ADAPTING AUTHORITARIANISM : INSTITUTIONS AND CO-OPTATION IN EGYPT AND SYRIA

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Adapting Authoritarianism: Institutions and Co-optation in Egypt and Syria

Joshua Alan Stacher
Ph.D. Dissertation

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes how politicized and depoliticized institutional political orders affect a regime's ability to co-opt elites and non-elites so as to maintain authoritarian rule. It examines contemporary authoritarian governance in Egypt and Syria to demonstrate how institutional variations determine why otherwise similar regimes respond differently in adapting their authoritarian systems.

I argue that "depoliticized" institutional arenas, as in Egypt, provide a political system greater flexibility than systems with "politicized" institutions, as in Syria. By politicized or depoliticized institutions, I mean the degree that a system's institutions such as the presidency, ruling party of state, and military/security services establishment contribute to politically formulating a governing consensus.

The Egyptian case has a higher capacity for authoritarian adaptation because the president oversees a political arena devoid of institutions that can obstruct the executive's initiatives. Conversely, the Syrian president faces a different constraint because too many institutions -- including ones that should not be politically active -- are involved in formulating the governing consensus, which makes co-opting elites and non-elites a more diffuse process. It also decreases the system's ability to adapt efficiently.

The argument implies the need for further comparisons of similar authoritarian regimes in order to advance our understanding of authoritarianism.

Declarations

I, Joshua Alan Stacher, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 92,500 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date 9 March 2007 Signature of candidate ____________________

I was admitted as a research student in September 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in September 2002; the higher study for which this is record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 2002 and 2006.

Date 9 March 2007 Signature of candidate ____________________

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit the thesis in application for that degree.

Date ____________ Signature of supervisor ______________________

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Chapter One

Problem Statement, Theoretical Concerns, and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

This present and central conundrum for Arab ruling elites and systems is analogous to a fictional case from Italian literature. Lampedusa's famous Count in *The Leopard* declares, as the Sicilian political arrangements crumble around his elite family's status, "Unless we ourselves take a hand now, they'll [nationalists] foist a republic on us. If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."[1] Change in this sense, as with the contemporary Arab world, is more about adapting in order to maintain power rather than for the sake of revolutionary change or reform.

A struggle over reforming the Arab world is currently underway. It is a tale of power, relationships, and change cloaked in the language of terrorism, democracy, and peace. On one side of this struggle is the United States, which argues that Arab governments need to reform by increasing freedoms and democracy. On the other side are the Arab governments themselves, who are trying to manage a reform process that allows for system maintenance and adaptation. When the United States speaks of reform, it implies changing the nature of governance. When Arab leaders initiate reform, the implemented changes are far more limited than those envisioned by U.S. rhetoric.

A core problem is that the U.S. government presumes that all Arab regimes can benefit from its overarching prescriptions to fix existing governance problems because all are similarly authoritarian. Yet, the variance among Arab regimes is too great to be solved by a single set of prescriptions. Despite research on the conventional classifications such as monarchies and republics, comparative variance among these political systems is not well researched. The assumption seems to be that since republics have similar constitutions and institutions then they are more or less the same.[2] Yet, it would seem that although Arab political systems are all being altered, change is coming in a variety of ways. No uniform outcome is likely.

Whether Arab leaders' ultimate aim is the pursuit of democratic development is debatable but uncontrolled change is not part of their reform agenda. The question, therefore, is how do political systems reconcile an unwillingness to radically reform with pressures to change? These pressures are principally external but also internal. Whether Arab governments like it or not, political change is an unavoidable burden. As a consequence, those governments have a vested interest in this process. As the Cairo Bureau chief of the pan-Arab daily *al-Hayat* Mohamad Salah explains, "It is in a regime's interest to change so that it can stay in power. They reform the system to keep it going."[3]

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[1] Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1958): 21.

[2] To my knowledge, no one has written on why comparisons do not exist between similar-looking systems. If any trend is detectable, comparing Egypt and Syria has tended to stress similarities rather than differences.

[3] Interview, Mohamad Salah, Cairo-Bureau Chief of *al-Hayat,* Cairo, 9 February 2004.

To radically reform a system implies that changes are taking place that alter the fundamentally authoritarian tenants of governance. Yet, what if "reform" is not what is occurring despite changes to the political systems? This thesis argues that Arab governments are not initiating reform processes but, rather, are engaging in regime adaptation. Regime adaptation is distinct from reform because it does not change the central tenants of governance. But adaptation is most certainly change. For this thesis's purposes, adaptation can be defined as political change meant to adjust a state to changes in its environment (such as a more mobilized, complex society, weakening state economic capabilities, external pressures, etc) without giving up authoritarian power or sacrificing the cohesion of elites. System adaptation is changing in order for regime power and domination over the society remains the same.[4] It centers on co-optation strategies that typically include controlled openings, greater responsiveness by the regime to crises, and/or co-optation of new groups possibly at the expense of previously privileged groups. This implies a shift occurs in the state's social base and involves institutional and other innovations in political technology. Increasing a regime's capabilities to adapt is the key strategy of system maintenance, continuity, and persistence. As this definition suggests, adaptation does not indicate that the ruling elites seek to intentionally transform or re-structure existing power relationships between the ruling and the ruled.

My comparison of two similar post-populist authoritarian systems in Egypt and Syria attempts to reveal the existence of operational and structural differences for adaptation. At the center of this comparison lie two key governance components: institutions and co-optation. The central aim is to examine the micro-dynamics of elite co-optation strategies in authoritarian regimes in order to explain regime survival and adaptation. In a March 2004 interview, Egypt's Youth minister, `Ali al-Din Hilal, remarked that despite numerous institutions, proposed initiatives "are challenged by powerful personalities."[5] Conversely, Syrian Expatriates minister, Bothaina Shab`an, cited different obstacles to the "reform" process. She argues, "Change on the ground will happen. It is easy to change a person at anytime but institutions tend to stand in the way of larger reform."[6] As such, while individuals supported by entrenched patronage networks slow and obstruct the process in Cairo, it is institutions that are considered problematic to adaptation in Damascus. Therefore, despite the assumed similarities between Egypt and Syria, different factors are said to hamper the “reform” process. Particularly, this thesis argues that despite an abundance of similar institutions in Egypt and Syria, the politicized (decentralized) or depoliticized (centralized) character of institutions determines a system’s ability to co-opt, affirm, and shed established and new elites while also incorporating unaffiliated social actors. It is a political system’s propensity to co-opt coalition members that determines its likelihood of system adaptation. The findings suggest that each system is capable of persisting and adapting. Yet, system adaptability is higher in Egypt because the depoliticized nature of the institutions enhances the centralization of presidential power. This allows for Egypt’s regime and its ruling coalition to be reconstructed in a more flexible manner. Syria’s institutional order demonstrates that several politicized institutions compete for influence while blocking changes by other institutionally backed participants. It makes the Syrian political arena less able to quickly adapt its system. This suggests that Syria possesses a lower adaptability quality.

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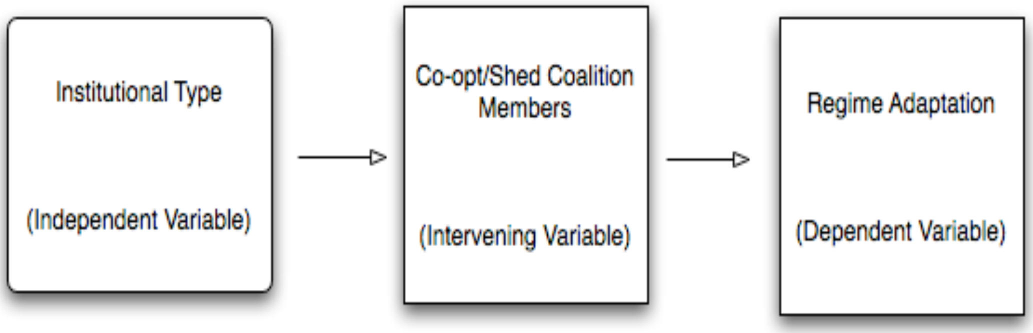
[4] Adaptation, as will be seen throughout this thesis, is a messy concept precisely because politics is immune from manufactured academic concepts. Nonetheless, while adaptation is always change, change cannot be exclusively seen as reform. As a consequence, adaptation is a distinct process from reform. Developments that may cause a regime to adapt include but are not limited to technical developments, economic liberalization, the multiple faces of globalization, and an external patron demanding concessions. With particular reference to regime adaptation to economic liberalization and the rise of a technocratic governments, please see Frederick Fleron, 'System Attributes and Career Attributes: The Soviet Political Leadership System, 1952-1965', in Carl Beck (ed.) *Comparative Communist Political Leadership* (New York: McKay, 1973): 43-85.

[5] Interview, `Ali al-Din Hilal, minister of Youth (1999-2004), Cairo, 2 March 2004.

[6] Interview, Bothaina Shab`an, minister of Expatriates, Damascus, 24 March 2004.

FIGURE 1.



Institutions are important political structures. Any political system’s continuity depends on the type of institutions and elites within those institutions that govern. Institutionally backed elites interact and compete with one another in developing system consensus, which allows or obstructs the ruling elites to govern cohesively, resolve potential problems, and react to crises that emerge. Academic literature argues that authoritarian regimes possess weak institutions and favor personal rule.[7] The logic suggests that by empowering institutions at the expense of personalities, more efficient and democratic governance will result. Strong institutions demand that power flows from those holding office. Institutions also encourage power to be distributed according to formal rules, which possess standard operating procedures that do not require constant intervention by political leaders. Strong institutions have autonomy and are able to absorb and win the loyalty of multiple social forces. Conversely, weak institutions are ones that are manipulated, have their rules set aside or overridden by patrimonial leaders or clientage networks.[8] Egypt and Syria fit the pattern of possessing weak institutions dominated by political elites. Yet, this thesis intends to illustrate why even within personal authoritarian rule, institutions do matter and behave differently. It is in how elites in these institutions use, interact, and influence other institutions that produce differences for regime adaptation. The main argument will show that despite similarities between Egyptian and Syrian post-populist authoritarianism, different political processes are at work as each state pursues system adaptation. Egypt and Syria, as will be argued, exhibit different levels of institutional politicization.

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[7] See Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 17-22 and 270-271, James Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East* (New York: Longman, 2000): 71-73 and 118-120, and Paul Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000): 36-37.

The degree to which the politicization of professional state instruments, such as bureaucracy or security services, is present affects system adaptation. Professional state instruments are *supposed to be* a political leadership's apolitical facilitators of power. In cases where this distinction is not maintained, it leads to a vicious circle of political underdevelopment. Therefore, politicized apolitical institutions can be defined as formal state organizations (security services or bureaucracy) that can compete with intended political state organizations (presidency, party) by prioritizing and safeguarding their elites' individual interests over other institutionally supported elites' interests. In theory, this creates a political arena where all the institutions – whether they are supposed to be politicized or not - have a degree of autonomy from one another. In reality it's a bit more nuanced by creating a confused system where the institutions that are supposed to be political are and institutions that are supposed to be apolitical are not. This specifically applies when politicization is present among state instruments outside of the presidency, parliament, or political parties. This type of institutional configuration hampers the development or implementation of a regime's consensus. Rather than lobbying, compromising, and debating the direction of regime adaptation, elites in politicized institutions possess influence that can block, dilute, and sabotage other elites intended politicized institutional initiatives in the interest of system viability**.** Hence, the presence of active and disruptive politicized professional apolitical institutions in authoritarian settings makes them repositories of power that lead to governance gridlock. A president can appoint ministers and begin programs but other institutionally supported elites can bureaucratically disrupt and isolate people and initiatives leading to lost time and governance mismanagement.

Depoliticized institutions, conversely, are state institutions that do not possess the autonomy that allow elites to operate on behalf of an institution's initiative within the political arena. As in Egypt, a centralized president and upper elites have manipulated and conditioned a state's institutions in such a way that elites within these institutions are dependent on the president. Hence, elites within depoliticized institutions, which include institutions that are intended to be political institutions such as parties and parliament, do not openly compete with other institutionally supported elites. This structural arena is more centralized and more easily facilitates the formulation of the regime's consensus. In this respect, rarely if ever, do elites in any institutional bloc openly or quietly resist the upper elites' expressed decision. Depoliticized institutions are not sources or repositories of power. While ruling elites may be members of such depoliticized institutions, their power within the system is derived from individual proximity to the president rather than their official positions. Indeed, should a powerful elite run afoul of the system's consensus, depoliticized institutions can do little to protect them. Alternatively, depoliticized institutions do advantage a system because there is little internal debate or inter-institutional conflict over the system's consensus. While upper-elites may debate with one another, the institutions – be they intended professional apolitical arms of the state or its supposedly political arms -- are incapable of promoting or defending their interests against the upper elites/state's interests.

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[8] Social Science literature also makes another observation: In LCDs with colonial histories, bureaucratic institutions (executive, bureaucracy, military, police) tend to be stronger than political ones (parties, parliaments). This is another explanation for authoritarian persistence and democratic weakness.

Egypt's system represents a political arena that is comprised of depoliticized institutions, which includes the professional apolitical and well as intended political state institutions. For example, one only need to look at the apolitical nature of the security services or the weakness of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) vis-à-vis the presidency to observe an institutional type distinct from that in Syria. Egypt remains dominated by depoliticized institutions in which the executive branch, and particularly the president, dominates the political order. Institutions, such as the ruling NDP and the security services, remain run by individuals with extensive patronage networks that depend largely upon the president's will. None of the institutions save the presidency has a mandate to be politically active, compete with the presidency, or debate with other institutions. The executive has nurtured and created depoliticized institutions that accelerate the consensus-making process. As a result, Egypt's institutions can be viewed as more flexible, for example, in terms of incorporating newer politicians into the political arena and system adaptation in general. One cost of these types of institutions could be isolation from society.

Syria, by contrast, exhibits a political arena that possesses politicized institutions, which include institutions that are intended to be political and those that are not. In the Syrian case, such institutions can be seen in the presidency, B`ath party, and the branches of the security services. These politicized institutions are repositories of power or the "centers of power" that many analysts, such as Michel Kilo, have referred to in Bashar al-Asad's Syria.[9] Unlike Egypt, Syria's political system contends with separate politicized institutions, comprised of individual actors with patronage networks. While the individual patronage groups compete with one another inside their institutions, a balance and consensus is achievable that permits the institutional elites to participate with and compete against the system's other institutional elites. When the institutions engage and interact with one another, however, achieving consensus appears to be more problematic. Rather than leading to a more complex, more developed political arena, Syria's politicized institutions contribute to more power sharing than in Egypt and often result in governance gridlock. This gridlock, in turn, hampers the system's ability to adapt. As a result, competition for influence intensifies as institutions engage in defensive struggles to preserve their influence from being eroded. In this context, the presidency, the ruling B`ath party, and the security services vie to maintain their political influence within the system. In the absence of an authority capable of resolving cross-institutional elite disagreements, establishing a consensus among these competitive structures proves difficult.

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[9] Interview, Michel Kilo, civil society activist, Damascus, 30 September 2003.

This produces a complicated comparison between Egypt and Syria. In Syria, the party is more institutionalized and hence more appropriately politicized; the parliaments appear the most similar component in the comparison; and security services are more politicized and less institutionalized than in Egypt. The presidency in Egypt might be more institutionalized than in Syria given the fact it is so strong vis-à-vis the state's other institutions. The outcome is that there is less centralization and more power sharing in Syria than in Egypt. What this is really describing is the difference between oligarchic and autocratic authoritarianism. Despite this qualification, simplicity requires that Egypt be described as having depoliticized (centralized) and Syria as possessing politicized (decentralized) institutions for the remainder of the thesis.

In summary, this study compares and contrasts Egypt and Syria's institutions, which contribute to the systems' adaptive capability. Institutional politicization will be examined as the independent variable and the ability to co-opt newer figures and shed older ones will be the intervening variable. The framework within which these processes occur will be evaluated historically to show where the systems diverged as their leaders chose different institutional formation strategies. After these differences are established, the role of the presidency in each country is reviewed as are elite politics. Non-elite individual co-optation and shedding is also considered to demonstrate similarities and differences between Egypt and Syria. The ability of the ruling parties to absorb and rid themselves of political participants will also be considered. The security services in each country are also examined to stress how a politicized security apparatus in the Syrian case operates while a depoliticized apparatus is prevalent in Egypt.

It is within this context that this thesis examines authoritarianism in an explicit top-down manner. This is not to ignore or attempt to discredit the immensely helpful bottom-up opposition literature of the 1990s.[10] Particularly, the academic literature's findings on civil society,[11] labor movements, syndicates, opposition parties, and elections provided detailed examinations of the various types of opposition that could challenge an authoritarian state. It is from this bottom-up opposition literature that academics focused on transitions towards democracy. In particular, academics concentrated their efforts on the state-opposition alliance. The absence of this alliance from the bottom was used to explain the lack of democracy. However, it is primarily on those works' strength that the central revelation was that secular opposition in Arab states is weak, unorganized, and poor at connecting cross-sectional pockets of unified societal opposition. Yet, many of the "opposition from below" often excluded themselves because of their disorganized, personalize character that left the state as the dominant political hegemon.

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[10] A helpful and useful book within this genre is Ghassan Salame edited book, Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats: The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994.

[11] See, for example, Augustus Richard Norton's two edited volumes entitled *Civil Society in the Middle East, Vol. 1 & 2* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995 & 1998).

After having been exposed to those work's findings, this study shifted its attention and focus back onto the state and its various strategies of survival and manipulation. Looking at the state's power and its changing character as well as how authority is exercised largely left the legal and illegal opposition out of the research design. To qualify my findings, I decided to examine institutions and top-down management of elite and non-elite co-optation. This work is primarily concerned about authoritarianism in and of itself. The movement away from transition studies or bottom-up approaches to explain authoritarian persistence has already begun. Works like Marsha Pripstein Posusney's edited book on *Authoritarianism in the Middle East* examines the role of elections, external factors, and the security forces.[12] More recently, Nicola Pratt's also focuses on the character of the state's authoritarian power rather than on the frequently powerless opposition from below.[13] The central difference between Posusney and Pratt's work and mine is that while we all agree that top-down approaches to studying authoritarianism need to be taken, I distinguish between different types of authoritarian rule among regimes that are frequently understood to have more in common that not. It is here that this study's contribution lies.

The implications of this study are that Arab authoritarian regimes are different institutionally despite appearances and theoretical models that suggest otherwise.[14] While this sounds simplistic, it breaks with prevailing policy and academic trends that superficially lump similar Arab political systems together. The choice of Egypt and Syria as case studies is intentional because of a lack of substantial research comparing the countries. The differences between the two states highlight and provide insight that complicates and problematizes thinking about Arab republican regimes. The existence of institutions is less of a concern for this study as it is assumed that they exist and matter. Instead, the focus is the level of politicization of such institutions and the capacity of these institutions to define and shape the adaptation of the political system.

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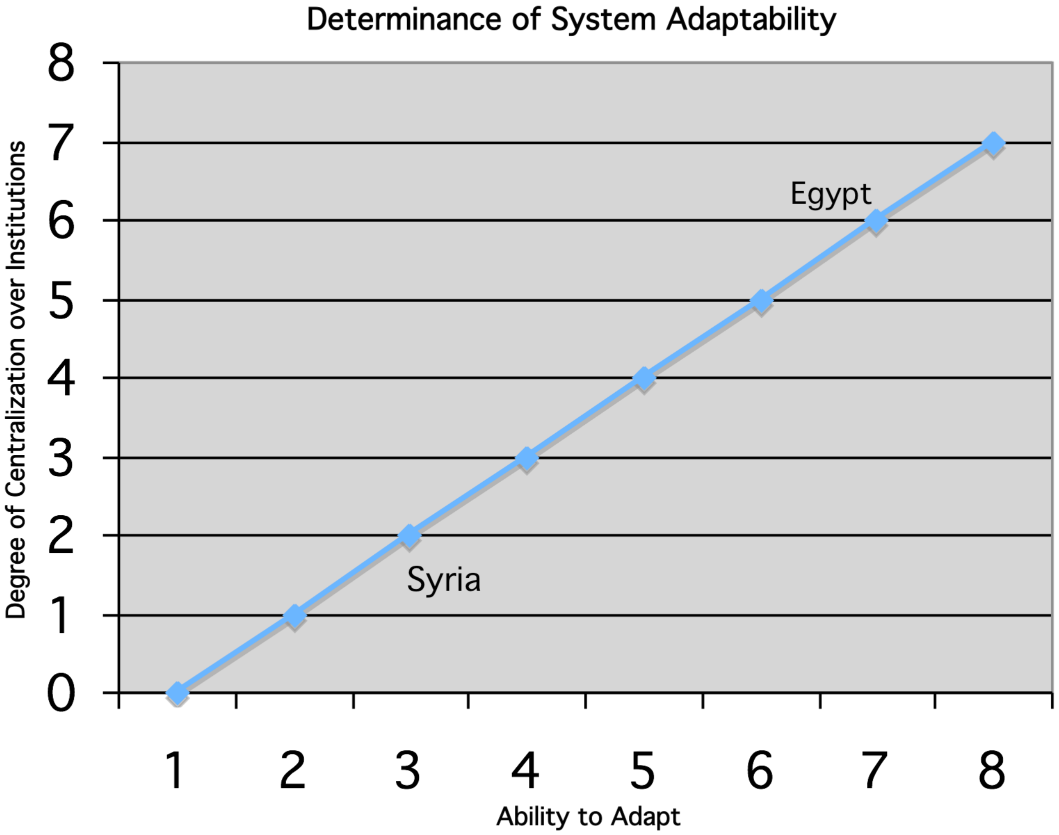
[12] Marsha Pripstein Posusney, *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Power and Resistance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2005).

[13] Nicola Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2007).

[14] For theoretical models that suggest similarities see John Waterbury and Alan Richards, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996): 275-308, and Nazih Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995): 196-223.

Contrary to conventional literature on authoritarianism, however, this project explores notions of authoritarian adaptability and persistence.[15] As such, the thesis will revolve around three broad questions that serve as the study's basis: (1) what are the differences in the institutional politicization that effectively define the political boundaries of each system; (2) what impact does the types of institution have in regards to co-opting and shedding elites; and (3) how does this impact system adaptation**.** The main point is that increased centralization over institutions -- which I am calling depoliticization -- equals a political system's greater ability to adapt.

FIGURE 2.[16]



1.2 Background: The Persistence of Authoritarianism Amidst Democratization

Because authoritarian rule exists and persists in diverse forms in the Arab world, several questions are considered. What explains authoritarian variance in the Arab Middle East? How does institutional politicization and depoliticization affect a state's capabilities to co-opt elites and non-elites? Which types of regimes, if any, are likely to move away from authoritarianism? Such questions touch on issues that scholars of authoritarianism and Middle Eastern studies have considered since the 1950s.[17]

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[15] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanist Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," in Chehabi & Linz (eds), *Sultanist Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Synder's theory views authoritarianism as fragile, static, and prone to fail by providing cases that collapsed without looking at other cases where authoritarianism persisted.

[16] According to this diagram, a zero-rating would translate to system failure – be that in the form of a *coup d'etat*, regime implosion, or civil war.

Thoroughly authoritarian Arab monarchies and republics endured long after the "Third Wave" of democratization,[18] the USSR's implosion, and the 1991 Gulf war that entrenched American hegemony in the region. Recent developments, such as the overthrow of Saddam Husayn's regime, Palestinian, Egyptian, and Iraqi elections, and Lebanese demonstrations against Syria are thought to suggest that authoritarianism's days are numbered.[19] Yet, ending authoritarianism through external military intervention or through elections does not necessarily result in democratization. Authoritarianism persists despite the prognostications of writers who issue dire warnings of imminent economic and political crises in individual states,[20] use transition frameworks that focus on phenomena such as civil society[21] and describe a positive relationship between economic and political reform.[22]

For their part, misguided international policy initiatives have done little to minimize the prevalence or longevity of authoritarianism in the Middle East. One example of such an initiative can be found in the U.S. government's Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), which was launched in February 2004. The GMEI stressed democratically remaking the Arab world by strengthening civil society, empowering women, and restructuring decrepit educational curricula throughout the region. The essence of the GMEI is that by revitalizing these three purported basic pillars of democratic society, the regional political systems can be transformed into democracies. Arab governments and their leaders, led by Hosni Mubarak, resolutely denounced the initiative. The Arab leaders' counterargument was that uncontrolled liberalization would lead to Islamist gains that would, in turn, lead to chaos. Arab commentators joined the chorus to refute the initiative by arguing reform is an internal matter and that foreign interference to impose a model on the region is unacceptable. The Arab governments ultimately resisted by noting the necessity to undertake economic reforms before political projects could be pursued. The United States calmed their fears and tried multi-lateral approaches to coax the governments to conduct internal reform efforts. Yet, relations between the West and Arab governments reached new lows. By the time of the G-8 summit in June 2004, where the initiative was formally launched, the "initiative battle" was more or less over. The GMEI (later changed to the Broader Middle East Plan because in German "Greater" implies imperialist intent when translated) stalled because only a small number of Arab countries attended the summit. As *al-Jazeera* pointed out "Egypt and Saudi Arabia, two countries covered by the initiative but alarmed by its potential implications, declined invitations to the summit. Tunisia, which held the rotating presidency of the Arab League, followed suit. Leaders of Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Turkey and Yemen accepted Bush's invitation."[23] In all, only four out of 22-Arab League countries attended.

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[17] As an early example, see Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Boston: The Free Press, 1958).

[18] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave of Democratization* (Norman: Oklahoma UP, 1991).

[19] One *Economist* cover even read "Democracy stirs in the Middle East," with a picture of a pretty, western dressed female flashing a peace sign during an anti-Syrian protest in Beirut in February 2005. *The Economist*, 5-11 March 2005.

[20] See Cassandra, "The Impending Crisis in Egypt," *Middle East Journal* vol. 49 no.1 (Winter 1995): 9-38.

[21] Norton, *Civil Society in the Middle East*. Although Norton does not claim that civil society would end authoritarianism, this book falls squarely in the democratization literature, which ostensibly points to having a linear democratizing endgame.

[22] Robert Springborg and Clement M. Henry, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Another summit in Morocco in December 2004 further discussed the highly unpopular plan. The *New York Times* published a story that forecast the summit's expected agenda and limited outcomes.[24] It followed with a piece that argued that Arab leaders used the "excuse" of the Arab-Israeli conflict as the reason not to reform.[25] The story did not, however, choose to focus on how the U.S. plan had changed over the year. The GMEI went from broad calls to transform society to the pursuit of restructuring Arab economies. By choosing to focus on economic reforms before political reforms, it underscored the U.S.'s reinvigorated push to revive the democratization initiatives of the 1990s based upon the Washington Consensus. The Washington Consensus is a neo-liberal modernization-based model that suggests economic liberalization, structural adjustment, subsidy cuts, fiscal restraint, and privatization helps a country attain certain socio-economic benchmarks. The extended logic is that democracy follows economic growth. While the Washington Consensus is primarily an economic policy model, academics have refuted its core underpinnings when it became clear that economic liberalization did not lead to greater political reforms. Rather, it often led to a reversal in that economic reforms led to political liberalization being increasingly restricted to prevent instability born of the economic dislocations. As Pool notes, "it is more likely, however, that the more full-blooded and intense economic liberalization becomes, the stronger the tendency will be for a retreat to a stricter authoritarianism."[26] Yet, the rejection of the GMEI and the compromise that Arab governments will pursue economic before political reform does not end the saga of authoritarianism and reform in the Middle East.

Authoritarianism is by no means a static or unchangeable method of governance. Indeed, elites in authoritarian systems, as will be shown, must constantly work to ensure the system remains under their influence. A number of the region's governments are undergoing legislative and institutional changes. Regimes in the region may open and close their political fields to embark on economic structural adjustment programs, for instance. Arab governments evince remarkably altered features and employ different strategies than they did in the post-independence authoritarian period (1950s & 1960s) but they remain authoritarian nonetheless. Within academia, doubt has gradually replaced optimism towards democratization's prospects in the region, largely without slipping into cultural exceptionist arguments. As Heydemann notes, "The democratization euphoria of the post-1989 period is now tempered by the 'neopessimist' recognition that authoritarianism will be as much a part of our future as it has been of our past."[27] Therefore, authoritarianism is a subject that deserves continuous study and revision. As Wedeen states, "There are, oddly, few recent writings on authoritarianism in comparative politics and they tend to be concerned primarily with the transition from authoritarian to democratic forms of rule."[28] This study contributes to this neglected niche by reviewing and examining authoritarian adaptation without viewing democratization as the inevitable end state.

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[23] "No big breakthroughs at G-8 Summit," *al-Jazeera.net* 11 June 2004.

[24] Joel Brinkley, "US Slows Bid to Advance Democracy in Arab World," *New York Times* 5 December 2004

[25] Joel Brinkley, "Arab and Western Ministers Voice Different Priorities," *New York Times* 12 December 2004

[26] David Pool, ""The Links between Economic and Political Liberalization," in Tim Niblock and Emma Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East* (London: British Academic Press, 1993): 53.

This study's contribution reaches beyond Middle Eastern studies as its focuses on the dynamics of authoritarianism. It modifies and refines the various existing models used in analyzing and understanding the various authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Previous efforts, using strict personal[29] or political economic[30] readings of authoritarianism fail to explain completely authoritarian variance and persistence. While the conventional alternative to cultural explanations is political economy theory, my alternative model combines the precepts of authoritarian literature with institutional interpretations of authoritarianism.

1.3 Theoretical Review:

1.3.1 Modernization Theory

Modernization theory's origins can be traced to the 1950s. Theories such as proposed by W.W. Rostow outline the five necessary steps a country must proceed through before reaching the preconditions that permit economic "take-off" and political development based upon an American model, i.e., democratization.[31] Through the author's notion of "preconditions," academics continue to build on this model despite its inherent America-centrism. Following Rostow, Gabriel Almond and James Coleman's *The Politics of Developing Areas*[32] and David Apter's *The Politics of Modernization*[33] made contributions but essentially focused on socio-economic indicators as the key prerequisites of political and economic modernity. It is understood and expected that modernity will necessarily lead to democracy. Samuel Huntington produced a substantial contribution for modernization theory in 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*[34] gives modernization theory a more sophisticated edge, arguing that as economic growth occurs, political instability follows, particularly in the middle stages of growth. Huntington writes that a degree of destabilization, or praetorianism, usually results as weakly institutionalized systems fail to control forces of modernization because they are unable to incorporate the increased political mobilization of social forces unleashed by the development process. As a result, single-party modernizing states perform better because strong political leadership is equipped to focus on social reforms.

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[27] Stephen Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict 1946-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999): 8

[28] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbolism in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1999): 26.

[29] Jackson and Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*, 14-31.

[30] Volker Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

[31] W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Development: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

[32] Gabriel Almond and James Coleman (eds.) *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

[33] David Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965).

While some academics, such as John Waterbury, have argued that transitions such as South Korea's transition to democracy vindicate modernization theory,[35] their claim is debatable. A more in-depth analysis of the South Korean case shows that its convoluted development process cannot be explained exclusively through the use of socio-economic indicators[36] though they can, of course, condition possibilities. As Potter argues, South Korea's transition to democracy resulted because of geopolitical and international engagements, economic development, changing class divisions, and state and institutional development (and the interrelationships between them).[37] Hence, in addition to economic development, key international, social, and institutional changes must complement economic development to enable a democratic transition. Transitions cannot be based on economic development alone.

While modernization theory's insistence on socio-economic indicators misrepresents the development process, this branch of theory was reinvigorated by democratization or transition theories following the post-1989 fall of many Soviet Bloc Communist regimes. Academics perceived many of these countries as undergoing democratic transitions. The most prominent work in this regard was Samuel Huntington's *The Third Wave of Democratization* published in 1991. This book reaffirms the centrality of socio-economic indicators in modernization theory but updates it to include a supplemental cultural argument. While Huntington's writings subtly echo Francis Fukuyama's simplistic notion of "the end of history" and his belief that "the ideal of liberal democracy could not be improved on,"[38] Huntington surmises that countries "resistant" to democracy after 1990 remain authoritarian because they "had no previous experience with democracy."[39] He explains this lack of experience in three key points.

Economic development -- the staple of modernization theory -- retains its prominent place and socio-economic indicators remain linked to democratization. For Huntington, richer countries are democratic and poorer ones are not. Therefore, "economic development, in short, provided the basis for democracy."[40] Development not only provides the basis for democratization, it is the first element in a causal relationship that begins when a country attains a middle-level economic status. After a country reaches this "take-off" point, a transition ensues followed by a democratic breakthrough. Middle-level economic growth mobilizes, politicizes, and educates more people, who eventually push for greater liberties and rights, and thus drive the democratization processes. Economic growth indicators serve as just one tendency within this theoretical model.

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[34] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

[35] John Waterbury, "Democracy without Democrats? The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East" in Ghassan Salame (ed.) Democracy Without Democrats (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994): 44.

[36] David Potter, "Democratization at the same time in South Korea and Taiwan," in *Democratization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997): 219-39.

[37] Ibid, 219.

[38] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of history and the Last Man* (New York: Avon, 1992): ix.

[39] Huntington, *The Third Wave of Democratization*, 44.

A second pillar of Huntington's democratization theory indicates that changes in cultures or the lack thereof, can have an impact on whether a country begins a transition towards democratization. Accordingly, he places considerable weight on the role of cultural factors such as religion as prerequisites of the transition. For instance, Huntington finds it significant that South Korea has a higher percentage of Catholics than other Asian countries. Since the third wave was a "Catholic wave,"[41] South Korea's Catholics were a contributing factor in the country's becoming democratic. Alternatively, he finds an authoritarian antithesis in countries that he perceives to be more rigid in their religious beliefs. He does not probe deeply before naming Islam as an obstacle towards democracy. While Huntington's work is not as essentialist as that of Bernard Lewis, his argument remains culturally biased. With unsubstantiated statements such as "Islamic concepts of politics differ from and contradict the premise of democratic politics," and "Whatever the compatibility of Islam and democracy in theory, in practice they have not gone together,"[42] he aligns himself in the camp that views cultures, other than those of the Judeo-Christian world, as static and incapable of developing. Nevertheless, the argument is squarely rooted in modernization theory because particular cultures are viewed as intervening variables that accelerate or delay democratization. Its American/Western centric view is that "we" developed and therefore "they" must follow our lead to achieve progress. It believes that traditionalism is an obstacle to development and that economic development is a necessary requirement of modernity, which in this case is equated either with democratization or democracy.

Proponents of modernization are prone to label the Arab world as somehow deficient in comparison to other regions. This is best viewed in John Waterbury's argument that the Arab world is exceptionally resistant to international democratic tendencies by analyzing the socio-economic indicators and the dynamics of constructing a democratic coalition. Waterbury argues that, "Until the 1980s the Middle East was not exceptional. Only with the gradual redemocratization of Latin American and Southern Europe at the beginning of the decade, and the tentative democratization in South Korea and Taiwan towards the end, did the Middle East begin to appear behind the curve."[43] Citing that rising socio-economic indicators in many Arab countries proved unable to lead to a "democratic pay-off," Waterbury looks at other factors such as the political-economic variable of a state-dependent bourgeoisie, continued military-led governments, and conflict as obstacles towards democratization. Yet, in Latin American countries similar conditions and contexts exist, which leaves Waterbury to argue that to Arab societies are somehow exceptional because of the combination of a number of factors. He implicates the Islamists, and apparently Islam, as the reasons a successful democratic bargain cannot be negotiated. While he does not label Islam as static, he does rely on cultural scapegoats as proof of the Arab world's exceptionalism. As he notes, "Whether or not Islam or Middle Eastern 'culture' are separable phenomena, the two work in ways that do not augur well for democracy."[44] Waterbury argues Arab states will go through the necessary stages of struggle and bargaining that provide the opportunity for Islamic texts to be reinterpreted.[45] Hence, time is the key factor according to Waterbury's argument. Transforming the very cultures of the Middle East, one understands, can eliminate the obstacles to political modernity and end the exceptional nature of the Arab world.

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[40] Ibid, 59.
[41] Ibid, 76.
[42] Ibid, 307-8.

To summarize, socio-economic indicators are inadequate representations of a country's political development or its capacity to democratize. Indeed, Turkey held elections and had a democratic transition of presidential and party power in 1950 – well before the economic indicators warranted that it should have happened. Alternatively, countries such as Tunisia entered middle-level economic status and remain locked in a thoroughly authoritarian system. Where analyses of socio-economic indicators fail to unlock development's complex formula, modernization scholars tend to blame culture as the source of political underdevelopment. Proponents of modernization are usually the first to argue that the Arab culture is exceptional in its resistance to political modernity and economic development. Thus, modernization scholars explain the persistence of authoritarian rule as derivative of cultural obstacles.[46]

Modernization theory provides substantial contributions to our understandings of the nature of political participation and economic reform. Nonetheless, modernization theory fails to provide an adequate explanation for authoritarian persistence by using cultural explanations. This is because modernization theory presumes an almost mechanical relationship between levels of economic development and democracy. Modernization theorists' major weakness is their lack of detailed attention to political institutions. Single party authoritarian regimes are modern and such regimes can adapt and survive the modernization process. Therefore, the cultural variable does not add to understanding authoritarian persistence.

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[43] Waterbury, "Democracy without Democrats?" 25.
[44] Ibid, 33.
[45] Ibid, 45.
[46] Huntington, *The Third Wave of Democracy*, 307-308.

In the past decade academic interest focused almost exclusively on democratization and transitology studies, and scholars tended to overlook adaptation and variance of authoritarian governance. This project does not argue, however, that the discipline of Middle Eastern studies is flawed and ill conceived as some, such as Martin Kramer, suggest.[47] Indeed, even as there are many publications that rigidly study the region using transition theory, there are other publications that explore why authoritarianism continues to rule the day. Studies, such as those by Maye Kassem, Oliver Schlumbeger, and Christopher Parker to name a few, suggest and argue that a transition theory approach is unsuited as a general approach simply because transitions never occurred in the individual countries they studied.[48]

As Heydemann argues, "When it comes to the study of democratization and economic reform…the field has been largely right. The persistence of authoritarianism, not the inevitability of democracy, has been the principle focus of research. The overwhelming sentiment among researchers has been not uncritical optimism about the prospects of democratization, but a cautious and critical skepticism, verging at times on frank pessimism."[49] Heydemann is correct in that social scientists were not fooled into believing that the region's governments were in transition towards democracy. Nonetheless, understanding that transitions are not occurring is not the same as explaining the persistence of authoritarianism. Consequently, the debate's focus needs to be modified if the social science community is to understand authoritarianism in a more focused way. As Carothers suggests, "It is time to recognize that the transition paradigm has outlived its usefulness and look for a better lens."[50] It is only by assessing authoritarianism that one can build a better understanding of the mechanisms and complexities that exist behind the appearance of "blocked development."

1.3.2 Authoritarian, Populism, and Post-Populism Theory

1.3.2.A Authoritarianism

The concept of authoritarianism, by itself, is of limited utility as a theoretical tool and requires considerable development and differentiation. Since Max Weber's early identification of traditional patrimonial, charismatic, and rational forms of authority,[51] social scientists have treated authoritarianism either in broad or micro-typologies, as they try to classify its varying forms; they have tended to produce expansively generalized definitions or excessively case-specific definitions of authoritarianism. For example, a macro-definition is provided by Linz who argues that authoritarianism is a

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[47] Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington: The Brookings Institute, 2001).

[48] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy* (London: Ithaca Press, 1999), Oliver Schlumberger, "Transition to Development?" in George Joffe (ed.) *Jordan in Transition: 1990-2000* (London: Hurst, 2002): 225-53, and Christopher Parker, "Transformation without Transition: Electoral Politics, Network Ties, and the Persistence of the Shadow State in Jordan," in Iman Hamdy (ed.) *Elections in the Middle East* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2004): 132-70.

[49] Stephen Heydemann, "Defending the Discipline," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 13 No.3 (July 2002): 103.

[50] Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 13 No.1 (January 2002): 6.

[51] H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1948): 296.

> Political system with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate or guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader and occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.[52]

While this definition remains applicable today, its imprecision fails to accurately capture the complex diversities of authoritarian rule. The reason for such ambiguity in defining authoritarianism is attributable to the extensive range of such regimes. As Brooker notes, "The term 'authoritarian' is so widely applicable that it is difficult to develop a theory which can cover so many diverse cases without becoming either banal or incoherent…theorists have been plagued by the problem of how to cover what is still a diverse range."[53] Consistent with the difficulties of defining authoritarianism, social scientists have atomized the study of authoritarianism by developing endless typologies to characterize different types of authoritarian regimes instead of developing a single definition. Some of these typologies include military regimes, single-party regimes, traditional/patrimonial, sultanistic, pseudo-democracies, electoral authoritarianism, and predator states. None of these classifications is inherently incorrect, and as a whole encompass a wide variety of authoritarian regimes. However, the high number of classifications afford limited comparative potential because a typology can get so specific that it only applies to one case.

A more recent theoretical label, which comes out of the Weberian tradition, is that of neo-patrimonial regimes. Neo-patrimonialism focuses on a more institutional, rather than personal, type of patrimonialism. While the practice of applying neo-patrimonialism theory often results in scholars reducing "a regime" to the chief executive and his cronies, the state's institutions all contribute to an authoritarian regime's ability to adapt and to persist. Neo-patrimonialism continues to be a theoretical concept that maintains applicability when studying authoritarianism in the Arab world. It also demonstrates the mixed character of authoritarian regimes. Bratton and van de Walle explain neo-patrimonialism as

> hybrid political systems in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions. As with classic patrimonialism, the right to rule in neopatrimonial regimes is ascribed to a person rather than to an office, despite the official existence of a written constitution…The chief executive and his inner circle undermine the effectiveness of the nominally modern state administration by using it for systematic patronage and clientelist practices in order to maintain political order. Moreover, parallel and unofficial structures may well hold more power and authority than the formal administration.[54]

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[52] Juan Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: the case of Spain," in Erik Allard and Stein Rokkan (eds.) *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1970): 255.

[53] Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes*, 22.

[54] Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997): 62.

As can be seen from the definition above, neo-patrimonialism is the combination of traditional culture combined with the "modern" state institutions according to the West. Essentially, neo-patrimonialism combines the two Weberian concepts of traditional rule with the legal-rational form of rule. As a consequence, neither a pure form of the former nor the latter is evident. Yet, it is within this neo-patrimonial hybrid concept that a great deal of variance can be present. For example, some regimes might be more legal-rational than traditional while other authoritarian states exhibit more traditional than legal-rational aspects. As a theoretical tool currently, this ability to account for variance is not present. I hope to use and build on the neo-patrimonial literature.

Scholars on the Arab world have considered neo-patrimonialism. For example, Hisham Sharabi viewed the process of modernization as leading to cultural adaptations of patrimonialism. Neopatriarchy, as he calls it, is an inherited patriarchal culture that blends the state and the family as the modernization process reinforces a former colonial country's dependency on a capital center in the West.[55] Within this relationship of unequal (capital vs. dependent) states, traditionalism is encouraged to flourish.[56] This development of a neo-patrimonial state structure hinders a country's ability to develop economically because the state pursues a distorted type of statist development. While Sharabi work is largely focused on Arab economies and their effect on society, others academics have drawn out the potential for political development.

Halim Barakat takes the theory of neo-patrimonialism and applies it politically to explain the lack of an active civil society. As Barakat argues, the potential for opposition to rise organically and challenge the state is unlikely because neo-patrimonialism encourages conditions that are not favorable for political contestation. In his words, "The conditions described above – dependency, underdevelopment, patriarchal and authoritarian relationships, social and political fragmentation, class distinctions, successive historical defeats, and a generalized state of repression – have rendered the Arab people and society powerless."[57] Barakat, then, argues that Arab society or the Arab polity has been so demobilized and depoliticized as their resources and wealth are used to benefit the a small ruling elite and external countries that the "Arab world does not seem to have a society that functions well."[58] Neo-patrimonialism's effect on society carries with it detrimental political ramifications. This, in Barakat's estimation, excludes the Arab polity as a political class that can effect change or be viable opposition as it prevents potential development for opposition to emerge from below.

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[55] Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988): 3-4.

[56] Ibid, 6.

[57] Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture and State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 26.

[58] Ibid.

Not only does this existing literature on neo-patrimonialism support research that is focused on explicit top-down studies of authoritarianism for its own sake, it also calls into question how best to utilize it conceptually. For example, currently, neo-patrimonialism does appear to be too generic and incapable of making distinctions between different authoritarian regimes. But this does not mean it should be disregarded. Sharabi and Barakat do not draw out distinctions between various Arab authoritarian regimes in their work. Instead, they focus on the "Arab World". Similarly, as Sharabi and Barakat have used the notion, neo-patrimonialism is primarily a social phenomenon that retards the political and economic development. Hence, it is distinctly possible that the lack of political development in the Arab world stems from a structural or institutional problem. By identifying how neo-patrimonialism manifests itself in different ways and through different structural formats, the concept can be usefully employed. Unpacking and looking at how the concept of neo-patrimonial structures emerges and explains differences is a substantial contribution.

An additional complexity in studying such regimes and what continues to guide authoritarian studies is their ability to develop, adapt, and modernize. One social science tendency is to trace the emergence of regimes that blend authoritarian and democratic characteristics. Larry Diamond's label of "hybrid regimes" demonstrates how authoritarian regimes amalgamate democratic attributes into a regime's neo-patrimonial institutions. In this way, the external appearance of democratic governance is maintained while functionally systems of governance remain thoroughly authoritarian. Diamond views hybrid regimes as maintaining "the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multi-party electoral competition, that mask the reality of authoritarian domination."[59] Diamond's observation may be just a starting-point but it shows the complexity of authoritarianism. While Diamond notes the adaptability of authoritarian regimes, his supplemental theoretical contribution offers more labels and types of authoritarianism.

It is within this context that I will abandon the treatment of general authoritarian definitions in favor of examining two models of authoritarianism that broadly encompass the Egyptian and Syrian experience -- populist and post-populist authoritarianism.

1.3.2.B Populist Authoritarianism

Models do not explain differences between authoritarian regimes' institutional development and co-optation abilities, but they do describe a general trajectory. While no model ever completely describes an individual state's dynamics, they serve as roadmaps. For this study's purposes, it is imperative to review the literature on populist and post-populist authoritarianism. For the purposes of this study, which focuses on Egypt and Syria, populist authoritarianism (PA) is central as a starting-point.

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[59] Larry Diamond, "Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* vol. 13, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 24.

Populist authoritarianism is a post-colonial development strategy. Petit bourgeoisie military officers seize control in their countries and initiate a process of "revolution from above" that is subsequently transformed into radical state-led development.[60] Revolution from above is a military takeover of the state apparatus from the old elite in which there is little to no popular participation. The change is usually conducted with little violence and is politically pragmatic in its initial orientation. The political objective of a revolution from above is the obliteration of the traditional elite's economic and political bases, seen as a necessary prelude to modernization.[61] According to Ellen Kay Trimberger, military officers rose to power because they were autonomous from the dominant classes of the colonial era. As she argues, "such autonomy is likely to occur when there is no consolidated landed class…or when a landed oligarchy is in economic and political decline. In the latter case, the rising bourgeoisie must also be weak and/or dependent on foreign interests."[62] After rising to power, the military officers realize that they have a legitimacy deficit and lack a social base.

The officers challenge the dominant landed class and must acquire legitimacy at the expense of it. As such, the newly established regimes offer new populist incentives and a nationalist ideology in exchange for the people's support. Thus, as can be deduced, countries that possessed large landed classes produced the most radical changes in the Arab world. Such changes were witnessed in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.[63] Most notably, this strategy is generated through the state's redistribution policies. Specifically, the enactment of land reforms and use of nationalizations displace the dominant class and the key agents of the *ancien regime*. In effect, the governments take from the rich and give to the poor.

This type of authoritarianism has political, social, and economic repercussions. As Hinnebusch argues, "Insofar as the PA regimes uses its concentrated power chiefly to attack the old dominant classes while seeking legitimacy through egalitarian ideology and the political incorporation of middle and lower strata, it is arguably 'populist' that is, an 'authoritarianism of the left' which challenges rather than defends the traditional, privileged status quo."[64] PA, as Hinnebusch infers, transforms the political, economic, and social landscape. The new regimes create organizations, offices, and a bureaucracy that serve as the state's implementation instruments. Initially, PA leaders are left little option but to construct a wide ruling coalition that consists of workers, peasants, and lower-middle class members to substantiate the regime's political legitimacy and broaden its support base. Populist privileges such as free university education, guaranteed state employment, and security of public sector employment, contribute to the state's legitimacy. Additionally, land reforms, which gave land to previously landless peasants, and nationalizations, which place industry under the state's control served to further consolidate popular support for the regime. The old elite and former colonialist bourgeoisie thus found themselves marginalized as society's class composition and structures greatly changed.

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[60] Ellen Kay Trimberger, *Revolution from Above* (New Brunswick: Transaction Inc, 1978): 2-3.
[61] Ibid, 3.
[62] Ibid, 5.
[63] Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987): 96-102.
[64] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, (London: Routledge, 2001): 5

While wide coalition building succeeds in capturing the state's political power, it eventually produces a capital investment crisis because the regime cannot extract capital from the now alienated former elite. The state is therefore forced into the position of acting as the primary engine of economic growth. Thus, statism becomes an attractive and viable alternative for development. In this model, the state becomes the chief employer, planner, and manager of the economy. Initially, the state succeeds in driving the national development project and maintaining its populist promises. As Ayubi argues, "Fast industrial expansion allows at such a stage both the proletariat and the technocracy to benefit at the same time, thus creating the political conditions to inclusionary coalitions."[65] While populism can lead to forming inclusionary coalitions, "the purpose of the… policies is to underpin their power and to increase the autonomy of the state."[66] Yet, the economic function of statism is not sustainable over long period of time and, consequently, leads to neo-mercantilism.

Neo-mercantilism can be defined as the fusion of the political and the economic aspects that lead to power accumulation over capital accumulation.[67] The economic stress on the development process cannot be maintained while PA states create and expand bureaucracies, the public sector, populist policies, and military prowess. Extended experiments with PA lead to economic exhaustion, characterized by unbalanced trade deficits, debt, overspending on militaries, and negative rent seeking through patronage. Also, PA is not a sustainable development project because of the vulnerability of the commonly attempted strategy Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI).[68] The goal of ISI is to transform the economies of lesser-developed countries' from being primary product exporters to industrial producers. As Ayubi argues,

> Populist strategies which are fairly easy to implement at the beginning eventually face difficulties. Technically, it transpires that for such policies to be sustained and deepened, expensive intermediary and capitalist goods have to be imported, resulting in chronic balance of payment difficulties and escalating foreign indebtedness. The state then attempts to adopt austerity policies by restricting the earlier welfare benefits offered to the lower classes in the populist phase.

Unless the state locates a reliable and constant source of rent, such as foreign aid or oil wealth, to maintain its populist policies, it confronts periodic economic crises. Once the economy stagnates, it cannot maintain its instruments of power and control, namely its expansive military, bureaucracy, and welfare policies. For sake of priority, the once inclusive ruling coalition is restricted out of a necessity for economic efficiency. In other words, the state's retreat from high levels of interventionist statism takes the form of austerity measures that lead to a reorientation of the state's development trajectory.

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[65] Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State*, 205.

[66] Ibid, 206.

[67] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 11

[68] For an overview of ISI, see Richards and Waterbury, 25-27

1.3.2.C Post-Populist Authoritarianism

Post-populism is the strategy employed by authoritarian regimes pursuing economic and political reform after their experiment with populism and statism. While post-populism can modify a state's development trajectory, it has neither led to democratization nor the repressive Latin American bureaucratic authoritarian type. Post-populism is a variant that sometimes emerges after a populist experiment and alters socio-political and economic patterns of interaction. However, post-populism cannot be viewed as a progression or maturation of PA. Post-populism can be best viewed as exclusive authoritarianism in comparison to its populist variant. Its strategies are founded on smaller ruling coalitions that focus on capitalist development. This requires the elites to restrict or rescind populist privileges in the interest of capital accumulation. As Hinnebusch notes:

> Statist economic crisis were met by economic liberalization policies meant to revive the private sector as the main or at least a complementary engine of capital accumulation and to facilitate a switch from import substitution to export strategies. The success of these strategies has depended on the construction of a new state-bourgeoisie alliance and on the rollback of reliance on the mass citizenry as the regime's main support base.[69]

This narrowed coalition pursues a policy of *infitah*, or economic opening. This requires the state to eliminate members from the coalition and restrict populist privileges for economic efficiency. *Infitah* policies focus on capitalist development. Thus, states that pursue *infitah* can implement policies as diverse as "unrestricted opening of the economy to foreign imports and investment, a recession of etatist and populist intervention in it and a downgrading of the public sector."[70] An additional *infitah* policy is the adoption of an IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP).

Infitah renegotiates the state's pact with society. In the populist era, the state offered goods and services in the form of state patronage such as government jobs or public sector employment in exchange for political support. As that becomes more financially unviable, the state is forced to change course. This new post-populist agreement is a social pact that requires the state to appear to relinquish political controls[71] as it retreats on populist social promises. Rarely, however, do post-populist states ever provide political space for groups to achieve autonomy from the state. In fact, academic literature emphasizes that polities are deliberalized when economic restructuring occurs.[72] For example, while the state limits popular sectors handouts, it increases the bourgeoisie's role. The resulting process is a balancing act between managing the bourgeoisie's autonomy of the state and the popular sector's discontent. Invariably, post-populist strategies lead the state into nurturing a dependent bourgeoisie and the use of coercion on the popular sectors. The state's management of different social forces is needed to ensure domestic stability because when a system's direction is changed, it is disruptive and generates new class inequalities that can lead to conflict. The leader's challenge is to decide to whom to grant the benefits of economic reform and in what order.[73] As Hinnebusch argues, "managing economic liberalization may actually require a 'harder' form of authoritarian state"[74] The revived bourgeoisie prove to be the winners of *infitah* while the lower income bracket bear the brunt of the "social pain" that economic reform introduces.[75] Public sector industrial workers, state dependent middle class, and peasants are usually grouped among the chief losers of *infitah*. While the private sector and bourgeoisie are the process's winner, their connections and dependence on the state rarely makes them a force of change as they have a considerable stake in maintaining the status quo. To paraphrase, the state is able to maintain control over this economically empowered class, which, in turn, has no incentive to check state political power. This has detrimental implications for the bourgeoisie's ability to construct a democratic coalition to negotiate with the state.[76]

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[69] Hinnebusch, "Liberalization without Democratization in 'Post-Poplist' Authoritarian States," in Davis Butenschon and Hassassian (eds). *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2000): 129-30.

[70] Raymond Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 57.

[71] Ways that some Arab governments provide this appearance is by creating multi-party arenas, re-wording constitutions, and holding elections.

Equally important*,* *infitah* economies witness import and consumption increases rather than production increases. This imbalance does little to solve the previous capital accumulation and economic crises that led to the initiation of *infitah* in the first place. As a result, the state is forced to borrow more capital from international financial institutions and other countries, which leads to a chronic balance of payment deficit and a very costly servicing of the national debt. This leads to increased dependency on the international economic system -- leaving post-populist states at the mercy of the international economy's booms and busts as well as most susceptible to foreign interference. Thus, revolutions from above that established populist privileges and were fervently nationalistic are reversed and become dependent clients to superpower patrons.[77]

Adaptation in a post-populist context implies a regime maintaining stability while initiating capitalist development. As a consequence, co-opting and shedding coalition members also remains a balancing act. Co-opting and shedding coalition members is the central variable that permits regime adaptation. Co-opting and shedding coalition members is, in turn, largely dependent on whether a system's power has centralized (depoliticized) or decentralized (politicized) institutions. This, in turn, affects the degree to which a political system is adaptable.

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[72] See Pool, ""The Links between Economic and Political Liberalization," or Eberhard Kienle, *A Grand Delusion: Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001).

[73] John Waterbury, "The Political Management of Economic Adjustment and Reform," in Joan Nelson (ed.) *Fragile Coalitions* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1989): 40.

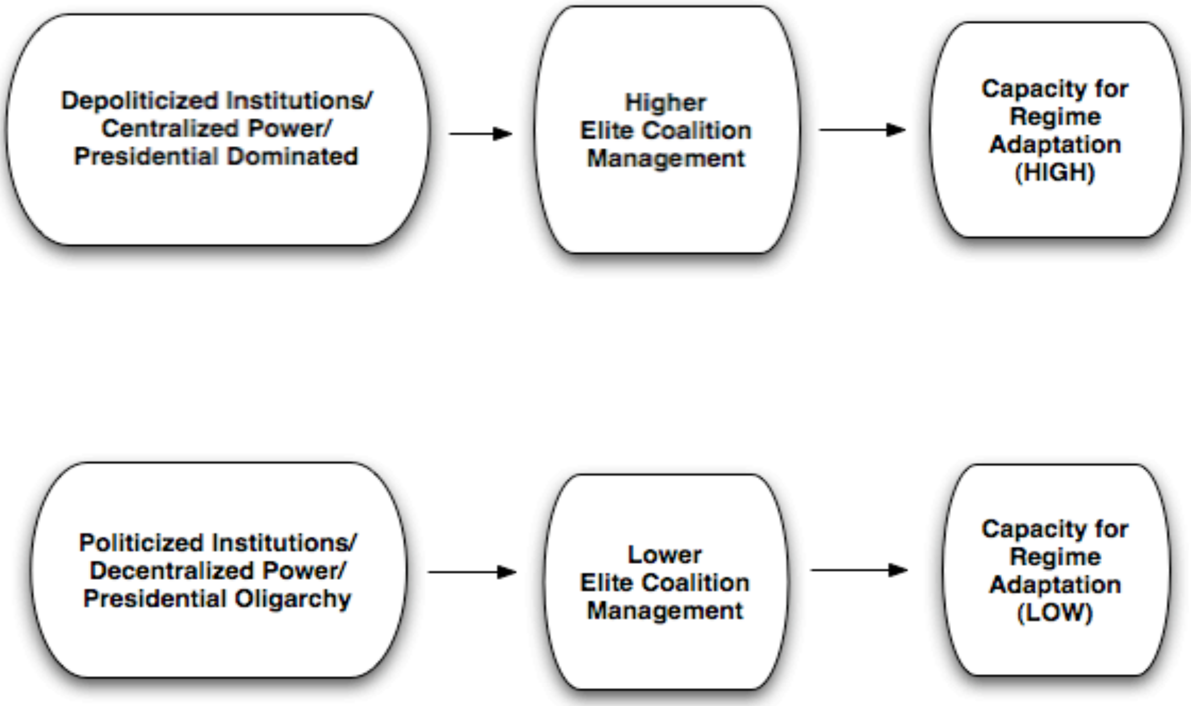
[74] Hinnebusch, "Liberalization without Democratization," 132.

[75] Waterbury, "The Political Management of Economic Adjustment and Reform," 39.

[76] Hinnebusch, "Liberalization without Democratization," 132.

[77] Lisa Anderson, "Arab Democracy: Dismal Prospects," *World Policy Journal* vol. 18, issue 3 (Fall 2001): 59.

FIGURE 3.


Depoliticized Institutions/ Centralized Power/ Presidential Dominated
Higher Elite Coalition Management
Capacity for Regime Adaptation (HIGH)
Politicized Institutions/ Decentralized Power/ Presidential Oligarchy
Lower Elite Coalition Management
Capacity for Regime Adaptation (LOW)

The means by which a regime handles this balance determine the scope of regime adaptation. The degree of institutional politicization is one indicator of a regime's ability to co-opt and introduce or shed and exclude members from a ruling coalition. Authoritarian adaptation is the outcome of this interplay between the comparative politicization of institutions and coalition restructuring. There are no two identical populist or post-populist regimes. Therefore, degrees and depth of adapting are likewise not exactly similar. As the cases of Egypt and Syria demonstrate, both states could be classified as initially PA and now post-PA regimes, yet, as I will discuss later, there are differences between the two systems.

1.3.3 Institution Theory

As with the discussion of authoritarianism, Weber's scholarship on governance typologies outlines general characteristics, which have come to be understood as the barometer for political modernity. Weber notes that traditional governance, which is also referred to as personal or patrimonial rule, is the least developed in terms of accommodating social forces because it is institutionally weak and subject to a leader's will. The second of his typologies is also based on personal politics and is dubbed charismatic rule (where the leader drives radical change and mobilizes mass support). His third designation is impersonal rule or the legal-rational type, which is characterized by the development of state institutions. As Weber notes, "By virtue of its depersonalization, the bureaucratic state…is less accessible to substantive moralization than were the patriarchal orders of the past."[78] By developing a bureaucratic state, run by institutions, personal rule decreases and a state operates in a "rational" way. Weber's initial conclusions on institutions remain pertinent in social science theory.

Institutions are the building blocks of a political system. Institutions are comprised of practices and systems of organizations that do not constantly require the intervention and action of individuals. They are self-sustaining beyond the choices of their participants. Political actors can try to change institutions but are often confronted with a more difficult task than they initially expected.[79] Institutions organize and distribute power in a way that is stipulated by written laws in an impersonal manner. Huntington is clear that there is a difference between a political organization and an institution. Organizations represent an ethnic, religious or occupational grouping.[80] He notes that organizations can maintain order, mediate conflicts between rivals, elect leaders and contribute to solidifying a particular interest group. Yet, the inherent problem with organizations is that because they are interest-specific their societal reach is limited. Hence, "The more complex and heterogeneous the society… the more the achievement and maintenance of political community become dependent upon the workings of political institutions."[81] Huntington connects political modernity to the development of institutions. While this does not indicate democracy explicitly, it implies a scenario in which stability and system adaptability are facilitated by institutions that are able to absorb social forces. In his words, "A strong party system thus provides the institutional organizations and procedures for the assimilation of new groups into the system. The development of such party institutions is the prerequisite for political stability in modernizing countries."[82] Hence, one way for weakly institutionalized polities to develop is by strengthening one institution. In particular, Huntington notes the importance of a strong ruling party that can lead in the development of an institutional arena. This notion of using a single party to drive institutionalization of the political field continues to be relevant in social science literature.[83]

Brownlee argues that a single-party system actually contributes to the maintenance of authoritarianism because its serves a vital function. In his words, "a ruling party's capacity for intra-elite mediation is particularly important…where the maintenance of domination depends on regime cohesion. In a context where individuals seek political influence and material gain, party institutions sustain those preferences while providing a site, the party organization, to pursue them."[84] This argument suggests that institutions actually serve as a restriction on political development because they contribute to system maintenance. Yet, this is only relevant insofar as one defines political development as democratization and excludes the possibility that authoritarian regimes can accommodate some level of political participation. Huntington, for his part, views institutions such as single party systems, as capable of accommodating participation. Hence, they cannot be exclusively viewed as restricting political development. This suggests that rather than viewing authoritarian regimes as simply possessing only weak institutions, it is necessary to understand how the degrees of politicization and depoliticization as well as clientelism in institutional arrangements present in post-populist states affect their operation.

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[78] Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, 334.

[79] Communication with Jason Brownlee, Assistant Professor of government, University of Texas-Austin, 26 April 2005.

[80] Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 8-9.

[81] Ibid, 9.

[82] Ibid, 412.

[83] Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995): 305-306.

On such differences Waldner notes that, "State institutional characteristics are shaped by bargaining dynamics" out of which they emerge.[85] As a consequence, he argues that the degree and level of elite conflict determines the size of a government's ruling coalition. Where conflict is high, ruling coalitions tend to be larger and incorporate more societal actors. This, in turn, encourages detrimental institutional consequences that include clientelism, bureaucratic politicization, a "distributive fiscal policy", and various forms of state economic interventions.[86] These insights are helpful because they demonstrate that institutions vary depending on their inherited dynamics. Yet, it also suggests that when a state is "path-dependent," it is difficult to break away from an inherited constraints.

The theoretical debate on institutions and its ramifications on system adaptation is one key element of this thesis. In accordance with Huntington, who is correct that developing strong institutions and defined institutional roles leads to political development, Egypt and Syria demonstrate the importance of weak institutions in undeveloped political systems. Overall, Egypt's political system is more institutionalized than Syria's political system in the sense that the institutional roles and characteristics of more of the state's instruments perform their intended tasks. However, while the Egyptian system has rightly developed the role of depoliticized, professional, apolitical instruments of state, its supposed political institutions -- such as parliament and the party -- are also depoliticized leaving the executive as the only repository of power in developing regime consensus. In Syria, the opposite is apparent. The political arms of the state such as the party and the presidency are rightly politicized but so are the intended professional and apolitical instruments of the state such as the security services. While both states are authoritarian and maintain weak institutions, a system with a strong presidency and depoliticized institutions is more adaptable because it facilitates regime consensus more rapidly than a system where there is less institutionalization, less centralization, and more politicization among the state's institutions.

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[84] Jason Brownlee, "Ruling Parties and Durable Authoritarianism," *CDDRL Working Papers,* Number 23 (28 October 2004): 5.
[85] David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999): 37.
[86] Ibid.

Neither Egypt nor Syria can be described as possessing strong institutions. Three major propositions are suggested by the cases. First, institutions tend to be weaker -- more politicized and more patrimonial -- in authoritarianism states, but nevertheless exist and matter for regime adaptability. Secondly, bureaucratic institutions tend to be stronger than political ones (as in Egypt) but this is not uniform where the party is relatively stronger in Syria. Thirdly, institutional configurations are different in different authoritarian states, as seen in the Syrian and Egyptian cases. Where the presidency is consolidated owing to its command over professional apolitical bureaucratic arms and a weak patrimonial party, the elite has maximum freedom to freely adapt through co-optation and shedding members from the ruling coalition. Conversely, where the bureaucratic arms are not reliable instruments of the presidency -- and, therefore, politicized -- and where the party is strong and able to check the president, this configuration makes it harder to centralize presidential power. Hence, this restrains adaptive ability and allows societal (vested) interests better representation to defend the status quo in the policy process. Because the process of adaptation depends on a regime's ability to remake itself, the relationship of institutions and co-optation becomes the important basis of this inquiry. This degree of institutional politicization or depoliticization shapes the ability of the state to co-opt and micro-manage elites and non-elites. In the following subsection, co-optation theory is reviewed. This implies that in the end the Egyptian regime is more capable of adapting quickly than the Syrian one.

1.3.4 Co-optation Theory

Co-optation is a process of incorporating, mobilizing, and sometimes, depending on the context, neutralizing individuals in the state's structural and institutional framework. It operates within a system of informal patron-client and corporatist relationships. Within academic literature, clientelism describes the process of co-opting individuals while corporatism designates co-optation of whole social classes. Patron-client relations are defined as:

> an exchange between roles – may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection of benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to a patron.[87]

Corporatism targets larger social groups, usually on the basis of socio-economic classes by organizing people into structures such as unions or professional syndicates. As Brooker argues, "State corporatism was often more of a control/repression mechanism and ideological symbol than a 'working' economic or social program."[88] For the purpose of this thesis, I will look at Egypt and Syria's clientelist and corporatist practices by describing them as co-optation. Co-optation is necessary for any authoritarian regime because it is a mechanism that allows for a government to extend power and garner support within society. As Kassem argues, "In the absence of democratic institutions, accountable representation, and a compelling and mobilizing ideology, authoritarian regimes depend on the distribution of patronage to establish a clientelist system that secures some form of stability."[89] Co-optation helps an authoritarian regime divide and rule by facilitating the inclusion, hence neutralizing, of potential elements of discontent. In this vein, structures are created to integrate individuals or large portions of a social class into the regime. Once people are brought into these structures, it effectively neutralizes them while buttressing the strength of an institution or organization. While co-opted members could band together and "colonize" the institution, the only chance of this happening seems to be in politicized institutional arenas. Depoliticized institutions are difficult to rally without personalities with established patronized networks responding in a restrictive manner.

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[87] James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," in Schmidt, Guasti, Lande, and Scott (eds.) *Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977): 124-5.

[88] Brooker, 155.

Co-option remains the chief means of expanding regime power. While there is some attempt to co-opt opposition, co-optation is designed primarily for those people who are neither aligned nor opposed to a regime, and who comprise the vast majority of any society. By including these neutral individuals, a regime ties its clients' personal, rational interests to that of the regime's persistence**.** Indeed, if one belongs to a party, think-tank, parliament, advisory committee or council, or holds a higher position in trade unions, the bureaucracy, the military, or the academy, there is little incentive for him/her to challenge the regime. Co-opted individuals, therefore, become part of the structures regardless of the degree of their access to ruler or his immediate elite circle. One likely outcome is that a co-opted individual's support for the system and stability is likely to grow. While the motivation for being co-opted is not rooted in direct access to chief decision-makers, there is still an element of power involved even if it is of the more subtle variety.

Alignment with the government, even an unpopular one, by accepting to be integrated into its structures brings social prestige through the granting of access to the media or the acquisition of a public role. People seek to be co-opted because it is seen as a means of increasing one's social status. There is also an element of personal security. In systems where the rule of law is ambiguous and subject to manipulation, being co-opted increases the chances one will be protected from a regime's security apparatus. One might therefore tacitly support a regime's general stances while privately acknowledging the existence of deeper systemic problems. By such tacit support of a regime's key positions, one seeks not only to acquire job security and greater social status, but one further hopes that such support might translate over time into greater social mobility. On another level co-opting individuals into over-bloated bureaucracies encourages acquiescence in exchange for benefits such as security from dismissal regardless of one's productivity or attendance levels. While pay scales may lag behind rising costs of living, a government can offer an array of other benefits such as subsidies, low-interest bank loans, and job perks that keep people integrated in its structures which, in turn, encourage regime continuity.

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[89] Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics,* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004): 4.

Another aspect of co-optation is, thus, access to material benefits and favors. As Eisenstadt and Lemarchand argue, "patron-client ties involve dyadic bonds between individuals of unequal power and socioeconomic status; they exhibit a diffuse, particularistic, face-to-face quality strongly reminiscent of ascriptive solidarities; unlike ascriptive ties, however, they are voluntarily entered into and derive their legitimacy from expectations of mutual benefits."[90] Co-optation encourages petty corruption and a person integrated into these networks stands to benefit financially, either through direct forms of corruption or through privileged access to insider information. For example, one of the primary motivations for competing in authoritarian elections where the outcome is mostly predetermined is access to wealth and resources.[91] By competing for a parliamentary seat and winning, an MP gains access to insider information relating to discounted land and real estate speculation, business monopolies, construction projects, or import licenses. Also, there is the informal notion of *wasta* or connections. If one is included in the system, then one enjoys the needed access to expedite or circumvent bureaucratic procedures. Either way, participation in the system helps increase a person's chances of having access to these while staunch opponents as well as individuals unknown to the system are excluded. While the above describes the motivations that drive co-optation, a merit-based pre-requisite factors into the process.

There is a tendency when studying authoritarianism and the co-optation process to view individuals integrated into a system as negative rent-seekers.[92] Yet, this is only partially accurate. Indeed, people that wish to be co-opted for reasons of increased social status, security, or material benefits also need to be *worthy* of co-optation. This is an immeasurable condition. Yet, authoritarian regimes do focus on one's social capital and ability to positively contribute to its social base. Thus, a completely compliant and flexible person is likely to be co-opted at lower levels than someone who is potentially resistant enough to attract the regime's desire to *ensure* they are integrated into the system. A person who holds an advanced degree from a Western university and possesses expertise that can help maintain the system is likely to a better catch for regime integration than an unqualified 'yes man'. Also, skilled clients with solid networks are more attractive to the government than ones without such links. As Kassem demonstrates in relation to Egypt's ruling party, "candidates are nominated not on the basis of dedication to the party, hard work, political capability or the like, but on whether a person, because of his personal influence and social networks within the community, merits co-optation into the system."[93] Selective co-optation thus helps maintain authoritarian rule by exerting regime control through inclusion of promising clients. Moreover, an ever-present concern exists that the exclusion of too many talented people could eventually prompt their convergence as opposition to a regime's continuation. It is, thus, deemed more prudent to make them shareholders in the regime's continuation.

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[90] S.N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand (eds.) *Political Clientelism, Patronage, and Development* (London: Sage Publications, 1981): 15.

[91] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*, 24-5.

[92] Daniel Brumberg, "Survival Strategies vs. Democratic Bargains: The politics of Economic Reform in Contemporary Egypt," in Henri J. Barkey (ed.) *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992): 77-8

Co-optation further provides a regime with an additional safety-value for potential dissent. For example, if a talented co-opted person turns against the regime for altruistic reasons or on principle, then it is easy for a government to discredit and then exclude a person by attacking their social status, using the legal framework to level accusations of corruption or by attacking their livelihood. The state possesses considerable means of ensuring acquiescence once one becomes a part of its structures. Co-optation is a tool that reinforces informality, which authoritarian regimes can use to maintain the system or a particular institution.

In this regard, co-optation is a continuous process of negotiation and interaction that induces competition inside the structures, as each client seeks to demonstrate their utility and thus to enhance their promotion potential. This gives the process its cohesion as mutual dependence of each co-opted level keeps the system constantly engaged for the sake of those involved. It seems authoritarian systems thrive on the mutual dependence that co-optation creates. For example, a president tries to make a ruling elite dependent on his rule so as to remain less challengeable. Powerful elite figures try to make a president and other elites dependent on their usefulness. The president and ruling elites make institutions, organizations, and society dependent on them. With everyone trying to ensure the dependency of others on their utility as co-opted entities, this contributes to increasing an inherent logic of mutual dependence among the actors within a systems institutional order.

The above discussion of clientelism and corporatism is not intended to imply that co-optation operates in a uniform way in authoritarian systems. As this thesis will show, co-optation works differently in otherwise similar states depending on the degree of politicization in an individual system's institutional configurations. Before moving on to a literature review on Egypt and Syria, it is necessary to consider coercion since it is a feature that cannot be overlooked when studying authoritarianism.

1.3.5 Coercion Theory

Coercion is the widely discussed attribute of authoritarian rule because it is the most visible tactic. Coercion, for the purpose of this thesis, can be described as a regime's ability to use force or the threat of force against dissenting individuals or groups. Coercion, although the most visible tool of maintaining authoritarian rule, is also the least used. As Hinnebusch notes, coercion

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[93] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*, 83.

"alone is never enough to ensure stability: government can never directly coerce more than a minority; the ability to coerce depends on the always problematic loyalty of followers, and coercion can only concentrate, not expand power."[94] Coercion has few flexible qualities and is used sparingly. Intelligence services, police, and militaries in authoritarian states maintain the country's sovereignty, defend it from external aggression, and keep day-to-day order. In addition, they protect the ruling regime.[95] It is because of their role in protecting the regime that they develop a political role. The security services in such states are a final bulwark for maintaining authoritarian rule.

While a regime can use force only sparingly, the threat of force is ever present. If large segments of society perceive the possibility of the security services using coercion, it changes people's behavior. Myths are often spread of the depth and efficiency of security services as a warning. In this way, the threat of force can be seen as more of a deterrent than force itself. The presence of plain-clothed informers, who may be formally on the service's payroll or akin to unaffiliated day laborers, on the streets also serve as a reminder that the state is always watching. Furthermore, the overlapping notions of co-optation and patron-client relationships also dominate the security services and link them to the ruling elite. The ruling elites disburse vast amounts of patronage to keep its soldiers loyal and willing to support their rule in the face of dissent. As Bellin argues, "Patrimonial linkages between the regime and coercive apparatus…enmesh the two."[96]

Yet, as will be argued, the security apparatuses of similar authoritarian regimes do not operate in the same manner. Thus, in one authoritarian regime, although present, the security services may not be visible while in another similar regime they are highly politicized and visible. In the former, the services act as depoliticized implementers while in the later they behave as overt political actors competing with official policy institutions. The security services differ in Egypt and Syria. This variance between the two services is attributable more to the degree to which the respective institutions are politicized rather than the degree of coercion utilized by either the Syrian or Egyptian regime. It is within this respect that co-optation works differently, which depends on the degree of institutional politicization.

1.4 Comparing Egypt and Syria: A Literature Overview

Comparative political studies are valuable. While one-country studies detail the individual path and provide analysis on a particular case, the question remains in comparison to what? Area studies are most beneficial when they compare different political systems. As Lichbach and Zuckerman argue, "Comparativists therefore insist that analysis requires explicit comparisons. Because events of global historical significance affect so many countries in so short a period of time, studies of single countries and abstract theorizing are woefully inadequate to capture epoch-shaping developments."[97] These comparative studies permit a greater understanding of the development processes and enrich the field for its future practitioners. If the endgame is to understand development in the contemporary world, comparative studies bring scholars closer to this comprehension.[98] Comparative work, which unearths both similarities and differences, assists in building theory, deciphering single case anomalies, and revealing larger trends. As Wiarda notes, "comparative politics is particularly interested in exploring patterns, processes, and regularities among political systems. It looks for trends, for changes of patterns; and tries to develop general propositions or hypotheses that describe and explain these trends."[99] This study falls within the tradition of comparative political analysis.

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[94] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 6.
[95] Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 7.
[96] Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East," *Comparative Politics* vol. 36, no. 2, January 2004): 143.

Contemporary Arab world studies have a diverse tradition of single country studies, comparative cases, and region-wide comparisons that dates back to the 1950s. Yet, by far, single-country[100] and regional studies[101] remain the staple of political studies on the Arab world. This is, to some degree, understandable. Researchers are faced with tremendous obstacles learning about countries. Work, publication, financial, and personal constraints often fail to give them sufficient time to learn about different countries. Indeed, merely assessing the literature on one well-studied country, such as Egypt, which contains a vast array of approaches, is a formidable task for any scholar to undertake.

Additionally, shifts away from area studies are being emphasized in the discipline, particularly in the United States. Thus, researchers must also cope with this trend. As renowned Russian historian at Princeton University, Stephen Kotkin, opined in the *New York Times*, "Flick through the channels and you can find plenty of regional experts analyzing the nuclear-tipped tensions between India and Pakistan or a war with Iraq. But try finding a full-time political scientist who specializes in the Middle East or South Asia at the nation's top universities and you'd almost be out of luck. Stanford and Princeton don't have a single political scientist who specializes in the Middle East. Yale has no political scientist on South Asia."[102] While American academia searches for "one world-applicable theory,"[103] aspiring academics are pressured into pursuing their PhDs comparing multi-country, multi-region studies that serve theory rather than regional studies. There is merit in these produced works but the number of classical area experts, such as Arabists, is dwindling. Language abilities, time commitments, and financial constraints play a role and limit research depth and breadth when one tries to compare such disparate regimes as those in the Philippines, Argentina, Algeria, and Russia, for example.

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[97] Marck Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, "Research Traditions and Theory in Comparative Politics: An Introduction," in Lichbach and Zuckerman (eds.) *Comparative Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 4.

[98] Ronald Chilcote, *Theories of Comparative Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994): 15.

[99] Howard J. Wiarda, *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Concepts and Processes* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Co, 2000): 7.

[100] For example, notable single-country works on Egypt include Robert Springborg, *Family, Power, and Politics in* Egypt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); and Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*. Concerning Syria, Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*; Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*; and Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*.

[101] Numerous examples exist such as Richards and Waterbury's *A Political Economy of the Middle East*; Ayubi's *Overstating the Arab State*; Korany, Brynen, and Noble's *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Vol. 2, Comparative Experiences* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); Norton's *Civil Society in the Middle East, volumes 1 & 2*; Moore and Springborg's *Globalization and the Politics Development in the Middle East*; and Hinnebusch and Ehteshami's *The Foreign Polices of Middle East States*.

This study does not include a cross-regional approach. Any theoretical contributions, knowledge, or conclusions it draws will be directed at scholarship on the Arab world. By all means, should cross-regionalists, theorists, or students of other disciplines find its outcomes useful then this is a bonus. Bu my main concern is to make a theoretical contribution and obtain an understanding about authoritarian governance in the Arab world.

This study pursues an overlooked and understudied comparison between Egypt and Syria. These countries are both important regionally, enjoy a long shared history that includes a failed union between 1958-1961, and both have produced authoritarian governments. Yet, it is a fact that there are no substantial comparative studies of the two countries.[104] There are a number of accounts that detail the inception and break-up of the Syrian-Egyptian United Arab Republic,[105] but none that have focused on contemporary comparisons. The literature that does compare Syria and Egypt is limited. There is one journal article, two chapters in books, and an in-depth six-page comparison by a Syrianist. As a general rule, the Syrianists usually refer to Egypt. Yet, the reverse seldom happens. For example, in a chapter of *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization Between Cold War and Cold Peace*, Hinnebusch's article on Syria makes five comparative references to Egypt. Similarly, Kienle's article in the same volume references Egypt four times.[106] This suggests that there is substantial overlap and space for comparative work to be done.

Of the existing literature after 1945, the earliest two works date from 1966. The first is by Charles Issawi and is entitled "Social Structure and Ideology in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and the UAR".[107] Issawi explains that the reason for Egypt's rigid centralism is linked to its long river. The

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[102] Stephen Kotkin, "A World War Among Professors," *New York Times* 7 September 2002.

[103] Ibid.

[104] There are a number of historical studies such as Abraham N. Poliak, *Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon, 1250-1900* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1939). Also, old travel books are prevalent such as Charles Leonard Irby, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria and the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1845).

[105] For example, Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasir and his Rivals, 1958-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Fawiz Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics, 1955-1967* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

[106] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," and Eberhard Kienle, "The Return of Politics? Scenarios for Syria's Second Infitah," in Kienle (ed.) *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994): 97-131. Both authors have written separate books on Egypt and on Syria.

[107] Charles Issawi, "Social Structure and ideology in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and the UAR," in Jack Howell

Nile forced the Egyptians throughout history to have extensive bureaucratic centralization because of irrigation patterns. In Issawi's assessment, "It…meant that the country had to be unified and tightly controlled by a government which ensured the necessary labor and cooperation on irrigation works, a task considerably facilitated by Egypt's compactness."[108] Bureaucratic institutions were developed accordingly and impacted "economic and social life."[109] There was also a history of large landowners since the time of Mohamad `Ali (1804-1848). Despite this large landed class, however, "Egypt did not acquire a class of prosperous, conservative peasants who in so many countries have constituted one of the main pillars of democratic capitalism."[110] Thus, irrigation patterns meant that constitutional democracies and free enterprise were sacrificed in favor of centralized rule.

According to Issawi, Syria, on the other hand, stood to fare better in regard to democratic development and free enterprise because of the nature of its agriculture and its bourgeoisie. According to his logic, Syria is dependent on a rainfall-based agriculture because of the absence of a long river that could unify social structures. As the author explains:

> Unlike that of Egypt and Iraq, the agriculture of Syria and Lebanon is rain-fed, irrigation having been negligible until the last ten or fifteen years. This prevented these countries from achieving a large agricultural production and explains their constant subordination to either Iraq or, more often, Egypt. But it also meant that they never experienced such breakdowns as Iraq, since even the Mongols could not destroy the rain! It meant too that the role of government in agriculture was negligible.[111]

Hence, in the absence of a centrally controlled irrigation system, the Syrian "peasantry could both adopt progressive capitalist forms of agriculture…and play a positive role in the political process."[112] Nevertheless, the author ignores that Syria's big landed class equally dominated the peasants. This, in turn, fostered a bourgeoisie class in Syria that was able to control a sizable portion of the economy and acquire "deep roots in society."[113] Conversely, a strong bourgeoisie did not arise in Egypt until the 1920s and 1930s and thus had to enter and compete in a heavily foreign-dominated enterprise sector. It was never able to assert itself in the colonial period and was comparatively weaker than its Syrian counterpart when the Free Officer coup occurred in 1952. This, in turn, influenced the bourgeoisie's nature. In Issawi's words, "in Egypt the 'productive middle class' as distinct from the 'salaried middle class,' consisted until quite recently almost wholly of foreigners and members of minority groups and could therefore put up very little

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Thompson (ed.) *Modernization of the Arab World* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1966): 141-9.

[108] Ibid, 143.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid, 144.

[111] Ibid, 145.

[112] Ibid, 146.

[113] Ibid, 147.

resistance against radical forces…that emerged in the last twenty years."[114] One is led to assume that because the agriculture harvest was so plentiful that many Egyptians instead of entering private enterprise decided to stay on the land to reap the benefits.

Issawi's work is an attempt to comparatively explain difference between Egypt and Syria's political systems. He tries to frame the trends leading both to and away from liberal governance. It is also an attempt to understand the radical positions taken by some regimes in the region. He focused on differences that could explain this trend. He chose as variables the type of agriculture (river-based irrigation or rain-fed) and the development of a domestic bourgeoisie. Yet, history tells us that this structuralist approach fails to explain the radical form of authoritarianism that was adopted by Salah al-Jadid's B`athist coup in February 1966. Indeed, some writers such as Stephen Heydemann have argued that Egypt practices a softer authoritarianism than Syria.[115] Nor can Issawi's article explain the type of authoritarianism introduced in Hafiz al-Asad's Syria. Indeed, in his conclusion, Issawi notes Syria has "certain internal resistances to the forces making for state ownership and control, a fact that accounts for many of their actions in recent years."[116] While this work fruitfully compares Egypt and Syria and notes the differences in social structures, sufficient time has elapsed to pass judgment on its findings. The level of development of a country's bourgeoisie and the influence of their agricultural base on the state's bureaucratic structures are both significant, yet they fail to explain the nature of social structures or their resistance to various forms of governance. Leadership and elite decisions, the role of international powers, political trends, social conflict, and institutional manipulation such as corporatism are also variables that can rapidly and radically transform a country's political dynamic.

Another work that offers a comparison between Syria and Egypt is George Lenczowski's 1966 article entitled "Radical Regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq: Some Comparative Observations on Ideologies and Practices".[117] He offers a comparison of the various events that led to the ideological paths taken by the regimes of the 1950s and 1960s. He classifies the regimes as radical not because of the manner in which they rule but "on the content of policies and the basic attitudes and commitments of the regime which attained power."[118] He also argues that, "military dictatorships have replaced the previous constitutional systems." Moreover, the author details the different phases of development in Egypt from 1952 and in Syria from 1949 to the time of his writing in 1966. Lenczowski reviews the tactics and approaches used by each government to discredit the pre-revolutionary establishment and the colonial overlords. He views the regimes as portraying themselves as liberating movements for the Arab masses.[119]

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 18-23.

[116] Issawi, 149.

[117] George Lenczowski, "Radical Regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq: Some Comparative Observations on Ideologies and Practices," *The Journal of Politics* vol. 28, issue 1, (Feb 1966): 29-56

[118] Ibid., 31.

Lenczowski also notes their similar views towards socialism. For example he notes, "By 1958…Nasser's regime began using the expression of 'socialism, freedom, and unity.' These same three words had earlier been given currency by the Baath party in Syria."[120] Socialism was integrated and connected to the idea of nationalism in both cases. Hence, the ideological variable seems to drive this comparison but fails to account for the motivations prompting its use. For example, in the case of Arab nationalism, its use by the state could be regarded as a reaction to colonialism. He reviews the similarities between socialism and Islam, describing the B`athists as "secular, [although] the actual practice could best be summed up as one of coexistence with Islam." In turn, he argues that the "Egyptian regime's attitude towards Islam is manipulative."[121] He proceeds to evaluate UAR and B`ath party documents and concludes there is ideological vagueness on economic matters.[122] He speaks of legitimacy problems in both cases. The conclusion he draws from his comparative study is that Egypt and Syria's radicalism is more developed than in Iraq, but that the trend towards greater radicalism is gaining ground in the Arab republics. He concludes that Egypt is further along "in terms of evolution from vagueness to precision…and has probably made a more concentrated effort than has the Baath Party."[123] He seems impressed by Egypt's 1962 National Charter and its clarity. Yet, in addition to these similarities and differences, Lenczowski also notes "Nasser's brand of socialism has provided an effective radical alternative to Communism. It is less so in Syria, although any strengthening of the Baath would probably have the same effect."[124] It is worth noting that Lenczowski still does not view the Arab Socialist project as completed.

Lenczowski's article is an attempt to understand the differences between the B`ath parties of Iraq and Syria as well between them and the Nasserist experiment in Egypt. His research with primary sources such as B`ath Party documents and Egypt's National Charter provides researchers with a useful comparative analysis. While the article cannot account for future developments such as the 1967 war, it clearly describes ideological development from the coups that brought these regimes to power until 1966. Ironically, the article was published in February 1966, the same month as the coup led by Salah al-Jadid. For the next four years, al-Jadid and his radical wing of the B`ath party deepened the socialist experiment. Nevertheless, it is debatable whether Arab socialism ever developed fully to reach "the final stage of its formulation" as Lenczowski felt it may.[125]

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[119] Ibid, 35.
[120] Ibid, 36.
[121] Ibid, 39.
[122] Ibid, 43.
[123] Ibid, 56.
[124] Ibid.

The chief weakness with Lenczowki's comparison is that ideology -- particularly Arab nationalism and socialism -- was discredited after the June 1967 War. The ensuing trend shifted away from radical socialism towards economic liberalization. In Syria, the bourgeoisie were subtly re-incorporated under the state's influence during al-Asad's first decade in power while a more revolutionary transformation took place in Egypt with Sadat's aggressive *Infitah* policies and realignment with the United States during the 1970s. Thus, ideology was marginalized as a crucial staple of the regimes' individual and collective legitimacy. As Perthes reminds us in the Syrian case, "Only in the 1966-1970 period did ideological considerations gain considerable influence."[126] It is arguable that prior to the 1967 war the same trend can be seen in Egypt.

After these two articles in 1966, no two-country studies explicitly comparing Syria and Egypt appeared until 1999. The reason is unknown but one can speculate. In the 1960s when the first two studies occurred, Arab nationalism, the UAR experiment, and post-independence provided fertile ground that invited comparisons between Syria and Egypt. Then in 1967, the Six-Day War erupted, changing the discipline's focus from explicit comparative work to the effects of war and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The dramatic conclusion of the Six-Day War produced a rupture in the countries' trajectories as well as the comparative academic work about the countries.

When the comparativists and their field rebounded to conduct comparative work in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the appearance of a vast divide between Syria and Egypt, perhaps, discouraged comparison. Indeed, comparison may not have looked possible at the time. By this time, Sadat had drastically changed the Egyptian state through aggressive adoption of post-populism, realignment towards the United States, and peace with Israel while Hafiz al-Asad searched for social stability in Syria even as the country was pre-occupied with involvement in the Lebanese civil war. Moreover, at this time, Egypt disengaged from Arab politics while Syria was caught in the middle of the quagmire. Thus, the differences that surfaced in the 1970s, as a result of the 1967 war, may have encouraged comparativists to focus on the individual nature of such regimes rather than to compare regimes thought to be heading in different developmental directions. This oversight should be rectified so that similarities and differences between Egypt and Syria can be explored. The divide that was perceived to exist between the two states in the 1970s and 1980s is not as great as originally understood and deserves examination.

It should be noted that one contemporary study, Heydemann's *Authoritarianism in Syria*, provided a six-page comparison between authoritarian types adopted by Egypt and Syria. The author contrasted Waterbury's notion of Egypt's "soft state" authoritarianism[127] with the radical "hard" variant adopted by the Syrian B`ath party following the 1963 coup that brought it to power. Heydemann's work, which deals with social conflict and institution building between 1946-1970, highlights several possible explanations for the variance in authoritarianism of the two regimes. He notes that the extreme social conflict between groups such as the bourgeoisie, socialists, and landed oligarchy required the B`ath party to adopt a harder authoritarian form to ensure their consolidation and expansion of power. The absence of intense social conflict in Egypt as well as the failed UAR merger influenced its elite strategies. As Heydemann points out, "the 'counterrevolutionary' episode of Syria's succession from the union taught B'athist elites how high the costs of soft authoritarianism could be."[128] Furthermore, "the iron fist and class conflict were not merely optional strategies for accumulation or mobilization of capital: they were essential to the empowerment and survival of the B`ath Party."[129] Thus, Egypt and Syria's differing constraints account for their divergence.

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, 36.

These constraints arise from dilemmas in consolidating populist authoritarian (PA) regimes. These are, according to Heydemann, "the dilemma of popular mobilization, the dilemma of countermobilization, and the dilemma of limited state autonomy under conditions of dependent development."[130] If class conflict and massive repression are required for consolidation, elites may choose a different path – namely that of softer authoritarianism, which limits "autonomy, extractive capacity, and autarchy."[131] The Egyptian political elite took this approach. Choosing the softer variant, however, forces a compromise between ruling and the ruled. In Heydemann's words, "The need to accommodate multiple interests encourages a system of unwieldy 'pluralist authoritarianism'. Furthermore:

> State elites are forced to constantly to defend a shrinking autonomous realm from encroachments or domestic interest groups, which the regime is unwilling or unable to control, and from the demands of foreign investors, bankers, and lending agencies. Soft states get squeezed from many sides.[132]

Heydemann argues that this is the variant the Egyptian elite developed under Nasser's tenure. While Syria locked itself into a hard radical form of PA, Egypt's soft state approach was easier to modify over the years. As Heydemann argues, "After 1967, however, Nasser and, later, Sadat and Mubarak sought to dilute the populist attributes of their regimes and broaden their ruling coalitions…In this case, populist authoritarian strategies are not discarded but amended and made more flexible."[133] Thus, elite decisions made as a result of overcoming capital accumulation and social conflict in the early regime formation period (which occurred in Egypt between 1954-1961 and in Syria between 1963-1970) determined future reform options. While there is undoubtedly merit in Heydemann's comparison, its brevity raises more issues than it resolves. This study shares Heydemann's research interests, however, it seeks to explain the diversity of authoritarian adaptation through politicized or depoliticized institutions.

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[127] John Waterbury, "The Soft State and the Open Door," *Comparative Politics* vol. 18 (October 1985): 65-83.

[128] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*, 22.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid, 19.

[131] Ibid, 18.

[132] Ibid, 19.

The remaining work that explicitly compares Egypt and Syria was a chapter by Raymond Hinnebusch in 2001.[134] Hinnebusch traces the Egyptian-Syrian comparison from their initial PA towards their liberalizing strategies and constraints that influence liberalization. He notes that "severity of crisis of capital accumulation and other economic imbalances" serve as the chief reasons to pursue economic liberalization.[135] Opportunities, such as aid and rent, assist in economic openings. From this vantage point, he evaluates the Egyptian and Syrian contexts against variables of the international system, the balance of social forces, and elite strategies.[136] Through his choice of variables and their complex interactions, he outlines their comparative economic and political development. Of particular usefulness, the concepts of alliances with superpowers, split bourgeoisies, and political decompression explain similarities and differences in the two cases. In addition to such differences, however, Hinnebusch also reveals similarities between the two states. His work discloses, for instance, a pattern that has emerged the past 30 years. This similarity is found in their style of liberalization. In his words, "Although the story of the Middle East economic liberalization is really only beginning, the current bottom line is that in both cases, incremental liberalization has, so far, revitalized economies without jeopardizing stability."[137]

Hinnebusch's article is a starting point for further research. He provides a general framework and key variables that have dictated and guided the Egyptian and Syrian liberalization processes. It is within this framework that more research needs to delve. When explaining authoritarian variants and persistence, one needs to understand the underlying processes operating within the regimes. This can be done through examining institutions and their effect on elite and non-elite individual co-optation. In part, this explains each state's individual alignment with superpowers, how it maintains social balance, expands and contracts the ruling coalition, and which strategies its elite pursue. A researcher is, thus, left searching for what makes the system adaptable in addition to why differences occur in otherwise similar systems. The ways and means that either encourage or impede system change also merit further exploration.

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[133] Ibid, 21.

[134] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Politics of Economic Liberalization: Comparing Egypt and Syria," in Hassan Hakimian and Ziba Moshaver, (eds.), *The State and Global Change: the Political Economy of Transition in the Middle East and North Africa* (Richmond: Cruzon Press, 2001): 111-34.

[135] Ibid, 113.

[136] Ibid, 130.

[137] Ibid, 133.

The works of the previous scholars framed where the field is today. On balance, it is possible to suggest that Issawi's findings on the social structural differences do not really seems to remain relevant. As we can see, Syria did not transform into a democracy due to its geography while the reasons for Egypt's authoritarianism extends beyond its geographical layout. Basically, in the larger scheme, social structures differences are not exclusively causal variables for resulting governance types.

Lencowski's work on ideology was extremely pertinent when he wrote it in the 1960s but as events since have shown neither the B`ath party nor Egypt's Arab Socialist Union (and its direct descendent the National Democratic Party) remained overly ideological organizations. In fact, today the opposite is apparent. The B`ath – while retaining a commitment to Arab Nationalism – has become an all-encompassing party while one of the NDP's main weaknesses is its inability to choose a place on the ideological spectrum. The B`ath and the NDP try to be all things to all those they rule rather than committed to any one ideology. As some would argue, the only ideology that currently matters in the Arab world is Islamism as seen in the electoral gains of groups such as Egypt's Muslim Brothers, Lebanon's Hizbollah, and Hamas in Palestine. Yet, even the argument that ideology is a central explanatory factor must be handled cautiously because Islamists groups often behave more like Western defined political parties than a country's party of state.[138] Hence, the groups' popularity could be more to do with such their *actions* rather than espousal of Islamist rhetoric or ideology, which continue to win such movements' support.

Focusing on conflict structures -- particularly within elite arena during state formation -- as Heydemann does yields more concrete explanations for understanding political underdevelopment. This thesis may not be a direct result of Heydemann's work but it is in the same family. The emphasis on institutional arrangements and structures helps to explain authoritarian adaptation. Hence, the structural aspects of his argument continue to influence my related thinking about institutions.

Hinnebusch's work on Egypt has been primarily focused on comparing Egypt and Syria similarly by using the post-populist model. While this thesis does not look to unseat or argue against his findings, which are in their essence true, this research is trying to emphasis the differences, rather than similarities, between governance in Egypt and Syria. Hinnebusch is the only comparative political scientist working on the Arab world who has ever attempted an explicit comparison. As a result, this thesis follows the groundwork that he has laid but with my modifications and different approach to the Egyptian and Syrian cases.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that there are a number of authored and edited works that invite comparison on the region. There are often chapters within these works dedicated to individual case studies that fit underneath an overarching thematic framework. Numerous examples exist such as Richards and Waterbury's *A Political Economy of the Middle East*,[139] Ayubi's *Overstating the Arab State,*[140] Brynen, Korany, and Noble's *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*,[141] Norton's *Civil Society in the Middle East*,[142] Moore and Springborg's *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East,*[143] and Hinnebusch and Ehteshami's *The Foreign Polices of Middle East States.*[144] While all these works make necessary and useful observations on Egypt and Syria, among others, they are presented in a manner that makes any comparisons implicit, rather than overt. It is through direct comparative studies that similarities and differences can be explicitly unmasked and argued to the rest of the discipline.[145]

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[138] Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament," *Middle East Report* No. 240 (Fall 2006): 32-40, and Nir Rosen, "Hizb Allah, Party of God," (3 October 2006): http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/200601003_hiz_ballah_party_of_god

1.5 Research Methodology

Methods of Research:

Constraints abound when studying authoritarianism in the Arab world. This is largely attributable to the type of political systems that currently exist there. Firstly, as an American, I was usually thought to be working for the American intelligence services, especially when asking about system maintenance, durability, and social networks in Egypt and Syria. A researcher of authoritarianism must, therefore, often confront suspicion and distrust when approaching the topic. As one Syrian explained to me, "most Syrians have seven faces which they employ depending on who they are speaking with. I can tell you one thing and five minutes later tell my superior at work the complete opposite."[146] This is not out of the ordinary for anyone, including Westerners, but it does reveal a potential pitfall for the researcher. As with any study, the more sensitive the subject, the more cautious a researcher must be of obtained information. Indeed, multiple information channels and individuals' perceptions of reality explain why many incidents and events leave a researcher bewildered.

Also, printed material in Arabic regarding this subject is limited although this is become less and less the case since writing this dissertation. Most Arab social scientists prefer to stay away from authoritarianism while other more regime-aligned analysts tend to write more ideological and pro-government works on how incremental nature of reform is being conducted. By default, these publications place themselves into the transition literature. Works that do not uphold the government line exist, but in small numbers and are often of little utility. The reason is that opposition figures often engage in polemic criticism of government. Yet, these works also misrepresent how authoritarianism varies, adapts, and persists because of their biased arguments against their governments. Both opposition and pro-government writers will also use cultural and sectarian arguments, which are misleading. There is a tendency to emphasize foreign interference and embrace conspiracy theories. This is always a problem in any scholarship on governments, including the U.S. government -- particularly in studying the Kennedy assassination or reasons for the United States' invasion of Iraq. A researcher is presented with these obstacles but through a deliberate and delicate selection of the available material can find evidence to substantiate arguments and claims. Conducting a comparative work also presented challenges. Most Syrians I spoke with knew very little about Egypt other than the most general observations and often-repeated clichés. Egyptians fared little better on their comparative knowledge of Syrian politics, economy, or society. This leaves a researcher little alternative than to gather as much published work as possible when applying a comparative framework.

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[139] Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*.

[140] Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State*.

[141] Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany and Paul Noble, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Volume 2: Comparative Experiences*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

[142] Norton, *Civil Society in the Middle East, Volumes 1 & 2*.

[143] Moore and Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*.

[144] Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, *The Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern States*.

[145] Lichbach and Zuckman, 5.

[146] Interview with Syrian political analyst, Damascus, September 2003.

Accumulating printed material was a continuous process throughout the four years of research. I gathered academic books, journal articles, newspaper articles, human rights reports, economic analysis publications, government sanctioned statistics, international organizations' reports, and statistics on my case studies. At St. Andrews, I focused mainly on theoretical works and academic studies on Egypt and Syria. I also read material on similar countries, such as Jordan and Morocco, to see what converging trends appeared in the region. I continued to gather printed material during my year of field research. I lived in Damascus from September 2003 to January 2004. I was in Egypt from January 2004 to mid-March 2004 when I returned to the *Sham* to spend a week in Beirut and two weeks in Damascus. I returned to Cairo in April 2004 only to make one further research trip to Syria between February and March 2005. While the printed material constituted an important pillar to my study, I also relied on interviews with government ministers, people affiliated with the respective governments, NGO-participants, members of political parties, members of parliament, Islamists, writers, analysts, economists, academics, diplomats, and journalists in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, the U.S., and Britain.

My supervisor, Raymond Hinnebusch, provided me with my initial contacts in Syria and through these initial contacts I connected with others interested in my research. Part of my field research was also being visible at public events such as press conferences, academic conferences, and lectures. Receptions at these events usually provided a productive environment to "network" and meet new people. Heavy doses of networking enabled me to gain both trust and access to other individuals willing to share their insights, analysis, and experiences. I found the most efficient methods to meet new interviewees were to approach my initial core contacts and ask for recommendations and guidance, which they generously provided me. Therefore, I established and expanded my networks in this fashion. It was easier to collect data using such informal techniques. I also used informality because if I turned up unknown with the intention of obtaining access to information -- be it from an individual or organization -- I would have most likely been likely blocked or treated in an uncooperative manner.

In Egypt, I was fortunate to have excellent access because I have lived in Egypt since 1998 when I began a Master's degree in Political Science at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Thus, my experiences of studying politics, learning Egyptian Arabic, familiarity with political actors and movements, and conducting an M.A. field research assisted to create the necessary foundation. Also, an important base for extending my networks was my wife Maye Kassem, who teaches political science and specializes in contemporary Egyptian politics. She, and her family, always made calls on my behalf to facilitate access to individuals that most *khawagat* (foreigners) would normally have a much more difficult time obtaining. A more detailed account of my research methods follows:

1.5.1 Printed Material:

I accumulated printed material from many sources including foreign press (British, French, and American), periodicals, NGO reports, and the official Egyptian and Syrian information services. Periodicals such as *Middle East International* were invaluable in analyzing two countries simultaneously. Access to press reports and articles on the Internet and in libraries of St. Andrews, American University in Cairo (AUC), and School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS). The British and al-Asad national libraries, the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), and Cairo's Dar al-Kutib also allowed for an accumulation of data. Political rights reports from international non-governmental organizations (such as the International Crisis Group) and Egyptian and Syrian NGOs (such as Egyptian Organization for Human Rights in the case of the former or Human Rights Association of Syria in the latter) were also examined and acquired directly from the organizations. The Egyptian government's State Information Service provided official government documents and texts for legislation, the constitution, and various presidential speeches. Similarly, *Tishreen* and the al-Asad National Library contained similar information on Syria. I also gathered the available information from government and opposition sources in Egypt and Syria.

The problem with relying solely on printed data is that it can be misleading and incomplete. Printed materials produced by parties, NGOs, or governments are often vague, ideological, and usually in the form of pamphlets and booklets. Opposition and government newspapers were undeniably useful for comparing varying viewpoints about governance (usually described as the "reform" process) but most newspapers carried a high degree of bias, omission, and exaggeration.[147] While the collection and study of this data extended over four years, the obstacles described above could only allow me to use them to set the scene and as an occasional reference point for this research's argument.

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[147] For example, in Syria criticism of the president or the system is not permitted. Thus, papers such as *al-Ba`th*, *Tishreen* and *al-Thawra* under-report by only focusing on formal and public statements made by officials. Similarly in Egypt, while some opposition papers criticize the president indirectly, the state papers such as *al-Ahram*, *Akhbar,* and *al-Gumhuriya* do not.

Interviews:

1.5.2 Formal Interviews:

These interviews were initially aimed at political figures and activists[148] and served two purposes. First, they were designed to formulate an analytical framework of what was actually occurring politically in Egypt and Syria based on the interviewee's participatory experiences and personal knowledge. Secondly, I attempted to elicit information on the character and personal political convictions of these individuals. Each formal interview took between one hour to two hours and two sets of questions were raised during that time. The first set of questions was personally oriented and required fixed answers. Thus, questions touched upon the interviewee's professional background, local origin, and number of years active in politics. This usually calmed an interviewee and lowered their suspicions of me. After the initial set of questions, the interview was guided towards more open ended questions about personal views of the political system, the reason for their participation (or non-participation) in politics, examples of problems encountered, examples of successes when participating, and political beliefs and aims in the past, present, and future. Such questions allowed the respondents the freedom to express their opinions in a less constricted manner, to recount personal or general experiences, and give as much detail as possible to clarify and qualify their answers.

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[148] In Syria, those most relevant to my research include: `Abdallah Dardari (head of State Planning Commission), Anwar al-Bunni (lawyer and HRAS member), Ayman Abd al-Nor (former consultant to President Bashar al-Asad), Bothaina Shab`an (Minister of Expatriates), Faris Tlas (CEO of MAS, businessman), George Jabbour (MP, formal advisor to President Hafiz al-Asad), Haytham al-Malih (lawyer, head of HRAS), Hashem Akkad (MP and prominent businessman), M`an `Abd al-Salam (Women's rights activist), Michel Kilo (Civil Society movement member), Mohamad Sawwan (Secretary-General of the Group for the Sake of United Democracy in Syria), Ratib Shallah (Head of Syrian Chamber of Commerce), Salam Kawakbi (Civil Society movement in Aleppo), Samir Al-Taqi (ex-member of the politburo of al-Faysal wing of Communist Party), Sarab al-Atassi (coordinator of Jamal al-Din al-Atassi forum), and Zuhair Jannan (consultant to Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations during 1990s). In Egypt, `Abd al-Gaffar Shukar (Political Bureau of the Tugam`u party) `Abd al-Halim Qandil (Editor of al-`Arabi opposition newspaper) `Abd al-Min`um Abu Futuh (Member of Muslim Brotherhood Guidance Council), Abu `Ala Madi (ex-member of Muslim Brotherhood and founder of al-Wasat Party), `Adil Bishai` (economist and member of Higher Policies Committee of NDP's Policies Secretariat), Ahmed Saif (director of Hisham Mubarak Legal Center), `Aida Saif al-Dawla (head of Nadeem Center against Torture), Ali al-Din Hilal (Minister of Youth), Ali Shams al-Din (ex-member of NDP), Assam al-Arian (Member of Muslim Brotherhood), Ayman Nor (former MP), Bahey al-Din Hassan (member of National Council of Human Rights and director of Cairo Center for Human Rights), Boutros Boutros-Ghali (former Secretary-General of the United Nations, President of the National Council of Human Rights), Dia` al-Din Dawoud (President of Nasserist Party), Gasir Abd al-Razik (member of the EOHR), Hafiz Abu Sa`ada (member of National Council for Human Rights, Head of EOHR), Hala Mostapha (al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and member of Higher Policies Committee in NDP Policies Secretariat), Humdeen Sabahi (MP, head of the unlicensed al-Karama Party), Husayn Abd al-Razik (Secretary-General of Tugam`u Party), Ibrahim Abaza (head of economic section of Wafd Party), Mohamad Kamal (member of youth committee of the NDP's Policies Secretariat), Mohamad Mahdi Akif (Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood), Mohamad Rageb (head of NDP in Shura Council), Mahmoud Mohy al-Din (Minister of Investment), Mukhtar Nor (ex-member of Muslim Brotherhood), Rif`at Said (President of Tugam`u Party), Sherif Wali (NDP, member of Shura Council, head of Youth in Giza governorate),and Safinaz al-Tarouty (NDP youth member).

Most of the respondents were open and provided me with a wealth of information to construct a clear idea of authoritarianism in Egypt and Syria and those who are involved or blocked from participating in each county. The problem I encountered then was filtering the information and trying to understand how the systems varied in relation to historical background, degrees of decompression and co-optation power, and societal management. In each country, these notions tend to be understood in the abstract, which obliged me to reason deductively. For example, co-optation in Syria can be seen to function and operate differently than in Egypt because it is designed and understood differently. Although the tactic produces a similar aim of maintaining authoritarian rule, I gained a sense why the systems vary in comparison to one another. During the course of this research, the majority of respondents were somewhat biased depending on their orientation or in relation to their allowed level of participation. Members of the government, especially from the ruling B`ath or National Democratic Parties, were more cautious in their responses. The opposition participants were more straightforward but more extreme in their perceptions. In any case, after completing the first few formal interviews with political activists, it became necessary to find supplementary research sources to overcome some of the inadequate responses obtained from the activists to conceptualize the adequate ones. The research avenues I pursued in parallel with the formal interviews with political activists consisted of formal interviews with political specialists and more informal interviews and interaction with the politicians previously mentioned.

The political specialists were chosen on the basis of their expertise on issues pertaining to authoritarianism in Egyptian and Syria. These comprised mostly of academics, retired politicians, journalists, political and economic analysts, researchers, and diplomats.[149] The questions addressed to these specialists centered upon the main research questions of the study. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to two hours. Open-ended questions again allowed the respondent freedom and flexibility to discuss what they personally considered as important issues regarding Egypt and Syria’s authoritarian systems. Specific questions usually addressed aspects of answers provided by the politicians who were previously interviewed. For example, if a politician was not direct about why he could not do certain things, such as resign a post, it was useful to ask specialists why this was the case.

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[149] The most relevant from this category include: In Syria, Ali al-Atassi (*An-Nahar* journalist) Ali Salih (economist, Civil Society movement member), `Ammar Abd al-Hamid (political analyst and NGO activist), Hisham Dajani (Civil Society Movement and democratic activist), Ibrahim Hamidi (*al-Hyatt* Damascus bureau chief), `Imad Shuebi (philosophy Professor), Nabil Sukkar (leading economist), Osama al-Ansari (head of an NGO working with Expatriate Affairs), Sadiq al-Azm (philosophy professor), Sami Moubeyid (businessman and Administrative Member of Syrian Young Entrepreneurs Association), and Ziad Haydr (*al-Safir* and *al-Arabaya* journalist). In Egypt, Abd al-Men`um Said (director of Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies), Ali Sawi (Political Science professor at Cairo University), `Amr Hashim Rabei (al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies), Gamal Assam al-Din (*al-Ahram Weekly* journalist), Hisham Kassem (publisher of *Cairo Times*), Mohamad Salah (*al-Hyatt* Cairo bureau chief), Mohamad Sayid Said (Deputy Director of the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies), Mohamad Sid Ahmed (journalist and liberal thinker), Nagla Mostapha (USAID good governance section), Moheb Zaki (interim director of Ibn Khaldun Center), Mostapha al-Sayid (political science professor), Nader Ferghany (co-author of Arab Human Development Report and director of al-Mishkat Research Center), Negad al-Bora`i (director of now defunct Group for Democratic Development) and Saad Eddin Ibrahim (sociologist and director of Ibn Khaldun Center).

The specialists' knowledge was useful in providing a more detached and analytical insight of how authoritarianism adapts in Egypt and Syria. When one understands how authoritarianism adapts, variances become noticeable. Yet, the specialists, too, had their limitations because they were indirect participants in politics, so the data accumulated from these interviews generally supplemented and compensated for the inadequate and occasionally non-existent literature available on the subject. As mentioned, they further clarified the formal interviews conducted with the political actors. Although this group was not this study's focus, maintaining contact with them periodically for the purpose of general guidance and to benefit from their experiences as close observers of the political area was necessary.

1.5.3 Informal Interviews:

These interviews were conducted with political activists who had participated in the formal interviews. This method of research was a more gradual process, but was certainly indispensable for understanding the logic behind the action or inaction of political participants. The familiarity acquired prior to and during the informal interviews enabled the respondents to be more relaxed and open in their responses, as opposed to some of the "official" responses obtained previously. Familiarity enabled me to approach the individuals with new queries and seek further elaboration on issues discussed previously. Informal interviews permitted access to in-depth information on lesser known activities and relationships with other individuals outside of their official realm. Because of my informal interviews or "chats" with these activists, I was able to envisage a much wider political field in Egypt and Syria that better represented its formal and informal aspects. These "chats" allowed me to see the difference between the interviewees' "official" positions and their personal opinions of policies or activists. The findings often ran contradictory to one's assumptions.

Opposition leaders, for example, were not necessarily isolated individuals struggling to enter the political arena. As I learned, many were already apart of it. Personal networks of opposition members with each other and with those in power were much stronger than one might assume theoretically exist. This allows one to say something about the nature of politics in authoritarian systems. Informal interviews also provided an opportunity to examine and understand the negative side of political individualism. By informally interviewing political activists, they were more open about their fears and shortcomings, as well as the "behind the scenes" maneuvering that happens with each other and with the authorities.

This research technique was applied in similar fashion as with the specialists. The responses with regard to their opinion of other political figures were more personal than the responses obtained from the specialists. With regard to their assessment of organizations other than their own, their responses were largely compatible with the responses obtained from the specialists. I found informal interviewing to be a productive method for accumulating research material; this was the least problematic of the research techniques I employed because of the implicit directness of informality. Put simply, I had to read less between the lines because respondents were usually more straightforward in their responses.

Informal interviews are more spontaneous than formal interviews. This is because informal interviews take place whenever an opportunity arises, rather than being subject to pre-planned schedules and time constraints. For example, I would pass by an individual's office on the way to or from another interview. I would thank the individual for their help on the previous occasion and update them on my progress. This creates a situation where informality thrives. On some occasions it would last 5 or 10 minutes and was usually spurred by my asking for a clarification of what they or someone else had said. Continuous interaction is essential for informality to operate.[150] While this technique is an invaluable research method for clarifications and acquiring new data, such data was dependent on the interviewee's co-operation. Their co-operation with a researcher on a more personal level also depended on the general political climate during the research period,[151] their political positions,[152] the researcher's nationality and background.[153] The limitations of employing this technique derive inherently from unstable and changing circumstances that can be difficult to reproduce.

As my research methods and experiences illustrate, obtaining detailed data on contemporary authoritarianism in Egypt and Syria in a systematic fashion is difficult. Political actors can be suspicious and cautious at times. More frequently, researchers can be misled with biased or deficient information. This may not always be intentional, but an authoritarian environment no doubt contributes to such conditions. It did, however, necessitate the use of several research techniques to verify the data's reliability.

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[150] In addition to passing by an individual's office, I would use mobile text messages, email, and phone calls to maintain interactions and contact.

[151] During my research period, Syria was under enormous external pressure. Israel conducted a military strike on `Ain Sahib (15 km north-east of Damascus) on 5 October 2003, the US passed the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act (SALSA) on 14 December 2003 and enacted economic sanctions on 11 May 2004. The Syrian government also failed to sign a EU Association Agreement after much consultation and initialing a document on 9 December 2003. Similarly, domestic pressures were present. The government encountered Kurdish riots in March 2004 and a 'terrorist' attack in Damascus' Mezze district in April 2004. Also, there was the substantial international pressure on Syria resulting from the extension of the Lahoud presidency in September 2004 and the 14 February 2005 assassination of Lebanon's former PM Rafiq al-Hariri. Pressure aside, the atmosphere was rebounding after two years of quiet following the imprisonment of the Damascus Spring's activists in 2002 and people were expressing themselves. In Egypt, social and activists' criticism, including that of the president's position, had never been higher under Mubarak because of the president's stance on the Iraq war in 2003, the NDP's internal stagnation, poor economic figures, and the prospect the president's son, Gamal, may inherit power. While the US criticized the Egyptian regime, the government permitted vocal dissent and took a light-handed approach (with some exceptions) to society's criticism such as to the *Kifaya* protests from December 2004 to the present. Perhaps a reaction to the pressure, Mubarak called for the Amendment of constitutional article 76 in February 2005. The system was changed to allow for direct, multi-candidacy presidential elections that Mubarak won handedly carrying 89-percent of the vote in September 2005.

[152] Often whether one's star is rising or falling within the political structures determines how much one will talk. If someone feels, for example, excluded and is disgruntled, then they openly discuss day-to-day participation in authoritarian politics –particularly methods of regime co-optation and retribution.

[153] For example, some subjects like to speak to outsiders. For those that do not, they tend to be more relaxed when they find out I am married to an Arab Muslim, work with a respected supervisor, live in the region, and have good network connections with those "known" in the particular country.

When dealing with a lot of oral data in formal and informal interviews, which are largely based off of participants' memories and perceptions, it was necessary to constantly check and re-check anecdotes to ensure that events were as accurately depicted as possible. Triangulating this data was largely conducted through checking one subject's account with another semi-related subject's account of a particular event. For example, if one ruling party member provided me with a narrative, I would cross-reference and check its accuracy with another party member to confirm intent, background, or to provide further explanation. After adjusting the narrative to a safely constructed center to limit the chances that I was engaging in misrepresentation, I would usually go to a third-party or a previous interviewee to get a reaction to the constructed narrative.

This process was time consuming but necessary to ensure that all the oral information included in this thesis is as accurate as possible. By constantly being vigilant to the potential flaws of utilizing interviews (both formal and informal), this process of redundancy contributes to making my narratives fall within the confines of a "safe reality". Ultimately, this is a process was done to limit the possibility that an erroneous story or unchecked information was included in this thesis.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The following chapters show how authoritarianism adapts in Egypt and Syria by discussing historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and the nature of co-optation and shedding in the elite and non-elite societal sectors. The degree of institutional politicization determines adaptation differences between similar systems. Particularly, by demonstrating variety in the level of politicization between Egyptian and Syrian institutions, it explains the differences in the state's capability of co-optation and shedding power. Moreover, it serves to explain differences in the overall framework regarding elites, the incorporation of new social actors, and the maintenance of security services. Despite the variance in their authoritarian institutions both regimes are capable of adapting. The objective will be to demonstrate how institutional differences produce different capabilities in adapting Egypt and Syria's political systems.

Chapter two serves as a historical overview, which traces and explains the divergence in institution formation strategies after Sadat and Asad assume power in 1970. It looks at the transition of populist to post-populist authoritarianism through diverging institutional politicization, and how these factors set in place a process that would determine how co-optation of elite and non-elite individuals is contemporarily conducted. Consideration is given to the diverging national identity constraints, the amount and type of domestic social opposition, relations to other regional and international powers, and the ways in which these factors influence an individual state's institutional trajectory. More precisely, it explains the origins of Egypt's adoption of depoliticized institutions and Syria's politicized institutions. Institution formation variance is explored as a prelude to understanding differences in co-optation.

The primary concern of chapter three is to highlight why elite co-optation -- a strategy used by Egypt and Syria -- functions differently in each state. This chapter demonstrates how patronage networks and institutions interact and effectively blend together to keep the elite arena cohesive. As I will illustrate, in the Syrian case, institutions are highly politicized and, hence, semi-autonomous of others participating in the political arena. This chapter shows that while institutions are capable of resolving their internal problems, interaction between overtly politicized institutions produces system blockage, which complicates adaptation. Arguably, the reason is that institutions are framed so those controlling patronage in the institution are capable of keeping their institution-based elites from defection. Institutions that remain politically active enhance the ability to produce a semi-autonomous institution that rallies and defends itself against other institutions in the system. Hence, this explains the micro-dynamics of elite co-optation strategies.

In Egypt, the depoliticized nature of institutions shows another dynamic at play. Egypt's elite competition is similar to that in Syria in regards to keeping elites organized in patronage networks. The ruling NDP is central to the examination of elite co-optation. This chapter underscores how elite coalition management and change is conducted. It achieves this aim by studying the presidential oligarchy that exists in Syria against Egypt's presidential-dominated system and the affects they have on coalition management and change. Particularly, it shows why elite co-optation is a negotiated and continuous process. Elite competition for mutual dependence ensues where elites compete and power centers vie to acquire a preponderance of power relations. Then a reworking of the elite takes place, making some elites dependent on others. Either way, it is an elite game in that losers are not reaching outside of the ruling circle. It also shows that this game of mutual independence occurs as the president seeks to make established elites dependent on his rule while the established elites compete against one another to maintain their positions by manipulating new elites and the president's objectives.

Chapter four examines the differences between Egypt's depoliticized institutions and Syria's politicized institutions' ability to co-opt unaffiliated non-elites. The purpose is to demonstrate why co-optation is a less concentrated process in Syria's politicized institutions. Conversely, this chapter will show that Egypt displays more governing flexibility than Syria by including and excluding non-elites from the arena largely due to the immense powers of the president and the lack of politicized activity by other state institutions.

It demonstrates why an old tactic, corporatism, is instrumental in adapting authoritarianism. Apart from the usual co-optation tactics such as dominating formally "independent" entities such as trade unions, NGOs, and professional syndicates, the regimes are adapting by creating nearly parallel entities that formalize informality *within* existing government structures such as the party freedom committee, a higher policies council and various national councils. Specifically, this chapter examines politicized versus depoliticized institutions' differing abilities to co-opt and recruit non-elite individuals. It also demonstrates that although each state purses similar strategies, variance remains evident in both.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter in which the results of the study are detailed. It explains the differences between Egypt's depoliticized and Syria's politicized institutional systems as traceable to the 1970s. Despite an abundance of similar institutions in Egypt and Syria, the autonomy and character of institutions determines a system's ability to co-opt, reaffirm, and shed established and new elites while incorporating unaffiliated social actors. The findings suggest that each system is capable of persisting and adapting. Yet, the capability for adaptation is higher in Egypt because the depoliticized nature of the institutions has enhanced the centralization of presidential power. Hence, this allows Egypt's regime and its ruling coalition to be reconstructed in a more flexible manner. Syria's politicized institutions demonstrate that several such institutions compete for influence and block changes by other institutionally backed participants. This makes Syrian elites less able to quickly adapt their system. This chapter concludes by questioning the authoritarianism literature, which appears to depict such systems as fragile and institutionalization as the only way out of the development morass. As will be shown, the nature of depoliticized institutions serves Egypt well while politicized institutions slow Syrian adaptation capabilities. Neither, however, look headed towards democracy.

Arab states may be weak states, as Ayubi defines them,[154] but they still possess the ability to survive and adapt their systems. By comparing and contrasting systems' institutional arrangements and their abilities to advance soft power options such as co-optation, a better understanding of system adaptation is explained. This, in turn, allows for a more representative understanding of how authoritarianism adapts and is maintained. Similarly, it highlights the difficulties of making generalizations about authoritarian regimes because of the existing extent of variation. As will be seen, although Egypt and Syria employ similar strategies, these strategies operate differently because of the contrasting institutional characters in each country's political arenas. Lastly, and paradoxically, Syria is more authoritarian than Egypt, where some freedom of press, political parties, and civil society do exist, but power in Syria is less centralized while Egypt is less authoritarian but power is more centralized. This appears counter-intuitive but, as my findings show, a closer representation of reality than the existing academic literature suggests.

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[154] Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State.*

Chapter Two
The Origins of Depoliticized and Politicized Institutions in Egypt and Syria

2.1 Introduction and Argument

An often-repeated convention about Syria is that it is exactly like Egypt – only ten or fifteen years behind. Indeed, Syrian observers cite this cliché frequently when asked about comparisons to Egypt.[155] `Ammar `Abd al-Hamid argues, "Syria is Egypt just ten years behind. The regime here has not made an attempt to reverse land reform or cut the public sector workforce, but it is inevitable."[156] Similarly, political scientists generally see Syria's development as modeled on that of Egypt, which is widely perceived as the Arab world's pace-setter.[157] Not only does this argument imply that Egypt's developmental trajectory is unidirectional but also that the populist authoritarian history that the Syrian republic shares with the Egyptian regime will drive it inevitably in the same direction.

Political scientists, such as Perthes, cite key differences in each state's economic policies to argue against this generalization. Perthes observes that "In contrast to countries like Egypt…Syria has never, to date, allowed bilateral donors or international financial institutions to interfere in any substantial way with its economic policies, nor negotiated aid for economic reform programmes."[158] He suggests Syria is on a different, more inward-looking economic trajectory than Egypt. Yet, this caveat applies to more than just economic policy.

Other key internal and external dynamics also make this "Syria is Egypt" generalization misleading. For example, Syria differs in its internal social order because it is highly regionalized and socially heterogeneous compared to Egypt, which has historically been centrally ruled from Cairo. Syria has lacked such centralized control from Damascus. The degree of political centralization is another important difference between Egypt and Syria. As Sadowski notes, pre-B`athist Syria:

> was more diverse and fractionalized regionally than Egypt. Syria's state structures never penetrated society and regional cities the way they did in Egypt. The public sector does not and never intended to dominate the commanding heights of the economy like in Egypt. Aleppo's industry was unlike any Egyptian city in 1952. Lastly, Cairo has always cut its political deals through the state while in Syria political arrangements were conducted through local government.[159]

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[155] Interview, Ibrahim Hamidi, journalist, Damascus, 9 November 2003.

[156] Interview, `Ammar `Abd al-Hamid, writer and activist, Damascus, 1 December 2003.

[157] Robert Springborg, "Approaches to the Understanding of Egypt," in Peter Chelkowski and Robert Pranger (eds.) *Ideology and Power in the Middle East* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1988): 137.

[158] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, 203.

[159] Interview, Yehya Sadowski, American University of Beirut political science professor, Beirut, 16 March 2004.

Identity and differences in Egypt and Syria's social composition remains a central, historical variable that required the establishment of varying institutional orders. Ideas of what "Egypt" and "Syria" are, as nations, as well as their relative degrees of regional fragmentation are primarily responsible for the establishment of politicized and depoliticized institutions in Syria and Egypt. Yet, identity – defined by social and regional affiliations – can only be partially responsible for generating differing institutional types. I argue that there are two other key factors that accelerated the divergent institution formation processes: the differential treatment of the regional hegemon, and the severity of opposition challenges during formation.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and trace the origins of Egypt and Syria's depoliticized and politicized institutions. This chapter argues that Egypt's Anwar al-Sadat and Syria's Hafiz al-Asad chose differing institutional types because of the constraints imposed by variance in social make-up and the degree of regional fragmentation. Although the leaders made choices regarding institution formation, Sadat and Asad selected from different pools of available social and ideological options. Similarly, given that the 1970s represent a critical juncture in institutional formation in each system, it is also important to examine the role of the region's hegemon -- the U.S. -- and its treatment of Egypt and Syria, as well as domestic opposition system challenges. These factors accelerated existing divergences in institutional formation in each political system. Although foreign policy alignment and opposition challenges cannot be viewed as the primary causes for divergence, they nevertheless played a supporting role in making existing divergences more irretractable. Depoliticized and politicized institutional types in Egypt and Syria are the product of multiple causal variables. The varying institutional types, in turn, shape elite and non-elite co-optation. This, in turn, will be used to explain each system's different capacity for system adaptation.

2.2 Domestic Identity Constraints

By the late 1960s, Egypt and Syria's political systems looked similar. Both were populist, Arab nationalist regimes that had broken away from the previous colonial and imperialistic order. Both were ideologically radical[160] to the degree that they unified under the failed United Arab Republic experiment between 1958-1961.[161] Egypt and Syria also had suffered a humiliating joint military defeat to Israel in 1967. The defeat, ultimately, led to the rise to power of pragmatic leaders in 1970. These new Egyptian and Syrian leaders wanted to pursue economic liberalization to different degrees. Both Sadat and Asad planned to fight side-by-side in the October 1973 war. The war's outcome provided both presidents with legitimacy, and also facilitated entering peace negotiations together with Israel under the America's auspices.

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[160] Lenczowski, "Radical Regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq".

[161] Syria was the "Northern sector" and Egypt was the "South Sector" under Gamal `Abd al-Nasser's leadership.

With all their similarities, Egypt and Syria's leaders chose distinctly different directions for institutional formation at this point. The inadequacy of each state's institution formation strategies explains the politicized and depoliticized institutional outcomes. Inherited social and regional constraints in Egypt and Syria effectively furnished each leader with a different set of options for institutional formation. These notably allowed Egypt to break from its radically ideological path while Syria was forced to negotiate a more arduous route with less maneuverability. As Hinnebusch notes, "subtle differences in state formation and identity shaped different concepts of state interest which, given the right systemic factors, drew the two states in opposing directions."[162]

Egypt broke away from its Arab nationalist ideological chains easily while Syria never could substantially disassociate itself. Sadat was largely responsible for jettisoning Arab nationalism in favor of state nationalism ("Egypt First").[163] Yet, ideological constraints prevented Asad from moving in a similar direction, and forced him to use Arabism to consolidate the Syrian state. Asad's ideological affinity or preference was not the main impetus behind this -- the pragmatic necessity of stabilizing the political system was. How did the identity differences underwriting the Egyptian and Syrian experiences cause institutional formation strategies to diverge and produce politicized and depoliticized institutions in these two countries?

Syrian society -- after independence in 1946-- was a sectarian mosaic with no political or administrative center to anchor the state. Syria had no history as a self-contained state. Hence, it was impossible for an ideology of "Syria First" to be disseminated throughout society. In the absence of Syrianism as an ideology to bind and attach citizens to the state, the country's diversity made Arabism the best available alternative in constructing and basing what is a Syrian. As Hinnebusch argues, "Syria had no history of prior statehood that might underlay a distinct (non-Arab) Syrian identity. Situated at a crossroads of the movement of peoples and religions, it is very religiously heterogeneous but also overwhelmingly Arabic speaking. As such, secular Arab nationalism was its most plausible and potentially integrating identity."[164]

The lack of a ready-made national identity contributed to a tumultuously unstable political history between Syrian independence and Hafiz Asad's assumption of power in 1970. Between 1946-1970, numerous *coups d'etat* brought new leadership and different regimes to Damascus. Constant regime changes and orientations never allowed the state to be a cohesive or unified entity.[165] The political coup and counter-coups that Syria witnessed during this period made sectarian concerns a priority and defined its first 25-years of independence.[166]

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[162] Raymond Hinnebusch, *The international politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003): 135.

[163] After the 1967 military defeat, Nasser's pan-Arab designs were dead. Subtle shifts towards an "Egypt First" project actually began at the end of Nasser's presidency. Sadat accelerated and placed the trend on an irreversible track.

[164] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Foreign Policy of Syria," in Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern States*, 141.

In addition to a lack of clear national identity, another factor contributing to this turmoil was the lack of continuity and integration of the state's institutions between the various cities and regions. It was not until Hafiz al-Asad used and expanded the pan-Arab B`ath party to establish a structural link across sectarian lines for the country's regions that a Syrian leader was able to incorporate a wide social base of popular support into a functioning state. Hence, the social heterogeneity and regional fragmentation that comprised the artificial Syrian entity posed a severe challenge that compelled Asad's centralizing efforts via a strong governing party.

Egypt did not face similar problems. As an established country with millennia of history, Egypt had long ago institutionalized centralized rule along the Nile valley and the Delta's limited habitable landscape. Egypt's geography makes it more of a disconnected island as opposed to the more religiously and ethnically cosmopolitan countries in the region. For example, one only needs to look to the region known as *Bilad al-Sham* of which Syria is but one part (Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon are also part of the *Sham*). Syrians refer to themselves as people of the "*Sham*" more often than as "*Suriyeen*" (Syrians). It is also not a coincidence that Damascus is often called *al-Sham* as opposed to *Damishq*. While Egyptians tend to refer to Cairo as "*Masr*" rather than "*al-Qahira*" when traveling outside of the capital or country, no Egyptian would even refer to himself as North African or Arab in the first instance. In this regard, Egypt and Cairo both represent a distinct Egyptian identity. Egypt's social homogeneity meant that its leaders at independence did not have to focus their energies on building bridges between different sectarian groupings.[167] As a result, ideas of what it meant to be "Egyptian" co-existed with ideas of what it meant to be "Arab." Although Nasser's main governing ideology was Arab nationalism, the ideology was never subsumed the country's Egyptian identity.[168] As Hinnebusch states:

> Egypt's Arabism remained relatively shallow: kinship was acknowledged and, indeed, Egypt saw itself as the leader of the Arab world entitled to preeminence in proportion to the heavy burdens it bore in defense of the Arab cause. But few Egyptians had an emotional commitment to Arabism or to unity with other Arab states…The responsibilities that accompanied Arab leadership were accepted as long as the benefits exceeded the costs, but when the balance reversed, Egypt tended to greater isolationism.[169]

As seen from this quote, Arabism was employed as a supplement to an already consolidated and working Egyptian identity.

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[165] For an excellent and readable account of this period, see Patrick Seale, *The Struggle For Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[166] Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1979).

[167] Egypt's population is 90-pecent Sunni Muslim and 10-pecent Egyptian Coptic-Orthodox Christian. Although Egyptian Baha`is, Evangelicals, and Catholics exist, they constitute less than 1-pecent of the Egypt's total population.

[168] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Foreign Policy of Egypt," in Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (eds.), 93.

[169] Ibid, 94.

Nasser did not have to develop a new identity to unify various religious sects or work to counter fragmented regionalism when Egypt gained independence. The Free Officer clique running Egypt thus had a number of options at its disposal for the type of state and institutions it needed to govern the country. This allowed for an easier consolidation of the state, which functioned on the basis of a strong executive. Inherited social and regional dynamics meant that no B`ath-type centralizing institution was needed in Egypt, where central authority and bureaucratic state penetration already existed prior to independence. In effect, Nasser established the Arab world's first presidential authoritarian system quite easily by using and then changing multiple single party-like organizations to oversee the political arena at various points.[170] Many Arab states reproduced this kind of authoritarianism. Yet, differences in social composition and regional dynamics produced distinct variations of this presidential authoritarian system. Egypt certainly had an easier task in consolidating its version, given the limited inherited historical constraints of a homogeneous society, a working national identity, and regionally integrated geography.

2.3 Comparative Party Development

2.3.1 – Egyptian Party Depoliticization

Egypt and Syria did not face the same constraints when Sadat and Asad respectively came to power. Rather, as I have argued, social homogeneity and an established national identity facilitated the consolidation and stability of Egypt's state and political system. The country's new leader inherited Nasser's political institutions and began changing their structures and politicization levels to consolidate his presidency. One of the first sites that Sadat focused on for political reorganization was Nasser's single party, which served as a repository of power for Nasserist politicians against the new president. Because of the limited social and ideological constraints, a strong centralizing party was not needed to keep Egyptian society cohesively unified. Obviously, some institution was needed to regulate the political arena but Sadat tried to ensure that the party did not have the power to challenge the presidency's power.

The purpose of this section is to show that Egypt's party institution was not only changed and renamed, but was increasingly depoliticized in comparison to Nasser's Arab Socialist Union (ASU). By 1978, Sadat had penetrated, hollowed out, and dismantled the ASU in favor of a more depoliticized party of state – the National Democratic Party (NDP). Although the strength of the ASU paled in comparison to Nasser's presidential powers, it was much more organized ideological and coherent than the NDP ever has been. By incrementally depoliticizing the party upon his assumption of power, Sadat dissected Egypt's civilian institutional framework. No politicized institution comparable to the ASU was created to replace it – the NDP certainly did not perform the same role. As `Abd al-Gaffar Shukar, a former head of political education in the ASU, compares the ASU to the NDP:

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[170] These included the Liberation Rally, National Union, and the Arab Socialist Union.

> The political organization and ideology was stronger in the ASU. The ASU was more internally organized and political active than the NDP. To date, it is impossible to understand the NDP's internal structure because of how personalized and unorganized it is. Additionally, the NDP has no ideology and all the positions are personal appointments, driven by individual interests. The NDP is less like the ASU, which was harder for one person to control.[171]

Egypt's political arena became considerably more depoliticized during Sadat's presidency. This process started after his assumption of power. Before 1970, populism, Arab nationalism, and the charismatic figure of Nasser formed the core of Egyptian political legitimacy. While the 1967 military defeat to Israel called into question the viability of Arab nationalism, Nasser's politicized ASU showed greater resilience in terms of its organization and mobilization capabilities.

Following his presidential referendum, Sadat realized that Nasserist networks limited his own control over the political establishment. He was in a weak position vis-à-vis the existing power centers, including the ASU, with "no institutional base of power and no organized clientele."[172] As Baker notes, Sadat was primarily permitted to succeed Nasser because he was a Free Officer, which fostered a sense of continuity, and because powerful politicians and military officers perceived him as someone unlikely to "disturb their privileged positions."[173] The ASU organized how politics was conducted, determined appointments in the state apparatus, and regulated the various corporatist organizations such as the labor union hierarchies. As Waterbury points out, "in 1964…there were over four million active members in the ASU…One had to be a member of the ASU to be eligible for appointment or election to any cooperative board, local, regional, or national assembly, or board of any union or professional association. In some instances the right to exercise a profession (viz. journalists) was dependent upon ASU membership."[174] Given the option between ruling Egypt as an unchallenged President or becoming entrenched in oligarchic political struggles over leadership, Sadat promptly made a choice to pursue the former course. The relative weakness of ideological constraints particularly facilitated this path.

Sadat needed to act aggressively if he was going to become president in power as well as in name. He had to depoliticize the ASU, and began this project by purging politicized figures with strong institutional support like vice-president `Ali Sabri and minister of interior Sh`arawi Gum`a. Other figures perceived to be constraining him were the director of Nasser's personal security Sami Sharif and defense minister Mohamad Fawzi. The issue quickly became a question of when and how -- not who -- had to go.

Following annual May Day festivities in 1971 where Sadat was forced to publicly defend himself against Nasser's legacy, the new president moved towards consolidating his leadership.

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[171] Interview, `Abd al-Gaffar Shukar, political bureau member of the Tugam`u party, former head of political education in the ASU, Cairo, 30 April 2004.

[172] John Waterbury, *The Political Economy of Egypt Under Nasser and Sadat*, 349.

[173] Raymond Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978): 124.

[174] Waterbury, *Egypt under Nasser and Sadat*, 314.

Sabri was placed under house arrest on 2 May 1971. Nasserist politicians chose not to retaliate in defense of Sabri, which further encouraged Sadat. As the weekend began on 12 May, Sadat ordered the arrest of Gum`a. In a show of solidarity with Gum`a and Sabri and hoping to incite popular demonstrations against Sadat, politicians and military leaders loyal to Nasser resigned. On 14 May, after no such protests materialized, Sadat ordered his security director to arrest these leaders, famously remarking, "They should be arrested for political stupidity."[175] The following day, Sadat proposed a new constitution that provided for a more dominant presidency. The new president labeled the move "the Corrective Revolution." By December 1971, 91 Nasserist politicians and senior officers arrested in May were officially sentenced to various prison terms.[176]

The new president transformed the Egyptian political arena with a combination of interrelated tactics that ultimately led to the depoliticization of Egypt's central political institution, the ASU. Firstly, Sadat understood that Nasser's system, although patrimonial, had given rise to politicized institutions that could potentially counterbalance the presidency. Having consolidated his power, Sadat used multiple, weak institutions to build his regime. This produced a system in which the presidency became the only active politicized institution while the others were depoliticized. This has allowed the Egyptian president the freedom to practice divide-and rule tactics with supporters and opposition. As Waterbury argues:

> It is a testimony to the space that Sadat created around himself that Mubarak had no institution satraps to fear…Sadat's National Democratic party had no leaders of the caliber nor with the organizational power of `Ali Sabri. The party secretariats were more ward heelers than political infighters. They lacked all semblance of the organizational power or public image that would have allowed them to make a bid for power. Indeed, they could not even aspire to be power brokers…Mubarak thus reaped the benefits of the process of continuous decapitation that Sadat began in May 1971.[177]

Sadat eventually turned the ASU into three forums in December 1976 and Egypt subsequently held parliamentary elections. Sadat's three forums became Egypt's initial political parties – the Liberal (*Ahrar*) party, the National Progressive Socialist (*Tugam`u*) party, and the president's Arab Socialist Misr party (which became the NDP in 1978). He hollowed out the ASU, weakening it incrementally before dismembering the structure itself. As Waterbury recounts:

> Sadat, having destroyed the centers of power, now established the power of the center. With a comfortable and manipulative majority in parliament, he quickly took two steps in Egypt's political reorganization. One January 2, 1977, official permission was extended to found political parties, and on January 10, First Secretary Mustapha Khalil announced the abolition of all organizations under the

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[175] According to an interview with `Ali Wali, minister under Nasser and Sadat. From Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 21.

[176] In addition to Sabri and Gum`a -- Sharif, and Fawzi, Mohamad Fayik (information minister), Hilmi Sa`id (electricity minister), and `Adel `Abd al-Nor (first secretary of the ASU central committee) were sentenced.

[177] Waterbury, *Egypt under Nasser and Sadat*, 367.

> aegis of the ASU. All that remained of the superstructure was a Central Committee in suspended animation.[178]

As political analyst Wahid `Abd al-Magid argues, “The regime is designed to have one party, and suddenly political parties were introduced. The existing political structure, with its constitution, laws and political mentality, did not have this concept [of pluralism].”[179] The lack of a strong party institution, which could, in theory, serve to center political power as much as incorporate different social groups after Sadat’s dissolution of the ASU, facilitated the depoliticization process. It also made the political arena more fluid and less resistant to manipulation. This fluidity enables the contemporary Egyptian state to practice selective co-optation by introducing and ridding the political arena of supporters and detractors.

The depoliticization of the ASU made the presidency dominant relative to other political institutions. Sadat dismantled an ASU that he could not trust by hiving off opposition elements into powerless and disparate opposition parties so the rump NDP would be purely loyalist in character. In the process, the NDP became a toothless, disorganized party that served at the pleasure of the executive rather than performing a politicized and consensus-making role in Egypt’s political landscape. This effectively rendered independent party activity meaningless.

While Sadat depoliticized the party of state, Hosni Mubarak’s rule has buttressed and reinforced Sadat’s legacy. Mubarak, much less an exhibitionist than Sadat, is a cautious leader who has continued and deepened the Sadat-initiated transformation. This is borne out by the fact that the NDP remains less structurally ingrained or, indeed, necessary to the political establishment than the ASU. The ruling party was never intended to be a center of power that could structurally or politically oppose a sitting president. Yet, this also extends to all the political parties that were created after Sadat initiated multi-partyism in 1976. As Kassem has shown, multi-partyism has not led to greater constraints on the president or a more effective party system. In fact, she describes the opposition parties to be remarkably similar in terms of their limitations.[180] Kassem argues that “the multiparty transition was part of a wider effort by Sadat to establish his own authority” independent of state institutions.[181]

The NDP continues to exist at the president’s directive, without the pretense of independence from the president. Egypt’s party of state remains a recipient and enforcer of presidential power rather than serving as an autonomous repository of power. This makes the party easier to alter, strengthen, or weaken depending on the president and/or a situation’s political requirements. As Kassem argues, “should Mubarak’s successor decide, for one reason or another to disband the NDP and create his own party, or indeed, to suspend elections indefinitely, the NDP, regardless of its current status, would hardly be in a position to oppose him."[182]

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[178] Ibid, 364.
[179] Noha El-Hennawy, “Pluralism at Death’s Door?” *Egypt Today* (September 2004): 75.
[180] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*, 92-97.
[181] Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 53.

This effectively continues to leave Egypt without a single effective or legal political party capable of participating in politics. Instead, the presidency remains the only civilian institution capable of initiating or decision-making regarding the policy direction of contemporary Egypt. In this sense, Egypt's personalized patrimonialism allows the executive to manipulate a host of subsequent, ad hoc political and civil society institutions that can be weakened at will.[183] This is largely the result of Sadat's legacy and the relative freedom of maneuver in shifting the political foundations of the regime. This ability to shape a depoliticized institutional order produces a higher capacity for co-optation as well as overall system adaptation.

2.3.2 -- Syrian Party Politicization

After Hafiz al-Asad led his corrective *coup d'etat* in November 1970 against the ideologically radical wing of the B`ath party, the new president faced numerous constraints that did not apply in the Egyptian experience. Syria remained regionally fragmented. It was also without a Syrian national identity. The new leader was forced to emphasize Syria's Arab identity in an attempt to keep the country stable. The inherited constraints of identity and fragmentation determined Asad's course. Although there are indications that Asad wished to follow a pragmatic path vis-à-vis Israel and liberalize the economy, he was not in position to forge a depoliticized institutional order. Rather, Syria's new president had to build an order that was stable, first and foremost. In the process of building a party of state under the umbrella of pan-Arabism, it was necessary to sustain the politicization of the party in order to build support for the political system. The B`ath party became so crucial to regime stability in Syria because it presented an immediate, and perhaps short-term, solution for resolving the sectarian mosaic identity predicament. The party harnessed a cross-sectarian coalition under a common Arab identity. Hence, Syria's inherited constraints drew Asad in an opposite direction from Sadat, and led him to pursue different institutional formation strategies. The outcome of these strategies was a politicized institutional order.

After the Egyptian-Syrian UAR collapsed in 1961, Syrian politics entered a two-year phase of struggle for political control. After two years of attempts to re-establish the domestic political arrangements of 1954, elite-level struggles between vying capitalists, socialists, and large landowners over the political establishment led to the B`athist military coup of 8 March 1963. From 1963 to 1965, the B`athist government, led by Hafiz al-Amin, made significant populist promises to attract members and secure its tenuous base. While the party tried to keep Syria stable immediately upon assuming power in 1963, its small internal ranks were divided into competing factions largely due to a lack of clear leadership and direction. Salah al-Jadid's ideological faction carried out a successful coup in 1966 and launched a political program imbued with radical populism.

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[182] Ibid.

[183] Nagla Mostapha, USAID official, interview, Cairo, 15 September 2004.

The ideologues' decision not to purge the party's more pragmatic wing to make-up for the party's lack of numbers was compounded by their failure to close the diametrical gap between the party's wings. The pragmatists led by Asad, proved proficient at inserting other pragmatists into the military's highest command and control positions. These trends in military appointments accelerated after the 1967 war, as the factions' divergence widened into the "duality of power" that was recognized at the 1968 B`ath congress.[184] Two years later, following the military's refusal to attack Jordan's Hashemite regime during the Palestinian's Black September uprising, Asad launched a coup that resulted in al-Jadid's and other members' imprisonment. Thus, when Asad became Syria's leader, the B`ath party was neither as institutionalized as the ASU, nor did it have the ability to be an autonomous institutional power center in Syria. Asad needed to build and integrate the party into the weak state.

Asad inherited a small but ideologically driven B`ath party. It had been in power for seven years when Asad conducted his coup. Neither as vast in membership nor as encompassing a tool for political organization as the ASU, the B`ath had a long history out of power, with real ideological and procedural traditions that Asad relied on to build a lasting political system.[185] The main difference between the ASU and the B`ath was the latter's strict pan-Arab ideology, which established membership criteria and procedures that prioritized and produced committed members. The ASU, by contrast, was an artificial creation of the regime leadership, based loosely on pan-Arabism, which was quickly discarded in favor of the Egyptian nationalism after the 1967 war. Asad's strengthening of the B`ath party helped to secure and expand regime power. Given Syria's history of elite conflict, introducing an inclusive political center to the system was a necessity.[186] Asad's presidency became synonymous with Syria's domestic political stability. Yet, this stability was grounded in the B`ath party's politicization. The B`ath was useful to Asad because it was a real party with a doctrine, cadres, and organizational procedures.

Asad broadened the party's social base by retaining a high percentage of the party's rank and file and vastly expanding recruitment. With the military camp's backing, Asad moderated the party's radical populist ideology to win support from outside the party. Specifically, Asad initiated a limited economic liberalization program by easing restrictions on state control over foreign trade and imports to gain support from the Damascene private sector.[187] This acted as social co-optation because it revitalized Syria's previously well-established bourgeoisie but made them dependent on the president's reform initiative.[188] Maintaining a firm grip on the military and developing the intelligence services helped Asad to protect his regime. Yet, without a centralizing party to channel political activity, Asad's regime would have been more susceptible to external and internal disruptions.

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[184] Van Dam, 64.

[185] The B`ath was founded by Salah al-Din Bitar and Michel `Aflaq in 1945. The fact that the B`ath was ideological and Sadat's NDP was not does not indicate that ideological parties are more politicized than parties that are not. The notion of ideological vs. non-ideological parties and their affect on politicization/depoliticization, however, does present a potentially useful theoretical question and comparison for future study.

[186] Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria*.

[187] Hinnebusch, *Syria*: *revolution from above*, 65.

The growing number of party members during Asad's first fifteen years in power reflects this strategy of encouraging stability and counterbalancing external and internal challenges through a party. Party membership totaled 35,000 members/candidates under al-Jadid in the late 1960s.[189] By 1977-1978, the party had at least 200,000 full and candidate members.[190] By 1980, although members were declining in "quality," nearly 375,000 members had joined the B`ath.[191] Four years on, B`ath membership and candidates accounted for 8.36 percent of the age-eligible population and numbered 537,864.[192] The increase in figures during the 1970s and early 1980s coincided with the period of greatest turmoil in Asad's Syria. It is, therefore, plausible that Asad built the party as a strong, politicized pillar to stabilize the political system.

Choosing to build a politicized B`ath party had consequences –- particularly for its pan-Arab ideology. The party connected and unified Syria's fragmented regions by attaching them to corporatist organizations that mobilized support for the party. As such, the B`ath became the "essential instrument in mobilizing large part of society."[193] Yet, as the B`ath became the central civilian political institution, its pan-Arab ideology not only provided Asad a solution to the lack of a national identity and regional fragmentation, but also became a constraint on the president's subsequent domestic and foreign policy. The party's pan-Arab ideology became part and parcel of Asad's institution formation strategy. Whether this was Asad's choice or not is immaterial. Rather, because of how pan-Arabism was tied to the B`ath party's development it had to play an integral ideological role if Asad wanted the party to stabilize the state. Hence, once pan-Arabism was institutionalized in the party and given a key role in mobilizing popular support for the party, it became inextricably linked to any future diplomacy or conflicts.

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[188] In addition to social co-optation, Asad created a subsidiary institutional base whereby the state could direct and control supporters and detractors through institutional co-optation. In 1971, he established the People's Assembly (*Majlis al-Sh`ab*). The legislative body assisted the regime in coordinating, legitimizing and channeling regime supporters by providing them access to economic resources and power. Many urbanites, which Asad included to broaden the regime's base, were co-opted through parliament. The following year, Asad initiated the Progressive National Front (PNF or *Jubha Taqadim al-Wataniya*) that gave the appearance of a "pluralist system" by including Nasserists, Communists, and Arab Socialist parties with the B`ath. However, unlike Sadat, Asad strengthened the party of state even while bringing in formally opposed small parties though the PNF. This permitted the Front's parties to have consultative roles, appointed public offices, and cabinet position. As such, the opposition parties became neutralized by their incorporation into the Front. Another means of expanding power was the promulgation of the 1973 constitution that established the legal mechanism of Asad's rule. Indeed, the 1973 constitution designated the B`ath party as the "leading" party of the country.

[189] Raymond Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in B`athist Syria* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990): 178.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid, 179.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Hans Gunter Lobmeyer, "Al-Dimuqratiyya Hiyya al-Hal?" in Kienle (ed.) *Contemporary Syria*, 95.

The B`ath party, although inherited by Asad, was largely his creation, thanks to his expansion of the party and integration of it as a pillar of the regime. This does not imply it did not change qualitatively during his 30-year rule. As Perthes argues:

> The Party was transformed….it was de-ideologized; and it was restructured so as to fit into the authoritarian format of Asad's system, losing its avant-garde character and become an instrument for generating mass support and political control. It was also to become the regime's main patronage network. In addition, an institutional frame was built which, if needed, would allow Asad to balance the party against other political forces.[194]

Yet, despite this transformation, the B`ath continues to maintain some institutional autonomy. Once the party was constructed as a politicized actor, the only way to change its character was to destroy it. This explicitly implies that Asad (neither Hafiz nor Bashar) could not destroy or dismantle the party as easily as Sadat destroyed the ASU. The B`ath, because of its politicized character, is a repository of autonomous power in Syria. This entails its own sets of constraints because to attack the B`ath is the equivalent to attacking the political system itself. Without either a viable or ready-made institutional replacement, the political establishment would lose its central foundation. Given the B`ath party's politicized and integral history in promoting stability, it is difficult to imagine that it could be eliminated without inviting a return to pre-Hafiz al-Asad era political turmoil in Syria.

The limits on eliminating the B`ath are well established in the academic literature on Syria. As Hinnebusch argues, "The…party cannot be readily transformed into a party of business such as Egypt's National Democratic party (NDP); it is overwhelmingly a party of those dependent on the state or threatened by liberalization, notably teachers, public employees, public sector workers and peasants, and only two-per cent of its membership can be considered upper or upper-middle class."[195]

Some analysts have argued, particularly in the mid-1990s, that the B`ath party looked increasingly weak compared to the late-1970s/early 1980s period. For example, Nabil Sukkar notes that economic planning policy was taken away from the B`ath's control after the 1985 regional congress, and this stunted the party's role in policy making.[196] Sukkar's observation is accurate in that the B`ath party was not the *tour de force* it had been in economic or social planning following the liberalization experiments of 1986 and 1991, which were precipitated by economic crises.

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[194] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad*, 154.

[195] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994): 109.

[196] Nabil Sukkar, "The Crisis of 1986 and Syria's Plan for Reform," in Kienle (ed.) *Contemporary Syria,* 33.

Others point to a decline in the party's role because of its failure to convene congresses between 1985-2000.[197] Yet, rather than characterizing this as the end of the B`ath, these shifts may be attributed to general character of Syrian political arena in the 1980s. No space existed for any unsanctioned political activity following the 1982 Hama massacre and Rif`at al-Asad's failed bid for presidential power in 1984. In this respect, political activity was circumscribed in Syria for all actors, not merely for the B`ath party. Accounts of the de-mobilization of Syrian politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s including demobilization of civil society[198] complement this interpretation. The situation changed following Asad's death in June 2000 as more political actors and existing institutions reasserted themselves.

The B`ath party seems to have experienced a revival following Bashar al-Asad's assumption of power in 2000. Although the B`ath was rendered dormant during the second half of Asad's presidency, its potential to function as an institutional pillar should not have been neglected by analysts of Syrian politics. The B`ath influence decreased but its institutional autonomy could allow its reassertion. As Kienle argues, the Ba`th's role was always a "support of the regime or even…one of its seats of power."[199] The party currently exists as one a handful of autonomous politicized institutions that currently struggle for control and influence in Syria. The intelligence services, military, and office of the presidency can be considered some of the other politicized institutions involved in redefining post-Hafiz Syrian politics. While the B`ath cannot be argued to be reasserting a particular mentality or ideology, it can be seen as a structural obstacle to system adaptation and a autnomous institutional source of power.

The B`ath's strengthening and politicization in the 1970s and early 1980s turned it into a disciplinary force throughout Asad's presidency. It must be noted that the party went through various periods when it was more and less assertive, and its institutionalization permitted it to remobilize as a political force in the post-Hafiz al-Asad era. After all, the party "in spite of its marginalization in the decision-making process, remains the only large-scale political organization with a viable infrastructure and branches all over the country."[200] While the B`ath is without doubt an institution that Asad was able to manipulate, the party's politicized structure proved more durable than is generally given credit.

Presently, B`ath party membership stands at nearly two million members, but the nature of membership has changed. While many opportunists now join for an "easier life or better opportunities" or for preferred entrance to a specific university or career, advancement within the party is more managed as it can take decades to become a full member. Scott Wilson reports that

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[197] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad*, 157.

[198] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Civil Society in Syria," in Norton (ed.) *Civil Society in the Middle East*, 214-242.

[199] Eberhard Kienle, "Introduction: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace", in Kienle (ed.) *Contemporary Syria,* 4.

[200] Eberhard Kienle, "The Return of Politics: Scenarios for Syria's Second *Infitah,*" in Kienle (ed.) *Contemporary Syria*, 131.

"Since the revolution that brought it to power 41 years ago, the nearly 2 million member party has grown into a parallel government, monitoring education, political and economic policy through a network of committees from the national to the village level."[201] The politicized grounding of the B`ath party allows it remain an autonomous repository of state power.

The institutional formation strategy that the Syrian leadership chose was primarily shaped by the necessity of constructing politically stable state institutions. Asad's choices were guided by the need to socially and regionally integrate Syria under a overarching ideology. As Syrianism could not serve as a viable ideological banner, Asad was forced to rely on what was available. The party's pan-Arab ideology offered a way out of the instability, and the B`ath was integral for integrating a wide range of sects and regions under cross-sectarian Arabism. Rather than existing as a patronage machine only, the party was politicized to fulfill certain roles in order to serve as a regime pillar, which preserved it in a politicized form and meant that Asad had to share, at least, some power with it. The party needed Asad as much as he needed the party.

A politicized party is not necessary a negative trait because the role of a party is precisely to channel political contestation and mobilization. But other institutions Asad created – including the military/security services establishment -- sought to play a similar consultative role in governing Syria. Asad ably became the chief arbitrator in managing this parthenon-shaped political system.[202] Yet, towards the end of his presdiency and particularly when his son assumed power, these politicized institutions reasserted themselves and contributed to governance gridlock.

2.4 Comparative Military Development

2.4.1 – Egyptian Military Depoliticization

The depoliticizing trends within Egypt's civilian political institutions were repeated in the military under Sadat's leadership. As the facilitator of the coup against the royal family in 1952, the military holds a special place in Egypt's collective nationalist imagination. The Free Officers leadership, headed by Nasser, was perceived as the modernizing answer to Egypt's development challenges in the revolution's aftermath. Nasser's use of pan-Arabism, which was not as key for unifying the population in Egypt as in Syria, placed the Egyptian military at the forefront of defending the Arab world. The political legitimacy windfall of Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and withstanding the British, French, and Israeli tripartite aggression in 1956 gave him and the military leadership free rein to govern politically.

Yet, rather than establishing a professionalized military, Nasser placed many military officers in positions of civilian leadership. As Baker has noted, "Despite a symbolic importance, these costume changes did not alter the fact that the same military personalities, led by Gamal Abdul Nasser, continue to play a leading role. In all governments after 1952 the top positions have been held by officers…the military at the ministerial level generally has been impressive: of the sixty-five men who held portfolios in the government between 1962 and 1967, twenty-seven were former officers."[203] According to another study, nearly 34-percent of all of Nasser's ministerial appointments during his 16-year presidency were military officers.[204] Baker argues:

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[201] Scott Wilson, "Syria's Baathist under siege," *Washington Post* (25 September 2004).

[202] Interview, Hassan Abbas, political analyst, Damascus, 21 October 2003.

> The army came to represent a personnel pool for far reaching extramilitary tasks…These military figures undoubtedly stabilized Nasser's regime and guaranteed the political survival of Free Officer rule. It remains now to add that Egypt has paid dearly for such advantages. Perhaps the greatest costs has been the failure of the governmental bureaucracies so heavily permeated by army officers to restrain the budgetary appetites of the military establishment…Had the army not played so strong a role, a better case might been made for concentrating Egypt's resources on the creation of a modern, industrialized society. [205]

The military became a "state within a state" under `Abd al-Hakim `Amir's command. `Amir, Nasser's closest confident, was careful never to use his political capital to publicly or directly challenge Nasser, but it was becoming clear in the 1960s that the military was autonomous and a competing power center. As Aburish argues, "Even Nasser's assumption of the position of commander in chief was a strictly decorative measure, and Amer continued to run the army unencumbered…This confirmed the existence of 'two states,' the one led by Nasser and the shadowy one headed by Amer."[206] Even if Nasser had a high degree of informal control over the military, the fact remains that it was not professionalized and had a highly politicized character. As a consequence of regime portrayals of the military, the popular myth of the army's strength flourished. These perceptions were shattered during the Israeli rout of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria's militaries in a mere six days in June 1967. No military's weakness was exposed in quite the same way as that of Egypt. Given Nasser's extensive rhetoric and pan-Arab designs, the failure of Egypt's Arab identity needed to be downplayed. The fact that Egypt had its own national identity facilitated the smooth transition. As the Egyptian military could no longer claim to be the vanguard for defending the Arab world, the opportunity to depoliticize and reorganize the military presented itself to the state.

Nasser initiated the depoliticization of the military. The Six-Day War provided Nasser with an excuse to eliminate his rivals in the military. `Amir and his power base were removed.[207] Non-political senior officers were given the task of expanding and professionalizing its ranks. By the time Sadat came to power, the depoliticization process had started.

As he did with the civilian institutions, Sadat also set himself on a course to establish full control over the military. What Sadat ultimately created was a military/security services complex built on its rank and file's professional merit, while the senior officers overseeing the institution were utterly dependent on the president. This reconfiguration, which was carried out incrementally, assured Sadat that the military would be loyal and an auxiliary of state power rather than a repository of autonomous power. As Hinnebusch argues, "while their [military] support was crucial to Sadat's consolidation of power, the military needed him as much as he them, and he did not thereby become their creature."[208]

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[203] Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution*, 48-49.

[204] Gehad Ouda, Negad al-Borai, and Hafiz Abu Saada, *A Door onto the Desert: Egyptian Legislative Elections of 2000* (Cairo: United Group and Fredich Nuemann Foundation, 2001): 24.

[205] Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution*, 55-56.

[206] Said Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab* (New York: Thomas Dunne Press, 2004): 245.

[207] `Amir officially committed suicide in September 1967. Although conspiracies abound about Nasser's role in `Amir death, there is little concrete evidence of how it was arranged.

The frequent turnover of military leadership with the unwavering qualification that appointees supported Sadat's policies produced a professionalized, depoliticized military establishment. This was largely due to the failure of Arab nationalism, an established Egyptian identity, and a consolidated state that gave Sadat an edge over potential military resistance. All of these factors increased in Sadat's ability to divorce himself from the previous marriage to a pan-Arab vision. As Hinnebusch argues, "this break with the radical past was much sharper in Egypt under Sadat…as Egypt abandoned Nasser's Arab nationalism, pursued a separate peace with Israel…and embraced alliance with America."[209]

Sadat struck out at all opposition in the military as he aggressively consolidated his leadership. From the beginning of his presidency, Sadat employed divide-and-rule tactics among the military elite in order to domesticate it. His use of such tactics created an elite loyal to his person or the office of the presidency, rather than to the institutional power bases that particular military leaders had accumulated under Nasser. For example, Mohamad Ahmad Sadik was elevated to the position of minister of war after Mohamad Fawzi's demotion for his Nasserist inclinations during the 1971 Sabri affair.[210] Lasi Nasif became commander of the presidential guard also as a result of such tactics. Each new appointee owed his position – and therefore his loyalty – to Sadat. Sadat maintained their allegiance by playing off inter-military rivals against one another[211] so that his appointees could not gain potential autonomy outside of his control.

There was, however, occasional political infighting between Sadat and his appointees that further encouraged the former to closely manage and rotate appointments.[212] For example, he sparred with Fawzi's replacement, Ahmad Sadik. Sadat used Ahmad Isma`il `Ali, who had personal links to the president, to rout Sadik and his supporters when latter opposed Sadat's decision regarding the expulsion of the Soviets. As Hinnebusch argues, "The replacement of the overtly political Sadiq with Isma`il represented another step in the de-politicization of the top military elite."[213] The president also struggled with chief of staff Sa`ad al-Shazli over his decision to cooperate with the U.S. in peace negotiations with the Israelis after the 1973 war. Shazli was replaced by a more loyal `Abd al-Ghani Gamasi, which effectively ended open resistance to Sadat within the military. Gamasi later became minister of defense. As Hinnebusch notes, "Gamasi, the very model of the respected non-political professional prepared to defer to the authority of the President, became the key figure in further consolidating the principle of military non-intervention in political matters."[214] Nevertheless, even Gamasi was replaced along with chief of staff, Mohamad `Ali Fahmi, over their opposition to the Camp David accords in the late 1970s. Replacing them was a new military crop of Sadat loyalists, such as vice-president Hosni Mubarak and minister of defense `Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala. Generals like Mubarak and Abu Ghazala, who were completely loyalty to the president, became the model for how high-ranking officers retained their positions in Sadat's military.

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[208] Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 127.

[209] Hinnebusch, *The international politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003): 135.

[210] Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat*, 128

[211] Ibid.

[212] Hinnebusch has an excellent account of this political wrestling between Sadat and the military during this period, Ibid, 127-129.

[213] Ibid, 128.

No one military officer – much less a bloc of opposition within the military – was allowed to gain too much political power. Hence, rather than elites investing in the institutions they oversaw, political survival became linked to allegiance to the president. This affected the military, which never actively or independently participated in politics after Sadat's rise to power in 1970. The end of this process within the military reveals incremental depoliticization at work. Sadat's divide-and rule tactics, the ability to drop Arab nationalism in favor of pursuing Egypt's interests, and a consolidated state helped him depoliticize the state's institutions once they had been emasculated man-by-man.

The circumscription of the military's role in politics did not just involve the depoliticization of the institution as an autonomous actor. It also extended to military officers appointed in the government. Sadat greatly reduced their representation in government ministries with only 20-percent of all ministerial appointment going to military officers.[215] While a fifth of appointments is still a sizable proportion, it represents a considerable reduction from Nasser's longer tenure as president. Sadat's successor, also a military general, has continued this trend. During Mubarak's twenty-five years as president, military officers have held less than 10-percent of all ministerial positions.[216] This effective depoliticization of the military eclipsed its role as an autonomous institution and changed the character of the regime. Yet, the change in the character of the Egyptian military between the Nasser and Sadat eras is of great import. As Hinnebusch notes:

> At the beginning of his [Sadat] rule, the military constituted a privileged ruling group dominating top elite posts. By the end, it had been reduced to a much smaller, weaker component of the elite. Its claims for a decisive role or veto even in its field of special responsibility had been repeatedly defeated. Indeed, every major foreign or defense policy decision under Sadat was a purely Presidential initiative, often taken without consultation or even against the wishes of top generals…The military still had some input, informally or though the consultations

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[214] Ibid, 129.
[215] Nazih Ayubi, *The State and Public Policies in Egypt since Sadat*, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1991): 92.
[216] Ouda, Borai, and Saada, 24.

> of the National Security Council, into defense policy, but its role had been reduced to that of simply giving political advice.[217]

The military and top generals still matter and are consulted in Egypt. However, the military and security services are not politicized or active agents involved in preserving their institution's interests at the expense of the president's wishes or needs. The military institution is a servant of presidential power as opposed to being a practitioner of autonomous political power. As Kassem suggests, "This does not imply that the military and the security apparatus play a less important role in Mubarak's rule. Rather, the role of both the military and the security apparatus as the defenders of the regime has been preserved."[218] This overall domestication of the military has severed to sustain its depoliticization and professionalization. Hinnebusch argues this most succinctly:

> The de-politicization and conservatization of the military resulted partly from external pressures and the political struggle… But reinforcing this was a gradual transformation in the authority system from Nasir to Sadat eras, that is, the decline of revolutionary authority which sanctioned an active political role for the officers who made the revolution and its relatively complete routinization in legal-bureaucratic authority, above all in the Presidency. The institutionalization of the political system over the 30 years since 1952 had gradually narrowed the scope for overt military politics.[219]

The depoliticization of the military in Sadat and Mubarak's Egypt is generally viewed favorably in the academic literature.[220] A more professionalized, politically inactive military is a sign of mature development. Yet, in tandem with the utter depoliticization of the civilian part of the Egyptian political system -- for example, political parties -- this permits a disproportionate amount of power to be concentrated and centralized in the office of the presidency. While the individual occupying the office of president and the degree to which he has consolidated his position matter, it can be plausibly argued that any Egyptian president could exercise centralized authority over the country's depoliticized institutional order. It is this nexus of high degrees of presidential centralization and institutional depoliticization that gives Egypt a greater capacity for co-optation and system adaptation.

2.4.2 – Syrian Military Politicization

Syria's military, like the B`ath party, was disciplined to serve as a stabilizing regime pillar out of political necessity. While it is a good thing to encourage the military and security services establishments to be apolitical arms of the state, as I have discussed previously, this was not a practical option when Asad came to power. Instead, the military existed in an unorganized and fragmented condition. The larger, outstanding identity and regional divisions that plagued Syria politically also extended to the organization of the military and security services. Not only did Asad need to construct a cohesive political center that became the politicized B`ath party, but he also needed to organize the military as a pillar of the Syrian regime's precarious stability. Hence, unlike Sadat, who saw Nasser begin the military's depoliticization as well as cede Egypt's Arab nationalist credentials, Asad confronted altogether different constraints. Asad could not reorient a consolidated political system in the direction of depoliticization. Rather, he was forced to build institutions on which to anchor the political system. Arab nationalism had to be the binding ideology to integrate Syria's sectarian mosaic. Yet, Arabism lent itself to an overtly politicized role for the military and security establishment in Syrian politics. Asad needed the military to play a part in bridging Syria's sectarian divisions, so he pursued an institutional formation strategy for the military that cultivated a cross-sectarian organization rallied behind the idea of Arab nationalism.

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[217] Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat*, 131.

[218] Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 40.

[219] Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat*, 131.

[220] For example, see Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*. For an in-depth article on the professionalization of the Egyptian military, see Imad Harb, "The Egyptian Military in Politics: Disengagement or Accommodation?" *Middle East Journal* (Spring 2003): 269-290.

The roots of the army's disorganization under the B`ath party state can be traced at least as far back as Salah al-Jadid's presidency. The central problem was the military overlapped into the party while the party overlapped indistinguishably from the military establishment. Jadid, the regime strongman and assistant secretary general of the party between 1966-1970, led the radically populist wing of the B`ath while Asad, the defense minister, came to lead the more pragmatic opposition wing. Asad, as minister of defense, witnessed the crushing defeat of the Syrian and Arab armies at the hands of the Israeli war machine from close quarters in 1967. The 1967 defeat was a mild political earthquake that cleared Asad's path to the presidency. The following year at the B`ath party congress Asad and Jadid agreed to disagree as a "duality of power" emerged between the pragmatic and ideological party wings. This recognition was, in fact, a sign of the party leadership's inability to effectively control the military establishment. Asad, however, clearly benefited from the party's withdrawal from military affairs particularly in the matter of officer appointments. As minister of defense, Asad "used a policy of gradual transfers appointments…and strategic alliances with other key offices, to by-pass and neutralize the Ba`thi political network in the army and assume command over the armed party formation."[221] When Asad carried out his coup, the military overpowered the ideologues easily. As Munif al-Razzaz, a civilian party leader removed in 1966 by Jadid said, "Jadid's fatal mistake was to attempt to govern the army though the party. It was a mistake with which we were familiar."[222] Jadid stripped Asad and his closest confidant, Mostapha Tlas, of their party membership because of their 'indiscipline' at the November 1970 party congress. Their dismissals were, however, a moot point. Asad had the conference hall surrounded by the military, and the bloodless coup was complete. As Hinnebusch writes, "when the legitimacy of party institutions and the holders of coercive power were confronted in the starkest fashion, the latter triumphed."[223]

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[221] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power,* 159.

[222] Quote from Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle For the Middle East*, (Berkeley: California University Press, 1988): 150.

Asad, having experienced the B`ath party's inability to control the military, realized that he needed to separate and invest in each institution. He used a two-prong strategy for building the military: he decided that the parts closest to the regime would be disproportionately comprised of his fellow `Alawis; whereas in the wider military apparatus, professional qualifications would be the more important criterion, and upward mobility would be possible for any Syrian. Hinnebusch, in his work on the Syrian military, discusses three distinct circles.[224] First, there was Asad's personal Alawi kin and clients "closest to the political nerve center."[225] The second circle consisted of "certain senior non-Alawi Ba`thi officers" that had long been close allies of Asad.[226] Their primary task was to serve as conduits between the party and the military. However, Asad transformed the role of the military by allowing it a wide hand in security and defense issues while civilian politicians in the B`ath were responsible for all domestic and non-security related foreign policy. The third circle was the "wider professional officer corps" at the "outside rim of the military establishment."[227] The primary role of this circle was to serve as a corporatist interest group to lobby the state on behalf of the military's special interests.

The three circles acquired a heavily politicized role in Syria. Hinnebusch outlines the ways in which the military changed in pre and post-Asad Syria:

> From 1963-1970, Ba`thi officers-politicians held key roles in the party and state apparatus and under Asad Alawi officers, bridging the inner circle of the presidency, army commands, and party organs, are uniquely situated as power brokers.... But this does not mean the military is the 'real' power and the party and state its mere instruments; rather, the regime is a military-civilian coalition in which decision- making power is shared. Since 1970, the role of the military in the regime has, to a degree, been semi-institutionalized as one of three pillars of state subordinate to the presidency. While the army is certainly first among equals, army, party apparatus, and state bureaucracy are each mutually dependent, none capable of ruling alone. And while there certainly is overlap, especially of senior personnel at the very top, the three are functionally specialized and partly autonomous partners with real power in their domains.[228]

Asad, because of a lack of options, used the military to unify society and stabilize the political system because it helped address the challenges of regionalism and the sectarian diversity. The military became an integral instrument of mass mobilization. As Hinnebusch argues, "The emergence of a 'citizen-army' generates a national consciousness which inevitable bolsters the legitimacy of the state which directs it."[229]

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[223] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 60.
[224] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power*, 160-162.
[225] Individuals included Rif`at al-Asad, Adnan al-Asad, Adnan Makhluf, Mohamad al-Khuly, `Ali Haydir, Shafiq Fayad, and `Ali Duba.
[226] For example Mostapha Tlas, Naji Jamil, and `Abd al-Rahman al-Khulafawi.
[227] Long-time chief of staff Hikmat al-Shihabi is largely seen as representing the third circle
[228] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power*, 162.

Though the infusion of `Alawi officers at strategic points and the adoption of Arabism, various sects – particularly Sunnis and `Alawis -- were united towards a common purpose. The Syrian military, together with related security services, was crucial to Asad's rule. These came to be institutions that he shared power with and was compelled to design his policies around. As Hinnebusch argues, "Asad was… more dependent on a politicised military and an ideological party that were less deferent than their Egyptian counterparts."[230] This provided the military with a strong *raison d'etre* and an autonomous politicized character, permitting it to endure, as an institution that Asad could not reconfigure or depoliticize at will. The military, although a politicized agent in the institutional arena, shares power and contributes to the more oligarchic political system that exists in Syria in comparison with Egypt.

Signs of the military's politicized role are apparent in more contemporary times too. Although Hafiz al-Asad maintained a degree of control over their regime pillar, by the 1980s the military's politicized role resurfaced in uncertain and potentially destabilizing times.[231] The military has become a real opponent of reform, and the open corruption of its senior members portrays a seemingly "above the law status." Hinnebusch says that Syria's politicized military has "become an intensely praetorian incubus in the heart of the state, kept under control only by presidential authority. When that weakens…praetorianism starkly reemerges and abuse of power deepens."[232]

As Asad's health declined in the late 1990s and succession loomed on the near horizon, Syria's politicized institutions rallied to maintain their role in the governing system. By the time Bashar inherited his father's position, the established and powerful institutional centers were in a position to block his consolidation and check his presidential authority. In some ways, Bashar's situation is loosely analogous to that of Sadat in 1970. A separate Syrian identity may have developed, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, although it persists, is not as likely to pull the Syrian political establishment apart as in the early Hafiz al-Asad years.[233] Yet, unlike Sadat, Bashar is comparatively weaker in dealing with overly politicized institutions seeking to maintain their position. In addition to the B`ath party, the military's politicized character will not readily cede power.[234] This undercuts Bashar's ability to consolidate his power and the political system's ability to co-opt elites and non-elites easily. Most importantly, however, Syria's politicized institutional order lowers the political system's capacity to adapt.

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[229] Ibid, 164.

[230] Hinnebusch, *The international politics of the Middle East*, 138

[231] The classic example is when the military divided over Asad's ailing health and the ensuing Brothers War between Hafiz and Rif`at in 1983.

[232] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power*, 161.

[233] Bashar has on several occasions called on the Israelis to openly negotiate an end to Syria and Israel's state of war in the international and domestic media. Most recently, Bashar called for peace talks in October 2006.

[234] Before Syrian Interior minister General Ghazi Kan`an committed suicide October 2005, he oversaw the political security intelligence agency. Prior to that he oversaw Syria's security operations in Lebanon for 18

The differences in Sadat and Asad's inherited constraints led to their distinct institution formation strategies. While these differences were emerging, Egypt and Syria launched a joint attack against Israel on 6 October 1973. Although far from a military victory, it resulted in a political victory against an army that had previously embarrassed both states. The political victory of the 1973 war also gave Sadat and Asad the opportunity to pursue a lasting peace with Israel and end the conflict. Yet, just as Egypt and Syria had followed different institution formation trajectories, the states also pursued different paths in the post-1973 peace negotiations. The United States, heavy involved as the chief mediator in the peace talks, favored working with Egypt. This had much to do with determining the policy options available to Sadat and Asad. For Sadat, realigning with the Americans helped speed up his institutional reconfiguration; for Asad, however, aligning with the U.S. meant betraying the Palestinian cause, the cornerstone of B`athist Arab nationalism. Thus, Asad maintained Syria's long-standing alliance with the alternative Soviet superpower. Hence, American support meant salvation to one side and a threat to the other. The U.S., for its part, only wanted willing partners, and was willing to diplomatically isolate resistance. While the external patron variable was not the primary reason for divergence between Egypt's depoliticized and Syria's politicized institutions, it nevertheless played a secondary role in accelerating institutional difference in the superficially similar Arab states.

2.5 The External Patron, Peace, and Extra-Institutional Ruling Challenges

Another contributing – albeit supporting – factor to each state's institutional formation is its relationship to the region's chief hegemon during the critical juncture of the 1970s in the Middle East. The 1973 war with Israel bolstered the legitimacy of Sadat and Asad in similar ways. However, the options they had to use this renewed legitimacy for redesigning or constructing a stable regime had already diverged. While this is attributable to each state's previous institution formation strategies, the U.S. also played decisive role in how the leaders routinized their depoliticized and politicized institutional types. While the external relations factor was by no means a primary reason for institutional formation divergence in Egypt and Syria, it did cement particular institutional types in each political system.

A final supporting variable that exacerbated and consolidated differences in the institutional orders of Egypt and Syria was the nature of domestic opposition challenges to the state. This variable was particularly important during the 1970s, when institution formation processes were in full swing. The type of opposition and the severity of its challenge to the regimes

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years (1982-2000). His corruption and power from the two positions was so legendary that one Syrian journalist described Kan`an as "president of two states [Syria and Lebanon]". Interview, Syrian journalist, Damascus, April 2004.

often shaped leaders' persistence with, and in most cases deepening of, existing institutional formation strategies. In the case of Syria, severe opposition challenges to the state led Asad to deepen the politicization of his institutional party and military pillars. In Egypt, Sadat faced limited opposition challenges while he was depoliticizing Egypt's institutions of state. As was the case for the external patron factor, the domestic opposition challenge variable accelerated – rather than caused -- the politicization of Syria's institutions and the depoliticization of Egyptian institutions.

The legacy of each leaders' strategies in constructing and redesigning their institutional orders during this period continues to influence and account for the differing governing styles in contemporary Egypt and Syria. The purpose of this section is to historically compare Egypt and Syria's institutional formation strategies in light of these above-mentioned variables to explain the acceleration of politicized and depoliticized institutional types.

Sadat and Asad gained significant legitimacy from the 1973 war, and both leaders subsequently entered into peace talks with the Israelis, which the U.S. influenced and oversaw. Both political systems also faced varying degrees of domestic challenges that further entrenched the opposing paths they had chosen. Yet, Egyptian and Syrian institutional formation divergence had been well under way before these events. Sadat's strategy was to eliminate the politicized institutions within Egypt's consolidated state. By contrast, Asad had begun building stable institutional pillars on which to balance the Syrian system. Whether intentionally or not, Asad's party and military institutions routinized a sense of self-perpetuation that reduced the likelihood of future coups but also made the Syrian system far more oligarchic and required far more institutional power sharing than the Egyptian system.

In the case of Egypt, open partnership with the U.S. not only resulted in an Egyptian-Israeli separate peace by the end of the 1970s but also helped Sadat in redesigning Egyptian politics. The lack of ideological constraints and the ability to replace Arabism with a developed "Egypt First" ideology afforded Sadat maneuverability to adjust the basis of the regime's support. By emphasizing economic liberalization and developing a dependent bourgeois class, Sadat was able to continue depoliticizing the bureaucracy, military/security service apparatus, and the ruling party. It was Sadat's desire to realign with the United States that, in effect, accelerated his carrying out the pre-1973 war domestic institutional agenda. Prior to the 1973 war, Sadat was signaling to the US but it was not listening. Similarly, the lack of widespread domestic or regional challenges encouraged Sadat to take his institutional project further. This, in turn, bequeathed Egypt's new president, Hosni Mubarak, an entirely different looking governing environment in 1981 than the one Sadat inherited from Nasser.

Syria's leadership – without US patronage or political support -- had different options in continuing its institutional formation strategies. Faced with a domestic constraint of tying the B`ath party and military to Arabism, Asad was excluded *de facto* from using the American hegemon to sign a deal with the Israelis or restructure his domestic political arena. To negotiate and sign a separate peace treaty that effectively marginalized the Palestinians was simply a bridge too far for Asad to tread. Once Arabism was institutionalized into the ruling B`ath party and army, it became a constraint on the leader's foreign policy as well as on the kind of domestic support he could draw on. Hence, even if the U.S. had treated Syria the same way as Egypt, Asad would not have been able to follow Sadat's lead.

Left without the option of either aligning with the U.S. or redesigning Syria's unconsolidated political system, Asad chose the only option that held out the hope of stability – he continued to expand the pillars and structures of authoritarian power. He nurtured the cross-sectarian ruling B`ath party, expanded the military, created a bloated bureaucratic arm of the state and mobilized the countryside and various regions through union-type B`athist organizations. Hence, Asad was building a stable polity from scratch.

In addition to facing constraints not present in Egypt, Asad could not have American political cover to assist in stabilizing and consolidating the regime's pillars because it would have de-legitimized him. Instead, he had to rely on a combination of Arab financing and Soviet arms. These factors turned out to be only the beginning of Asad's problems as his political system faced intense challenges such as a continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict by proxy during the Lebanese civil war, and an intense and violent domestic insurrection led by Sunni Islamist groups. Syria and Asad survived each of these challenges, but they cemented a particular type of politicized institutional order.

2.5.1 –American Friends, Weak Opposition Challenges, and a Separate Peace

Complementing Sadat's initial depoliticization of the ASU and the military, he launched an "Egypt First" campaign around the country in a clear move to rid the country of Nasser's Arab nationalism. Sadat's pursuit of an American alliance was the final blow to Arab unity that visibly transformed Arab politics into what it had always been about – namely, individual states attempting to secure their interests over wider Arab causes. Detailed accounts of inter-Arab politicking record the discrepancy between individual state-interested political maneuvers and their collective calls for Arab unity.[235] Baker observed this transformation when he recalled Sadat describing himself as an "Egyptian nationalist" who was "solving Egypt's problems." Moreover, billboards appeared around Egypt praising "Mother Egypt" or "Egypt First" doctrines.[236] Indeed, Egypt's approach to the 1973 war and its post-war negotiations demonstrated this national-centrism. The legitimacy Sadat earned in the war was what enabled him to begin the de-Nasserization that would reconfigure Egypt's institutional order.

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[235] See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*. Also, Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: 1958-1967* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), and Fawaz Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

[236] Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution,* 142.

The post 1973 war American-led peace diplomacy helped Sadat transform his political system. Sadat pursued economic programs (*Infitah*) that were ostensibly meant to shift the populist-leanings of Nasser's regime towards a more business-class friendly base. This introduced post-populism to the country's political orientation, by altering the elite to include a dependent bourgeoisie class while incrementally excluding the more populist elements from Nasser's era. The Americans cannot be held responsible for Sadat's institutional depoliticization and his shift towards a dependent business class. Yet, its treatment of Egypt not only contributed to a peace agreement with Israel that has netted over $50 billion dollars in military and economic aid since 1979,[237] but the U.S's. favorable treatment of Egypt also gave Sadat political capital to accelerate and intensify the course he had embarked on upon taking power in 1970. American aid also helped to foster a U.S.-friendly business class.

Indications that Sadat felt he needed the Americans to help transform Egypt's political landscape appeared early in his presidency. After a Nixon-Brezhnev summit in May 1972, Sadat appears to have understood that the superpowers would discourage further wars in the Middle East, and consequently, he feared, "a permanent freezing of the post-1967 situation."[238] He, consequently, expelled 7,800 Soviet consultants, advisors, and military experts from Egypt in July 1972 as a means of showing the Americans that Egypt was open to U.S. influence.[239] In addition to this public gesture, Heikel has detailed extensive secret connections between Sadat and the American government that were conducted by Saudi intelligence chief, Kamal Adham, in the year prior to the Soviets' repatriation.[240]

When the Americans were less than responsive to his gesture, Sadat felt that only war could change the dynamic. The 1973 war not only provided Sadat with ruling legitimacy but helped him alter the regime's support base. Middle Eastern politics were also radically transformed by the October War and its reordering of regional power relationships, particularly the opening of a diplomatic route between the U.S., the Arab states, and Israel. The aftermath of the 1973 war provided an entry point for the U.S. as chief arbitrator in the peace negotiations. The U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, epitomized the shift in American policy, which reflected changes in the region. As Shlaim argues:

> In Henry Kissinger's hands US policy was largely reduced to support for Israel and the status quo. Once the status quo had been shaken up, however, Kissinger moved with remarkable speed to develop an Arab dimension to American foreign policy. His aim was to use the fluid situation created by the war in order to move the parties, step by step, towards a political settlement.[241]

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[237] Charles Levinson, "$50 billion later, taking stock of US aid to Egypt," *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 April 2004

[238] Baker, Egypt's *Uncertain Revolution*, 128.

[239] Seale, *Asad*, 191.

[240] Mohamad Hassanein Heikel, *Autumn of Fury* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1983): 43-45.

[241] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (London: Penguin, 2000): 321.

Initially, the U.S. appears to have had difficulty coming to terms with Sadat's eagerness to share information and declare his intentions. Prior to the war, Kissinger notes that "Sadat boldly told us what he was going to do but we did not believe him."[242] However, Kissinger quickly realized that the U.S. and Israel had a vital ally in Sadat and that an opportunity for an Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement was possible. The fact that Sadat had started the process of depoliticization and was not constrained by Arab nationalist commitments allowed him to realign with the U.S. The new relationship also boosted Sadat's domestic agenda of shifting its populist base to one that rested on Egypt's business community.

The U.S. was able to deliver the Sinai to Egypt, plus economic aid and investment. Hence, Egypt's gains from the war allowed it to pursue limited capitalist development by fostering a pro-Western bourgeoisie and achieving some integration into the Western market. While the U.S. may not have been vital for the Sadat-led transformation, it did allow his *Infitah* project to go further than it might have without favorable American treatment. The U.S. unintentionally benefited from Egypt's political developments and harnessed Sadat's compulsion to push through a separate peace agreement with Israel.

Economically, Sadat's Egypt was marked by a variety of changes. The influx of new resources reactivated the private sector, which increased investment, primarily in the service sector. Consequently, the industrial base was weakened as a result of the state's retraction. Unconvinced local capitalists did not come through with expected investment, which in turn required a stronger commitment to the Americans, who was willing to provide aid and loans to replace the public sector's input. This produced a rent boom and accumulation of national debt. As a result of lost state investment, many of the goods that had been produced locally were now imported. This, coupled with the availability of new goods, encouraged a consumption-based economy. Sadat's post-populism ushered in an increase in inequality as the salaries of the public sector middle class depreciated. In addition, the populist social coalition that included peasants and labor was jettisoned as a new capitalist class emerged. Despite the dislocations occasioned by the economic and social changes, the domestic opposition challenges emerged in response to Sadat's domestic and foreign policies were relatively low-intensity.

The groundwork of initially depoliticizing Egypt's single party and the military institutions and realigning into the American sphere of influence intersected with the lack of substantial extra-regime opposition challenges. Sadat confronted challenges to his peace and liberalizing projects only twice between 1973-1981. Neither affected Egypt's depoliticization, which had already been carried out.

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[242] Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1982): 459

The first challenge was the "Bread Riots" of January 1977, which were some of the first IMF riots in the world.[243] Sadat, in keeping with his economic liberalization policies, repealed subsidies on bread and other food staples. The following day, protests erupted at Cairo University before contagiously spreading throughout Cairo. By the second day, the protests had expanded through length of Egypt from Alexandria to Aswan leaving 79 people dead, approximately 1,000 injured, and 1,500 under arrest. The subsidies were subsequently reinstated and the riots ended. Although these riots were the most visible expression of the population's discontent with Sadat's economic policies, "the regime never appears to have been in serious danger of falling; the rioters had neither the will nor leadership to overthrow it and the security forces held firm."[244] Since 1977, no Egyptian government has attempted a radical cut of subsidies, opting instead for an incremental approach. While this event affected the manner in which the regime pursued economic liberalization, the riots were hardly a threat to regime continuity.

The second challenge Sadat faced was in the lead-up to and aftermath of the Camp David Accords in September 1978. He targeted elite governing circles, replacing key military personnel and reshuffling his cabinet in favor of more dependent and loyal figures. The pre-emptive moves to undercut dissent in elite circles notwithstanding, societal opposition mobilized against Sadat's lack of accountability in signing a peace agreement. While the Arab states threatened to marginalize Egypt if it concluded such a treaty, Sadat focused his attention on domestic opponents. Parliament was dismissed and rigged elections ensured that no opposition figures won. The journalists' syndicate was shut down on grounds of "irresponsible criticism" while Sadat initiated a "code of ethics" that "outlawed transgressions against traditional family values such as disrespect for the head of the big Egyptian family, that is, the President."[245]

Instead of containing or channeling opposition, Sadat further agitated it by signing the peace agreement as Israel attacked southern Lebanon in 1978. Opposition also connected Sadat's economic policies, which marginalized the middle and lower classes, with his American ties. In reaction to increasing secular dissent, Sadat encouraged the Islamists to act as a counter-balancing force. As Abdo argues, "As he moved closer and closer to the risky peace with Israel…he also became more tolerant of the Islamists."[246] Although Sadat confronted wave after wave of multi-sided opposition to his economic policies, he also had more difficulty justifying his policies towards Israel and dependency on the Americans.

Sadat overstepped the bounds of what was perceived to be politically acceptable to Egyptians. His support was fraying at the edges as he tried to placate the opposition. In May 1980, Sadat assumed the post of prime minister, as well as president, in the hope of maintaining managed control over his political establishment. Simultaneously, he hoped that by being prime minister he could create a class of technocrats to eliminate corruption and cronyism. He promised to reform his *Infitah* program as a means of soothing popular discontent. He did this by reverting to populism as price controls increased and popular goods were further subsidized.

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[243] Personal communication with Samer Shehata, Assistant Professor of Arab politics at Georgetown University, August 2006.

[244] Hinnebusch, *Egyptian Politics under Sadat*, 71.

[245] Ibid, 75.

[246] Geneive Abdo, *No God But God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 54.

While Sadat outwardly appeared in control, more intimate portraits present another perspective. Heikal's account, which is far from unbiased, describes a man out of touch, isolated, and resentful of his alienation. As Heikel argues, "He now lived almost entirely in a world of his own creation, in which he was the continuing star and from which all the hostile forces or rivals were effectively excluded."[247] Sadat's last infamous attempt to stop the opposition to him and his policies happened on 3 September 1981 when he arrested approximately 1,500 people from all political trends and professions. Islamists mixed with Nasserists as journalists met engineers in prison, coming together in their opposition to Sadat. A month later, on 6 October, during a military parade on Nasr City's broad thoroughfare, Islamists led by Khalid Islambouli, the brother of one of those arrested in September, assassinated Sadat. While it could be argued that Sadat had co-opted the Islamists that would later kill him, his assassination can also be understood differently. By the end of his tenure, Sadat was continuously defusing multifarious oppositional challenges, and it is symbolic that an assassin who happened to be an army solider, as well as a member of al-Jihad, and whose brother was in prison, ended the struggle between Sadat and his domestic opposition.

While Sadat paid with his life for depoliticizing Egypt's institutional arena and limiting channels of peaceful political participation and dissent, Egypt's political system and relationship to the U.S. survived him. Mubarak has built on the Egyptian-American relationship and the depoliticized institutional order, and has, if anything, further strengthened the regime's links to the Egypt's bourgeoisie class while further marginalizing the peasants and labor sectors of the governing coalition.[248] After the Accords were signed, the Americans effectively controlled the most powerful military (Israel) and the most influential and populated Arab state (Egypt) in the Middle East. In exchange, and as a result of Sadat's initiative, the Egyptian president now firmly controls the state's hapless institutions.

2.5.2 – American Adversaries, Strong Opposition Challenges, and No Peace

Asad created a regime that comprised politicized institutional pillars of support to remedy Syria's lack of a national identity and existing regional fragmentation. These primary variables were essential to constructing a stable state. In addition to his initial politicization of the B`ath and the military, Asad was further constrained by these institutions' commitment to and foundation on the ideals of Arab nationalism. Unlike Sadat, who could launched an "Egypt First" campaign and eliminate Nasser's expendable Arab nationalist identity en route to working with the U.S., Asad's interactions with the American regional patron were limited by ideological tensions. Just as Egypt's alliance with the U.S. accelerated Egypt's depoliticized institutional arrangements, Asad's inability to realign with the U.S. helped to cement Syria's institutional path. Even if the U.S. had treated Syria favorably in the post-1973 period, Asad could not have broken away from his developing institutional environment and acted as Sadat did. As Syria was not absorbed into the new U.S. dominated regional alliance, its stature declined with that of the Soviet Union. As I will demonstrate, the lack of American political support and the politicized institutional order limited Asad's economic liberalization designs and placed strains on the existing social cleavages he had sought to bridge.

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[247] Heikel, *Autumn of Fury,* 182.

[248] Presidential-initiated legislation that reserved land reform came into force in 1997 while liberalization of the labor force became law in 2003.

Sadat's willingness to align with the Americans to negotiate the return of the Sinai peninsula (lost in the 1967 war) and to gain access to Western markets in order to encourage the Egyptian business class tied Asad's hands. Sadat and Kissinger's desire to consolidate the special relationship between Egypt and the U.S. came at the expense of a less than forthcoming Syria. Without the option of breaking away from the Arab nationalism ingrained in politicized institutions, Asad deepened Syria's alliance with the Soviet Union. While the prestige factor for Kissinger in getting Syria and Egypt to sign agreements with Israel was optimal, Asad's inherited constraints caused him to hesitate. Faced with the realization that Egypt was ready and Syria was not, the Americans made an Egypt-Israeli peace agreement their primary goal. Indirectly, this meant that a settlement with Syria could be left for later. Kissinger, in a memorandum to Nixon, describes Syria's self-imposed exclusion as "very satisfactory for us – a blessing in disguise…we should let Asad stew in his own juice for a while."[249] Thus, Syria's political arena made aligning with the Americans or signing a separate peace with Israel impossible if the political system was to remain stable. Kissinger rightly blamed the B`ath party for Asad's rigid position. The American posture towards Syria at this time and Asad's inability to individually pursue peace deepened the already existing differences in Egypt and Syria's depoliticized and politicized institutions.

Within this framework, Asad became more reliant on his institutional pillars than ever as he continued strengthening the B`ath and military establishments. Being forced deeper into the Soviet camp also shaped Syria's political and economic development. The Soviets were unable to provide the Syrians with the same level of economic rent or political assistance that the U.S. could offer Egypt. As a consequence, the relationship between Syria and the U.S.S.R. was primarily based on arms transfers and military training for defending against the Israeli threat. The arms, which the Soviets provided Syria, could only serve as a deterrent against Israel, rather than used in recovering the Golan region. This relegated Syria into a frozen "no-war, no-peace" situation. As Syria remained in the Soviet camp, military assistance alone was not enough to help Asad introduce deeper economic liberalization. Exclusion from the Western markets and an ongoing official state of war with Israel meant that Syria's investment climate was not attractive enough to encourage a business class with links to the international economy. This may have stunted Syrian economic growth. Consequently, Asad used Syria's "front-line" status against Israel to attract funds from oil-rich Arab states, which he funneled into the public sector. This resulted in much more limited development as the creation of a bourgeoisie was postponed.

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[249] Kissinger, 1249.

Asad, constrained by the ideological creatures of his creation and the lack of U.S. support, watched his politicized institutional bases also retard movements towards economic liberalization. While the B`ath and military both restricted Asad's options for pursuing peace, the military was particularly active in limiting his creation of a viable business class. This, again, stemmed from Syria's existential identity crisis – the social cleavages between the `Alawi-packed military and Syria's largely Sunni bourgeoisie constrained Asad's rapprochement with the private sector. Politicized `Alawi officers "turned into a major obstacle and a burden on development" because they were "wary of economic or political liberalization, for the Sunni bourgeoisie [were] better situated to benefit."[250] The officers were also responsible for rampant levels of corruption and deterred "both private investment and the rationalization of the public sector."[251] While the U.S. cannot be blamed for basing its policy on Syria's inherent and imposed constraints, its lack of support can be seen as a contributing variable for the lack of Syrian economic development and Asad's inability to create a large pro-Western business class prepared to invest in the country.

If the factors above crystallized the overt institutional formation differences between Egypt and Syria, extra-institutional challenges to the system accelerated their divergence. Such opposition challenges not only required Asad to rely on the military and the party, but also allowed them to develop an overly politicized character. Unlike Egypt during the 1970s, Syria confronted intense oppositional challenges that endangered the political system's survival. Asad, again, was forced to further strengthen the B`ath party and the military institutions to overcome these challenges. In the process, Syria's institutions continued to routinize their politicization.

The Syrian state was confronted with major challenges after having declined American support. The first challenge was the Lebanese civil war, which began in April 1975 and lasted for fourteen years. During this time, Syrian forces periodically engaged the Israeli military in Lebanon. Thus, while Sadat had extracted himself from the Arab-Israeli conflict, Asad embroiled Syria in the conflict, necessarily by proxy, within Lebanon's boarders. The Lebanese civil war also witnessed the creation of numerous sectarian and intra-sectarian militias that were supported at different times by different regional states. As Syria considers itself historically associated to Lebanon, the civil war and its continuously changing dynamics forced the Syrians to become deeply involved in the neighboring country. Yet, multiple political constraints influenced the character of Syrian involvement. Asad's decision to support the Maronite Christians in the civil war's initial stages was dictated by a hostile regional environment. His argument for supporting Lebanon's confessional governmental arrangements was based on his fear that the relocated Palestinian groups, such as the PLO, which had been expelled from Jordan, would prolong the war. Asad feared the Palestinians would establish a radicalized state in Lebanon and that this would attract unrelenting Israeli military attention.[252] Hence, his calculation was based on keeping Syria out of direct armed conflict with Israel.

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[250] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power*, 160-161, 165.
[251] Ibid, 165.

Not wanting the Israelis to open a front on his flank necessitated his anti-Palestinian posture. Additionally, Asad feared the destructive effects of a prolonged Lebanese civil war that might seep into Syria and destabilize the delicate political balance he had just managed to construct.[253] Thus, Asad was faced with a multifaceted problem in Lebanon. The U.S.'s unwillingness to intervene on Syria's behalf with the Israelis as well as the Israeli, Palestinian, Iraqi, Saudi, and Iranian involvement in Lebanon effectively reshaped regional political relationships that kept Syria preoccupied and isolated. Involvement in the Lebanese war and against the Palestinians cost Asad nationalist legitimacy and lost him much support among natural allies. It also spurred the rise of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) challenge. This, in turn, led Asad to pursue more repressive, centralizing strategies that stifled political life in the party and elsewhere. Now, loyalty to Asad came before everything else, including institutions. Also, as a direct consequence, political and economic liberalization were both deemed too dangerous, as the alliance of the Sunni business class and the Islamists could reap their benefits. While this example may not be perceived as a serious challenge to the Syrian state, it does trace a direct link between Asad's foreign and internal policies.

Asad's policy of supporting the Maronites in Lebanon provoked mounting domestic opposition. The opposition to Asad nearly led to the state's implosion as regional, sectarian, and Islamist threats coalesced into a violent internal rebellion. While Asad and the `Alawi sect were frequent targets of criticism, the very nature of the Syrian state and its future were at stake. Syria, thus, found itself on verge of its own civil war between 1977-1982. Syria had witnessed Islamist challenges in the years since the B`ath party came to power. In 1964, the Muslim Brotherhood protested against the B`athist monopoly of power. In 1973, they challenged the regime because the constitution did not designate Islam as the state religion. The regime made conciliatory gestures that defused these individual episodes and kept them from widening into more sustained resistance. However, after Asad decided to intervene on behalf of the Christians in Lebanon, the Syrian Brotherhood launched an anti-regime campaign that promised not to end.

The Brotherhood intended to discredit the regime as a minority-run government that opposed the majority Sunni population's interpretation of Islam. Its confrontation with the state escalated when the group began attacking government buildings, politicians, and parts of the military. The Islamists hoped to expose the state as weak while presenting themselves as the stable alternative. The Brotherhood attempted to polarize the political arena along sectarian lines, which was evident in the August 1979 killing of over 50 `Alawi officers at an Aleppo military school. By separating the Sunnis from the `Alawi, the Brotherhood sent a firm message to Sunnis that `Alawi favoritism should be eradicated from the political system. As Hinnebusch argues, "The broader, urban public, far from showing any inclination to assist in curbing anti-regime terrorism, tacitly sympathized with the Brotherhood."[254]

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[252] Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 83

[253] Ibid.

Asad's government reacted with dual tactics of repression and concession. He reverted to populist measures such as increasing wages to secure as wide a public-sector base as possible and introducing price controls to combat inflation. Simultaneously, he sought to make examples of those involved in anti-government violence by executing Islamists. Regional developments, however, such as the success of Iran's Islamic revolution, and money channeled by Iraq and Jordan to the Brotherhood to oppose and weaken the government, only bolstered the movement. Over time, a new power center arose that played on Syria's existing regional fragmentation: Aleppo emerged as the seat of the Islamist resistance that defined itself against the Damascene regime centre.

The conflict escalated incrementally as the government and Islamists exchanged blows. The president's brother Rif`at commanded Syria's most sophisticated paramilitary units, the Defense Companies (*Saraya al-Dif`a*), whose profile expanded as it repressed emerging Islamist networks. For example, 25,000 troops, supported by the Defense Companies, launched mortar attacks against an Aleppo mosque and arrested over 5,000 people in house-to-house searches in early 1980.[255] The dispute turned personal as a Brotherhood member tried to assassinate Asad as he waited to receive an African dignitary outside of Damascus's Guest Palace on 26 June 1980. The attempted assassination of the president was met with a vicious response. Within twelve hours, Rif`at mobilized two units of the Defense Companies and turned his men loose on Brotherhood detainees in Tadmor's desert prison. Over 500 inmates were killed. By 8 July 1980, following a one-month amnesty, Muslim Brotherhood membership was declared a capital offense.

The escalation against Asad forced the regime into an increasingly desperate confrontation for its survival. With no external state to appeal to for assistance despite getting plenty of military help from the U.S.S.R. after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Asad was forced to adapt his regime to save it. Asad saw Syria as standing alone in a region of neighboring enemies. As Seale recalls:

> He [Asad] saw himself as the victim of a 'terrible alliance' of external and internal enemies…Asad's fear's were not paranoiac. He was indeed surrounded by enemies. He had exasperated Washington by his attacks on the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. He had broken with Iraq and after the emergence of Ayatollah Khomayni had sided with revolutionary Iran. He was on the worst possible terms

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[254] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power*, 293.
[255] Ibid, 295.

> with King Husayn of Jordan. He had tangled dangerously with Israel in Lebanon. Another center of hostility was the Syrian expatriate community in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf…many of them members of the former landowning or political families. They had no love for Islamic fundamentalism but saw guerrillas as a battering ram which might bring Asad down.[256]

Pressed into such a situation, Asad and the Muslim Brotherhood turned state-society relations into a zero-sum game that neither wanted nor could afford to lose. The near civil war raged and incrementally escalated until February 1982 when the Brotherhood and regime clashed in Hama, a conservative town on the Orantes River about 150 km south of Aleppo. As the government frequently targeted Brotherhood-sympathetic Aleppo, more and more of the insurgents drifted south to Hama. This town, in turn, became a base of anti-regime terrorism as well as home to many of the underground movement's leadership such as `Omar Jawad.

Following an ambush of army units patrolling Hama in early February, the government's frustration and anger was unleashed once and for all. Rif`at al-Asad led his Defense Companies and 12,000 other soldiers into Hama, which ended with the death of between 5,000 and 10,000 guerillas and civilians. As Seale writes, "In Damascus, there was a moment of something like panic when Hama rose. The regime itself shook. After battling for five long years it had failed to stamp out an underground that had killed the flower of the `Alawi professional class and had tarred Asad's presidency with the charge of illegitimacy. Fear, loathing and a river of spilt blood ruled out any thought of truce."[257]

The government's response has been well documented and often dramatically misrepresented in the popular media. Friedman argues that Hama expressed Asad's style of rule, which he summarized as if one disagrees with Asad, the Syrian regime kills them and as many innocent people as possible.[258] Besides exaggerating the number of people killed (20,000), Friedman recalls that "In February 1982, President Asad decided to end his Hama problem once and for all…Since fully taking power in 1970, he has managed to rule Syria longer than any man in the post World War II era. He has done so by playing by his own rules. His own rules, I discovered, were Hama Rules.[259]" By treating Hama as an event without historical contingency, Asad and Syrian politics have been grossly misunderstood. While the killing of civilians by a state's military apparatus is abhorrent and deplorable at any time, most have failed to understand the pressure and international, regional, and domestic context in which the Hama showdown transpired.

Hama produced lasting effects on the character of the Syrian state. Hinnebusch argues that "the failed Islamic revolution arrested the development of the Ba`thist state."[260] Seale poignantly states, “The iron-fist methods he put into practice probably saved the regime, but also changed its character.”[261] As basic political liberties were all but suspended, institutional influence declined while civil society was decimated following Hama. These institution’s more politicized attributes would not return under after Asad died in 2000.

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[256] Seale, *Asad*, 335.
[257] Ibid, 333.
[258] Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Doubleday, 1989): 76-105.
[259] Ibid, 80.
[260] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 101-102.

The politicized B`ath party and the military were Asad’s key instruments in saving Syria during its near civil war period. These events and the lack of a reliable external patron secondarily reinforced the institutional formation strategies that Asad adopted in 1970. While they cannot be seen as important as the regional fragmentation and lack of national identity that forced Asad to build politicized institutions, they do help fill in a more complete picture. When institutions are politicized, as they were in Syria, they acquire strength and a position that they never lose – until they are reconfigured or depoliticized – whether political life is active or in hibernation. Hafiz al-Asad never actively depoliticized the system’s institutions, as they remained the ruling pillars throughout his presidency. While the institutions remained dormant, they proved capable of reasserting themselves at the soonest available opportunity. When Bashar became president, the institutions began selectively using their politicized character to maintain and expand their influence in ruling post-Hafiz Syria. Just as Sadat’s depoliticized institutional order outlived his presidency, Syria’s politicized institutions outlived their creator.

2.6 Depoliticized and Politicized Institutions

It is in some ways ironic that Anwar al-Sadat faced fewer identity and state consolidation constraints, enjoyed American support, confronted less intense opposition challenges and is internationally seen as the transformer of Middle Eastern politics despite his assassination. Meanwhile, Hafiz al-Asad overcame Syria’s identity and regional issues while constructing a consolidated state, only to be forced to balance his system against regime-threatening domestic opposition, meddling neighbors, and a lack of U.S. support (and even surviving a heart attack in 1983). Nevertheless, Asad continues to be portrayed as the archetypical authoritarian leader in a region dominated by such governance.

The lack of a consolidated state and regional cleavages left Arab nationalism as the only plausible identity that could bind and organize Syria’s fractious political arena. Asad not only built ruling pillars on which to stabilize his regime but also created politicized, and somewhat autonomous, institutions. Rather than depoliticizing the political arrangements he inherited as Sadat did, Asad consciously politicized institutional bases of support into the regime – namely the B`ath and the military/security services. The B`ath and the military apparatus were essential to regime stability because they offered Asad a possible solution for overcoming Syria’s sectarian heterogeneity.

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[261] Seale, *Asad*, 327.

Conversely, no such centralizing institutions were needed in Egypt, where state authority and penetration has already been established. Given Egypt's ready-made national identity and consolidated state, Sadat could pursue the path initiated after the 1967 war. In so doing, he uprooted any institutional obstacles to the Egyptian presidency as he reconfigured the institutional order. Yet, Sadat never replaced or inserted similarly politicized capabilities in the newly formed institutions established after reorganizing the military and dismantling the ASU. Mubarak inherited Egypt's depoliticized institutional arrangements and continued along the path traced by Sadat.

The multiple situational variables that each leader confronted after taking power placed constraints on Asad and created opportunities for Sadat. Just as Anwar al-Sadat could easily break away to pursue his opportunities, Asad had to make something out of what was possible. Paradoxically, although the two leaders were pulled in different directions regarding institution formation strategies, the leaders seemed somewhat one-dimensional in their ruling styles. Sadat seemed to have a natural inclination to depoliticize every institution he could, so as to personally dominate the political system. Without such options at his disposal, Asad politicized each of the institutional pillars of state for the sake of regime stability. Neither of these systems lends themselves to an easy trajectory for more balanced political development.

This points to a tentative conclusion. While institutions can lose their influence at certain times, once they have achieved a certain degree of strength or politicization, their potential to participate in politics remains, unless they are completely subordinated to the president's centralization of power. If institutions are created but never endowed with political potency, then their ability to organize politically or grow stronger on their own is limited. Hence, the B`ath party and military/security services apparatus can be described as politicized institutions and the NDP and Egyptian military as depoliticized institutions. If given a choice between ruling a politicized or depoliticized institutional order, the latter shows a higher capacity for system adaptation.

The differences in Egypt and Syria's contemporary capacity to adapt is linked to the character of each system's institutional arena. Syria is, and has been since 1970, more of an institutionally oligarchic system where competing institutions share power and protect their own interests. This type of political system requires a president to be more actively involved in reaching governing compromises and consensus. It also constrains the ability of the president to dramatically break away from the system's existing course. Egypt, on the other hand, is an executive-heavy political system where depoliticized institutions do not maintain the ability to act independently outside the president's purview. While advisors that comprise the Egyptian president's small kitchen cabinet no doubt constitute a type of informal oligarchy, no institutional oligarchy exists in the system. As a consequence, institutional constraints are not invasive as the president works on more narrow lines in formulating ruling consensus. The Egyptian president is not constrained by leading representatives of what are thought to be the institutions of state. Syria's president is constrained by such institutions. Egypt is an oligarchy of individuals in comparison to

Syria’s oligarchy of institutions. As I will argue in the next chapter, politics based on individuals is easier to alter than institutional group politics. Hence, Egypt’s greater propensity to incorporate and shed elites and non-elites into and out of the political arena as well as its higher capacity for system adaptation.

Different strategies of institution formation led to a divergence in the character of institutional politics that developed in Egypt and Syria. The politicized institutions that emerged in Syria were capable of political participation outside the institution of the presidency while Egypt’s depoliticized institutions prove incapable of defending themselves, much less independently participating in politics beyond the presidency. Syria’s institutions became repositories of power while Egyptian institutions became servants of presidential power. This, in turn, produced different styles of co-optation of elites and non-elites, which is a fundamental aspect that influences an authoritarian regime’s capacity to adapt. The next chapter examines the varying character of elite co-optation in light of the differences in Egypt and Syria’s institutional types.

Chapter Three
Coalition Change and Management in Varying Authoritarian Systems: Institutions and Elite Co-optation

3.1 Introduction

Having established the historical origin of Egypt's depoliticized and Syria's politicized institutional types, I will examine elite co-optation in those countries. For the purpose of this study, elites are narrowly defined as a political system's highest echelon of government actors such as ministers or those attached to official government-sponsored organs that contribute to policy formation. Government elites possess the greatest ability to induce primary policy change in a society because they are institutionally involved in the process of government –- regardless of the weakness of their position or institution.[262] They are designated by their positions such as high-ranking party member, government minister, or presidential advisor. Lesser elites include pro-government personnel attached to state-funded organs, which although unable to introduce political change, can sanction or criticize higher elite decisions publicly. They include intellectuals that serve political power, editor-in-chiefs of official and semi-official newspapers, leading members of state-affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research centers. Other elites can include businessmen with access to government decision-makers. The elites' varying amounts of power depend on how useful they are to the system, how developed their patronage networks are, and their commitment to elite cohesion. Proximity to the center - be it the presidency or one of the system's power centers - also determines an elite's strength or vulnerability. The higher one climbs in a political system, the deeper one's stake in the system becomes. The ability to network and attach oneself to a patron allows entry into the elite circle of any political system's pinnacle. It also requires an unquantifiable mixture of informality, talent, and effort.

This chapter comparatively evaluates elite co-optation politics in Syria and Egypt. Elite co-optation entails a multi-faceted discussion that focuses on coalition change and management (discussed later in the chapter). By developing on the last chapter's argument that Egypt possesses depoliticized institutions while Syria operates with politicized institutions, I will discuss the contemporary differences in Egypt's consolidated authoritarian presidential system and Syria's competing institutional power centers. After situating the presidents' roles in both case studies, the chapter examines individual top-elite co-optation. The aim is to demonstrate why mutual dependence and competition among the elites encourages stability, and equally important, why elite co-optation and developing regime consensus, which facilitates system adaptation, is a consequence of the types of institutions.

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[262] Non-government actors are not elites, but they are capable of inducing policy change. This, while true, does not fit my definition of an elite because examples of opposition organizations or protests tend to act more as a constraint on regime activity rather introducing pro-active policy change. Corporatism and co-optation is a negotiated process but power distribution disparities make government agents more likely to introduce change than lobbying or protesting opposition. To see a variant of the other argument, see Marsha Pripstein Posusney, *Labor and the State in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

3.2 Presidential Roles in Contemporary Egypt and Syria

Currently, Egypt and Syria's political systems possess different types of presidents. This is partially attributed to Hosni Mubarak's consolidated authoritarian presidency and Bashar al-Asad's unconsolidated tenure at Syria's helm. Naturally, a president's incumbency and efficiency at overcoming internal political challenges contribute to the strength and autonomy of his rule. Yet, presidential consolidation is not the single determining factor in the relationship between a president's position, the institutional arena, and elite agents within such structures. Inherited institutional arrangements – whether the institutions are politicized or not - also determine the degree of power one can wield. Presidents in any system continuously redefine and rework the political order to maintain and increase autonomous influence vis-à-vis other social forces and institutions that attempt to assert their significance. The relative autonomy of a president determines the amount of work required to maintain his position. The point of convergence is political systems are fluid and necessitate constant attention and adjustments for leaders and elites to remain in control. Whether analyzing a consolidated or unconsolidated president, each needs to work at maintaining political control by maneuvering through variant and particular institutional arrangements. It is within this context that a fully consolidated president needs to work less at maintenance than a less consolidated president.

While these processes are universal in authoritarian systems, individual regimes embody different institutional relationships. Generally, a system with politicized institutions is more difficult to manipulate or manage. This is because such politicized settings reflect the presence of more than one organizing institution that contributes to coalition change and management and how policies are implemented. As such, these institutions must possess the ability to defend themselves against each other or face the possibility of marginalization or even demise. These institutions include the presidency, militaries, intelligence services, or ruling parties. A competitive field of institutional interests does not necessarily equate with elite conflict. While such politicized institutional systems are more prone to elite conflict if the matter is reduced to a zero-sum situation, elites – including presidents – recognize it is not in the system's interest to deflate politics to such a level. Regime stability for all elites, therefore, takes precedence over one institution's complete dominance of the system. Thus, as will be shown, elites engage in a competition that aims to make other elites and their institutional foundations dependent on their influence. As all realize that reaching outside of the elite circle to appeal for more populist support jeopardizes system stability, elites that violate the pact are immediately expelled. In this respect, elites in consolidated post-populist systems unite against the mobilization of large social blocs threatening to the regime. In effect, elites compete for elite influence rather than for a greater popular base.

In systems that do not possess politicized institutional frameworks, the president's position is stronger. A strong president, endowed with extensive constitutional powers, can incrementally alter the system if he is capable of utilizing legal powers to situate the presidency as the state's key arbitrator. Yet, if a president is unable to control the legal mechanisms because of other politicized institutional interference, the likelihood of establishing an authoritarian presidential system where institutions can be depoliticized is doubtful. An unconsolidated president still competes to situate his position and ward off elite challenges, but the lack of semi-autonomous politicized institutions is advantageous for an unconsolidated president's ability to control the political arena. In order to achieve an objective, a president can temporarily strengthen a weak institution. It is unlikely in such a system that a president would politicize an institution to a degree that it could develop some autonomy that may turn against his rule.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, in Syria, institutions have more of a politicized background than Egypt's depoliticized order. In Syria, several inter-institutional power centers, semi-autonomous institutions, and an unconsolidated president currently compete for influence over the political system. The reason is because Hafiz al-Asad had created politicized institutions to widen the system base during the 1970s and these entities still possessed the ability to reassert themselves after his death. Egypt's experience evidences a different trend. Sadat and Mubarak's depoliticization of weak institutions reduced the likelihood of structurally supported elite power centers emerging in the first place. In this vein, Sadat initiated the demise of Nasir's Arab Socialist Union (ASU) by replacing it with the organizationally weaker National Democratic Party (NDP). Similarly, Sadat began the process of depoliticizing the military by incrementally removing high-ranking officers from active participatory roles without de-institutionalizing it as a pillar.[263] Mubarak has continued both trends initiated by Sadat. Hence, Egypt's presidential-dominated system exhibits depoliticized institutions. Syria is the contrasting case. This difference contributes to each state's varying capacity to co-opt and shed elites. It is within this context that specificities of Egypt and Syria's contemporary presidencies are examined.

3.2.1 Hosni Mubarak's Egypt

Egypt's current president, Hosni Mubarak, assumed office after Sadat was assassinated in October 1981. He has ruled without a designated vice-president during this time using a host of approaches and mixing degrees of coercion and concession to domestic opposition and allies. The only public accountability the president faces has been a referendum every six years, although his nomination as the single candidate is securely controlled by his parliament.[264] The president is constitutionally entitled to unlimited terms. Unlike other Arab presidents such as Bourguiba or Saddam Husayn, who achieved 99-percent majorities in referendums, Mubarak seems more modest, having won 93.79 percent in the 1999 referendum. Mubarak's insatiable pursuit of political power at the expense of other actors and institutions has adversely affected Egypt's political culture.[265] Whether on mass or elite levels, Egypt's presidential authoritarian system concentrates as much power as possible in his hands. The 1971 constitution provides the president with overwhelming powers. But it is Mubarak's ability of use such powers that has allowed the further consolidation of his position. Generally, analysts view the early 1980s as a period of relative tolerance and accommodation[266] while the 1990s were characterized by political repression and deliberalization.[267] Mubarak utilized Egypt's weak and depoliticized institutional field to maintain his patrimonial rule over the system while pursuing limited economic liberalization. As Maye Kassem argues:

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[263] Imad Harb, "The Egyptian Military in Politics: Disengagement or Accommodation?" *Middle East Journal* Volume 57, No. 2 (Spring 2003): 269-290.

[264] On 26 February 2005, Hosni Mubarak called on parliament to amend article 76 of the constitution to do away with a presidential referendum and replace it with direct, multi-candidacy presidential elections. The amendment, which is highly restrictive for independent and opposition party candidates was approved in

> The fact that, after nearly two decades in power, he continues to claim concern for stability as justification for the lack of progress on either front [socio-economic or political] cannot be attributed simply to an inferior personal ability to strategize and innovate change. His circumspect attitude can instead be interpreted as a strategy aimed at safeguarding the system of personalized authoritarian rule.[268]

Mubarak's patrimonial tendencies are reflected in the manner in which he perceives himself as the state's father and Egyptians as his children wanting stability at all costs.[269] Nowhere was this more evident than in an interview he conducted with pro-Mubarak media mogul `Imad al-Din Adib, entitled, "My Word on History" in April 2005.[270] Throughout the course of the six-hour affair, Mubarak explained his leadership qualities and experiences as if he was effectively the only person capable of leading Egypt. Since Mubarak, personally, sits at the seemingly unchallengeable apex of the classic political pyramid, it is not surprising that his political perceptions are highly patrimonial.

Although Egypt cannot be described as a "sultanistic regime"[271] because some external and internal constraints do exist, Mubarak has proved capable of checking autonomous institutional development. The institutions that formally govern Egypt are not capable of defending themselves

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parliament on 10 May and approved by 83-percent in a popular referendum. On 7 September 2005, the Egyptian president was elected for the first time as Mubarak winning 89–percent of the national vote.

[265] Joshua A. Stacher, "A Democracy with Fangs and Claws and its Effect on Egyptian Political Culture," *Arab Studies Quarterly* Volume 23 No. 3 (Summer 2001): 83-99.

[266] Joshua Stacher, "Parties Over: The Demise of Egypt's Opposition Parties," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Volume 2 No. 2 (November 2004): 12.

[267] Eberhard Kienle, "More than a Response to Islamism: The Political Deliberalization of Egypt in the 1990s" *Middle East Journal* Volume 52 No. 2 (Spring 1998): 219.

[268] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*, 57.

[269] Ibid , 51.

[270] "My Word on History," broadcast on Egyptian State Television, 24-26 April 2005.

[271] H.E. Chehabi and Linz, "A theory of Sultanism I," in Chehabi and Linz (ed.) *Sultanic Regimes* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998): 3-25.

against the president, much less independently participating in the formulation of the regime consensus. Mubarak does not seem content with his position of supreme authority vis-à-vis formal institutions, but, rather, continues to expand his reach into individual government portfolios and job descriptions. He penetrates governmental portfolios and jurisdictions while violating the autonomy of state institutions, so as to constantly fortify his unchallenged position in the system. As publisher Hisham Kassem argues:

> Whenever Mubarak sees any organization or anyone *potentially* capable of strengthening themselves and, therefore, able to challenge the daily workings of his rule – be it an autonomous prime minister or a NGO – he not only moves to remove the person after weakening their base, he annexes their office ensuring its future subservience to his rule. One only needs to compare Fu`ad Mohy al-Din with `Atif `Obayd to see the Prime Minister's declining autonomy. Since he consolidated, Egyptian politics has been about the utter destruction of the legislation, judicial, and executive branches save his powers.[272]

Indeed, if one is to elaborate on Fu`ad Mohy al-Din's role compared to that of Atif `Obayd, variance in the degree of autonomy between the two PMs is striking. As Kassem argues, even "the appearance of being independent from the presidency remains unacceptable in Mubarak's Egypt."[273]

Mubarak was initially constrained by the inheritance of an economic and politically liberalizing doctrine with commitments to the rule of law. Consequently, Mubarak has never disregarded a Supreme Constitution Court ruling.[274] By either selectively applying the court's decisions by manipulating the on-the-ground application or initiating parliamentary legislation to eliminate the legal obstacles, he manages to maintain the guise of respecting judicial independence. Mubarak also confronted various domestic crises such as the 1986 Central Security Forces (CSF) riots over salaries. A military and political challenge emerged when he was forced to publicly compete and exclude the popular minister of defense `Abd al-Hamid Abu Ghazala in 1988. Military officers did not support Abu Ghazala's house arrest, but Mubarak weathered the backlash of the key constituency and strengthened his position through the patrimonial restructuring before further depoliticizing their ranks.[275] In the 1990s, economic challenges such as an increasing external debt, deflating currency value (L.E.), and price inflation forced the president to steer the country away from economic collapse, by selectively implementing an IMF-sponsored Structural Adjustment Program. The regime also battled a radical Islamist insurgency in the 1990s that targeted government officials and tourism - Egypt's top revenue earner.

Similarly, regional political developments, such as the Palestinian Intifadas, forced Mubarak to work vigorously to defend his position. Despite only visiting Israel once for the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, Mubarak honors the Camp David Accords and oversaw the return of full-Egyptian control of the Sinai. Indeed, Egyptian-Israeli co-operation appears as if it will be extended to Egyptian security control over the Gaza strip. Lastly, the close and occasionally frictional alliance with the U.S. causes frequent domestic legitimacy deficits. Mubarak was criticized for Egypt's direct and overt military participation in Operation Desert Shield against Iraq in January 1991 and was similarly criticized after the America invaded Iraq on 19 March 2003.[276] Regardless of the unpopularity of his foreign policy, Mubarak survived and learned from his experience and as such incrementally strengthened his position at Egypt's helm.

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[272] Interview, Hisham Kassem, Chief-Manager of *al-Misri al-Yom*, Cairo, 12 February 2004.

[273] Kassem, *Egyptian Politics,* 29.

[274] Interview, Enid Hill, AUC Political Science Professor, Cairo, March 2004.

[275] Robert Springborg has developed this Mubarak-Abu Ghazala case study in his book *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989): 98-104 and 118-123.

His ability to overcome political challenges is made easier because he operates in an environment where institutions are depoliticized. Elites without strong or politicized institutional backing challenged Mubarak when he was not a consolidated leader, but their opposition was defused without much difficulty. Neither Ministers nor the cabinet as a whole have power bases autonomous of the presidency. The NDP is institutionally unable to defend itself and remains the mainstay of personalities rather than contributing to organized institutional-based rule.

The Egyptian military also serves as a presidential appendage as its various sub-branches are involved in safeguarding the regime. As one scholar argues, "It [military] remains the president's private preserve."[277] Yet, as noted, this process began under Sadat. As Harb states, "Sadat disallowed the emergence of an `Amir-like personality within the armed services and frequently dismissed top officers…Mubarak has allowed for the economic independence of the military while assuring himself complete domination of it."[278] Mubarak's wide-reaching powers of appointment reinforce loyalty to the president, who was previously an air force general. As a relatively professional organization, the military as an institution remains depoliticized and unable to act without presidential initiative.

Mubarak's rule demonstrates to what extent the presidency has strengthened and remains the only extensively institutionalized political office in Egypt. The chief means of Mubarak's success consists of incrementally eroding any organizational, personal, or institutional resiliency that emerges. Following his inheritance of a weak institutional framework, Mubarak has deepened and entrenched its Egypt's depoliticized institutions. As a result, Mubarak's twenty-five year reign makes him the longest ruling Egyptian leader since the Pharaonic era. The president, however, does need elites to perpetuate the personalized patrimonial system that prevails.

While this discussion of the Egypt's presidency suggests that Mubarak is an omnipotent figure, he is forced to maintain an elite coalition and a minimal popular constituency. Mubarak is, after all, unable to rule by himself. Power may be concentrated in his office but he must be capable of expanding it outwardly through patron-client networks and generating some legitimacy from selective populism to remain unchallenged. This, in turn, places constraints on him, although they are not institutionally based. Thus, even in a system so blatantly unbalanced in the president's favor, he must maintain a consensus among his political establishment. While he is capable of influencing his establishment by introducing new elites or removing older ones, compliant followers perform their duties, and incorporate their patronage networks necessary to perpetuate the system in the absence of a strong institutional setting. Hence, he must maintain a constant engagement with the political establishment and work to discipline the political elites. The Syrian presidency is markedly different from Egypt's since Bashar al-Asad's succession in July 2000.

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[276] At the 20 March 20003 protests in Cairo's Their Square, protesters chanted, among others anti-Mubarak chants, "Ya `Ala, 'ual l-Abuak…al-milaynin biyakhrahu." [Hey `Ala (president's son) tell your father, Millions hate him].

[277] Harb, 287.

[278] Ibid, 289.

3.2.2 Bashar al-Asad's Syria

Syria's political system transformed after Hafiz al-Asad died on 10 June 2000. Prior to Asad's death, similarities existed with other regional authoritarian leaders. During Asad's life, he led an "authoritarian-presidential system with distinct neo-patrimonial traits."[279] High levels of divide-and-rule tactics, corporatism, and centralized rule maintained stability in a system that previously was marred by destabilizing elite conflict. Asad, like Mubarak, was the supreme commander of the armed forces, head of state, and key arbitrator in all high policy creation. Similar to the current Egyptian situation, Asad was empowered and able to employ all constitution's extensive executive powers. The elite political arena comprised of several institutions that were headed by security "Barons", senior ministers and veteran party apparatchiki that Asad ably controlled and balanced. Yet, Asad also consulted with his elites in high policy matters rather than remaining above the system. It is acknowledged that Hafiz anchored his regime in the pillars of the B`ath party and its corporatist subsidiaries, the state bureaucracy, and the security forces.[280] While these structures were politicized, Asad was able to influence and dominate them through various tactics over the years.

While not much difference exists in the constitutional powers of the Egyptian and Syrian presidents, institutional considerations produce divergence in how each president interacts with his elites. Organizational structures, and particularly the B`ath party, do matter in Syria. As is increasingly evident, Syria's politicized institutional framework is re-asserting itself against Bashar's decisive consolidation of the presidency. Indeed, not only have the B`ath party and security services acquired invigorated policy influence since 2000, they are currently able to relatively constrain Bashar's power. The institutions, which Hafiz capably manipulated, have become centers of power in his absence. While Hafiz initially developed institutions in an attempt to insulate the regime, he failed to completely depoliticize them as he steered Syria through tumultuous periods. Hence, it is important to note that when institutions are strengthened, their potential to act as independent power centers exists because of their capacity to organize politics.

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[279] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, 133.

[280] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 80-87.

The ability of politicized institutions to re-assert themselves can be seen as not only elites protecting their position but as an obstacle to adaptation.

The Syrian vacuum created by Hafiz's departure adjusted by transforming the political system from an authoritarian presidential system to an oligarchy of various institutional power centers that compete for influence. Hence, the system went from one in which the president weighed suggestions before deciding on a consensus to one where no single arbitrator exists. Rather than struggle for domination over the system, the institutional centers act defensively so as not to be excluded from power. This, consequently, appears to have increased examples of inefficiently, public contradictions, a lack of elite cohesion and coherent policy direction since Bashar assumed the presidency in July 2000.

Syria's system transformation was elite guided,[281] but the elites would have been powerless to constrain the new president without politicized institutions capable of independent political action. The elites, within their various institutions, were capable of rallying their power centers to slow the pace of change and check presidential power. As Perthes argues, "Bashar al-Asad owed his position to the very regime at the top of which he had been placed. At the outset, therefore, it seemed that some sort of collective leadership would emerge whereby the President would have to share his power with other members of the leadership, particularly those who had been brought into their posts by his father."[282] New presidents always must decipher existing power relations and interests as they consolidate their positions at the system's apex. However, in the case of Syria, the prevalence of a politicized ruling party and other institutions and Bashar's inability to counter them has made consolidation difficult.

Bashar has neither consolidated his regime nor appears capable of doing so without a dramatic alteration of the politicized institutions he inherited. One reason is that Syria differs structurally from other Arab systems, and particularly Egypt's system. Not since Sadat's assumption of power have elites backed by institutions countered presidential power there. Sadat's depoliticization of the system's arrangements in the 1970s reorganized politics in such a way that personalities rather than institutional conglomerates vie for influence. Hence, when Mubarak became Egypt's president, he was forced to overcome personalities—not institutions—that sought to check his consolidation. In the political game of influence, it is important to emphasize that counterbalancing people is easier than politically active institutions.

Adding intrigue to complexity, some Syrian and Lebanese analysts question Bashar's real power in the system as they paint him as a figurehead while entrenched elites control and benefit from behind the scenes puppet-mastering.[283] There is a tremendous amount of symbolic and continuity significance to Bashar's presidency.[284] Researched evidence, however, demonstrates that Bashar is a key player in Syria's transformed oligarchic system. He shares power with elites of various entrenched institutions in a way that Hafiz was never forced to do. Bashar is required to work and follow-up on initiated reforms rather than be assured that the elites will implement his policy changes. The presidency under Bashar is a power center competing for influence as much as the B`ath party or the multiple security services. As Seale argues, "We cannot say the president has no power. While other interests exist, he effectively has all the extensive services and powers of the presidency. He sets the tone for the country through his speeches and is in charge of meeting important foreign dignitaries and attending international conferences."[285] While Bashar may not be able to utilize the extensive constitutional powers his father possessed, he still maintains the most cohesive of competing institutions. As Samir al-Taqi argues, "The office of the presidency is the most developed institution in the country. His office has the best-trained and armed military squads defending it, the constitution's legal reach, and popular legitimacy that the party does not have for instance. Regardless of the centers of power, the system was created to point to the presidency. It is not his arena to win, it's his to lose"[286] Yet, if Bashar sits on top of the presidency, is it possible to argue he is not consolidating? While Bashar is a force in Syrian politics, indicators demonstrate that he is not solidly consolidating his presidency. This may be linked to a fundamental institutional difference between the Egyptian and Syrian presidential systems.

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[281] Interview, Patrick Seale, journalist and Syrian expert, Cairo, 10 October 2003.

[282] Perthes, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad: Modernisation and the Limits of Change," *Adelphia Papers* Volume 366 (July 2004): 5.

[283] Interviews with academics, activists, journalists, and diplomats in Damascus, September-December 2003 and Beirut, March 2004.

According to observers of Syrian politics, Bashar's greatest obstacle for consolidating power is a lack of ability to counter the party. According to these observers, Bashar makes pronouncements but is unable to implement his reforms because he lacks the will to do so.[287] Observers point to Bashar's inaugural speech in July 2000 when he generally argued for reform based on "accountability," "transparency," and "the rule of law, and "democratic thinking."[288] Despite these statements, however, analysts note Bashar failed to create a plan of action. As the International Crisis Group (ICG) report argues, "There is little doubt that he remains dependent on the regime he inherited and of which he is a quintessential product…He has yet to devise or implement a coherent project or strategy of his own, domestic or foreign."[289]

Indeed, examples indicate Bashar is constrained by elites backed by the B`ath party, military, `Alawi community, and intelligence services, which lends credence to the power centers argument in contemporary Syria. Constraining the president entails two broad tactics. Firstly, the

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[284] Joshua Stacher, "Explaining Persistent Authoritarianism: Syria's Untraditional Presidential Succession," Unpublished paper, BRISMES conference, Exeter, 14 July 2003.
[285] Interview, Seale, 10 October 2003.
[286] Interview, Samir al-Taqi, member of the al-Faysil wing of the Communist party, Damascus, 29 December 2003.
[287] Interview, European diplomat, Damascus, 1 November 2003.
[288] *Al-Thawra* 17 July 2000. An English translation of the address is available at http://www.albab.com/arab/countries/syria/bashar00a.htm, accessed 2 November 2003.
[289] International Crisis Group, "Syria Under Bashar II: Domestic Policy Challenges," *ICG Middle East Report, No 24*, (11 February 2004): 6

B`athist elites circumscribe Bashar's position by disregarding his reforms whether by bureaucratically blocking them or simply ignoring them. An example of Bashar's lack of control over the ruling party is Executive Decision 408 of June 2003. According to one participant, Bashar fought for months for the party's Regional Command (RC) to accept a decision that separated executive policy creation from the party's control. Executive Decision 408 states explicitly that the party's role is separated from that of the state or government, and personnel decisions in government would prioritize merit over party affiliation. Lacking a solid base around him to counter existing powerful elites, Bashar is thought to have pursued this in order to introduce more "reformers" (as opposed to B`athists) into government-appointed positions.[290] Reformers in this sense mean people willing to build Bashar's independent networks, which will be capable of challenging other power centers.[291] Yet, rather than a sense of Bashar getting stronger, the opposite seems to be the trend.

For example, when a new cabinet was announced in September 2003, the percentage of pro-Bashar elements decreased as the key reformist Minister of Industry, `Issam Z`aim, was falsely charged with corruption while other non-party actors such as economist Nabil Sukkar were passed over for ministerial postings. Instead, B`athist representation in the new cabinet increased, indicating a setback for Bashar's agenda. Indeed, the September 2003 cabinet-reshuffle "proportionately contains more members of the ruling Baath party than the previous government."[292]

It is also possible to argue that the latest cabinet reshuffle in October 2004 continued this trend of marginalization of Bashar. Thus, while Bashar successfully lobbied the RC to agree to Executive Decision 408, it was quickly nullified by the B`ath party's disregarding its practical application. Yet, ignoring Bashar's initiatives is not restricted to the role of the party. The power centers that exist within institutions are more influential than any single institutional source. It is claimed that between 2000 and 2003 "some 1900 decrees, laws and administrative orders carrying Bashar's signature have been issued…very few have been implemented, a result of bureaucratic inertia or outright opposition by high-ranking officials."[293] Elites with extensive patronage networks within various institutions are capable of rallying support that dilutes the president's directives. Yet, the elites have not simply blocked the president's influence through disregarding his pronouncements. They have also managed to prevent him from building a strong counter-elite.

As seen in the case of pro-Bashar technocrats such as `Issam Z`aim or Ghassan al-Rifa`i, Bashar has not been able to keep high profile ministers or appointees to strengthen his position vis-à-vis the party power centers. The patronage networks of some of the B`athist elites, such as then-

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[290] Interview, former political consultant to Bashar, Damascus, November 2003.

[291] Interview, Ayman `Abd al-Nor, editor of *All 4 Syria* electronic newsletter, Damascus, 22 December 2003.

[292] Nicholas Blanford, "As reform falters, Syrian elite tighten grip," *Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 2003).

[293] ICG, *Domestic Policy Challenges*, 12.

VP `Abd al-Halim Khadam or then-PM Mostapha Miro, have been far more extensive than Bashar's. Thus, elites engage in a process of constant curtailment of Bashar's support base. This is not done in an absolute manner, but rather through modestly limiting his advances. Given the party's corporatist reach, it is unsurprising that Bashar is easily constrained. For every appointment Bashar makes, the party responds with years of experience, networks, and organizational attributes that dilute his gains. While the president theoretically governs the most effective institution in the country, the party has been capable of blocking him, which effectively lessens his powers in a *de facto* sense. Some, such as Landis,[294] portray the struggle for contemporary Syria as taking place between the old and new guard. Yet, elites within politicized institutions are the key to understanding the Syrian predicament. As a former consultant argues, "Z`aim was removed, al-Rifa`i's ministry was stripped. There are no reformers left. The party hunts anyone near the president and he is incapable of protecting his people."[295] Yet, as mentioned earlier, this is not about total domination of the system's center. It is about keeping the president dependent on top elites and their power centers. The party seeks to make the president dependent as the president looks to incrementally advance his influence against the institutions. This makes achieving a regime consensus difficult and, consequently, blocks system adaptation.

Bashar's inability to control personnel is not constrained comprehensively. A growing trend of appointing Damascene, non-B`athist, Sunnis – particularly in education portfolios is apparent since 2003. Observers view this as Bashar's attempt to counter the party's Regional Command (RC), and its derivative multiple power centers, by nominating non-party technocrats.[296] The most prominent appointments have been `Issam al-`Awwa's appointment as Dean in Damascus University, Hani Mortada's appointment as minister of higher education,[297] and `Abdallah Dirdari's appointment as head of the State Planning Commission. As such, Bashar is constrained to such as degree that changes in the education field are perceived as his chief strategy of breaking the B`ath party's political control.[298]

Political participants, however, were not impressed by Bashar's strategy of limiting the party's reasserted influence. As one observer argued, "Bashar's presidency is similar to Sadat's. He is either going to carry out a coup against the elites or else he will be a toy in their hands."[299] Samir al-Taqi, former member of the Faysil wing of the communist party, made a similar point in a perhaps more nuanced manner. He argues, "Unless Bashar makes important leadership changes, the party will ably maintain its political hegemony within the system."[300] Every unconsolidated president faces obstacles and entrenched interests, which he must offset if he is to effectively consolidate his presidency. In the case of Bashar, the B`ath party's politicized character has proved to be more difficult than in other Arab states with weaker institutional frameworks. As Bashar appears on a slow path towards consolidation, the prevalence of multiple and overlapping politicized power centers increases Syria's inability to demonstrate basic governmental efficiency. This attribute is what hinders system adaptation. It is during these occasional episodes of government inefficiency that insights of the dynamics between Bashar vis-à-vis the power centers can be detected.

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[294] Joshua Landis, "The United States and Reform in Syria," *Syria Report* No 18 (May 2004): 4-6. To see a reprint of the article http://www.tharwaproject.com/English/Main-Sec/Features/Feat_06_13_04/landis1.htm accessed on 20 October 2004.

[295] Interview, Syrian consultant to the presidency, Damascus, November 2003.

[296] Interview, al-Taqi, Damascus, 2 December 2003.

[297] Mortada is an anomaly to the trend that Bashar's appointments are non-B`athist, Damascene, and Sunni. Mortada is a Shi`a and is director of the prominent Sayida Zaynib foundation.

[298] Interview, Sadiq al-`Azm, Damascus University Philosophy professor, Damascus, 20 December 2003.

[299] Interview, Syrian political observer, Damascus, 3 November 2003.

Syria's vote on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1483 in May 2003 is a telling example that demonstrates Bashar's position among the politicized power centers. It also demonstrates the inefficiency that occasionally results in a government managed by power centers with poorly defined roles. During 2002 and 2003, Syria was a rotating representative on the fifteen-member U.N. Security Council. Syria foresaw negative repercussions from the U.S.'s war against Iraq, and, as a result, its Security Council role was spotlighted internationally. To vote against resolutions concerning Iraq, supported by the Security Council majority, could be potentially used as diplomatic fodder to isolate Damascus. On the other hand, approving such measures went against Syria's interests and invited domestic and regional criticism. Syria voted favorably for U.N. resolution 1441 in November 2002, which gave the final warning to Saddam to abandon Iraq's non-existent weapons programs. When Bush launched the war in March 2003, Damascus rightly anticipated the war's fallout and exploited the U.S.'s lack of strategic planning. Syria was the Arab's world most outspoken critic while the other Arab states tacitly supported the U.S. and curtailed domestic protests. Syria's opposition to the war is attributed to veteran B`ath elites, who experienced similar regional challenges under Hafiz's leadership, and decided to stand fast rather than be seen as capitulating to Western regional designs.[301] In interviews with American embassy personnel, they conceded that the regime's predictions were more accurate than that of the Bush administration.[302] Regardless, Syria increasingly became a focus of neo-conservative attention with some, such as John Bolton, advocating regime change in Syria.[303]

Despite its stance regarding Iraq, the Syrian government was far from united on the subject. As the war's aftermath unfolded, the struggle between power centers became publicly apparent. On 22 May 2003, the U.N. Security Council convened and voted on resolution 1483, which legitimized the U.S. occupation of Iraq as it created the Provisional Coalition Authority, and cancelled U.N. sanctions. The resolution passed 14-0 during the meeting. Syria's U.N. representative, Faysil Makdad, did not attend the vote for the resolution. Makdad showed up in the afternoon and presented Syria's affirmation. While Syria's vote on 1483 was noted into the U.N. minutes afterwards, it was recorded as an abstention officially. According to a former Syrian political advisor present at the Regional Command's deliberation of 1483,[304] the confusion surrounding Syria's vote presents a unique insight into how its power centers interact when they disagree over an issue. The B`ath party's Regional Command (RC) met the evening before the vote. Bashar was not present but indicated that he wished Syria to vote affirmatively. Two RC members, vice-president Khadam and Foreign Minister Farok al-Shar`a, opposed the resolution. When a show of hands was given, all RC members supported the resolution while Khadam and al-Shar`a voted against it. Makdad was contacted and told the RC voted for the resolution. The following morning Makdad was contacted again and told Khadam and al-Shar`a said a mistake was made. Perplexed by the contradictory signals from Damascus and unable to obtain confirmation of Syria's vote, Makdad did not attend the vote. When Bashar was told Syria abstained, he asked for clarification and was angered with the senior B`athists interference. He ordered Makdad to the U.N. to record Syria's vote for the resolution. Makdad explained, "if we were given more time in the morning, we would have done this and raised our hands with the other people."[305] The confusion surrounding this U.N. resolution is rich with interpretative possibilities about Syria's contemporary political arrangements because it demonstrates how the power centers interact.

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[300] Interview, al-Taqi, 2 December 2003.

[301] Interview, Western diplomat, Damascus, November 2003.

[302] Interview, US embassy staff, Damascus, Fall 2003.

[303] The clearest argument Bolton makes is in his testimony in front of the Middle East and Central Asia Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee on 16 September 2003 when he advocated regime change in Syria. However, Bolton argued such a position since December 2002. To read the transcript, see http://freelebanon.org/testimonies/t75.htm, accessed 19 October 2004.

This example does not suggest that every decision is taken in such a conflicted manner but it does show Bashar's contested role in Syria's oligarchic system. As `Abd al-Hamid suggests, "Bashar is one of the equals while his father was first among them."[306] Entrenched elites, who are supported by politicized institutions, are capable of maintaining power centers independent of the president. While Bashar is not powerless, he does not command the position or ability to decisively exercise his constitutionally stipulated powers, which delineates formal hierarchies and duties between the presidency and the party. After all, according to articles 95 and 109 of the Syrian constitution the president is endowed with the power to dismiss any appointed position in the bureaucracy and military. However, the constitution does not confer any powers over elected positions such as RC members. On another level, it is worth pointing out here that the formal powers of the RC are not constitutionally enshrined but are instead formalized within the party by-laws framework.[307] As such, this contrasts greatly with other regional authoritarian presidential systems, such as in Egypt, because even in the absence of constitutional powers the RC can blatantly interfere with public policy against the president's stated will.

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[304] Interview, former political consultant, Damascus, Fall 2003.

[305] Stewart Stogel, "U.N.: Stumbling, Bumbling and Payola," *Newsmax.com* (23 May 2003). http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/5/23/152128.shtml, accessed on 19 September 2003.

[306] Interview, `Ammar `Abd al-Hamid, co-founder of al-Thawra NGO, Damascus, 8 October 2003.

[307] The constitution refers to the Ba`th party only in article 8 of the constitution which states that the Ba`th "is the leading party in society." Syrian Constitution (1973).

Discussing power centers is potentially misleading. The key power center relative to the president is the party. Others that unequally vie for influence are the bureaucracy, redundant security services, and military. Nevertheless, the institutions described in this work are not monolithic blocs. The B`ath party, for example, does not move in a unified manner against the president's center. Also, research indicates that "old guard-new guard" distinction inaccurately depict the cleavage in contemporary Syria. Older elites have young clients, as patronage networks cut across generation. As every individual maintains separate and overlapping patronage networks, institutional power centers sometimes coalesce. Hence, a B`ath member may be part of a reforming wing that supports the president's more liberal measures and another member may not view political change as advantageous to system's evolution. Both belong to the B`ath but not to the same power centers within the politicized institution. Counting other institutions such as the military and its various power centers, the security services, bureaucracy, and regional elements throughout the country, hundreds of factions may exist. Hence, discussion of the B`ath party as a power center that counterbalances oversimplifies and identifies only the most salient and policy-relevant cleavage. Also, power centers that existed during Hafiz's tenure were incapable of influencing policy in the way they do under Bashar's leadership. Hence, the system has changed with the leadership transition. Power is undoubtedly more fragmented in post-Hafiz Syria.

One could argue that Bashar has not yet consolidated his position and that power relationships will tilt favorably in his direction with time. On the other hand, the fact is the president does not have a solid base to challenge the prevailing system. As economist Nabil Sukkar argues, "There has not been much change in personalities within the party. When they disappear, will it change the dynamic? When an older member falls, he is not necessarily being replaced by a pro-presidential addition. Most of the entrenched elites maintain powerful and influential crony capitalist links, which are not diminishing. In fact, it is more accurate to argue they are increasing."[308] As Sukkar's comments indicate, Bashar faces "entrenched elites" supported by politicized institutions, which are capable of defending themselves, that constrain him. To make matters worse, the institutions are protected because of their politicized character and autonomy. Bashar has not been able to attack the institutions to eliminate his opponents because an attempt to depoliticize the party is tantamount to attacking the political system. As Bashar cannot replace the B`ath, he will have to continue to compete with it.

In the case of Syria, Hafiz al-Asad strengthened and politicized institutions to widen the regime's base. Whether he was developing his institutions or maintaining them afterwards, Hafiz always sat in a chief arbitrator's role above the system's workings. The institutions inactivity during the 1980s did not entail their permanent enervation as they reasserted themselves following Hafiz's death. Bashar al-Asad inherited the presidency, but not the informal powers of his father. Consequently, the Syrian presidency and political system has been transformed to an informal oligarchy where the politicized institutions of the presidency, B`ath party, and security services compete for influence and share power. While the presidency maintains wide constitutional powers, Bashar seems incapable of asserting his control over the state's pillars. Hafiz al-Asad did not rule as an omnipotent puppet-master, but rather as the system's chief arbitrator among various institutional power centers. Bashar, on balance, is not the system's arbitrator. He participates as an elite but not above the entrenched elites' politicized power centers. Being an arbitrator over politicized institutions is different than being a president that can be challenged by institutions capable of accumulating power and actively participating in politics.

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[308] Interview, Nabil Sukkar, Economist and director of Syrian Consulting Bureau for Development & Investment (SCBI), Damascus, 22 October 2003.

It is within this context that Mubarak and Asad's day-to-day governance of Egypt and Syria entail different governing demands. With the Egyptian and Syrian presidencies situated, inter-elite politics and top elite co-optation will now be discussed in relation to these diverging institutional arrangements.

3.3 Elite Co-optation

Egypt's consolidated authoritarian presidential system, which operates in tandem with depoliticized institutions, can be contrasted with Syria's system of an unconsolidated president participating among politicized inter-institutional power centers.[309] Nevertheless, it is important to note that a president remains only one factor in the elite co-optation and shedding strategies a regime employs. Just as presidents constantly work on maintaining and increasing their influence in a system, so do other political elites. Elites compete to be included or avoid exclusion from the political arena. In effect, everyone within the elite arena participates to maintain and enhance their person in a bid not to lose one's viability. Elite co-optation and exclusion is an informally negotiated process. It is not, however, an even process, as power is distributed asymmetrically within the arena. In this sense, it is how high one climbs and the distance between the elite and the president, which determines one's position and security. The higher and closer one is to the president generally correlates with one's longevity within the system. Thus, the higher an elite is, the greater difficulty in being excluded from the elite arena. Yet, the rules and power potential vary greatly among the participants.

Co-optation and shedding differs in Syria and Egyptian elite politics. Elites in Egypt's depoliticized institutional system are more susceptible to being readily included and excluded from the elite politics than in the case of Bashar's Syria. One can argue that the difference stems from the fact that politicized institutional arenas increase elite resiliency because the structures along with the personalities must be weakened simultaneously; older established elites are more difficult to remove because the institutions provide insulation for their continued inclusion. In this regard, politicized institutions within an authoritarian arena provide for more elite protection and allow for the proliferation of overlapping and competing power centers within such structures. In Egypt, by contrast, the prevalence of depoliticized institutions makes the dynamics of elite co-optation or exclusion a much more straightforward process. In other words, Egypt's elite arena is more changeable in terms of inclusion and exclusion because it is more personalized. As will be discussed in the following section, such differences between Mubarak's Egypt and Bashar's Syria subsequently influence the nature of dynamics of elite coalition change in both systems.

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[309] Inter-institutional denotes more than one power center can exist within a particular institution. The party, intelligence services, and military are not monolithic blocs that act in concord. Instead, institutions have degrees of semi-autonomy and therefore provide a protective measure for various elites inside them. Naturally, various elites have overlapping but separate patronage networks that articulate varying interests. These inter-institutional elite groupings, which are structurally engrained within the political system, constitute a power center.

3.4 Elite Coalition Change

Elite coalition change is a strategy that organizes and redistributes power within that arena. Coalition change is a visible process (compared to management) because one actually observes new elites introduced and older ones are replaced. Therefore, more concrete examples can be used to demonstrate this aspect of elite politics in Egypt and Syria. Keeping in mind the current variations between Egypt and Syria's institutional arenas, it is easier to introduce and exclude elites in Egypt. Its arena is more flexible because personalities, rather than institutions, center the system. The case of `Amr Mosa reflects this phenomenon.

3.4.1 Egypt: The Case of `Amr Mosa

`Amr Mosa joined the Egyptian foreign ministry in 1958. He served as Egyptian ambassador to India and the United Nations before being appointed foreign minister in 1991. For nearly a decade, Mosa ably directed his ministry, and, indeed, exhibited charisma on both the regional and international levels.[310] Despite Mosa's prominence as foreign minister, he was not a direct client of the president. Instead, he was connected to the president's most trusted political advisor, Osama al-Baz.[311] In this regard, Mosa is an upper-elite rather than a top elite belonging to the president's inner circle.

Mosa's outspoken and frequent blunt depictions of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories endeared him to many Egyptians precisely because they often clashed with Washington's unbalanced portrayal. As a result he was also frequently criticized personally in the Israeli press, which increased his Egyptian (and Arab) popularity further.[312] As the below Egyptian

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[310] Some could counter-argue that Mosa's ten-year tenure was considerable and perhaps regime actors felt a need for change. Yet, considering that the particular actors had all been ministers or advisors for much longer than Mosa was FM, it is unconvincing. My research indicates that upper-elites that are not autonomous and their usefulness determine their career lengths.

[311] Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 29.

[312] Ibid.

State Information Service's report demonstrates, Mosa's blend of charisma, opposition, and frankness is apparent. As the report summarizes:

> Queried whether Cairo would broker a meeting between Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon and Palestinian president Yasser Arafat, Moussa said the issue is not a photo opportunity for television cameras. So far, Moussa said, the attitude of the new Israeli government towards the peace process is not clear. On the fact that Israel and the new US administration have made it a condition that the Palestinian Intifada stop before resuming negotiations, the foreign minister said that it cannot be halted by pushing a button. Ending the Intifada depends on addressing the frustration felt by the people occupied due to the practices of their occupier.[313]

While Mubarak's statements often disagreed with Washington and Tel Aviv, rarely are they sharp to a degree that Egyptians view the president significantly distanced himself from Washington's influence. Additionally, Mubarak's statements rarely display emotional frustration towards the occupied territories' deteriorating situation. Thus, popular perception of Mosa was favorable because he frequently appeared frustrated and addressed Israeli actions contemptuously. As a consequence, he was unpopular in Washington because he was "no ordinary Egyptian government official."[314] Mosa's popularity had Cairo's politically aware classes advocating his succession to Egyptian presidency.[315] It is worth noting here that petitions continue to circulate in Egypt demanding fair presidential elections with Mosa as a potential candidate.[316] In early 2001, with the current Palestinian Intifada escalating, populist Egyptian singer Sh`aban `Abd al-Rahim's song "I hate Israel and love `Amr Mosa" dominated popular culture and catapulted Mosa's status higher. Egypt's top elites began to similarly interpret Mosa's increasing popularity as problematic. Mosa's potentially autonomous popular base jeopardized his ministerial position. It was the appearance of autonomy from the presidency that effectively terminated his tenure as foreign minister. In May 2001, Mosa was dismissed as minister and replaced by a much less charismatic figure, Ahmad Mahir. In fact, when Mahir was appointed, the information ministry broadcast that Mahir's brother, `Ali, was appointed and doled out details of `Ali's career before correcting its error.[317] As one Cairo journalist remarked with hindsight, "If you made a list of FMs that could have followed `Amr Mosa, Ahmad Mahir would not have been on it."[318] Mosa went from being a prominent and popular elite to one outside the elite arena in a matter of days. Nevertheless, he was expelled in a cordial manner that allowed for his continuation of politics outside of Egypt's domestic arena.

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[313] "Egypt refutes Israel's claims regarding the Intifada," *Egyptian State Information* (12 March 2001) http://www.sis.gov.eg/online/html3/o120321f.htm, accessed 25 October 2004.

[314] "Profile: Amr Moussa," *BBC News* (23 July 2002) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1766776.stm, accessed 25 October 2004.

[315] Numerous conversations with Egyptian friends, students, and professors during 2000-2001.

[316] "Petition calls for elections, nominates Amr Moussa," *Arabic News* (10 March 2004) http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/040310/2004031002.html, accessed 25 October 2004.

[317] Saeed Okasha, "In with the new" *Cairo Times* Vol. 5, issue 12 (24-30 May 2001).

[318] Interview, Paul Schemm, Journalist, Cairo, March 2004.

Mosa was appointed secretary-general of the Arab League in May 2001. He was in many ways the best possible candidate. While his predecessor, `Asmat `Abd al-Magid had proved capable, the Arab League needed rejuvenation and Mosa's personality added considerable weight to the notoriously fragmented and popularly ridiculed organization. While Mosa's appointment as secretary-general appears impressive, it relegated him to a retirement track. From an Egyptian elite perspective, his new position stripped him of his domestic power potential and redistributed his patronage networks. Being secretary-general permitted Mosa to use his charisma and ability but in a way that cannot directly challenge the president's domestic standing while maintaining Egypt's prominent position within the League. Mosa's transfer therefore, while paraded positively by the Egyptian semi-official press, had profound overt and subliminal effects on the elite arena.

Shortly after Mosa became secretary-general of the Arab League, his domestic power potential was exposed in a publicly reported incident at Cairo airport.[319] Mosa and a prominent Libyan diplomat went to Cairo airport to fly to Tripoli in hopes of dissuading Ghadafi from withdrawing from the Arab League on 3 March 2002. However, the Libyan jet was grounded because the state-owned gas company refused to clear the plane's take-off until its $152 refueling account was paid. Mosa's entourage offered the equivalent in Egyptian pounds and the captain offered Euros, which were both refused by the workers. The issue was resolved as Mosa promised to repay the company in dollars upon their return. For good measure, the Libyan diplomat had to leave his personal ID as insurance before the fuel truck moved and allowed Mosa and the Libyans to leave. While it is impossible to know the intentions of such a maneuver, it sent a public message that Mosa's powers were virtually non-existent, since it would have been unimaginable a year earlier. While the airport incident occurred about ten-months into his secretary-general stint, it took less time for Mosa's fellow elites to react. Patronage networks and power potential were swiftly redistributed and reverberated within the system as clients began shifting sides immediately after Mosa was excluded.

Mosa lost his domestic elite status and ability to maintain a sizable patronage network when he was relieved as foreign minister. For example, upon assuming his post in the Arab League, he asked many of his most talented clients to work with him there. A few of Mosa's clients went out of personal allegiance. Yet, if foreign ministry employees want to remain on their ambassadorial career paths, they must be in the foreign ministry. Hisham Badr, who was one of Mosa's ablest clients, is an example of this dilemma. Badr accepted Mosa's offer to manage his office temporarily at the Arab League. However, less than a year later, he returned to the ministry and accepted an ambassadorial posting to Japan. Badr confirmed that following Mosa to the Arab League was a "favor" because his networks depreciated considerably within Egyptian political circles after he was let go as foreign minister.[320] Mosa went from being surrounded by powerful clients to being discarded because he was no longer of any use to careers. Badr, at least, offered Mosa his services while others shunned the former foreign minister after his demotion.[321]

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[319] "Grounded for greenbacks," *Cairo Times* vol. 6, issue 1 (7-13 March 2002).

The case of `Amr Mosa offers key analytical contributions to understanding Egypt's elite coalition change. Mosa's distinguished postings within the foreign ministry, links with the president's chief advisor, and considerable client base in the ten-years he was foreign minister could have secured his political career. However, Mosa's charisma combined with increasing popularity led to his exclusion because the president and his chief advisors perceived Mosa's increasing autonomy as a threat. It is unclear who made the ultimate decision to exclude Mosa and it is ultimately inconsequential. The point is that when Mubarak and his upper elites settled on a consensual decision to drop Mosa as foreign minister, his removal was swift and unopposed in any of the political arena's institutional or ministerial corners. Given the President's constitutional right to dismiss an appointed minister, Mosa was left defenseless to protect his status. Indeed, it took less than forty-eight hours to dismiss Mosa and appoint Mahir. While introducing an elderly, ambivalent figure into a ministerial posting does not suggest elite arena dynamism, Mosa's straightforward exclusion does. It indicates that Egypt's elite co-optation and removal is an easy task because of the depoliticized nature of the system's institutions and, hence, presidential flexibility in including and excluding elites – regardless of their power bases within the system. In point of fact, there were no institutions capable of protecting Mosa from dismissal even had any of the incumbent elites wished to do so. Regime actors, who are the main decision-making figures that chiefly determine the system's political center, excluded Mosa by offering a golden-parachuted segue into retirement by nominating him as the Arab League's secretary-general. By allowing him to continue in politics while excluding him from Egypt's domestic elite arena, a gracious exit was Mosa's logical choice. Regime consensus to effortlessly dismiss Mosa demonstrates that in an arena comprised of depoliticized structures, co-opting and shedding does not tax elite cohesion. Yet, as the following section illustrates, upper-elites are not the only potential victims of a depoliticized institutional elite arena.

3.4.2 The Cases of Gamal Mubarak, Safwat al-Sharif, Yusif Wali, and Kamal al-Shazli

Even the president's closest top elites are at risk of exclusion in a personalistic system. While they cannot be dismissed in the same swift manner Mosa was, the ultimate outcome remains the same. In the absence of institutional support, top elites can also be politically excluded. In the case of three of Egypt's top elites, who comprise the president's inner cabinet, the gradual process of elite shedding is demonstrated through the incorporation of a new powerful elite bloc. Hence, the process of including and excluding top elites occurs simultaneously in this example.

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[320] An informal conversation with Hisham Badr, Cairo, April 2002.

[321] Interview, former staff-intern at Mosa's office at the Arab League, Cairo, January 2003.

For the past twenty-years of Mubarak's rule, Safwat al-Sharif (information minister, 1983-2004, president of Shura Council, NDP secretary-general 2002-), Yusif Wali (agriculture minister 1982-2004, NDP secretary-general 1984-2002), and Kamal al-Shazli (parliamentary affairs minister 1984-2005) were Egypt's longest serving and most prominent elites. They are very public figures as much for their resiliency within the system as for their reputations as being the chief manipulators of the Egyptian politics. Their tenure within the system made them personalities with extensive patronage networks. The ranks of Egypt's top elites are certainly more numerous than these three individuals. Yet, because al-Sharif, Wali, and al-Shazli most visibly interacted with other elites and society, they were arguably Egypt's most untouchable political figures outside of the president and his family.

Discussing these three top elites increasing marginalization within Egypt's elite arena should be understood in the context of the rise of the president's son, Gamal, in the system. Al-Sharif, Wali, and al-Shazli's marginalization coincided with the incorporation of Gamal's faction.[322] Gamal and his faction represent an extreme example of upper elite incorporation. Most elites enter on lower levels as a part of a patron-client relationship and incrementally develop themselves. Gamal Mubarak and his faction's emergence as upper elites, at the expense of pre-existing top elites, is uncharacteristic. Nevertheless, it is a prominent example that demonstrates the flexible nature of top elite exclusion in depoliticized institutional systems. To date, Yusif Wali has been excluded, al-Sharif marginalized,[323] and al-Shazli vulnerable as his duties are progressively being split and reduced.[324] While in Mosa's case, his exclusion occurred rapidly, the political system depended more heavily on al-Sharif, Wali, and al-Shazli's individual and overlapping patronage networks. Therefore, they cannot be excluded by decree without potential repercussions. Their marginalization has been more gradual and deliberate, and remains incomplete in the case of al-Shazli and al-Sharif. Yet, the declining trend is unmistakable. Without institutional support to protect them, it was easier to exclude them than elites within more politicized institutional arenas.

An institutionalized political party according to Huntington constitutes an entity that defines and regulates a systematic type of expected political behavior.[325] In this regard, the NDP is not institutionalized and, as a result, is adjustable. Yet, this flexibility and adjustability results because the party is depoliticized and incapable of asserting itself politically. As scholars demonstrate, politicians join the NDP to gain access to state resources and/or increase personal wealth or prestige as opposed to being ideologically committed to the party's non-existent platform.[326] In other cases, big businessmen want to be leading NDP members and MPs to protect their business monopolies such as the case of steel magnet Ahmad `Azz.[327] Either way, the party is not a politicized entity that influences or constrains the government. Rather, it exists through personalities that manage it. Thus, rather than adhering to party protocol and abiding by structural integrity, personalities dominate the party while curtailing merit ascendancy and potential emergence of charismatic personalities. Hisham Kassem, who lost as an independent candidate in Cairo's Kasr al-`Aini district in the 2000 elections, described the NDP as a "no-man's wasteland devoid of a single structure capable of promoting internal democracy. It only consists of people with patronage systems personally protecting their fiefdoms."[328]

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[322] Members of Gamal's faction, often referred to as his 'shilla' or group are all members of the NDP's policies secretariat and include Ahmad `Azz, Mahmod Mohi al-Din, Hosam Badrawi, Yusif Botros-Ghali, and Mohamad Kamal.

[323] Al-Sherif has been considerably demoted despite continuing to serve the party as the head in the Shura council, the political polities committee, and the Higher Press Council.

[324] Al-Shazli was excluded from his position as parliamentary affairs minister and assistant secrtary-general of the NDP in December 2005 and January 2006.

[325] Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968): 14.

Years of tinkering with Egypt's electoral system legislation from party-lists to individual candidacy systems as the interior ministry manned polling stations and stuffed ballot boxes to ensure overwhelming NDP parliamentary majorities[329] meant the party had no incentive to develop. However, the ruling party received a message of rejection in the 2000 parliamentary elections, which suggested that it was out of touch with the people and badly in need of restructuring.

Three-months before the elections, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ruled in June 2000 that the existing election procedures were unconstitutional because of a lack of judicial supervision inside polling stations. Mubarak, unwilling and unable to legitimately contradict Egypt's highest court, ensured that judges, not interior ministry personnel, would be inside the polling states. As judges manned sometimes near empty polling stations, scores of hired thugs (*baltagaya*) and interior ministry figures coercively controlled the space outside polling stations as the party mobilized state-employees and citizens with bribery and threats. In tandem with these tactics, the interior ministry transported the ballots to counting stations. Despite rampant interference, only 172 NDP nominated candidates prevailed (39 percent). The party's leadership (particularly Wali, al-Shazli, and al-Sharif), which prior to the elections emphasized its strict internal nominating process, allowed NDP "independents" [330] back into the party's fold out of necessity. The NDP independents boosted the party's nominated victors to a formidable 88 percent majority by gleaning 388 of 444 available slots. This shows that personal resources and social standing - not party support - count in Egyptian parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the 2000 parliamentary elections embarrassed the ruling party. The party's electoral failure coincided with the emergence of Gamal Mubarak and the decline of Wali, al-Sharif, and al-Shazli's political careers. While the elections exposed the party as a weak institution, the party is being used to change Egypt's elite arena. It is precisely because the ruling party is weak and empty that it can be hijacked and made into a vehicle for Gamal's ascent.

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[326] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*.

[327] Sherine Abdel-Razek, "Swords Cross over Steel," *al-Ahram Weekly* (22 - 28 January 2004).

[328] Hisham Kassem, "2000 Elections" lecture at the American University in Cairo, Spring 2001.

[329] Prior to 2005, parliamentary elections had never produced less than a 78-percent (1987) majority. Its highest majority under Mubarak was 95-percent in 1995. The 2005 elections produced a 74-percent NDP majority. However, out of the party's 444-official candidates only won 145 seats (32-percent of the vote).

[330] In the lead-up to those elections, NDP leadership claimed that independent party members that contested official NDP candidates and won would not be allowed to rejoin the party.

Framing the Gamal Mubarak-top elites discussion is difficult. While often referenced as "old versus new guards" in the press and by members of Gamal's faction,[331] the process is far more complicated than this convention suggests. Considering Gamal's political advancement at the expense of established top elites, rumors of hereditary succession are inevitable. The president's intentions are unclear although he publicly denies accusations a hereditary republic is imminent. While the party is weaker than the military (the usual channel of presidential recruitment), the depoliticized character of the military levels the playing field for succession.[332] Gamal's faction is using the weak ruling party to create and extend their own power base. By strengthening a portion of the party, Gamal's faction is now the most influential proponent of political change in the country. Nevertheless, the case illustrates how elites become top elites while also demonstrating how top elites are excluded in depoliticized institutional systems.

Gamal Mubarak's political profile increased dramatically, but incrementally, after the party's parliamentary election failure in 2000. At the time, Gamal was a newly appointed member of the party's 25-member general-secretariat and focused on youth, technology, and development projects. He was the chairman of the Future Generation Foundation—a project his mother initiated in 1999. Gamal's investment firm, Medinvest Associates, facilitated his own party-independent political connections. Therefore, it cannot be argued that Gamal entered the top echelons of the elite arena because he was the president's son alone. In late 2000, the idea of an inherited succession scenario playing out in Cairo was unlikely. It may still be unlikely according to some government critics.[333] Nevertheless, Gamal Mubarak's ascension (along with his group) into the top echelons while Wali, al-Sharif, and al-Shazli's careers erode effectively demonstrates elite coalition change. While the top elites appeared against Gamal's rapid ascension into their elite ranks, personalism rather than institutional considerations shaped the current outcomes. While

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[331] Hosam Badrawy, former MP (2000-05) and NDP's policies secretariat Education committee head, frequently described the change vs. status quo dynamic in such terms. Interview, Hisham Kassem, 12 February 2004.

[332] There are current arguments being made that the amendment of constitutional article 76 re-establishes the party as the institution from which Egypt's next president will come. The amendment states explicitly that the next president must be a senior member of a political party. Members of the Egyptian military are not allowed to be members in any of Egypt's 21 legal political parties. Hence, military officers appear to be legally excluded. For a more detailed version of this argument, see Joshua Stacher, "The Election to Prepare Succession: An Anatomy of Egypt's First Presidential Election" *Review of African Political Economy* (Forthcoming 2007).

[333] Interview, Hisham Kassem, 12 February 2004.

Gamal and his group employ the party to build and expand their base, it is precisely because the institution is based on personalities that group's success has easily been achieved.

Following the electoral debacle of 2000, the NDP appeared to need restructuring. The struggle to restructure the party demonstrates Gamal and his group's initial weakness compared with that of established NDP actors. The NDP began an internal reform process by revamping its platform and electoral protocols for nominations of local, district, and governorate positions. Inter-party elections were held and called electoral primaries (*al-mugam`at al-intikhabaya*). With Gamal championing internal party reform, the younger NDP members' prominence increased as did that of the youth minister `Ali al-Din Hilal.[334] Despite the changes to internal party practices whereby open nominations were used to choose new members for local councils, other indicators show that the president's men—Wali al-Sharif, and al-Shazli—still controlled how Gamal's reform agenda was applied. For example, the president's top elites interfered with the primaries' internal nominating criteria by personally selecting the candidates even though the party's by-laws stipulated that nominations were to be handled via elections by NDP members on the district and local council levels.

The electoral primaries before the Shura council elections of July 2001 support the argument that entrenched elites easily manipulate the younger Mubarak's initiatives. As former NDP middle elite turned dissident, `Ali Shams al-Din explains:

> The primaries did not help Gamal's faction other than in a public relations sense of advertising change. Actually, the protocol changes strengthened al-Sharif, al-Shazli, and Wali's positions against Gamal because it pitted selection of Gamal's faction against al-Sharif, al-Shazli, and Wali's nominations. Put simply, the entrenched elites won because the selection process ultimately came down to who had the most money to bribe figures such as al-Shazli or recommendations from State Security (*al-Amn al-Dawla*) where al-Sharif's networks originate. The fact is that they could oppose Gamal demonstrates where elite power was concentrated at that time.[335]

Jason Brownlee's research similarly indicates that entrenched actors' manipulation easily thwarted the NDP's internal reform movement.[336] When the entrenched elites' subtle pre-primary manipulations failed, they resorted to overt interference. In the case of `Ali Shams al-Din, a middle-ranking politician on good terms with the younger Mubarak's faction, we see the top-elites power in relation to Gamal's at the time. Shams al-Din opposed the Wali-supported candidate Nabil al-Qalmy in the 2001 primaries. His opposition to the president's elites was not tolerated. As Shams al-Din explains, "You are expected to obey their orders. You cannot say no to Wali or al-Shazli. Immediately, they begin asking 'who is backing you?' or 'what are you seeking to gain'."[337] During the primary run-off, agents on behalf of al-Shazli, al-Sharif, and Wali contacted eligible party voters with instructions about how to vote, discouraged voters who were thought to be supporting for the wrong candidate from going to polling stations, changed the composition of the party electors committees, shut off electricity during voting, and employed thugs to intimidate people.[338] After losing his rigged primary, Shams al-Din paid for his insolence. He was dismissed from the party after opposing Wali and al-Shazli's candidate in the primary. Shams al-Din's case is indicative of elite power configuration between Gamal and the entrenched figures in mid-2001. As I will now show, this drastically changed when the Gamal Mubarak succession project began in earnest.

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[334] Hilal lost his youth ministry in part do to the 2010 World Cup bid scandal. Yet. Hilal still sits on the NDP's steering committee and has continued to be promoted inside the party. He became head of the NDP's Media secretariat in January 2006.

[335] Interview, `Ali Shams al-Din, former NDP middle elite, Cairo 25 February 2004.

[336] Jason Brownlee, "The Decline of Pluralism in Mubarak's Egypt," Journal of Democracy Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 2002): 9-10.

The NDP held a party congress in September 2002. The party's weak structures were favorably altered to position the ascendancy of Gamal's group. The congress's outcome was determined before it convened when the president's top elites witnessed attacks against their patronage networks. Wali, al-Shazli, and al-Sharif each suffered from their leading clients being indicted on similar but unconnected corruption charges in August and September 2002. Agricultural ministry official Yusif `Abd al-Rahman (Wali's client), former chairman of TV news Mohamad al-Wakil (al-Sharif's client), and chairman of the Misr Exterior Bank `Abdalah Tayal (al-Shazli's client) were arrested, effectively limiting their patron's potential bases to obstruct Gamal's inclusion. As Schemm reports in reference to `Abd al-Rahman, "The arrest should be seen in the context of an attack on the minister himself, who is also the chairman of the ruling National Democratic Party."[339] What remains unclear is who authorized the seemingly coordinated campaign. Naturally, the public prosecutor processed the indictments but no paper trail exists that shows where the campaign originated. One, however, can assume the president tacitly granted his blessing as some journalists insinuated. As Khalil states, "All three have been affected in recent months by corruption charges against close associates - fueling speculation that the trio was being softened up to ease the ascension of new blood to the party's leadership."[340] If softening up three of the president's top elites was the objective, it succeeded because they proved unable to stop the curtailment of their party portfolios. For example, al-Shazli's control of party membership was reduced and split with Gamal-supporter Ahmad `Azz while his budgetary duties were split with Zakarya `Azmy (head of the president's office). Al-Sharif assumed the NDP's secretary-general position from Wali, who was demoted but kept his ministry. The point here is that by arresting the top elites' clients, structural changes were facilitated with no institutional resistance from the party. As such, the isolation and dissection of individual networks and their inability to institutionally rally support weakened them to the degree that they could be demoted by the party congress with little to no resistance. As a consequence, Egypt's prominent elites were forced to accept their demoted position rather than risk exclusion from the elite arena by trying to rally support against such measures.

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[337] Ibid.

[338] Interview, Shams al-Din.

[339] Paul Schemm, "He got the job done," *Cairo Times* (5-11 September 2002).

[340] Ashraf Khalil, "New thinking, new Egypt," *Cairo Times* (19-25 September 2002).

Gamal Mubarak, flanked by members of his network, took control of the newly established Policies Secretariat at the 2002 party congress. The secretariat instantly became the most significant of the NDP's fourteen secretariats. Simultaneously, outside of the presidency, Gamal's Policies Secretariat is the only structural group to emerge as a relevant governmental body for policy creation. As one NDP member argues, "The Policies Secretariat and its associated groups are the only place to be if you are interested in political change. It is the most single important policy organ in Egypt."[341] Combined with the top elites' demotion, Gamal and his group's structural insertion expanded their power within the elite arena. With Gamal heading the secretariat, close associates Hosam Badrawy (head of Education subcommittee), Mahmod Mohy al-Din (head of Economic subcommittee), and Mohamad Kamal (head of youth subcommittee) boosted the secretariat's networks. Ahmad `Azz became a steering committee head at the 2003 party conference further strengthening the secretariat's profile. Gamal and his group (each with budding patronage networks of their own) are favorably seen as the leading reformers and most enlightened politicians within the party ranks.[342]

While Gamal is certainly his secretariat's chief patron, the group's continuing success derives from their insertion into the party. In other words, an elite and his patronage network once inserted and allowed to develop within a weak institution permits for the smooth inclusion of new top elites. By being allowed to strengthen its secretariat, Gamal's faction insulated itself from other top elites without necessarily politicizing the party. As such, while the Policies Secretariat became an influential actor after its establishment, Gamal and his group continued to easily counter attacks from declining top elites.

Following the 2002 NDP congress, the weakened Wali, al-Sharif and al-Shazli continued to challenge Gamal's faction by choosing not to advise them when they made mistakes. For example, Shams al-Din points to frequent occasions when top elites were present when Gamal associate Hosam Badrawy advocated dismantling the national health care system and privatizing hospitals. While likely a necessity given the decrepit public health system, such notions are politically unpopular in a developing country with poor infrastructure and gross inequalities in distribution of wealth. Yet, rather than advising Badrawy to present his suggestions in a more politically acceptable fashion, they allowed him to publicly advocate his views and hence "hit the wall" with "the people". [343] In turn, this turned public opinion against Gamal and his faction's neo-liberal economic leanings. As Shams al-Din argues:

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[341] Interview, `Abd al-Men`im Sa`id, Director of the al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and member of the policies secretariat's Higher Policy Council, Cairo, 3 May 2004. The Higher Policies Council (HPC) is a 125-person appointed group that brainstorms and suggests initiatives to the NDP's Policies Secretariat. The HPC is a subsidiary and falls under the control of the party's policy chairman (Gamal).

[342] Interview, Safinz al-Taroty, NDP youth member, Cairo, 12 February 2004.

> The top elites portray themselves as coming from Egypt's clay. They understand what ordinary Egyptians want to hear. While they often employ a strategy of listening to the people and then implementing their own agenda, they do not advocate populist cuts publicly. While these established elites are at the president's mercy and cannot directly oppose Gamal or his comrades, they do small gestures that make it clear they do not want to help them politically.[344]

This is a fairly nuanced interpretation of elite politics. Nevertheless, the top elites have few alternative options to shore up their depreciating positions. In a depoliticized institutional system, this is one of a few limited techniques for inter-elite opposition. Nevertheless, such subtle tactics demonstrate that while elite coalition exclusion is an incremental process, there is little chance of declining elites mobilizing opposition because the depoliticized ruling party cannot offer institutional support. Better-said, even established elites are not engrained in the system structurally and are, thus, easy to include and exclude from the elite arena.

The depoliticized, and hence personalized, nature of the system also makes the appearance of overtly blocking the president's son potentially risky. Several NDP members, such as Yusif Wali's nephew Sharif, witnessed interactions between Gamal and the top elites and detected an increasingly predictable pattern. As he explains, "during meetings when Gamal suggests a measure such as repealing state-security courts, most of top elites explain that it was not practical during discussion but if Gamal persists, when the committee votes, everyone is in favor – not a single Gamal-introduced initiative has been rejected by the higher party members."[345] While one could attribute Gamal's untouchable status as linked to being the president's son, this does not wholly explain his ascension as a top elite in Egypt. The existing top elites are marginalized at the expense of Gamal's inclusion and show they are ineffective at publicly challenging him.

In July 2004, the top elites' exclusion become more official as Gamal's faction consolidated their positions among the elites. The elder Mubarak must have been in agreement for Gamal's project to progress but the exclusion of top elites was an incremental affair. President Mubarak fell ill in summer 2004. While most semi-official newspapers cited a slipped vertebral disk, rumors of cancer were rampant in Egyptian medical circles.[346] The then-75 year-old president traveled to Germany for two-weeks in late June - his longest absence from Cairo since becoming president in October 1981. As the president received treatment and underwent surgery abroad, rumors of a cabinet reshuffle appeared in the press. About halfway through his stay in Germany, Mubarak removed Safwat al-Sharif as information minister, a post he held for nearly twenty-years.

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[343] Interview Shams al-Din.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Interview, Sharif Wali, NDP elected Shura Council member, Cairo, 6 March 2004.

[346] I spoke to two separate Egyptian doctors who speculated that the president traveled to Germany for cancer treatment rather than back surgery. Discussions, Cairo, 24 and 27 June 2004.

He maintained his position as NDP secretary-general and became the party's representative in the Shura Council. Given that al-Sharif's networks originate in the security services and his public service allowed for control over the state media, the president effectively demonstrated that his elite arena was cohesive enough that he was capable of removing one of the most powerful political elites by a telephone call from Munich.

After returning from Germany, the president finished reshuffling the cabinet. Yusif Wali was dismissed as agriculture minister.[347] Wali has been wholly excluded from the elite arena.[348] Wali's contemporaries remain but their portfolios are reduced. For example, al-Shazil remained minister of parliamentary affairs but his duties were divided as al-Sharif became responsible for the portfolio's Shura council portion.

The 2004 cabinet contained a number of Gamal-friendly allies. The prime minister, Ahmad Nazif, a 52-year-old Canadian-trained engineer, is the youngest person to fill the post since the Nasir era. Nazif also accompanied Gamal on public relations' trips abroad to the U.S. in 2003. Gamal associate and Policies Secretariat member Mahmod Mohy al-Din was named investment minister. He remained the only high-profile Policies Secretariat member to be appointed minister while seven other lower secretariat members and Gamal associates, such as Rashid Mohamad Rashid and Tariq Kamal, became ministers. The new cabinet wasted little time establishing its liberalizing agenda. With the older and more established presidential elites increasingly marginalized, the Policies Secretariat's influence is apparent in the government's post-populist economic reforms announced after the formation of the new cabinet.

For example, by late August 2004, the new cabinet announced the repeal of duties on approximately one hundred consumer goods. Most prominent in this field was the removal of forty-percent duty on cars between 1300 and 1600-liter fuel injection. According to *al-Ahram Weekly*, nearly eighty-eight-percent of vehicles in Egypt fall within this range.[349] Similarly, subsidies were halved on diesel fuel, which caused an increase in public transportation costs. In keeping with the Policies Secretariat's neo-liberal economic discourse on modernizing Egypt, the reforms reflect willingness to partially reduce lower class populist rights while expanding the secretariat's appeal with the critical middle classes. As one analyst suggested, the new economic reforms “resemble middle-class populism.”[350] Apparently, the secretariat and the government seem to conceive of economic reform as a tool to maintain and expand professional middle class support even if this means forfeiting the support of the unorganized poor. While it is premature to know the longer-term stability effects of such measures, the government initiatives reflect the influential Policies Secretariat’s agenda.

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[347] After Wali's removal from the position of NDP secretary-general in 2002, high profile corruption cases involving a number of Wali's key clients emerged. These cases opened public criticism of Wali's involvement. In March 2004 Wali was forced to testify in court regarding the long- term import of illegal pesticides by his ministry from 1982 – 2004. Wali agreed to testify only after a Cairo criminal court threatened to lift his parliamentary immunity the previous January. This was the first time an incumbent cabinet minister appeared in a court case. See *al-Ahram Weekly* (4-10 March 2004). These scandals subsequently made it easy for the president, in July 2004, to remove Wali from the ministry after serving for twenty-two years as Egypt's minister of agriculture.

[348] Interview, Schemm, 24 October 2004. In 2005, although Wali held no official position in any of the NDP's highest bodies, he was nominated to run in the parliamentary elections as the NDP candidate in al-Fayyoum governorate. He was defeated by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and has, again, disappeared from public life.

[349] "Down with duties," *al-Ahram Weekly,* 9-15 September 2004.

By September 2004, Gamal and his faction had fully consolidated their positions as top elites. The NDP annual conference left no doubt as to this being the case. Al-Shazli’s usual prominent conference role diminished. Party secretary-general al-Sharif’s most substantial contribution was to introduce Gamal Mubarak, who was frequently interpreted and praised throughout his speech by the party faithful.[351] Wali did not attend the proceedings. While the conference overwhelmingly emphasized Egypt’s upcoming challenge as economic (rather than political) reform, Gamal and his faction determined the conference’s scope from organizing the agenda to who gave the press briefings. Indeed, PM Nazif was the only non-Policies Secretariat member to brief the press. Political reforms were largely shelved. Thus while Mohamad Kamal explained, “Egypt welcomes any initiative for reform. All the doors are open,” constitutional amendments to introduce presidential term limits or canceling emergency laws - key opposition demands - were “not on the agenda.”[352] Yet, this was consistent with pre-conference statements. Gamal Mubarak issued a statement in the party’s paper that “Political reform cannot be realized in unfavorable economic conditions.”[353]

The political and economic reforms that resulted from the conference were limited. Gamal and the Policies Secretariat’s consolidation within the party was the conference’s key outcome. The president’s address stressed that introducing younger elements into the party with the “aim to push the distinguished ones to take up positions of responsibility and authority within the party” was the party’s key objective.[354] Gamal’s Policies Secretariat is now the leading force of change in Egyptian politics. Although the party’s structures went untouched, Gamal’s faction now officially conduct party business while the older elements fade away.[355] It is unclear if Gamal will be nominated and elected to Egypt’s presidency, but his faction’s rise into the top elite arena while older more established elites are marginalized suggests conclusions about elite coalition change in Egypt. Depoliticized institutional arenas make removing powerful elite and introducing new elites much easier than in systems that possess politicized institutions. While elite coalition change in Egypt has been analyzed, it must be compared with the Syria’s politicized institutional arena to understand the variance between the two systems’ elite arena.

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[350] Interview, Private Sector Banker, Cairo, 22 October 2004.

[351] Paul Schemm, “Egypt: economic reform only,” *Middle East International* (8 October 2004): 28

[352] Megan Stack, “In Egypt, Reforms are all talk and little substance,” *Los Angeles Times* (24 September 2004).

[353] Schemm, “Egypt: economic reform only,” 29.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Joshua Stacher, “Gamal Mubarak’s journey to power,” *Daily Star* (3 November 2004)

3.4.3 Syria: The Case of Bashar, Mahmod Zob`i, Rif`at al-Asad, and Succession

Syria's political system is more resistant to inserting and removing top elites in comparison to Egypt. While Syrian personality changes happen, institutions matter more and top elites with extensive patronage networks enable them to insulate themselves within the protected institutions. Hence, the politicization of the party, intelligence, and military services make for oligarchic power sharing. This, as was argued in the previous chapter, was an outcome of Hafiz al-Asad allowing these institutions to develop as pillars to anchor his regime in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the Syrian arena experienced massive political deliberalization in the 1980s, once those institutions had been developed, the ability to re-assert themselves existed and occurred towards the end of Hafiz's presidency. By the time Bashar was being groomed for the presidency, the institutions had become part of an oligarchic political field. One example of Syrian top elite inclusion and exclusion is Bashar's ascension to the presidency following Hafiz's death in June 2000. Accepting Bashar bolstered top elites positions because they could control him and he was not a threat to their institutional power and positions.

Hafiz al-Asad appears to have intended a hereditary republic since the early 1990s. His heir apparent was his eldest son Basil. While officially under command of Asad's cousin-in-law `Adnan Makhlof, in practice Basil was in charge of the republican guards by the early 1990s.[356] Basil's succession, however, went unrealized because of his death in a highway traffic accident in January 1994. Following Basil's death, Bashar was recalled from London where he was pursuing ophthalmology training. As Perthes notes, "Following Basil's death, clear attempts were made by the regime's propaganda machine not only to transfigure and idealize Basil as the embodiment of all the good qualities of Arab youth, but also to put the President's second son … in Basil's place."[357] Bashar's rise through the hierarchical system was cautious and gradual. It also entailed ridding the system of long-serving personalities in the party, military, and intelligence. Yet, Syria's institutions proved more capable of constraining newly introduced top elite personalities.

Bashar al-Asad enrolled in Army Staff College at Homs where he graduated with the rank of captain. He was promoted to major and then to staff colonel in January 1999. He was appointed commander of Syria's elite republican guard. Bashar also supervised the military and air force intelligence by 1999. Just because Bashar commanded various units formally does not necessarily imply he actually controlled them. Although Bashar never held an official B`ath party or government position before becoming president, he was responsible for a number of policy files between 1995 and 2000. One such file was Lebanon. He made his first official visit to Lebanon in 1995 and played a prominent role in Emile Lahod's presidential election victory in 1998.[358]

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[356] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, 182.

[357] Ibid, 269.

[358] "Bashar al-Assad: Eyeing the Future," *BBC World News* (11 June 2000): http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/785921.stm, accessed on 18 June 2003.

Additionally, he was one of the leading advocates of the anti-corruption campaign, which began in 1999. Bashar was marketed wanting to modernize Syria. This was reflected by his chairmanship of the Syrian Computer Society, which emphasized Syria's need to introduce computers, Internet, and other IT services. Similarly, Bashar lobbied for economic and state administrative reform in his public comments and association with the Society for Economic Science, which focuses on continuing economic liberalization.

Various initiatives disrupted the political status quo and assisted in constructing a top elite coalition to structurally facilitate Bashar's takeover. The strategies employed were a mixture of co-optation and coercion that added new coalition members and shed older members perceived as obstacles to Bashar's presidency. The coercive element eliminated some power bases in the country. The co-optation strategies consisted of a matrix of forced retirement of senior personnel, a selective anti-corruption campaign, and a cabinet shuffle three months before Asad died. Elite coalition change relied more on political engineering rather than overt force. Enough elite changes were accomplished that allowed Bashar to take power although it was not fully completed when his father died in June 2000. It was never fully completed in a sense that Bashar could never develop his own autonomous base from the existing institutions. Becoming president did not mean that Bashar assumed his father's arbitrating role in the system. Bashar is forced to interact from an equal position with the top elites' power centers in politicized institutions rather than arbitrate above centers' various interests. Thus, Syria's institutional pillars proved more resilient in removing personalities than in Egypt. Indeed, perhaps it was because Bashar was a semi-outsider within the system that facilitated his assumption of its leadership. Bashar was acceptable by the competing factions because he ensured continuity and could not overtly threaten top elites interests. Had a more dominant figure of the system taken over, it could have disrupted elite cohesion. As such, an examination of Bashar's elevation provides useful insights into elite coalition change in Syria.

Coercive tactics surface in one case which helped to displace Bashar's most potentially threatening presidential rival Rif`at al-Asad -- Hafiz's younger brother and a former vice-president. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rif`at was one of the main advocates of violently repressing the militant Islamist insurgency from 1977-1982 and was in charge of al-Asad's praetorian guard – the Defense Brigade (*saraya al-difa`*). Following the 1982 Hama incident, Rif`at misinterpreted his brother's ill health as an opportunity to take the presidency in 1983. After a standoff, which witnessed Rif`at's elite forces positioned on Damascus's outskirts, Hafiz persuaded his brother to withdraw the leadership challenge.[359] Afterwards, Rif`at was dismissed from Defense Brigade command and, as a conciliatory gesture, was appointed one of three vice-presidents before being exiled to Spain in 1984. He returned only twice to Syria after being exiled – once for the funeral of his mother, Na`isa, in 1992 and for Basil's funeral in 1994. Although in exile, Rif`at maintained a lucrative smuggling business through his compound in Latakiya province.

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[359] Mostapha Tlas published a book entitled *90 days that shook Syria* in February 2004 in which he claims Hafiz paid Rif`at over 20-billion dollars to drop his presidential bid and leave Syria. The book was briefly available in Beirut before it was recalled. Tlas was forced to retrieve the copies he distributed to friends. Interview, Ziad Haidr, *Al-Safir* journalist, Damascus, March 2004.

President Asad began politically excluding Rif`at from the ruling coalition in 1998. While it is debatable whether someone could be considered part of the ruling coalition after being in exile for fifteen years, the president felt it imperative to strip his brother of the formal title of vice-president. Thus, in February 1998, Rif`at was relieved from his official post to prevent a potential comeback with a legitimacy claim to the presidency. The state's coercive move against Rif`at's residual domestic power base followed seventeen months later when as many as a thousand of his loyalists were arrested during a security sweep in September 1999.[360] The speculation, at the time, was that Rif`at's perceived attempt to elevate his "public and international profile and that of his son Sumer" angered Hafiz.[361] After the arrests began, the remaining Rif`at loyalists retreated to the Latakiya compound. Failing to convince the loyalists to surrender, the military conducted a full-scale assault on Rif`at's compound on 20 October 1999. This resulted in high casualties, which the Arab press reports as being between 100 and 700 people.[362] The government downplayed the event's significance, but it achieved two objectives. Firstly, it decimated Rif`at's domestic power base from which he may or may not have attempted another leadership challenge. Secondly, it sent a signal that potential rivals to Bashar's presidential bid were to be dealt with in the harshest manner. The other strategies pursued by the top elites proved more nuanced but effective in incrementally restructuring the existing coalition.

The forced retirement of senior personnel was another exclusion tactic that removed perceived obstacles to Bashar's elevation. This involved arbitrary legal manipulation. Officially, Syrian military officers and public servants retire at the age of sixty. The government uses this stipulation to distribute employment—particularly for new entries into the job market—to prevent the over-bloating of an already expansive public sector. Nevertheless, the constitution allows the president to waive this stipulation if he so desires. For example, the defense minister Mostapha Tlas continued in his ministerial position until May 2004 when he retired at the age of seventy-two.[363] Yet, to accommodate Bashar's presidential candidacy, a number of powerful military personnel were not granted this wavier and forced into retirement. Hikmat Shihabi, the chief of staff for twenty-four years, was retired in 1998 and `Ali Duba, who served as internal security director, stepped down in January 2000. Forced retirement of senior personnel on a legal technicality removed people that were perceived wed to the political status quo that their positions afforded them. Yet, the replacements tended to come from the intelligence services rather than be officers loyal to Bashar. Hence, this strategy was not as effective as intended because it failed to account for the political reassertion of the regime's security pillars once Hafiz died. The re-emergence of the politicized intelligence services acted as a check on Bashar's power. While removing entrenched elites likely helped Bashar's succession, the fact that Syria has a history of politicization within the party, the intelligence, and the military organs encouraged the re-emergence of inter-organizational power bases that a weak president would be forced to compete with rather than oversee.

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[360] "Trouble in the family," *Middle East International* (29 October 1999): 8.

[361] Ibid. Sumer al-Asad, the eldest son of Rif`at, runs the London-based Arab satellite channel Arab News Network (ANN).

[362] Ibid.

[363] Tlas was born in the village of Raston, near Homs, on 11 May 1932.

Retiring older figures helped elite coalition change but the anti-corruption campaign supplemented and accelerated it. The anti-corruption campaign, which was known as the "clean hands" campaign, began in 1999 and is a central factor that facilitated an elite coalition amenable to Bashar's succession. While the Jordanian daily *al-Rai* quipped that an anti-corruption campaign in Syria would likely transform into "a trial of the regime itself" and other commentators argued that it would result in a struggle between elites' vested interests,[364] the campaign permitted the removal of perceived obstacles to Bashar. But the project against the institutionally supported elites was not completed when Hafiz died because enough institutionally-supported elites remained to keep the entities politicized. As one journalist remarked, "It [the anti-corruption campaign]…[is] targeting the more dispensable elements of the 'old guard' as part of the process of making way for the 'new political elite' associated with Bashar."[365] The anti-corruption campaign's application was arbitrary and highly selective in regard to who was targeted. Thus, the campaign's political character suggests that it aimed at restructuring a coalition for Bashar's presidency rather than decimating the existing institutions.

One prominent victim of the anti-corruption drive was Mahmod Zob`i, who was prime minister from 1987 until March 2000. Officially, he was replaced for failing to implement economic reform and prevent corruption. After he was removed, Zob`i was indicted on unspecified financial irregularities charges and the party expelled him on 10 May 2000. Eleven days later, on 21 May, when security forces came to transfer Zob`i to the hearing, he was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Zob`i's suicide raised suspicion that the regime killed him because they feared he would expose names and details implicating other high-ranking B`ath party and government officials during his trial. Following Zob`i's arrest, officials announced that this was only the beginning and there were leaks in the Arab press that other figures – "including senior serving and former office holders" – were to be indicted on corruption.[366] Zob`i's arrest raised Bashar's profile as the leader of a new generation of clean politicians. Also, by framing an old guard figure, Zob`i symbolized a tainted era – one that Bashar and his allied technocrats could reform. As a result, the Syrian press began to call Bashar's anti-corruption drive the "new corrective movement," which made an explicit reference to his father's movement after taking power on 18 November 1970. The truth behind Zob`i arrest and suicide will likely remain a mystery.[367]

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[364] "Syria: suicide and speculation," *Middle East International* (2 June 2000): 13.
[365] Ibid.
[366] "Bashar's campaign," *Middle East International* (19 May 2000): 10.

Zob`i's arrest and suicide were also linked to the then forthcoming B`ath party congress.[368] The party was to hold its ninth party congress in June 2000. This was to be the first party congress held in fifteen years. The party congresses were seen as serving no substantial purpose and researchers often dismissed them.[369] It is, therefore, arguable that the ninth party congress was another tactic in the regime's repertoire to elevate Bashar's future candidacy. Speculation proposed that the congress's 950 local and branch level voting delegates would elect Bashar and long-time B`athists, such as foreign minister Farok al-Shara` and new prime minister Mostapha Miro, to the twenty-one member B`athist Regional Command.[370] Through the use of selectively applying the "clean hands" campaign, potential obstacles to Bashar's presidential bid were removed. It moreover shed resistant individuals of the state to accommodate Bashar's economic reform program.

The 14 March 2000 cabinet reshuffle also contributed to the shifting of the elite coalition. Allies close to Bashar, such as Ghassan al-Rifa`i and `Issam Z`aim, replaced dismissed ministers, thus strengthening the future president's position. This temporarily redefined existing elite power relationships but left the overall character of the system unchanged. The rivalry between existing top elites and the emerging competition between institutions encouraged a compromise presidential candidate from "outside" the system. Bashar may have been linked to his father, but he was not seen as a "son of the regime"[371] in the way his brother Basil was. Hence, the established institutionally-supported elites got a weaker president than if one of their own would have assumed the presidency.

The leading figure appointed in the March 2000 reshuffle was Mustapha Miro, a former Aleppo governor and B`athist. Miro and Bashar seemed to have a mutually beneficial relationship in the economic reform process. Miro was touted as a bridge for Bashar to reach out to the B`ath. Besides Miro's addition, twenty-two new ministers - consisting mainly of technocrats who were thought might ease Bashar into politics – composed the new cabinet. In reality and with hindsight, the cabinet was more liberal leaning than the subsequent reshuffles of December 2002, September 2003, and September 2004 when the B`ath's influence revived. The remaining thirteen members retained from the previous cabinet are referred to as the "old guard."[372] Among this "old guard" were included defense minister Mostapha Tlas, foreign minister Farok al-Shara`, interior minister Mohamad Harba, economic minister Mohammad `Imadi, and finance minister Mohamad Khalid al-Mahaimi. Yet, even some of these figures were excluded when Bashar conducted his first cabinet reshuffle in December 2002.[373]

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[367] Damascene political observers occasionally joke that Zob`i was "suicided," Interviews in Fall 2003, Damascus.

[368] "Bashar's campaign," 10.

[369] Volker Perthes, "Stages in Economic and Political Liberalization," in Eberhard Kienle (ed.) *Contemporary Syria,* 66.

[370] "Bashar's campaign," 10.

[371] "Ibna' al-Nizam" is attributed to Salam al-Kawakbi, Civil Society activist in Aleppo, Interview, Damascus, 1 October 2003.

The March 2000 cabinet reshuffle is an important factor in elite coalition change. It defined and redefined who was included and excluded from the ruling clique that stage-managed Bashar's succession. Bashar gave interviews to the Arab press explaining how he "recommended" some of the new ministers. As Jansen suggests, this demonstrated his "deepening and increasingly open involvement in political affairs."[374] While transfer of power was peacefully conducted in Syria, presidential-elite relations that existed in Hafiz's Syria altered into a situation of competing politicized institutional power centers looking to extend their system influence.

Bashar's succession process was incomplete when his father died on 10 June 2000. He held neither an official government nor B`ath party position. Speculation insinuated that the ninth B`ath party congress was to shift the political establishment's institutions by formally electing him to a high post. But his father died before these changes actually were implemented. Bashar was promoted rapidly through the ranks of the military, but this did not afford him actual control of the existing power structures there. Hence, the regime core[375] were one key for Bashar's succession. The intelligence services and military's was another central support. Yet, Bashar was largely a compromise candidate because of his relative weakness to the inter-institutional power centers that emerged in the wake of Hafiz's declining health.[376] The succession was implemented easily even though the preparation was incomplete. As Samir, an ordinary Damascene, commented on the lack of attention to Hafiz al-Asad's actual death, "This is not grief. It's politics."[377]

The regime superficially appeared to unite in support for Bashar's succession. After Hafiz's death was announced officially on 10 June, parliament convened within hours to glorify his reign. It unanimously voted to amend constitutional article eighty-three lowering the age of an eligible president from forty to thirty-four, which was Bashar's age at the time. The constitutional amendment's precision is notable as Bashar's younger brother, Mahir, was thirty-three. This excluded him from potentially challenging Bashar's succession. While Mahir made neither public claims to the presidency nor was visibly groomed, the regime's caution was linked to Mahir's position as a colonel in the elite republican guard.[378] In another example of regime caution, security was on high alert for Rif`at's potential return to Syria. Airports and borders in Syria and Lebanon were secured.[379] In reference to Rif`at, or any unknown presidential contenders, parliamentary speaker `Abd al-Qadar Qadora stated that no individual would be permitted to "affect the security situation in the country."[380] The B`ath party's RC met and nominated Bashar for president on the same day. The following day, vice-president Khadam, who was interim president, promoted Bashar from staff-colonel to lieutenant general as well as the armed forces' commander-in-chief. It, thus, seems that succession had to be carried out quickly to ensure system cohesion and security between the elites. The speed of the transition seems to be an important factor given the politicized character of elites from the various institutional pillars of the regime. As Quilty notes, "They began Bashar's succession ritual before Hafiz was even in the ground."[381]

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[372] This term is just as misleading in Syria as it is in Egypt and I use it sparingly. As it turned out the March 2000 reshuffle had more "old guard" thinkers than it did reformers. Similarly, the reformers would be successfully reduced over the next four years as Miro, Z`aim, Ghassan al-Rifa`i among others were removed in subsequent cabinet reshuffles.

[373] They included 'Imadi, Harba, and al-Mahaimi. Again, the notion that the B`ath is more institutionalized than the NDP is pertinent. In Syria, removing personalities thought to be "old guard" B`athists and replacing them with lower level B`athists does frequently happen and does not imply a liberalizing shift within the cabinet. Indeed, some analysts argued the post-2000 cabinets increasingly strengthened the B`ath party's representative.

[374] Michael Jansen, "Bashar's Cabinet?" *Middle East International* (24 March 2000): 6.

[375] The regime core consists of figures such as Tlas, al-Shara`, parliament speaker `Abd al-Qadar Qadora, and vice-president `Abd al-Halim Khadam, National Command head `Abdullah Ahmar, and vice-president Zahayr Masharqa.

[376] Interview, European diplomat and Syrian journalist, Damascus, 6 December 2003.

[377] Jim Quilty, "The politics of mourning," *Middle East International* (30 June 2000): 8.

The succession process formally continued at the ninth B`ath party congress held from 17-20 June. Bashar was rumored to become vice-president, filling the vacancy of his uncle Rif`at in 1998.[382] As a journalist covering the congress recalls, "The death of Hafiz al-Asad the previous week undermined the original agenda, and the congress was hurriedly transformed into a forum to legitimize the heir apparent."[383] Instead, Bashar was elected to the RC and to his father's former post as party secretary-general. He also was given the title "leader of the party and people" by the congress. While the congress was rumored to be a platform for drastic change in the RC, only twelve new people were added. Given that four RC members had died or gone into exile,[384] it netted only eight new figures including Bashar, Miro, al-Shara`, current PM Naji Otri, Salim Yasin, head of criminal intelligence Said Bkhitan, and Damascus party secretary Faruqabu Shammat. Several entrenched figures remained in their posts including Tlas, Qadora, Khadam, Abdallah al-Ahmar, Soliman Kaddah, and Zahayr Masharqa. Despite the grandiose propaganda that the first B`ath congress in fifteen years was to be a forum for reform and change, continuity was its hallmark. As Quilty remarked, "the old guard was not overturned, but supplemented."[385]

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[378] Eyal Zisser, "Does Bashar al-Assad Rule Syria?" *Middle East Quarterly* (Vol. 10, no. 1, Winter 2003). http://www.meforum.org/article/517, accessed on 19 June 2003.
[379] The other two times Rif`at returned to Syria after being exiled, he had come by way of Lebanon. Najm Jarrah, "Changing of the guard in Damascus," *Middle East International* (16 June 2000): 6.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Hafiz al-Asad and Mahmod Zob`i died and Rif`at al-Asad and former chief of staff Hikmat Shihabi were in exile. Shihabi resides in the United States.
[385] Quilty, 9.

The succession process also included Bashar's formal nomination from parliament, which occurred on 26 June. A national plebiscite had to be held for the public to endorse or reject the parliament's nomination within ninety days. Rather than waiting, vice-president Khadam scheduled the plebiscite on 10 July. The national plebiscite was supported overwhelmingly as Bashar obtained 97.2-percent of the vote on 10 July. Only .25-percent opposed his presidency.[386] Some observers noted that the high percentage did not reflect public support. Rather, it highlighted the regime's bases of support, which included the elite's military, intelligence services, ruling party, and administration sectors.[387] One week after the national plebiscite, on 17 July 2000, Bashar al-Asad officially became president. This officially established the first hereditary republic in contemporary Arab politics. Yet, Bashar's ascension a case of system transformation as power relations shifted from a presidential authoritarian to oligarchic system.

Bashar's succession resulted largely from modifications to the personnel of the military, intelligence services, and B`ath. This isolated entrenched political opponents, most of who came from the army and intelligence services. Nevertheless, no one challenged his succession.[388] Bashar became president with the military and intelligence services supporting him as well as other political core figures such as Tlas, al-Shara`, and Khadam. Yet, while resistance to Bashar presidency was minimal, the established politicized power centers' opposition to his policies is frequent. Bashar inherited his father's position, but he did not inherit his informal power.

Hypothetically, if a power figure from the army took over as president, elites in the other institutions would jockey and compete to a degree that elite conflict may have resulted. Rather than chance system fragmentation, it is more likely that authoritarian systems in general will opt for a weaker president in order to strengthen cohesion and reduce competition. While Sadat and Mubarak were more politically experienced and managed to consolidate their power once in office, the situation was different for Bashar, whose main political credentials was being the president's son. As one journalist noted, "After the death of Hafiz al-Asad, there was bound to be a decline in the *de facto* power of the presidency relative to other important axes which overlap with the B`ath party."[389] In this regard, the Syrian elite encouraged a coalition amenable to strengthening and entrenching their positions and influence vis-à-vis the presidency. This decision to facilitate Bashar's ascension and his subsequent failure to consolidate power makes his presidency one of the competing politicized institutional power center rather than a patrimonial arbitrator as his father operated.

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[386] The remaining percentage represented spoiled ballots.

[387] Correspondent, "Consolidating Bashar," *Middle East International* (14 July 2000): 10.

[388] Mostapha Tlas said, "Bashar is a young, promising leader, and he can rely on our support," in *Al-Ahram* (15 July 2000). Cited from Zisser, "Does Bashar al-Assad Rule Syria?"

[389] "Consolidating Bashar," 11.

3.5 Elite Coalition Management

Coalition management acts as a system maintenance mechanism that invites competition among the elite with the aim of keeping them unified and dependent on a higher patron (ultimately the president). In this competition, the most willing to serve regime interests survive. Coalition management is also a stabilizing feature. Elites that succeed in authoritarian politics combine talent with non-threatening behavior that keeps them in the system long enough to develop patronage bases, which, in turn, increase their value to the system. Elite coalition management is the primary arena where one observes elites attempting to make others dependent on each other. Elite interdependence provides the cohesive link that creates stable center. Coalition management is difficult to empirically show because examples are not as public as with coalition change when actual inclusions and exclusions occur. But it is no less important. The primary aim of coalition management is to keep potential dissenting elites loyal and regulate uncontrolled elite assent through tactics of threats, obstruction, and blocking emergence of alternative elites. Coalition management aims to keep the elite arena cohesive rather than to circulate elites. Therefore, management is about keeping elites included while coalition change is about circulating elites. Management serves as a daily stabilizing maintenance factor for a political system because it mitigates elite autonomy. Thus, in Syria and Egypt, coalition management's goal is elite cohesion and conformity.

In Egypt, Mubarak's strong position and the lack of politicized institutional challenges allow him exemption from daily coalition management participation. With Mubarak's presidential office well established and tailored to his specifications, Egypt's elite arena is maintained by upper elites controlling lower elites. Mubarak's most trusted elites, until recently, were Zakariya `Azmy (head of President's office), al-Sharif, Wali, al-Shazli, Husayn Tantawi (Defense Minister), and `Omar Soliman (head of Intelligence).[390] Elites and their clients act on the president's behalf to keep the arena stable by organizing chiefly through patronage networks. Top elites also expel others that are perceived potentially detrimental to elite stability. The lack of any politicized, autonomous institutions ensures that an elite's patronage networks are relatively easy to destroy if perceived necessary. Individuals with patronage networks in Egypt remain more susceptible to attack than individuals with networks within politicized institutions.

Top elites direct and manage lower ones, who are MPs, heads of party committees, or secretaries of governmental organizations. The personalized nature of these structures indicates that the chosen person can exercise direct influence or else rely on his developed allies. The commonality between the president's elites is they are loyal and nurtured by him. They are also not autonomous of the president. Yet, each of the president's elites serves different functions through heading ministries, government committees, parliament members, military links, or directing the security services. Thus, a division of labor exists among the president's elites, who oversee the daily maintenance of the political system. Hence, Egypt's top elites effectively organize the country's patronage through weak and depoliticized institutions in faithful compliance to the president.

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[390] Interview, Hala Mostapha, al-Ahram Center for Strategic and Political Studies analyst, Cairo, 26 February 2004.

Day-to-day maintenance is not public or reported in the news because of its subtlety. Nevertheless, insights from political participants into the dynamics of coalition management are revealed in each system. For example, a middle elite in Egypt explained his experiences after nearly a decade in the arena. As a NDP member and prominent figure on several elected committees, this person's insights denote that coalition management is rooted in informality and, at times, unpredictability. As he notes:

> In politics here, you are trained in how to deal with one another informally. I personally know exactly where I am just by saying hello to my patron. If I meet him and am received coldly, I immediately begin to ask if something is wrong. The idea is to close opened space between us as soon as possible and then to figure out who's created the problem. I never allow for a misunderstanding to fester. Other elites thrive on creating space between patrons and clients and then filling that space to separate you from power.[391]

The most common way to "create space" between upper, middle, and lower elites is through rumor spreading. For example, imagine an elite tells lies to other elites about a client's intentions. If the matter is not addressed or rectified, the falsehood begins to take on a life of its own and goes beyond the control of one's patron.

On such example is the case of `Ali al-Sawi, a political science professor from Cairo University. Sawi is a young Egyptian academic who writes critically on parliament. Because criticism rarely provides one a pass into the elite arena, Sawi used his connections with his mentor and former youth minister `Ali al-Din Hilal to enter the elite ranks.[392] Hilal managed to get Sawi appointed as the NDP youth secretary for Cairo in 2000. After the appointment, Sawi indirectly confronted entrenched minister of military production Mohamad al-Ghamrawi,[393] who reacted by creating space between Sawi and Hilal long enough that Sawi miscalculated. The incident that apparently sparked the clash between Ghamrawi and Sawi is linked to Sawi not accepting a phone call from Ghamrawi.[394] Offended that a middle elite would reject his call, he began to pressure Sawi by spreading a rumor he was too arrogant among the elite. Sawi understood that it was a pressure tactic on the part of Ghamrawi but he did not contact Hilal directly to clear up such a trivial matter.[395] As time passed, the rumors intensified and were supplemented by bureaucratic obstructions to Sawi's initiatives. This, in turn, led Sawi to take a drastic decision. He wrote a letter of resignation thinking that Hilal would protect him. To a degree, Hilal did. He called Sawi and told him that he could withdraw his letter and the matter would be dropped to which Sawi temporary agreed. Then a day later, pro-government journalists came to Sawi and asked why he resigned and then withdrew it, thus insinuating he was not good on his word. Sawi, angered at this point, told the journalists he was resigning, which the Ghamrawi-allied journalists promptly printed on the edition's front page the following day. As a contemporary of Sawi in the youth secretariat points out, "Resignations are calculated risks. They indicate that you reject the elite arena. If they backfire, then you are excluded."[396] Thus, after only three months as Cairo's youth secretary, Sawi left politics and returned to teaching at university exclusively.

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[391] Interview, NDP member, Cairo, March 2004

[392] Interview, Shams al-Din, 25 February 2004.

[393] Al-Ghamwari currently presides over the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones

[394] Interview, `Ali Sawi, professor of political science at Cairo University, Cairo, 15 February 2004.

[395] Ibid.

This example points to the process of incremental elite coalition management in that it focuses on the competition aspect as well as how you fall out of the system. Ghamwari, either out of a lack of trust, spite, or pretension was capable of pressuring Sawi into making a political mistake by isolating him from his patron. Sawi misunderstood his patron's reach and that a resignation is viewed by the other elites as a self-exclusion from the political arena. While this is an example of the dirtier side of elite coalition management, tactics of rumor spreading among the elite and using journalists as proxy are standard practices. Sawi miscalculated but it was an upper elite's ability to keep separation between him and his patron that contributed to Sawi's miscalculation. Sawi's formal elite experience lasted three months and his return to ordinary life has been uninhibited. For other elites that stay in the system longer, the option of resigning a prominent post may not elicit the same response.

Coalition management is also present in Syria. Yet, elite management tends to be contained within an institution's patronage network rather than directed through expansive and overlapping personalized arena as in Egypt. For example, B`ath elites handle patronage networks within the party while security services and the military oversee their members. Given that several power centers compete within any institution, committees and meetings provide a formal area for elite management while other informal means likely exist. For example, Hafiz al-Asad "ruled by telephone" to keep his elites personally loyal and accountable.[397] While my Syrian field research did not uncover any informal management tactics, there is an example of elites attempting to keep other elites dependent within existing institutions. The reason elites want to keep others dependent on the institutional framework is illustrative of a wider political struggle for control and influence. While Bashar is constitutionally entitled to dismiss any elite appointed to government office, actors use their politicized institutions to reduce the president's ability to use such measures. In this way, the president's continued inability to assert full control over the political arena has subsequently allowed for politicized institutional autonomy in Bashar's Syria. As one former consultant explains, “Party elites believe institution viability maintains their positions. They need Bashar but they need his position constantly weakened to keep their institution valid.”[398]

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[396] Interview, Wali.

[397] Interview, Seale, 10 October 2003.

In Syria, elite coalition management differs and serves an important contrast from Egypt. In the current situation, Bashar is involved in elite coalition management as he is forced to personally protect the nominees he chooses for governmental positions.[399] Bashar’s appointments tend neither to be B`athists nor have institutional base in the system. Rather, they are unaffiliated individuals with professional experience outside of Syria. Their lack of an internal institutional base makes them more susceptible to being undermined by institutionally supported elites. Top elites supported by power centers within politicized institutions attempt to make the president’s chosen personnel dependent on them, not him. If they cannot, they attempt to marginalize Bashar’s appointees. Therefore, coalition management appears to serve as a control mechanism in competing power centers. It also encourages a type of elite behavior that reinforces cohesion. Coalition management is about making all top elites dependent on one another to help regulate predictable behavior. Hence, even actors within different power centers of the same institution may clash if an elite’s behavior deviates from the established consensus (what is considered politically acceptable). However, the politicized versus depoliticized institutional dynamic slightly alter coalition management’s practice. Better stated, coalition management differs in centralized (depoliticized) and decentralized (politicized) authoritarian institutions.

On another level, when the risk of an elite potentially defecting or not toeing the line of acceptable behavior increases, overt management tactics that encourage renegotiation of an elite’s status ensues. During one of the summer 2003 twice-weekly RC meetings, the command’s deputy president Soliman Qaddah used such tactics against another RC member to prevent defection. A discussion turned into an argument regarding B`ath party internal policy as Miro opposed Qaddah openly at the meeting. The argument’s genesis was not recalled but a source indicated the underlying tension related to Miro’s pending demotion as prime minister.[400] Qaddah interpreted Miro’s opposition as potentially threatening as the prime minister insinuated he was tempted to align with the president against the party. Qaddah, in a raised voice, responded to Miro by saying “if you pursue such action, your career is over. You are either with us or you are gone.” Miro seemingly chose the party. Two months later, Miro was demoted as prime minister and assumed the less prominent but important position of heading the party’s labor organizations. This placed him in care of nearly one million B`ath members.[401] Uncertain of his political future, Miro may have proffered an oppositional viewpoint to invite his extension as an elite within the party.

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[398] Interview, former government consultant, Damascus, November 2003.

[399] Oft-repeated examples of the president’s inability to protect his appointed people are the cases of `Issam Z`aim or Ghassan al-Rifa`i. Interviews with journalists, diplomats, consultants, and politicians, Damascus, Fall 2003.

[400] Interview, former government consultant, Damascus, November 2003.

[401] Ibid.

Qaddah, rumored not to like the prime minister, decided to re-co-opt Miro rather than risk his defection from the party. Whether Qaddah could exclude Miro is inconsequential as Miro decided to avoid expanding the rift with his RC colleagues. Miro chose to remain within the party's fold rather than risk life outside the institution. While Miro was likely to lose his office, elite coalition management ensured his continuation as a loyal party elite. Qaddah's ultimatum led to Miro's co-optation back to the party, which contributes to the B`ath party's semi-autonomous politicized status. This process described above depicts management within one politicized institution rather than at a system-wide level. Rather than contribute to overall system adaptation, this management process is directed at keeping the B`ath cohesive and prepared to compete with other politicized institutions in Syria. Management within politicized institutional orders exhibit cleavages at the regime/system level that makes management frail overall. This opposes trends in depoliticized institutional arenas where management is directed to preserving the only institution with centralized power. In the case of the latter, it makes management a wider regime process and, as a result, is more conducive for comprehensive system adaptation. It also underscores an integral difference between authoritarian regimes with politicized and depoliticized institutional orders.

Elite coalition management is a much less visible process than coalition change. Yet, it is a crucial factor to system adaptation. Incrementally and frequently keeping elites affirmed to the political center – whether institutionally or personally engrained -- increases a cohesive elite arena that develops a stake in a system's continuation. While some theories perceive authoritarian structures as fixed and inevitability leading to all-powerful chief executive, the cases of Egypt and Syria demonstrate a more fluid and dynamic process of elite politics. Coalition management ensures that elite politicking is a continuous process of affirmation and loyalty to a system. Elites in both systems remain rooted in patronage networks and must continuously work at maintaining their positions. Yet, it also institutionalizes a type of elite behavior rather than contributing to healthier political development.

3. 6 Conclusion

Discussion and analysis of elite political arenas is an imprecise and varied endeavor. As coercive force is capable of only focusing power, the inclusion and exclusion of elites in ruling coalitions remains the key factor for expanding and adapting regime power. Syria and Egypt remain thoroughly authoritarian and patrimonial political arenas that exhibit trends towards deepening post-populism. Yet, substantial differences remain given each state's inherited constraints and the politicized and depoliticized institutions that resulted. The key difference for varying authoritarian regimes – in relation to co-opting and shedding elites – is the institutional frameworks in which elite coalition change and management is conducted. Depoliticized institutions provides the president's elites with more centralized control to personally reconfigure the elite arena. Such institutions also allow the president greater maneuverability in excluding top elites and introducing new ones. Without institutions that are capable of asserting themselves against the executive, elite coalitions are easier to alter and transform. Depoliticized institutions facilitate such processes because the leader does not have to attack the institutional framework when removing entrenched elites. Instead, only the expansive patronage links require concentrated attention. In the absence of an institutionally anchored system, the patronage networks become transferable as elites can more easily move from one network to another. Depoliticized institutions also allow for a regime consensus to be achieved quickly, which is essential to regime adaptation.

In authoritarian regimes with politicized institutions, the reassertion of competing power centers within semi-autonomous institutions offer elites the option of rallying an institution to maintain their positions and their patronage networks. Hence, the president in such a system may want to or be forced to not only attack the patronage networks that exist within institutions, but the institutions themselves if he is to dominate. Politicized institutional arenas permit the party, the security services, and the military to include and exclude old and new elites in a more decentralized manner. Hence, top elites can oppose the president and one another without suffering exclusion. This is not to argue that older elites are so insulated that they can never be dismissed. However, it would take a drastic shift within the existing power relations to enable the president to depoliticize the current institutions. In turn, this seems to bolster elite resiliency because each power center is capable of resistance against other centers. Yet, it also slows the regime's ability to settle on a system's consensus or adapt as a consequence.

Thus, in conclusion, one can argue that the case of Egypt shows the president is far better positioned to reorganize the elite arena through including and excluding new elites because the operating institutions are centralized and not politicized. Instead, the system relies on looser and more flexible personalized attributes that make alterations to a ruling coalition more tenable. The irony, if present, is that depoliticized structures can be used to temporarily assist in the introduction of new elite cadre without necessarily leading to greater institutionalization. Alternatively, the prevalence of competing politicized institutions, as in the case of Bashar's Syria, produces a more diffuse and less amenable environment with regard to the inclusion and removal of elites. This is because in the absence of a consolidated presidency, the emergence and reassertion of politicized institutions and their inter-structural power centers provide some form of insulation for the political elite. Hence, in regard to changing and maintaining elites, the depoliticized (centralized) versus politicized (decentralized) institutional arena remains a central factor for the divergence among similar regimes. This, in turn, contributes to understanding differences in elite co-optation between contemporary authoritarian regimes.

The following chapter turns to the topic of non-elite individual inclusion and co-optation to further illustrate system divergence among regimes that exhibit similar post-populist trends.

Chapter Four
Institution Type and its Affect on Non-Elite Individual Co-optation

4.1 Introduction

The degree to which institutions are politicized or depoliticized influences the way a regime co-opts members of the elites and non-elites. For the purpose of this study, non-elites are educated and productive social actors, who may already belong to the country's economic, cultural, or social elite, but who do not belong to the *political* elite. It also includes independent political activists. The key factor is that they must be unaffiliated to the state's institutional structures. This study will define the co-optation of the non-elites as the process whereby such people are bound to state-linked institutions.

Analysts and participants often posit that Egypt has more developed institutions than Syria does. This convention suggests that more developed institutionalized structures should ease the co-opting of non-elite individuals because institutions channel political participation. Huntington, for example, argues, "The level of political development of a society in large part depends upon the extent to which these political activists also belong to and identify with a variety of political institutions."[402] Huntington's idea of non-elites identifying with institutions suggests voluntary participation or activism. While Huntington sees political modernity as expressed through voluntary participation to build institutions, in an authoritarian context non-elites also are willing to enter via co-optation, which is also a voluntarily choice. Yet, Huntington is describing a different process than authoritarian adaptation.

Measuring political development by the strength of a government's institutions alone is misleading because it disguises the complex mechanisms that keep authoritarian regimes adaptable. While Huntington correctly observes that institutional (not personal) power, broad participation, and legitimacy are the hallmarks of political development, his argument neglects the fact that authoritarian regimes use institutions to expand their power and cement their control over society. That structures are being created is of less importance than what type of institutions are being created. But what do depoliticized (centralized) versus politicized (decentralized) institutions mean for non-elite co-optation? Because Egypt's governing institutions are centralized, the Egyptian government can more easily co-opt potential rivals because there is less institutional competition for bringing in non-elites. Hence, a central institution, in this case the ruling party, is where non-elite co-optation largely occurs. Depoliticized institutions, which characterize the Egyptian political arena, correlate to a flexible political arena that is advantageous to a regime's ability to co-opt non-elite individuals. This makes achieving regime consensus and system adaptation occur more rapidly.

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[402] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies,* 9.

Conversely, the Syrian political arena contains several politicized institutions—particularly the presidency, the security services, and the B`ath party. As a result, the character of co-optation is a less straightforward matter because its politicized institutions compete for influence in bringing in outside non-elites. In other words, while non-elites in Egypt tend to be channeled largely through the presidential-dominated single party, non-elites in Syria are potentially dispersed throughout the system through one of its pillar institutions—party, presidency, parliament, and security services. As such, non-elite co-optation in Syria is more diluted and uneven in comparison to Egypt. Because power is more spread out between competing institutions, it is harder for the Syrian regime to come to a consensus, and, therefore, to adapt.

The importance of co-optation in this regard is that it comprises a central "soft power" option open to a government. While coercion is arguably the most effective way to eliminate a perceived or present threat, force focuses rather than expands regime power.[403] In many ways, a regime's soft power is more sustainable than its coercive instruments. Co-optation is one means of expanding power by bringing opposition, perceived potential opposition, or neutral figures into the system, usually through appointment or invitation to join a semi-official or official organ. Co-optation is based on bringing non-elite individuals outside of the system's institutions and amalgamating them to the regime's structures. A government expands power by creating or using existing semi-official bodies to include individuals of certain professions, economic class, or educational strata. Hence, the expansion of regime power by co-opting non-elite individuals is a beneficial adaptation strategy. Other soft power options open to a regime are the use of populism and strategically dispersed economic benefits.

Co-optation of non-elite individuals also differs from elite co-optation. In the latter case, individuals who wield political power (usually through an extensive patronage network) are continuously re-co-opted or placed into situations where they must affirm their loyalty to the prevailing system. The primary aim is to prevent their defecting or creating an alternative competing ruling system. By co-opting elites, governments seek to create a consolidated and cohesive political arena. By bringing in non-elites, a regime seeks to expand its power by expanding the number of people who can be mobilized on its behalf and by neutralizing potential opponents. Individuals may be co-opted to prevent them from becoming active opponents of the regime, or to recruit them for their talents. As with elite co-optation, non-elite co-optation is a continuous process that contributes to the reshaping of the political arena.

Returning to our case studies, I have argued that Syria and Egypt's political systems are post-populist authoritarian systems that have diverged substantially in the degree to which their institutions are politicized. Because of these structural differences, non-elite co-optation in both systems differs. In order to substantiate this argument, the following section will start with an examination of party co-optation in contemporary Egypt.

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[403] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 5.

4.2 Party Co-optation

4.2.1 The Egyptian Case

In the previous chapters, the NDP is not depicted as an institutional anchor capable of resisting the country's excessively dominant executive branch. Indeed, Sadat created the NDP specifically not to be a counterweight to the presidency. Egypt's current president, Hosni Mubarak, continues Sadat's trend of increasing the presidency's autonomy and informal powers at the expense of other depoliticized institutions or government portfolios. Similarly, the ease with which the president's son, Gamal, and his Policies Secretariat (PS) are being structurally incorporated into the ruling party underscores the argument that the party possesses little institutional independence or ability to defend itself. Consequently, the party is useful to the presidency as a place for co-opting individuals from outside the political elite.[404]

As previously mentioned, the NDP created the Policies Secretariat (PS) at its September 2002 congress. The president's son, Gamal, heads the PS, which oversees seven subcommittees.[405] The subcommittees oversee the 123-person Higher Policies Council (HPC). The PS created the HPC to assist in debating potential policy aims and suggesting potential reforms. The PS garnered significant political clout and establishing itself as the country's preeminent political force outside of the presidency. The personality of Gamal is credited for this increase in power vis-à-vis the rest of the party and political system.[406]

When Gamal Mubarak and his group of technocrats such as Mahmod Mohy al-Din (PS economic subcommittee head), Mohamad Kamal (PS youth subcommittee head), and Hossam Badrawy (PS education subcommittee head) began advocating reforms, they broke with the NDP's inherited traditional policies of free education, free health care, and protectionist economic policy. For example, Mohy al-Din is credited with floating the Egyptian currency in January 2003.[407] Badrawy continues to argue that the national education system needs reforming, and has succeeded in partially dismantling it.[408] Regardless of these extensive reformist claims, however, a divide exists between the secretariat's advocated policies and the proposals sent to parliament. In this vein, the PS tends to argue that the sum of its contributions is larger than the tally of the proposals it has sent to parliament.[409]

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[404] Again, the notion of non-elite individual co-optation describes how people– who are part of a country's educated elite but not part of the political elite – go from being unaffiliated actors to being incorporated into the political elite. Hence, it describes the process from going from being a non-elite to an elite.

[405] The subcommittees include education, economics, foreign affairs ("Egypt and the world"), health and housing, youth, women, and transportation. The committees contain an additional 300 members in addition to the Policies Secretariat's 123-person Higher Policies Council. Gamal Mubarak appoints its members.

[406] Interview, Hala Mostapha, NDP Higher Policies Council member, Cairo, March 2004.

[407] Interview, Shams al-Din, March 2004. After the LE lost close to half its value, the float was blamed on out-going PM Atif `Obayd

[408] Brian Whitaker, "Egypt scours globe for ideas on how to update its wobbling infrastructure," *The Guardian* (21 September 2004).

Nevertheless, the NDP has consistently praised and publicized new legislation proposed by the secretariat. Examples of the secretariat's suggestions that passed as legislation are the abolishment of ordinary state-security courts[410] and establishment of the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR). In reference to the latter, the NDP secretary-general, Safwat al-Sharif explicitly credited the secretariat by stating that the NCHR was its "brain-child" in April 2003.[411] The party's annual conference in September 2004 was highly significant for the PS because, "During the conference, there was little doubt of who was in charge. From those briefing the press, to the applause Gamal received after his opening speech, it was evident that the group consolidated NDP leadership."[412]

Yet, as the PS consolidated its position, its emphasis decidedly shifted from political reform to economic reform. Gamal Mubarak attempted to justify this shift on the basis that "Political reform cannot be realized in unfavorable economic conditions."[413] Despite the younger Mubarak's insistence on adhering to this mantra of economic reform before political reform, the other members of the policies secretariat offer contradictory messages of impending political openness. As PS member Mohamad Kamal argued in response the party's slow response to demands for political reform, "It [constitutional amendment] is not on the agenda of this conference, but there are no red lines, no taboos whatsoever covering any issue related to political reform, including the issue of amending the constitution."[414] Despite the seemingly openness to political reform, El-Ghobashy conversely argues:

> Lectured for decades on the imperatives of delaying democracy, Egyptians today are being sent an updated version of the same message. Instead of young modernizing officers in khakis bent on reforming the rottenness of palace politics in 1952, today it is 'young' modernizing technophiles in trim suits telling Egyptians to wait until the economy is liberalized and the population is safely democratic before embarking on any political experiments.[415]

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[409] An example of this is the PS's call to abolish ordinary state-security courts in January 2003 while maintaining emergency state-security courts. The PS argued it was a significant reform yet, in retrospect, it eliminated the less draconian of state-security courts that operate in Egypt.

[410] Emergency state-security courts, whose decisions are final and cannot be appealed, remain in effect. In effect, the less repressive courts were abolished while the public prosecutor's office witnessed its investigative powers enhanced.

[411] Gamal Essem El-Din, "Democratisation debate," *al-Ahram Weekly* (1-7 May 2003). Al-Sharif's statement is a misnomer, however, as the idea of establishing a NCHR existed in May 2000 but was never realized. See, Joshua Stacher, "Rhetorical Acrobatics and Reputations: Egypt's National Council for Human Rights," *Middle East Report* issue 235, (Summer 2005).

[412] Stacher, "Gamal Mubarak's journey to power."

[413] Paul Schemm, "Egypt: economic reform only," *Middle East International* (7 October 2004): 28.

[414] Brian Whitaker, "Cairo reformers say free elections is not on agenda," *Guardian* (22 September 2004). Despite these claims made at the September 2004 conference, President Mubarak asked for a constitutional amendment of article 76 of the constitution on 26 February 2005 to allow for direct, multi-candidacy presidential elections.

[415] Mona El-Ghobashy, "Egypt Looks Ahead to Portentous Year," *Middle East Report Online* (2 February 2005): 8.

Despite this trend, which indicates continuity rather than an innovation, the PS's most substantial contribution to Egyptian co-optative politics is its Higher Policies Council (HPC).

The HPC, whose role is to suggest and debate potential policy objectives within its seven subcommittees, is the party's latest organ for co-opting non-elites. In so doing, the HPC is able to take, previously unaffiliated but publicly visible, non-elites and transform them into co-opted elites. Many academics, economists, and former diplomats serve on the 123-person HPC as the secretariat's link to society. Members portray debate within the HPC as open; all ideas are entertained, regardless of their immediate applicability. The aim of the HPC is to serve as the secretariat's brain trust. One member, economics professor `Adil Bishai`, describes the HPC as "the country's greatest think-tank. Fierce academic debates break out as members occasionally disagree before a subcommittee head collects the data for discussion by the PS's steering committee."[416] Conceptually, the HPC encourages innovation by including outside, non-party affiliated non-elites with a range of expertise to help prioritize which reforming options the PS should pursue. As Bishai` concludes,

> The HPC is an opportunity to bring people outside the government to work for the country. Nothing like these forum discussions existed before so this is a healthy development. I admire the other members' ideas. Any situation where ideas are exchanged in a mutual, unrestricted environment is a positive development. Nothing pleases me more than to see initiatives discussed by my subcommittee debated in the Shura council and passed into law by parliament.[417]

Indeed, the HPC's strengths are that it does include independent, respectable figures freely debating the PS's reforming direction. Several HPC initiatives, such as encouraging the president's cancellation of military decrees and the abolishment of ordinary state-security courts and hard-labor punishments, have been rightly hailed in the national press.

However, other HPC members privately complain that the council merely complements the existing authoritarian structures. One member, who wishes to remain anonymous, credits the HPC as a step in the right direction and that free debate is encouraged in its sessions. But this particular member remains skeptical:

> The PS steering committee promised us a liberal body [HPC] but now the secretariat has adopted an authoritarian style. They are becoming what they told us they opposed. For example, in the beginning Gamal Mubarak was accessible to all HPC members. He attended the subcommittees' plenary sessions, listened, and debated with us individually. Now he only shows up to the public sessions. He enters and exits surrounded by guards who do not let you talk to him. After the public sessions, we report to our individual subcommittees where his appointed heads run the meetings. It is these heads' responsibility to write the reports for the PS steering committee. They intentionally omit information and tailor the reports

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[416] Interview, `Adil Bishai`, HPC member, presidential appointed Shura Council member, AUC economics professor, Cairo, 25 February 2004.
[417] Ibid.

> to suit their personal interests, even inserting things that never happened. These subcommittee heads—Ahmad `Azz, Badrawy, Mohy al-Din, Kamal—filter what information gets to Gamal. They intentionally make sure there are walls between Gamal and the HPC's members.[418]

This member, at least, has stopped going to subcommittee meetings, denouncing them as "lacking content and cosmetic in substance."

But the HPC, in this member's estimation, goes beyond being a harmless waste of time. The obstacles the party perpetually places in the committee's way have made this member see it as a tool for co-opting intellectuals and other non-elites. While the council does allow for free and open debate, senior party members ensure that the debate remains irrelevant. "It took about six-months before I realized the HPC was a new regime tool of co-optation," this member recalls. "Its intention was to select liberal-minded intellectuals not formally affiliated with the party and bring them in so as to control them. When you place individuals in such a structure, they disappear from the scene."[419]

Senior NDP members, however, are shocked by but ultimately unconcerned with such an interpretation. Former youth minister `Ali al-Din Hilal countered that "no one on the council is paid. The establishment of the HPC was an opportunity to bring apolitical people into the dialogue. Co-optation is about political acquiescence but everyone in the secretariat reserves total freedom to speak and to engage with reforms."[420] Hilal notes that some of the frustration of individual members is rooted in their inaccurate perception of Egyptian politics. As he explains, "Most of the people that meet Gamal Mubarak think they are going to be a minister two months later. When that does not happen, they are dissatisfied. I think we need to ask why do they want to interact with him? I do not feel sympathy for these people. You interact with someone when you need to. It is work, not a social gathering."[421]

When one joins the HPC, they automatically become a member of the NDP. Hence, many university professors, academics, businessmen, lawyers, journalists, and economists are transformed from being unaffiliated members of the educated middle and upper classes to members of the ruling party. They move from being part of Egypt's non-elite to members of the ruling establishment. For many, this is an unimportant factor when given the opportunity to serve their country, particularly when many of their colleagues are also joining. Many previously apolitical individuals also see the HPC as an entrance into politics.

The illusion of power, self-absorbed ideas of personal importance, a stagnant career, and greed likely factor into the decision to participate and be co-opted as well. In any political system, acquiring the power that comes with higher public office or proximately to power is an added security for one's livelihood and the security of one's family. When asked why, if the council was so flawed, the disappointed member remains on the council, our member flinched embarrassingly before explaining that "In Egypt, there are social rules and norms and once someone is asked to serve, the commitment must be honored." After further probing, the member admitted, "Look, if I resign from the HPC and the NDP, my political career is over. Done. Finished. I am not ready to completely leave the system for good. The situation could change and if I am outside, it is not easy to be re-incorporated because I disassociated myself."[422]

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[418] Interview, HPC member, Cairo, February 2004.
[419] Ibid.
[420] Interview, Hilal, 2 March 2004.
[421] Ibid.

In effect people, who have spent years, building reputations and maintaining their independence in the political arena do not necessarily have a choice in the first place. When the government approaches them and asks if they wish to join, they risk future exclusion if they say no. If they do join and then defect, they ensure permanent exclusion. By joining the ruling party or a touted reforming wing of the party, one's status alters. Viewed from this angle, the decision is never really the individual's if they have political ambitions.

It seems unlikely that the HPC was designed to exclusively be a regime tool of co-optation. Yet, some HPC members' fear of resigning because of the implications on any potential political ambitions they might harbor reveals the extent to which considerations of co-optation are present or perceived. As the PS has continued to jockey for power, it has had to dull its reformist edge. Yet the secretariat's effects are apparent. Through the PS and its affiliates, the NDP has expanded its power throughout professional non-elite layers of Egyptian society.

The NDP is not a political party as defined by classic political-science definitions. The party's hierarchy is loose, its objectives ambiguous, its ideology non-existent, and its membership flexible but binding in the social status that is attached to it. The NDP, since its creation, has been depoliticized and is a major arena for distributing and negotiating patronage networks. Yet, it is precisely the weakness of the party's structures that allows it to co-opt upwardly mobile, urban, middle-level non-elites as a means of remaining politically viable. This process of recruitment and inclusion has less to do with the NDP's legitimacy and more to do with its ability to include and exclude people. Individual NDP members with their own patronage networks look for new and rising talent to integrate into their networks. Outsider non-elites are not attracted with the aim of strengthening the party, but rather with the aim of extending individual members' networks. Outside of the NDP or official government, this approach of attracting and integrating clients from outside and bringing them into the party structure does not happen. There is no final, decisive committee that sifts through party applications, sets established membership procedures, or determines worthiness. Rather, the party recruits and excludes to meet the demands of a given moment. Because Egyptian institutions are depoliticized, the ruling party is the only place to be co-opted, concentrating the incorporation of non-elites into one locus. The flexible character of the party's membership reflects its ability to expand regime power through non-elite co-optation. Particularly, the HPC and the PS serve as examples of the depoliticized party's flexibility in co-opting non-elites into the system. This, by contrast, does not apply in the case for Syria's politicized B`ath party.

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[422] Interview, HPC member, March 2004.

4.2.2 The Syrian Case

The mechanism for mass social co-optation is much more developed in Syria. Besides the ruling B`ath party's 1.8 million members, seven other parties comprise the Progressive National Front (PNF). The PNF was initiated in 1972 by Hafiz al-Asad to bring disparate political groupings under B`athist control. The exchange made the opposition parties subservient to the B`ath in return for parliamentary and ministerial representation. The continuing effect of the PNF is that it factionalizes the opposition parties. Additionally, Syria maintains a peasant union that provides the B`ath party a deep reach in villages and rural areas.[423] No counterpart in Egypt exists and the NDP does not have the rural appeal[424] that the B`ath has in the Syrian countryside. In this respect, the B`ath party was and remains more of a social organizing engine than any within the Egyptian political arena.

Corporatist entities do not to have the autonomy or lobbying weight of the B`ath, the security services, or the presidency, yet they exist as a support to the party. They reinforce and support B`ath autonomy, making it difficult for the presidency and security services to directly depoliticize the party apparatus. Consequently, any indication that the president intends to restructure the party is met with bureaucratic resistance and opposition. Hence, this demonstrates the institutional gridlock between various competing, politicized structures in contemporary Syria. To continue as the leading party, the B`ath party must remain relevant. To do so, the party must maintain both its bases and its cohesion among its various power centers while continuing to expand its power.

Co-option of non-elites into the ruling party, which is the key Egyptian strategy, plays out in a contrasting way in Syria. Given the bureaucratic requirements for full B`ath membership and the party's internal competing power centers, it is difficult for the party's leadership or the president to negotiate the creation of B`athist-sponsored councils as is routinely done in Egypt. B`athists join young and are nurtured. Established individuals outside the system in Syria do not often join government-sponsored councils and think tanks.

In January 2004, the party commissioned a committee for reforming the B`ath party to prepare a list of priorities for the June 2005 party congress's agenda. The 2005 party congress was the first to be held under Bashar's presidency. Many analysts felt it would be an important measurement of the president's position vis-à-vis the other institutional power centers.[425]

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[423] Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power,* 197-219.

[424] Rural voter quotes from Kassem's research indicate that electoral appeal in rural Egyptian areas stems from individual personalities and their ability to provide services rather than party affiliation, which is rarely a consideration. Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*, 160-162.

The committee for reforming the B`ath comprised four subcommittees and was chaired by `Abdallah Ahmar, who served (until June 2005) as the party's National Command head. The subcommittees include two ideological groups for pan-Arab unity and regional/local leadership. The remaining subcommittees were intended to evaluate the party's content and thus included a socialism subcommittee and a democracy or freedoms subcommittee. All the subcommittees produced reports that were reviewed by the party's regional command (RC) and incorporated into formulating the 10th party congress's agenda. The subcommittees had a year to complete their tasks. Of the four subcommittees, three had influence in that their recommendations would guide change for the congress. The fourth organ, the freedoms subcommittee, was consultative. Its recommendations could be adopted or dismissed at the Regional Command's discretion. The reason for the freedom's subcommittee's consultative status is that it was the only subcommittee that included opposition and independent figures. The remaining subcommittees were comprised entirely of B`athists. As an independent member of the freedoms subcommittee explains, "We were told to say what we wanted because it was not our job to reform the party."[426] The freedoms subcommittee included a mixture of B`ath party members, military officers, and independent figures. Its cross-sectarian mix included Sunni, Shi`a, Christian, and `Alawi members. Its members were Ahmad Barqawi (ex-B`athist, philosophy professor at Damascus University), Samir al-Taqi (surgeon, former member of the Faysil wing of the Communist party), Michel Kilo (civil society activist), Husayn al-Owdat (ex-B`athist, opposition figure), Samir Hassan (B`athist, Dean of Literature in Damascus University), Marwan Sabah (B`athist, consultant for the information ministry), Hamid Mar`ai (opposition, member of Committee for Friends of Civil Society), Major-Gen. `Izz al-Din Idris (a figure in the B`athist ideology branch), and Gen. Mohamad Yehia Sulayman (faculty director of National Defense school).

The freedoms subcommittee met almost weekly during the course of 2004. An agreement was reached with the non-B`athist figures participating on the freedoms organ whereby they could leave the subcommittee without retribution if they were unsatisfied with the committee.[427] Members such as Kilo successfully lobbied for their reports to be published and publicly circulated. Samir al-Taqi and Ahmad Barqawi published their contributions on Ayman `Abd al-Nor's *All 4 Syria* electronic newsletter.[428] Al-Taqi argues, "We made it clear from the beginning that we were here to save the country, not the B`ath party. Our reports were not managed. We discussed everything. We spoke about the military and its structures, the role of the shadow economy, potential social tension, and ethnic and confessional impact on our history and future development."[429] Individual members' papers addressed topics such as conceptual approaches to democracy and explored the effects of 'popular' democracy on the economy, civil society, political and state structures. At the conclusion of a year's work, the subcommittee submitted a final report to the party's RC.

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[425] Interview, Joshua Landis, Associate Professor at Oklahoma University, Damascus, 26 February 2005.
[426] Interview, Kilo, 22 March 2004.
[427] No one left the subcommittee.
[428] Interview, Samir al-Taqi, independent politician, Damascus, 2 March 2005.

The final report created some controversy in Damascus. Samir Hassan was placed in charge of amalgamating the numerous discussions and papers into a working paper that the RC could use in determining an agenda of priorities for its congress. The controversy revolved around the fact the final report has not been made public, and there were rumors that the party would not convene its congress. One Western diplomat spoke for many in Syria when he said "the reform subcommittee had lots of bluster in the beginning but as time wore on, people started shutting up. As for the report, it is known that it was written from above, and that the party discarded the opposition figures' individual papers."[430]

Al-Taqi disagreed. He felt that the final paper was a fitting summary of the subcommittees' work. Even if it did not live up to expectations, the original papers are still consulted and ready for use in the event of any party restructuring. In his view, just because some of the more liberal ideas were not in the final report does not mean they are buried or unusable in the future. So while the committee's members worked hard on producing useful ideas, the impact of their efforts depends on the outcome of the institutional struggle. Depending on which institution (presidency or party) accumulates the most influence on this issue will likely determine whether the final report is the collective subcommittee's or the individual papers.

The limited co-optative capacity of the subcommittee in comparison to the Egypt's Policies Secretariat's HPC is evident. The subcommittee for freedoms consisted of a wide cross-section of society. While a few of the subcommittee members are B`athist, the majority of its members are not. They belong to the part of the civil society movement that survived the "Damascus spring." People such as Kilo or Mar`ei are primarily concerned with cultural developments. Kilo frequently comments on Syrian politics in the media while writing weekly for Beirut-based newspapers and journals.[431] Samir al-Taqi is a surgeon. Once a member of the politburo of the Faysil branch of the Communist party, al-Taqi is now loosely affiliated with Walid al-Mo'alim, Bashar's deputy minister of foreign affairs.[432] Yet individuals such as al-Taqi or Kilo cannot fairly be considered co-opted by the party because of their participation on the freedoms subcommittee.

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[429] Ibid.

[430] Interview, a Western diplomat who requested anonymity, Damascus, 28 February 2005.

[431] In fact, Kilo's close cooperation with the B`ath party did not protect him. Kilo remains imprisoned without charges since May 2006 over a memorandum he authored calling for Syrian authorities to established formal relations with Lebanon.

[432] Al-Mo`alim was made Minister of Foreign Affairs in February 2006, replacing Farouk al-Shar`a, who was appointed vice-president. Al-Shar`a was foreign minister between 1984-2006.

It is within this context that divergence between Syria and Egypt is most apparent. If Syria followed the Egyptian example, individual members approached would have *de facto* become members of the ruling party. The incorporation of independent members would have neutralized them, as their efforts became absorbed into the system. In Syria, conversely, non-elite individuals were offered an opportunity to join a reforming committee. No one was forced to accept formal institutional affiliation. In fact, it is unlikely that the party, with its stringent rules for degrees of membership, would have easily accepted outside figures' becoming instant members. The party members are arranged in extensive, overlapping and, at times, conflicting patronage networks. Even so, the party has little difficulty organizing these patronage networks and resolving its internal differences. Indeed, injecting new charismatic or higher profile members would potentially disrupt the existing network structures and is difficult to do as a consequence.

Simultaneously, many of the non-elite figures do not see joining the party as the best means of improving Syria. As al-Taqi argues, "We would not join the party, our role is to criticize the party. By participating on the freedoms subcommittee, we reinforce our independence and maintain the open dialogue. If I were a member of the party, they would not need me."[433]

One might reasonably suggest that al-Taqi or Kilo might not have been appointed to the subcommittee if they were party members. They and the other subcommittee members are useful for developing ideas to reform the system in contemporary Syria. As a politicized institution, the party also serves a larger social organizing function that allows it to reach out and interact with these figures without formally including them. Hence, the co-optation of non-affiliated non-elite figures is not as prominent in the Syrian arena as in the Egyptian sphere.

Rather, the trend in Syria focuses on non-elite figures' being consulted and used but not incorporated formally into the structures of the system. This indicates that in authoritarian systems in which semi-autonomous politicized institutions exist, there can be interaction with independent non-elite personalities without the need to incorporate them formally. The consequence of such a measure is that non-elite individuals are diffusely spread across the system between the politicized institutions such as the party, military, intelligence services, bureaucracy, PNF, and parliament, which complicates clear lines of institutional interaction. In this vein, the institutions are bigger rather than personalities that make them up.

4.3 Societal Co-optation

4.3.1 Egypt: Councilization

One way that the Egyptian system adapts is by establishing national councils to expand the regime's power. These councils deal with issues such as women's rights, human rights, and other concerns often dismissed as Western concerns. Andre Bank develops this notion in relation to the

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[433] Interview, al-Taqi, 2 March 2005

Arab world's two constitutional monarchies, Morocco and Jordan. In case of Morocco, Bank argues:

> A new and most striking strategy of legitimation under the new Moroccan king is his creation of royal councils and committees in various policy fields. These unelected bodies existed or still exist in different areas such as the GSM-privatization, poverty reduction, the reform of the education system, the controversial Western Sahara question, human rights and the return of the civil code. This trend towards new (royal) institutions corresponds in many aspects with the Jordanian pattern of *formalizing informality*. It is an attempt by the king to institutionalize his rather informal powers and to create something of a parallel government structure. Thereby, a hybrid system develops in which the exact spheres of responsibilities are not clear and in which Muhammad can by-pass the formal procedures that have developed in Moroccan politics over the last decade. Overall, this constellation allows for various ways of penetration and intervention by the king.[434]

While Mubarak's ruling circle is not a royal court, the Egyptian government's has displayed a noticeable ability to harness the national councils as a means of expanding regime power. This is not a straightforward process of co-optation. Rather, this strategy seeks to invite divisions among groups working in such fields as human rights while containing and statizing a discourse of popular discontent among a key regime constituency, the urban middle class professionals. Egypt's two most prominent national councils are the National Women's Council (NWC) and the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR). For the purposes of this thesis, I will examine the NCHR[435] to illustrate a how a depoliticized political arena facilitates co-optation and expands regime power.

The NCHR's establishment is a softer example of the government's reaction to evolving domestic pressures. It is an attempt to market Gamal Mubarak's Policies Secretariat as the reformist future to the regime's social support base. This perceived key constituency is the educated but politically inactive urban professional class. The council's establishment also seeks to accommodate US pressure for reform, although this is not the primary reason for its establishment.

After the Cabinet approved the creation of the NCHR in May 2003, the justice minister laid out the council's composition and mission. It was to have twenty members, to be affiliated with and appointed by the president, and was meant to foster a culture of human rights. It was also set up to examine pertinent legislation and ensure Egypt's compliance with international human rights agreements. The president, subsequently, "decided" to attach the NCHR to the Shura council.[436] The council's affiliation, and indeed the Shura's domination by, the ruling party, blurred the distinction because it informally aligned the NCHR with the NDP. Parliament approved the legislation creating the council in parliament on June 16, 2003. Law 93/2003 stipulates that the

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[434] Andre Bank, "Rents, Cooptation, and Economized Discourse: Three Dimensions of Political Rule in Jordan, Morocco and Syria," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* Vol. 14, No. 1/2 (2004): 167.

[435] I thank *Middle East Report* for permitting me to replicate parts of my article in this thesis.

[436] The Council was affiliated to Parliament's upper house, rather than the presidency, because it was internationally illegal to affiliate a human rights council to the executive.

NCHR shall be funded by the state, possess no legislative powers, and consist of a chairman, a deputy, and twenty-five members.[437]

The NCHR, then, was conceived to serve as an advisory body. NDP parliamentary whip Kamal al-Shazly has described the limits of the council's authority by saying, "It [NCHR] is merely a consultative council with no power to draw up any plans."[438] While NDP MPs "heaped praise on Gamal Mubarak's policy secretariat, and encouraged the NCHR to stand up to NGOs that exploit the human rights issue to tarnish Egypt's image," analysts did note that its powers do not extend beyond "requesting cooperation" from governmental agencies and "recommending" cases for prosecution.[439] As such, inconvenient council advice can be legally ignored or shelved by the prosecutor-general's investigative branch. Similarly, requesting cooperation is rarely beneficial because the NCHR is not endowed with legal redress. Hence, other agencies that are asked to cooperate with the NCHR are not accountable.

Rather than hinge the NCHR's domestic and international legitimacy on lesser-known personalities, the Shura's appointees represent a who's who of Egyptian politics. Former UN secretary-general Botros Botros-Ghali is the council's chairman while respected international lawyer Ahmad Kamal Abul-Magd became its deputy. The additional twenty-five council members can be generally described as socially active and respectable.

The appointment of independent human rights activists also adds some degree of credibility to the NCHR's image. Bahey al-Din Hassan, the director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), and Hafiz Abu Sa`ada, the director of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), are considered the NCHR's opposition members. Abu Sa`ada is a deeply symbolic appointment. He runs Egypt's best-known domestic human rights NGO. He was also arrested and held for six-days in December 1998 because he authored a report about the al-Kosh incident of August 1998.[440] Although these appointments failed to impress civil society, their presence is intended to appeal to inactive professionals who see them as outside of the government's control.

The appointment of Hassan and Abu Sa`ada, however, was not unexpected. In May 2000, when the justice ministry was preparing to launch the NCHR, an article traced the council's development to Paris in March 2000 where Abu Sa`ada pitched the council's idea to the president's chief-of-staff, Zakaraya `Azmy.[441] In the same article, activists denounced the potential ramifications for Egypt’s human rights NGOs, but Hassan indicates that a council is a positive step. The Shura council apparently approached other activists to find out if they would be willing to serve. Others approached, but not appointed, include such figures as Nagad al-Bora`i,[442] and Hisham Kassem, manager of the independent daily *al-Masri al-Youm*.[443] While the appointees were more prominent than expected, they have been hampered by institutional deficiencies rather than their abilities to research, assess, and call for action.

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[437] The NCHR was proposed to consist of 20-members. A parliamentary compromise increased it to 27-members.

[438] Gamal Essam El-Din, "More than window-dressing?" *Al-Ahram Weekly* 19-25 June 2003.

[439] Ibid.

[440] Background information on Abu Sa`ada's case can be found in Stacher, "A Democracy with Fangs and Claws and its Effects on Egyptian Political Culture," 87-88. The al-Kosh incident (Sohag governorate) involved sectarian strife incited by the security services when as many as 1,000 villagers (primarily Christian) were detained and tortured over the unsolved murder of a Christian male in 1998.

[441] Amira Howeidy, "Rights at a crossroad," *Al-Ahram Weekly* 18-24 May 2000.

Some of Abu Sa`ada’s colleagues from other organizations branded him as an “opportunist”.[444] Others argue that Hassan and Abu Sa`ada “lost their independence” when they joined the NCHR.[445] For their part, Abu Sa`ada and Hassan defend their membership. As Abu Sa`ada states, “If you do not join, you can have no impact at all. I could not say no until we examine how the council operates. If it is inactive, I can resign.”[446] Hassan makes similar arguments.[447] The argument over co-optation and members’ reputations even reached the NCHR’s chairman, Botros Ghali, who brushed away criticism: “There is not a single representative of the government on the council. My personality alone is an obstacle to the government’s pressure. I said ‘no’ to the US government so I can say ‘no’ to the Egyptian government.”[448] While the co-optation debate rages, it neglects analysis of the various constituencies it reassures. The council’s middle 25 members attempt to achieve two interconnected aims.

First, the NCHR middle members include lawyers, journalists, bureaucrats, doctors, and intellectuals. Each of these professionals has his or her own social network, which are brought closer to the party by the inclusion of another friend. The government has also sought to woo the professional class by instituting economic policies that work to their advantage. Secondly, it quasi-nationalizes the human rights debate by diluting civil society’s oppositional messages. The NCHR provides a semi-official platform from which its socially respectable members transmit an incrementally liberalizing argument to various constituencies. In this vein, the target audience is not the upper-class businessmen or the countries’ numerous urban and rural poor. Rather, the NCHR speaks to urban professionals who, while perhaps concerned with human rights issues, are not consumed by the debate’s contours. By adding its voice to the human rights debate, the government quasi-nationalizes partially co-opts the debate.

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[442] Al-Borai` is the head of the Group for Democratic Development, an NGO that specializes in educating people on democratic traditions.

[443] Interview, `Aida Saif al-Dawla, 2 December 2004.

[444] Interview, Ahmad Saif al-Islam, HMLC director, Cairo, 16 February 2004.

[445] Interview, Saif al-Dawla, 24 February 2004.

[446] Interview, Hafiz Abu Sa`ada, EOHR director, Cairo 18 February 2004.

[447] Interviews, Bahay al-Din Hassan, CIHRS director, Cairo, 26 February 2004 and 16 December 2004.

[448] Phone Interview, Botros Botros-Ghali, NCHR chairman, Beirut to Paris, 16 March 2004.

Osama al-Ghazali Harb,[449] editor of al-Ahram's *al-Siyasa al-Dawliya*, and NDP MP Mostafa al-Fiqi are appointees. As government-inclined yet moderate pundits, both enjoy positive social reputations domestically. Hossam Badrawy, a NDP MP and Gamal Mubarak associate, is also on the council.[450] Popular Wafdist MP Monir Fakhry `Abd al-Nor represents opposition parties.[451] Lawyer and women rights activist, Mona Zolfiqar, also serves as an active voice.[452] Likewise Nasirist press syndicate head, Galal `Arif, ensures that journalists have representation.

The NHRC currently has seven working subcommittees. They represent political, social, economic, civil, and cultural rights as well as legislative matters. The remaining subcommittee verifies citizen and institutional complaints. An eighth subcommittee is slated to deal with international regulations. Hence, the subcommittees, save the one handling complaints, maintain the tasks of human rights education and dissemination. Only the complaints sub-committee handles cases of violations. In light of the NCHR's lack of legal powers, little of substance has transpired.

The NCHR published its first annual report on Egypt in April 2005. The report's adoption and release was handled in a questionable manner. A meeting scheduled for mid-April for the NCHR to circulate and discuss the 358-page report never happened. Instead, Abul-Magd called an *ad hoc* meeting on 5 April. Bahay Hassan, who was traveling at the time, characterized the move as consistent with how the body operates. He states, "The report was adopted at a meeting convened on short notice and sent to the president without making it available for its members, some of who were traveling, to read it. The report was completed to tell the people it has been done but the report will not be made public for months."[453] When asked if the report dealt with the al-`Arish detentions,[454] Hassan said, "I have neither read nor know what is in the report. Only those around Abul-Magd know its contents."[455] Hafiz Abu Sa`ada claimed that the report did address the al-`Arish incident and that the NCHR was publicly releasing the report in Arabic, English and French "in the months after the president and parliament have the opportunity to review our recommendations."[456] While intellectually the NCHR looked frail, its mere operation appears aimed at presenting an illusion of reforming activities.

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[449] Harb, a former member of the NDP's Policies Secretariat, resigned from the ruling party in March 2006 and launched a new party called the Justice and Democracy party. He remains on the NCHR.

[450] Badrawy lost his parliamentary re-election in Cairo's Kasr al-`Aini district in November 2005.

[451] `Abd al-Nor lost his parliamentary re-election in Cairo's al-Waily district in November 2005.

[452] Zolfiqar, also a member of the National Council for Women, was a leading advocate of personal-status law in 2000, which nominally gives women the right to divorce.

[453] Interview, Hassan, Cairo, 7 April 2005.

[454] Following the bombing of the Hilton in the Sinai resort of Taba that killed 34 people on October 7, 2004, the interior minister announced that nine Islamist radicals, led by a 25-year old microbus driver living in the northern Sinai town of al-'Arish, committed the atrocity. While most of the suspects have been captured or killed, one fugitive remains. In keeping with the government's common practices of collective punishment and torture, al-'Arish and nearby al-Shaykh Zuwayd have been subjected to flagrant repression. The reasoning seems to be that if the bombers resided there, the town's population has all the answers about the bombing. Cairo's human rights NGOs (including Abu Saada's EOHR) reported that over 2,500 people were indiscriminately detained and abused in late November. Human Rights Watch published a 48-page report in February 2005, based on collaborative investigations with domestic Egyptian groups, detailing the targeting of women, children and the elderly alongside accused "Islamists."

[455] Interview, Hassan, 7 April 2005.

The NCHR was not designed to be, and did not become, the regime's tool for co-opting the opposition. It does not have enough seats to co-opt very many people. Egypt's NCHR serves an important political purpose. While the council does not pretend to possess power, its creation is about largely that. The primary purpose of establishing the NCHR is to expand and redistribute regime power. Time will tell if it will succeed. In the meantime, muddling the human rights argument seems to favor the government.

The Policies Secretariat and the NCHR advertise that the government is moving in a liberalizing direction. By attributing the NCHR's origins to Gamal's Policies Secretariat, it markets that group as the regime's enlightened wing. By reaching out to professionals, it pre-empts and dilutes discontent while expanding support for the secretariat. In building support or reaffirming existing supporters among this potentially wavering social base, regime power increases. In adding a semi-official voice, it redistributes power because the field is redefined into "moderates" and "rejectionist" camps. Cultivating such a distinction, the human rights debate is quasi-nationalized because the NCHR dilutes independent human rights groups' criticisms of the government. If a few or even most of the human rights NGOs disregard the council, it does not invalidate the NCHR's assumptions of incremental development among the politically inactive citizens.

Human rights violations such as in the northern Sinai towns over the course of Fall 2004[457] are unfortunately routine in Egypt. Yet, handling domestic violations is not the NCHR's mission. The NCHR is rhetorically active in areas that concern Egypt's professionals. In this vein, increasing attention on the West's violations in Palestine and Iraq, which complements Arab media coverage, helps the council satisfy its intended domestic audience. It is, perhaps, continuous US military activity and the failure to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict that keeps the NCHR's focus abroad rather than at home. Whether or not the NCHR is capable of assuring long-term support does not seem to be important.

In the case of Egypt's NCHR, the establishment of such a council is not directed merely at co-opting independent individuals. Instead, several functions are served by creating a neutral council staffed by respected personalities. Firstly, the inclusion of opposition figures contributes to dividing the NGOs that already work in the field. Secondly, the NCHR provides a semi-official platform from which its socially respectable members transmit an incrementally liberalizing message. By adding its voice to the human rights debate, the government quasi-nationalizes the concept of human rights—rendering it no longer the exclusive preserve of foreign embassies and uppity activists with suspect foreign funding. Egypt's NCHR has done a poor job of preventing and rectifying human rights violations, particularly among the lowest strata of society. Hence, it can be argued that this mechanism is not designed for their benefit or to win their allegiance. Yet, for the many urban middle class professionals who do not harbor political ambitions, the establishment is a form of co-optation in that it placates a potential issue that could be seen as a rally point of discontent. Rather than being a specific point of co-optative politics, it is pre-emptive co-optation through the nationalizing of a discourse.

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[456] Interview, Abu Sa`ada, Cairo, 8 April 2005.

[457] See Footnote 445.

While in the previous examples there is a focus on forcing a formal institutional affiliation, the newer strategies of councils and councilization in Egypt demonstrate an increasing sophistication of authoritarian adaptation. In this example, the Egyptian government did not employ the older strategies of bringing independent people and formally wedding them to the system's structures. In a sense, this newer strategy seeks to attract a base through acquiescence rather than formalized membership into a structure. Apart from the traditional co-optation tactics such as dominating formally ”independent” entities such as trade unions, NGOs, and professional syndicates, the Egyptian government is moving to create parallel entities within the system's structures such as national councils. In the cases of the opposition or independent figures who did join the NCHR, the government proved capable of co-opting and recruiting individuals from prickly NGOs into a state-affiliated entity. They, in turn, helped expand the regime's social power among a key constituent. The Syrian regime, by contrast, is using a different strategy of empowering associations in hopes of expanding its power.

4.3.2 Syria: Controlled Association Expansion

The authoritarian adaptation strategy of councilization, as seen in the Egyptian example, is not employed by Syria. Bashar tried to introduce people personally connected to him from the Syrian Computer Society (SCS) into the governing structures[458] after assuming power but it produced unworkable results. While the people brought in through the SCS have become part of the elite, it is more limited in its scope. In Bank's words, the “attempts to bolster his power base have not been successful in the sense of creating a constellation in which he would acquire hegemonic powers over all other members of the core elite.”[459] Yet, Bashar's ability to seize control over the elite arena appears to be increasing the longer he has been in power. The extension of Lebanese president Emile Lahoud's term, which required a Lebanese constitutional amendment, strengthened Bashar's position domestically vis-à-vis the key elites within Syria's politicized institutions.[460] Despite the institutions' ability to check Bashar's unmitigated power, the strategy of councilization is not widely used. Instead of using councils, the government is permitting the controlled expansion of charitable associations.

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[458] SCS figures connected to Bashar are Syrian Ambassador to the US `Imad Mostapha, ex-consultant Ayman `Abd al-Nor, state planning commission head Abdalah Daradari.

[459] Bank, “Rents, Cooptation, and Economized Discourse,” 170.

[460] Interview, Syrian Political Analyst, Damascus, February-March 2005.

To frame associations in the Syrian context is difficult because NGOs are not legally recognized. There are two reasons for this. NGOs, by Syrian political definitions, are seen as open to foreign funding and involvement in domestic political activities. Hence, associations—and not NGOs—operate in Syria. Perhaps this is a matter of semantics but this is how associations characterize themselves in Syria. Since the United Arab Republic (UAR) experiment with Egypt (between 1958-1961), associations or charities are governed under Law 93/1958 and Law 1330/1958. These laws define what associations are and restrict the entities' activities by criminalizing political activism. It is within the association field, that some expansion has occurred in contemporary Syria.

The establishment of associations is a noticeable trend under Bashar al-Asad's presidency. According to the ministry of social affairs, Syria maintains 586 associations—fifty of them created in the last three years.[461] As a founder of the Syrian Young Entrepreneurs Association (SYEA) explains, "There has been an increase in associations but there are only about five that matter in terms of development."[462]

The new associations focus on channeling younger people into the public sphere to address issues such as rural poverty, women's development issues, entrepreneurship, and environmental topics. In a country that is defined by state-led development, the state does not have the specialized training and energy to engage in the issues addressed by some of the new associations. Despite a flourish of new associations being registered, the quickest and easiest way to be granted a license remains an association's connections to regime figures. For example, FIRDOS, MAWRED, and SYEA operate under the patronage of Bashar's wife, Asma al-Asad.

FIRDOS (Fund for Integrated Rural Development of Syria) was founded in July 2001. It is regarded as the "pioneer" in the new Syrian association field. The purpose of FIRDOS is to reduce and eliminate rural poverty through projects that target financial, educational, and basic infrastructural needs overlooked or neglected by the central state. One of FIRDOS's key contributions is its willingness to provide micro-finance loans to undercapitalized rural businesses. Modernizing and Activating Women's Role in Economic Development (MAWRED) was founded in April 2003. It seeks to train, employ, and develop women's professional and entrepreneurial skills so they can be better incorporated in the economy. MAWRED had recently initiated a project to consult and support struggling businesses in the hope of spurring creativity that translated into profits.[463] The aim of the project was to increase independence in business among the lower members of Syria's social strata. SYEA is a more recent association and was established in January 2004. Sami Moubayed, a Damascene businessman and British-trained Ph.D., was a leading member among the group's twelve founders. Moubayed explained that Syria has an unlimited environment for entrepreneurial growth and SEYA facilitates an organizational outlet for younger businesspeople to meet and network.[464] As he argues, "We are similar to FIRDOS and MAWRED. We are independent and a sort of junior chamber of commerce."[465] In many ways, one could argue the strategy of expanding Syrian associations is a means of expanding regime power because of the focus is on neglected areas of state development.

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[461] "Trying to fit in," *Syria Today* (Winter 2004): 6

[462] Interview, Sami Moubayed, SYEA founder, Damascus, 21 March 2004.

[463] "Trying to fit in," *Syria Today* (Winter 2004): 8.

On closer inspection, these new associations are neither all that free nor do they maintain a staff with the required technical expertise in their specific fields. While Asma al-Asad carries no official profile in the government, her position as the president's wife garners prominence for these established associations. Although access to state money and the ability to push paperwork through rigid government bureaucracy is a benefit, associations under the patronage of the president's wife forfeit independence. Moreover, those in charge of the day-to-day operations of each prominent association maintain other connections with the regime. For example, daughters of prominent regime figures participate and contribute to FIRDOS' and MAWRED's development. For example, Dima Turkmani, the daughter of Minister of Defense, Nora al-Shar`a, daughter of former foreign minister, and Reem Khaddam, daughter of former Vice-President are all members of FIRDOS or MAWRED. People associated with these associations feel that focusing on this aspect misrepresents the good work being done. As one FIRDOS member states, "It is incredible how smart and energetic these women are. Despite who their fathers' are, they care about Syria and its future dearly. They are not out for personal gain or wealth."[466] This is no reason not to believe this statement. These individuals are concerned with Syrian development and thanklessly donate their efforts. Yet, the striking feature is that the likelihood of these associations carving out an autonomous space is small. Being daughters of the regime is a double-edged sword. While it allows them to establish associations and to conduct activities, it also makes the organization susceptible to control. If one of these organizations interferes or proves detrimental to the Syrian political establishment, they can be curtailed after a family meeting. As one analyst remarks, "The associations here do good work. Asma has pulled back, and they are suffering at the moment. Besides, it is not like these groups were ever in anything but safe hands."[467]

A second consideration is that while those with personal connections within the regime can more easily circumscribe bureaucracy, they may not always be experts in their chosen field. Some Syrians living abroad have returned to work in these associations; attracting these expatriates was a key element of Bashar's early agenda. It is less clear if these westernized Syrian expatriates returning to work on development possess the required field credentials. As a former consultant connected to the projects argues, "I read some proposals and it was clear in many cases they did not have the expertise to alleviate and reduce rural poverty. Sure, they were optimistic and hard working, but FIRDOS and MAWRED operated without a compass. It was not rule of experts, but instead a lack of experts."[468] This is not to discredit or minimize their work. Yet, because of the direct and indirect control exercised over the expanding associational arena, it seems unlikely that the problems these groups, in coordination with the state, hope to combat will be effectively addressed. Additionally, no definitive measurements credibly indicate how these associations affect social co-optation other than involving new people. The expansion of the sector, then, suggests that the appearance of change is contributing to the existing political status quo.

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[464] Interview, Moubayed, 21 March 2004.

[465] Ibid.

[466] Interview, FIRDOS member, Beirut, March 2004.

[467] Interview, Syrian political analyst, Damascus, 28 February 2005.

The new trend of establishing development associations is a feature of Bashar's Syria. Yet, the associations are not as visible as they were a year ago. The legislation proposed to alter the association law to officially permit NGOs is stalled. This keeps these groups hampered from receiving external development aid. Keeping these new associations closely controlled through people connected to the regime in an ambiguous legal arena produces several different strategies for the associations. As *Syria Today* reports, "Some [associations] have appeared under the patronage of well-known Syrians…However, a number of these new [associations] have extensive experience and data on the development problems they are charged to address, and some work closely with the government in their respective areas of concern."[469] The formal and informal controls the state maintains over associations make the probability of their becoming a new space for independent activity unlikely. Relatives of senior regime figures staff the associations. They receive state funding. The regime's political and institutional balance remains unchanged despite alterations within the arena. Yet the introduction of quasi-official associations sponsored and operated by relatives of regime members, does not have the social co-optation reach of the Egyptian councilization strategy. While the new associations indicate that the government is reaching out to include new figures, it does so slowly, and in a manner that it controls completely.

One conclusion is that Syria's existing institutional field is resistant to the addition of other potentially politicized entities that could also vie for influence. In Egypt's depoliticized field, the addition of numerous NGOs, councils, and committees is frequently used as an adaptation strategy. Yet, in Syria, a complementary trend is absent because of competing power centers within and among politicized institutions. Such entities block the emergence of energized associations or councils. Hence anything but controlled entities could threaten the political balance that exists between political figures and their institutional supports. Hence, Asma's associations would be blocked if they upset the political balance in the president's favor. However, in Egypt, the system remains flexible for incorporating various entities precisely because the depoliticized field allows an entity to have power as easily as it can be stripped away. The big difference between associational life in Egypt and Syria is that in the former there is more room for NGOs as long as they are not political. In Syria, neither political nor apolitical associations seem to be welcome regardless of their sponsor.

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[468] Interview, former consultant to FIRDOS and MAWRED, Cairo, 9 March 2005.

[469] "Trying to fit in," 7.

4.4 From Political Non-elites to Elected Elites: Parliamentary Differences

While Egypt and Syria's parliaments both lack independence or real power, and while both bodies have proved useful tools for distributing patronage and absorbing figures into the regime, the processes whereby this happens diverge significantly. In Egypt, independents are encouraged to join the ruling party by officially becoming NDP members. In Syria, by contrast, party membership is not a prerequisite. In fact, independent MPs are purposefully recruited as independents. The purpose of this subsection is to highlight these differences in the regime's co-optation of non-elites by bringing them into parliament. To achieve this aim, I examine the differences in the parliaments, elections, and member composition.

4.4.1 Electoral and Parliamentary Dynamics in Egypt and Syria

Egypt's parliament (*Maglis al-Sh`ab*) is comprised of 444 elected and 10 presidentially appointed members. Parliamentary elections have been highly contested under Mubarak's rule, despite the opposition's inability to consistently compete with the ruling NDP.[470] In 2000, legal opposition parties obtained seventeen seats, or 4 –percent of the total. The Wafd won seven seats, the Tagam`u six, Nasserists three, and the Liberals one.[471] True independent candidates won a further twenty-one seats, while the Muslim Brotherhood won its largest number of seats since 1987, obtaining seventeen.[472] The NDP won 390 seats, establishing a dominating 88-percent majority.[473] The 2000 legislative elections have been considered by observers as the fairest of all the elections held under Mubarak's presidency. The reason for this is that the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ruled judicial supervision was a requirement of article 88 of the constitution, and therefore declared article 24 of Law 73/1956 unconstitutional on 8 July 2000.[474] Article 88 states that voting in the parliamentary elections should be monitored completely by members of the judiciary. This meant members of the judiciary should be in the polling stations instead of at central stations where they counted rigged ballots after the security forces delivered them.[475] In turn, this also meant the judges would neither allow unregistered voters to vote nor the police to transport the ballot boxes to the central stations, thereby limiting electoral interference.[476]

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[470] NDP parliamentary majorities have been 87-pecent (1984), 79-percent (1987), 86-percent (1990), 94-percent (1995), and 88-percent (2000) under Mubarak's presidency. In the 2005 elections, the NDP won 74-percent in an example that necessitates further explanation after completing this thesis.

[471] Five MPs representing the Wafd were expelled from that party by its leadership after the 2000 elections.

[472] This was reduced to 15 because the government called for elections to be re-contested, which resulted in two MB MPs losing in fraudulent re-elections.

[473] This number is misleading, however, as only 172 NDP-nominated candidates managed to win (39-percent of the vote). Another 181 'NDP independents' won seats and rejoined the party ranks. Another 35 actual independent candidates joined the NDP to give it an 88-percent majority in the 2000-2005 parliament.

[474] Gamal Essam El-Din, "Making History at the Supreme Court" *Al-Ahram Weekly* (13-19 July 2000).

[475] Maye Kassem, "Egypt's 2000 Legislative Elections: New Rules, New Tactics" *Cairo Papers in Social Science* (Cairo: AUC Press, forthcoming).

[476] Brownlee, "The Decline of Pluralism in Mubarak's Egypt," 9.

The reduction in opposition representation in parliament following the 1990, 1995, and 2000 elections can partially be explained by the fact that newly elected MPs who are not affiliated with a political party are encouraged to join the NDP after their election. In Egypt's 2000 parliamentary elections, official NDP candidates won 172 out of 444 contested seats. Another 216 independent candidates joined the party following the election, giving the NDP an 88-percent majority in parliament. Of the 216 independents that joined the party, 181 were originally members of the party who did not receive the party's official nomination and contested elections anyway. They rejoined in order to have access to state resources and proximately to the president's power. Kassem has argued that Egyptian parliamentary elections have less to do with commitment to party membership and more to do with access to state resources. In this manner, joining the NDP is a key element of control following an election. As she argues, "In the absence of a compelling ideology, autonomous access to resources or even independent party leaders, the NDP depends on its links with the president as its major source of propaganda."[477] It is no surprise that independents that win parliament elections join or rejoin the party in Egypt. They would be marginalized from the patronage networks, access to resources that benefit their constituencies, and continued participation in elite politics without formal NDP affiliation. A MP's official affiliation with the ruling party does not stop there.

The Egyptian parliament is not an active legislative body like those found in Western democracies. Rather, the parliament is expected to pass pertinent legislation that the government forwards to its chambers. \`Amr Hashem Raba\`i, a parliamentary analyst at the al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, notes, "nearly 95 percent of the legislation passed in parliament comes from the government. The other 5 percent is derived from the parliamentary members themselves."[478] NDP MPs are expected to vote for legislation even when it goes against their interests. An example of this is seen when the parliament voted on the second phase of a Value Added Tax (VAT) in 2002. As independent MP and former Nasserist party member Hamdin Sabahy recalls,

> When the legislation was put to a vote, all the opposition and independents were against it. Also, a majority of the NDP MPs were initially against it. Many of them are businessmen and an increase in a VAT would result negatively as their products would be more expensive. They were arguing that it was 'not fair and against the people' but then the parliamentary speaker intervened and said this initiative came from the president's office. When it was put to a vote, all the NDP MPs raised their hands to allow the bill to pass.[479]

In this example, the president's NDP proved capable of enforcing discipline, even when its members were opposed to a bill they saw as contrary to their interests.

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[477] Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*, 79-80.

[478] Interview, Amr Hashem Raba\`i, parliament expert at the al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 17 February 2004.

[479] Interview, Hamdin Sabahy, independent MP, Cairo, 1 March 2004.

Official affiliation with the ruling party facilitates parliamentarians' careers. In Egypt, affiliation with the ruling party secures the benefits of patronage and allows parliamentarians to pass along these benefits to their own clients. In the process, the regime wins by asserting control over elite and non-elite individuals. It is also the co-optative incentive that encourages non-aligned, unaffiliated individuals to break ranks as independents and become official members of the ruling party. As will be shown, the Syrian parliament is also an arena of elite and non-elite co-optation. This demonstrates the process of co-optation is as vital in Damascus as in Cairo. Yet, the key difference is related to a MP's institutional affiliation.

The Syrian parliament is similar to Egypt's in that it is not an independent or active body. In this sense, both parliaments act as facilitators for the dictates of the regime and the president. As with the Egyptian parliament, the Syrian legislature has, in the words of Perthes, "remained at the margins of political life. From the mid-1970s to date, all laws that were passed by parliament have been introduced by the government, and never have government bills been defeated."[480] While the incentive of access to state funds encourages Egyptian independents to join the ruling party, a different trend is at work in Syria. Rather than hold elections in a manner where independents and legal opposition parties compete for the available 250 seats in the Syrian parliament, the seats are allocated prior to the election. It is within this predetermined slot that non-elite individuals are co-opted into the political system and become part of the political elite.

Parliamentary elections have been held approximately every four years since 1973. In 1990, legislation transformed the parliamentary electoral system by widening the "representation of interests" by introducing "a new element of political participation by forces outside the regime elite."[481] In the 1990 parliamentary elections, the parliament was expanded from 195 members to 250 seats with independents reserved 83-seats outside of the Progressive National Front's lists.[482] As Perthes notes:

> The regime expended considerable effort in encouraging independent candidatures. There was no competition between independents and front-party candidates, and voters still had no choice as far as the PNF list was concerned. It was clear in advance that the PNF would secure seats for all its candidates and maintain about the same number of deputies as it presented on the outgoing council. But there was considerable competition among non-PNF candidates…Many candidates had marked views and independent opinions, but none of them represented anti-regime opposition. Most candidates actually confirmed their allegiance to the President, crediting him as the leader who had put Syria on the 'path to democracy.[483]

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[480] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad,* 167.

[481] Ibid, 166.

[482] The B`ath receives 135-seats (54-percent) out of 167 allocated seats for the PNF in this managed system.

[483] Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad*, 169.

In both countries, election to parliament likely means co-optation. In Egypt, however, membership in the ruling party becomes vital only if one wishes to have access to state resources and proximity to the president. In Syria, independents are expected to be loyal but are discouraged from applying for B`ath party membership. A closer examination of the most recent Syrian parliamentary elections will further reinforce this point.

The last parliamentary elections, held in March 2003, proved little different from all previous parliamentary elections conducted since 1990, though they were the first conducted under Bashar's reign. The B`ath party was allocated 135 seats while the remaining PNF parties were guaranteed 32 seats. The independent candidates were allotted their predetermined 83-seats. Even though there was slight variation in the pre-determined seat allocations, the B`ath party's proportion went unchanged. By one account, the 2003 elections witnessed the fiercest electoral competition in terms of money spent on campaigns among independent candidates in the post-1970 era. One estimate puts money spent by potential candidates at over 1 million dollars ("a huge amount by Syrian standards").[484] Despite low voter turnout and the public's preoccupation with the imminent American-led war on Iraq, the independents that won were mostly merchants and industrialists. Among them were many younger figures with connections to the regime. As *Middle East International* described parliament's composition following the 2003 elections, "the new parliament is loyal to the regime and the rule of President Bashar. It is a parliament without opposition."[485] One key development is noticeable. In response to calls by the political establishment for businessmen to be more involved in the reform process, the latest parliament witnessed increased representation by businessmen, including the famously wealthy Salih al-Malih (Aleppo), Khalid al-Ulabi (Aleppo), Zuhayr Dab`ul (Damascus), Mohamad Hamsu (Damascus), and Hashim Akkad (Damascus).

Regardless of the money these independent candidates spent to get elected or re-elected, they joined the ranks of the parliament without becoming members of the ruling party. Speaking to one wealthy businessmen MP, it quickly becomes clear that joining the party is seen as an undesirable move. Hashim Akkad is a Sunni, Damascene, independent MP. He has served in parliament since 1994. Hence, while Akkad's experience does not translate into a non-elite individual becoming a political elite, his understanding of contemporary Syrian politics and Bashar's presidency demonstrates how independent MPs represent one of the regime's co-opted wings. Akkad's business empire is expansive. He claims to have business interests in textiles, soft drinks, pasta, advertisement, information technology, telephone exchanges, trucking, car rentals, conference organization, restaurant services, trade houses, construction materials, and an oil company that specializes in drilling and field services (his company owns "several" oil rigs).[486]

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[484] "Elections brings little hope of change," *Middle East International* issue 697 (4 April 2003): 25.

[485] Ibid.

[486] Interview, Hashim Akkad, Businessman and independent MP, Damascus, 11 December 2003.

Akkad, whose office is adorned with framed pictures and sayings of Hafiz and Bashar al-Asad, notes that when Bashar came to power, there was a distinct change of government style to a "more open-minded approach." While he conceded that the old guard has some wisdom to bestow and remains useful, he feels no one is indispensable. Someone like vice-president `Abd al-Halim Khaddam is "capable at his job. If he is no longer any good, he will be removed."

While Akkad speaks mainly in generalities to clarify his points, he is transparent in his feelings about the president's resolve. As Akkad argues, "The president does not want any obstacles on his way to reform. If some elites are hurting the country, he will remove them constitutionally. But, it must be stated, people are happy with his progress. The president has made no mistakes—be they in foreign or internal matters—since coming to power."[487] Akkad feels that the economic reform process is accelerating at a "very fair" pace and that it is not "going too slow." He argues that he had not heard any complaints from the business community and emphasizes that the Syrian parliament "makes the country better because we force people to account."[488] Akkad was clear that his independent status in parliament is driven by a desire to remain part of the political and economic elite without providing a concrete example.

The Syrian and Egyptian parliaments are a major arena of non-elite individual co-optation. They provide the regimes an opportunity to invite competition between prospective non-elites. Once elected to one of the 83 seats allocated to them, they and their interests are insulated so long as they publicly express their loyalty to the system. Yet, an important difference between Syria and Egypt emerges in methods of co-opting non-elites through parliament. In Egypt, non-elite co-optation into parliament is achieved via three main avenues. The main avenue is the actual act of affiliating with the ruling party. The legalized opposition parties are to some degree allowed token electoral gains in return for accepting the government-defined rules of the game.[489] The few independents who enter parliament as independents can also be viewed as co-opted into the system because, as in the case of the opposition members, if they attempt to attack the political status quo, their prospects of maintaining a career in politics quickly decline.[490] In Syria, the mechanisms of parliamentary co-optation are more straightforward and overt. The B`ath and the other emasculated PNF parties maintain their positions virtually unchallenged through pre-determined seat allocation.

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[487] Ibid.

[488] Ibid.

[489] For an in-depth study on multi-party elections in Mubarak's Egypt, see Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy*.

[490] The latest example of an independent MP being attacked by the state is Tal`at al-Sadat. As a nephew of the president, he directly said that the military and Mubarak had a hand in Sadat's death days before the 25th anniversary of his uncle's assassination. On a national holiday, and Friday, parliament stripped Sadat of his parliamentary immunity as his case was referred to a military court. On the 31st of October, less than a month after his initial statement, Tal`at al-Sadat was convicted for disparaging the institution of the military and began serving a one-year prison term. There is no appeal possible because a military court handed down the sentence. Sadat's only legal recourse is for Mubarak, himself, to pardon him.

Yet, inviting competition between independents to become elected without having to join the party differentiates Syria from Egypt.

The reason for this difference seems rooted in the notion that the NDP is not a true ideological party with internal institutional mechanisms to enforce internal discipline or afford it semi-autonomous status vis-à-vis the presidency's strength. By encouraging "independent" candidates who prevail in parliamentary elections to join the ruling party, the party can maintain its dominance and refresh its membership through including local sub-political elites while maintaining existing elites. Also, by encouraging independents to officially join the ruling party, it prevents MPs from joining another party or affiliating themselves with a political trend in opposition to the ruling party.

Conversely, the Syrian parliament operates within an arena in which the ruling party is much more institutionally entrenched. The B`ath party maintains strict rules and timetables for full membership. Thus, the inclusion of new powerful non-elites could disrupt the balance of the party's internal patronage networks. To circumnavigate this predicament, Hafiz al-Asad included independent non-elites and elites by designating a space for them as independent MPs. His son has continued that tradition. This, as shown through the Akkad example, has not led to opposition blocs but rather for newer avenues for socio-economic elites to be co-opted—without formal party affiliation—into the political system.

4.5 The Security Services: Detached Observers vs. Information Gathering Co-optation

The security services also serve as an avenue for the regime to co-opt non-elites. The security establishments operate differently in Egypt and Syria. In Syria, while the security services' chief objective is to monitor and detail individual opposition movements, they are also a politicized institutional bloc that competes for a share of regime power. To do this, the separate branches groom and target activists as sources of information. Syrian activists also are involved in solving potential situations of instability on behalf of the services.

The professionalization but depoliticization of the security services in Egypt reinforces the personalized character of its system. The head of Egyptian intelligence, `Omar Sulayman, maintains a public political profile in Egypt—either through his handling of the Israeli-Palestinian portfolio or Arab affairs. Sulayman is a key player in Egyptian foreign relations. Yet, Sulayman and the Egyptian services play a different role than in Syria. For example, in Egypt, the services do not have a wide popular base or presence in society that is capable of institutionally rallying against the president. Additionally, the Egyptian services are less capable of distributing patronage outside of their sphere of influence. While Omar Sulayman is a strong political force, his ability to impact policy is directly linked to his relationship to President Mubarak.[491] Indeed, members of the NDP's influential Policies Secretariat indicate that Sulayman's political role is more personal rather than institutional. In the words of Mohamad Kamal, "Is Omar Suleiman powerful? Yes he is. Does he have a strong say in politics? Yes, but any talk about Omar Suleiman drafting domestic policy or competing for power is pure exaggeration and fiction."[492] Besides this intelligence head's political role, the services have a different *modus operandi* in Egyptian society than in Syria.

Indeed, while the Egyptian security services are informed and aware of on-the-ground opposition, such as the Egyptian Movement for Change (*Kifaya*),[493] Egyptian dissidents are not called in by security to discuss their movements unless they have triggered an event perceived as leading to instability. Information is gathered by the security services through informers and inter-agency research rather than through continual questioning of activists. As Egyptian activist `Aida Saif al-Dawla explains, "The security services know us by name and face. During demonstrations they address us by our names and say things like 'you should be careful, your health is not strong enough to cope with this excitement' but they do not overtly approach us outside of protests unless they want to arrest us."[494]

Instead, Egypt's security services rely on disruptive organizational tactics rather than personal attacks. For example, between November 2004 and February 2005, human rights activist Ahmad Saif al-Islam had two laptop computers stolen from his home in Cairo's Bolaq al-Dakhror neighborhood. Saif al-Islam holds the security services responsible and has filed charges with his local police station but no investigative action into the matter has resulted. Instead, the police argue that local thieves are responsible without attempting to apprehend the culprits.[495] Rather than detain Saif al-Islam, the security services allow him to operate as they disrupt his efforts. In many ways, the security services cause less trouble for the regime than they would if they arrested activists. Rather, letting them remain active while disrupting their work and severing their linkages in Egyptian society is the key strategy. Keeping small groups of activists isolated by not allowing their movements to connect in a cross-sectional social way achieves this desired aim without resorting to overt force.

The Egyptian security services rarely "invite" activists in to extract information from them. Instead, when one is called in by the services, the approach is largely to intimidate and to draw a clear hierarchical distinction between the summoned person as a citizen and the services as the regime. Indeed, those individuals that the security services do question are treated like children or subjects. One published encounter of a researcher, who approached state security concerned with electoral violence in Egypt's Delta region, was told patronizingly that the services are well prepared for social discontent. As the officer is reported to have said, "This is not Algeria or Iran you know. Everything is under control…We will never make the same mistakes as them. There will never be instability or uprisings…It will never happen here."[496] While this is only one case, Egypt's security services neither seek outside help nor rely on independent outsiders for analysis of social phenomena. While torture remains the key tool to extract confessions, its threat is to instill fear and as a deterrent rather than to co-opt to non-regime actors.

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[491] Sulayman is credited with saving Mubarak's life in an assassination attempt in Addis Ababa in 1995. He is regarded as one of Mubarak's most trusted advisors. See Mary-Anne Weaver, "Pharaohs-in-Waiting," *Atlantic Monthly* (October 2003), 7.

[492] Hossam Hamalawy, "Powerful Egyptian spy chief no longer behind the scenes," *Los Angeles Times* (8 February 2005).

[493] "Kifaya" is Arabic for "Enough" - the slogan used to protest another presidential term for Mubarak or the Gamal's inheritance of power.

[494] Interview, `Aida Saif al-Dawla, Kifaya activist, Cairo, 2 December 2004.

[495] Interview, Saif al-Islam, human rights activist, Cairo, 22 February 2005.

In Egypt, politics is overwhelmingly practiced in the depoliticized ruling party and not in the security services. For example, the security services and military do not reach outside to co-opt non-elite individuals. Certainly they may use street informers, who are not officially employed by the services, but that is distinct from adding someone onto a patronage network. In theory, to be incorporated into a patronage network, a client must strengthen the network. In Syria, however, different trends are apparent.

My research indicates that the Syrian security services are more politically active and do attempt to participate in the governing policy process. The politicized security services are autonomous from the B`ath party and the presidency. The services do not strive for absolute or dominant control of the political arena, but they constitute pivotal politicized institutions that are capable of influencing or blocking other regime institutions.[497] In the political game they play with other institutions and each other, the security services engage in competitive co-optation in which they try to groom opposition figures as sources of information or even as clients.

Syrian security agencies look to develop dissident and opposition contacts to provide information and assistance. The purpose is to effectively claim someone so that the other agencies cannot. This affords the agencies direct access to a particular dissident while providing access to information on a movement or community. Yet, this information and assistance are not strictly limited to questions about an individual's activities or group. This makes these opposition figures *de facto* clients of the agency because they provide information and occasionally serve as conduits between the services and opposition movements to prevent social unrest. Increasingly vocal pro-democracy activist `Ammar `Abd al-Hamid agrees that the services develop clients from among the opposition. After a six-month stint at Brookings Institute in Washington, where he met with the U.S. vice-president and assistant national security advisor, `Abd al-Hamid was asked to pay visits to political security upon his return to Syria. `Abd al-Hamid claims he met with the agency's second-in-command. Initially, he was confused about his meetings with security. In his words, "I thought they were bringing me in to question me or threaten me but instead they tried to use me as a consultant. They knew I met a Turkish academic at a conference and they kept asking why all these Turkish delegations were coming to Syria, what they wanted, and why there were increasing ties between Syria and Turkey. I had no idea because I only met the person once."[498] `Abd al-Hamid said that his dealings with security had been amicable until this point despite the fact they had taken place against his will. He said that the agency "tried to establish a friendly rapport with me. They invited me to their headquarters anytime they wish and then tell me 'you know, you should come around to my house for tea and meet my family rather than come to the office.' The moment you strike up a friendship with these people, you become part of their network."[499]

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[496] Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 192.

[497] For purposes of this thesis, Syria's security services are discussed as a single institutional bloc. Nevertheless, the security services are divided into several agencies and include Military Intelligence (*Mukhabarat al-`Askiraya*), which oversees a Palestine Branch, Investigative Branch, Regional Branch, and Airforce Branch. Also Political Intelligence (*Mukhabarat al-Siyasi*) and General Intelligence (*Mukhabarat al-`Ama*), which controls an Investigative Branch, Domestic Branch, and a Foreign Branch also operate in Syria. Each agency and branch has its own director and all maintain separate prisons and facilities. According to Alan George, there is one security service employee for every 153 Syrians, see *Neither Bread nor Freedom* (London: 2003): 2.

`Abd al-Hamid's comments suggest that the agencies want to continue to play in politics. As they have relatively little control over the party or president's maneuvers with other governments, they are at a loss for information. They develop contacts with unaffiliated opposition figures not only to watch them, but to secure information from them. In regards to politics, the services need to co-opt outsiders to stay abreast of developments.

Another example of opposition-security services cooperation is revealing. Shortly after the Damascus Spring ended with the arrests of activists such a Riyad Saif and Ma'mon Homsi in June 2002, American pressure increased over Syria's relations with Palestinian militant groups, its presence in Lebanon, and its small chemical weapons programs. As a consequence, momentum increased within the U.S. congress to apply sanctions on Syria. With Bashar battling the B`ath party and security services for political and economic policy influence, the looming threat of a war in Iraq, increasing hostility from Israel, the U.S.'s pressure began to coalesce into a pending crisis. The security services, as an example of a politicized institutional agent, began to reach out to its unaffiliated intellectual resources.

The interactions between Sadiq al-`Azm and Bahjat Sulayman expose the political role of the Syrian security services.[500] Sadiq al-`Azm is Syria's most prominent intellectual. Educated in the United States and a frequent visiting professor at Western universities, al-`Azm hails from

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[498] Interview, Ammar `Abd al-Hamid, director of al-Tharwa project, Damascus, 2 March 2005.

[499] Ibid. `Abd al-Hamid has since left Syria and resides in Washington D.C.

[500] Although at first glance one might be tempted to draw parallels with the public role of Egypt's intelligence chief, the comparison is not altogether apt. `Omar Sulayman's prominence derives from his role as the only Egyptian security figure that plays a role politically by handling the Palestinian-Israeli and the Arab affairs dossiers on behalf of President Mubarak. `Omar Sulayman, then, does not act independently on behalf of his agency. No other Egyptian security head or agencies are politically active. The Egyptian services play a more traditional role of disrupting and preventing unsanctioned politics, while in Syria the services are politicized institutional political players.

Damascus' most historically prominent family. Al-`Azm teaches political philosophy at the University of Damascus and the American University in Beirut. In the winter of 2002, an employee of former foreign intelligence chief Bahjat Sulayman approached al-`Azm to arrange a meeting with Sulayman. Sulayman's conduit was a former student of Al-`Azm, who agreed to meet Sulayman more out of curiosity than fear. Al-`Azm continued to meet and discuss politics with Sulayman frequently until the latter retired in spring of 2006. According to al-`Azm, Sulayman was eager to learn about the potential fallout from the U.S.'s war on Iraq as well as the potential ramifications of sanctions. Al-`Azm saw the security director's interest in such issues as "going beyond the theoretical stereotype."[501] For example, when domestic forces were mobilizing during the Damascus Spring, Sulayman was not prepared to arrest everyone as other leading security figures wished. Also, al-`Azm felt that Sulayman expressed genuine concern over the American sanctions as he worked with the president over ways to communicate with the United States.

Sulayman published an article in a pro-Syrian Lebanese newspaper, *al-Safir*, which represented the culmination of his meetings with al-`Azm. In the article, the first time a Syrian security figure penned an article under his own name, Sulayman devised a strategy to change Syrian-U.S. relations as he detailed the Syrians' understanding of American pressure.[502] While Sulayman's opinions in the article did not reflect al-`Azm's thinking, it stands out as a unique case of a security director publishing an article after consulting an unaffiliated source. Sulayman's article prompted much debate in Damascus and several responses were published in Lebanon's *An-Nahar* paper in the form of a debate with Sulayman.[503] Al-`Azm, although impressed at Sulayman's unconventional approach, also notes that the meetings were surreal. As al-`Azm describes, "At no time was there a whiff of 'we [Syrians] all need to cooperate to get out of this mess.' It is always about them [the regime]. You feel like a spectator."[504] The relationship that al-`Azm and Sulayman share is one variation of opposition-security service cooperation, which is ongoing in Damascus as the services expand and develop contacts for information. The security services primary role in an authoritarian state is that they are the first and last lines when social unrest occurs. It is within this context that their activist contacts also assist directly. This demonstrates another variation of this cooperative relationship. Occasionally, friendly relations with the security services seem to mutually benefit the services and opposition figures.

Haytham al-Malih,[505] a 76-year-old head of the Human Rights Association in Syria (HRAS), has been called in by political security to intercede to prevent social unrest. Al-Malih is a longtime opponent of the Syrian B`athist regime with Islamist sympathies. He was imprisoned, on the orders of President Hafiz al-Asad, between 1980-1987. He established a human rights organization that remains illegal, and he is usually under a travel ban. His relationship with the security services is well developed and his insolence with former political security director, Ghazi Kan`an,[506] is legendary in Syrian research circles.

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[501] Interview, Sadiq al-`Azm, Philosophy Professor, Damascus, 3 November 2003.

[502] Bahjat Sulayman, *al-Safir* 15 May 2003.

[503] See Michel Kilo, "Syrian-American Relations: Discussing Bahjat Sulayman's article" *An-Nahar* 21 May 2003 and Jihad al-Zain, "A lecture with Bahjat Sulayman," *An-Nahar* May 2003.

[504] Interview, al-`Azm, 20 December 2003.

[505] For Background on al-Malih, see Hussein Abdel Salaam, "Al-Malih's agenda," *Cairo Times* 15-21 April 2004.

After the European Union protested the travel ban against Al-Malih because of Damascus' refusal to allow him to address the German parliament about Syria's state of emergency in December 2003, Kan`an called al-Malih in for an "interview." Kan`an informed al-Malih that he was "a good man" and could have his passport back. Kan`an also asked if he would pay him a visit before he left to "chat" about his lectures. Al-Malih declined the offer. Three days later, Kan`an rang him again. He asked for another meeting. Al-Malih, now perturbed, said, "I told you I am preparing to travel. I simply don't have the time." Sensing al-Malih's abrupt tone, Kan`an replied, "Well, have a nice trip. I will see you when you get back" and hung up the phone. Kan`an did see al-Malih when he returned and reinstated his travel ban.[507] Despite these seemingly tense relations and the power imbalance that exists between the activist and the security chief, al-Malih tries to use the services as much as they use him for information about his social connections and activities.

In March 2004, violence erupted at a football match between Kurdish and Arab fans in Northeastern Syria when the Arab contingent allegedly taunted the Kurds with posters of Saddam Husayn. The riots continued for three days, spreading throughout the northeastern provinces of al-Qamishli and al-Hasakah before heading south to the western Damascene suburb of Dummar. By the time the violence died down, 22 Kurds were dead and more than 1,000 were detained. Schools were closed, and the security services enforced a curfew. During this unrest, al-Malih made repeated visits to al-Qamishli and al-Hasakah, meeting with various directors of different security agencies, governors, and Kurdish tribal leaders. By the time the riots were poised to spread to Damascus, al-Malih was brought in by the security agents to stop the violence. All traffic to Dummar was blocked, so he got out of his car and walked the remaining three kilometers and then brokered an agreement to get the rock-throwing to cease before the riot police deployed. Al-Malih met with security and Kurdish leaders and got both sides to withdraw. Al-Malih's involvement was clearly instrumental in preventing "things from getting bloody" as he put it.[508] Do people such as al-Malih, who maintain connections with security directors, realize that they are nominally co-opted by doing the security services' work while their activities and their information is monitored?

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[506] Kan`an served as head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon for nearly twenty-years. Following that, he was director of political security in Syria. He was appointed minister of interior in October 2004 and committed suicide in his Damascus office in October 2005.

[507] Interview, Haytham al-Malih, Head of HRAS, Damascus, 6 December 2003.

[508] Interview, al-Malih, 23 March 2004

Al-Malih does not seem to think in these terms. Activists have agendas and if cooperating with the security services to achieve their agendas is necessary, it is an arrangement some are willing to accept. Others, such as women rights' activist M`an `Abd al-Salam, argue that depicting activists or opposition figures dealings with the security services as positive is inaccurate. `Abd al-Salam maintains that cooperation is less of a choice because activists are constantly under an indirect threat of force. `Abd al-Salam agrees that there is competition between the services to cultivate activist links. He describes it as a competition for influence to see which agency is capable of developing or including the various opposition figures. But while some activists cooperate because they see it as an exchange to achieve their aims, `Abd al-Salam argues that the security services' relations with activists are the services'

> way of keeping people in line. They have no problem keeping friendly lines of communication open or contacting someone when they need to use him for a problem. But this is a one-sided relationship—when a dissident does his job, then it is finished. It is, then, forced co-optation. Activists deal with the security services because they see it benefiting Syria. But once they bring you in, you are marginalized. It does not turn into a dialogue between equals. The services use people and turn it into good propaganda for the regime.[509]

This reading of activists' cooperation with the security services represents a different dynamic. It shows that Syrian security services are politicized and proactively involved in establishing links with activists to understand political developments domestically and abroad, monitor behavior, and use activists' grassroots efforts to diffuse social tensions. Because of the configuration of the political arena and the security services' politicized role, such relations are a way that activists and the services conduct their occasionally converging agendas.

The security services remain politicized by co-opting various activists and opposition figures working in Syria. This cooperation between activists and security services takes many forms. In some cases it is the need for information. Other instances show that activists actually participate with the services to resolve domestic unrest. Whatever the motivations driving the services' frequent contact with activists, such contact permits the services to observe individuals deemed potentially troublesome to the political order. The main objective for any security service in an authoritarian setting is to ensure that the state's subjects are controlled to prevent instability.[510] Yet in Syria's contemporary political arena, the security services go beyond this role by actively gathering information from co-opted activists that they use to ensure their institutional influence is not curtailed in relation to the presidency or the B`ath party. While it is difficult to single out a popular domestic case of the security services overtly blocking the state's other institutional actors (as can be shown with the B`ath party) many Syrian analysts claim that it is happening. One case that undisputedly demonstrates the Syrian security services' politicized role is their perhaps unilateral decision to assassinate former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri on 14 February 2005.[511]

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[509] Interview, M`an `Abd al-Salam, publisher and women rights' activist, Damascus, 1 March 2005.
[510] Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East," (January 2004)

Syria's security services differ from their Egyptian counterparts because of the politicized role that they play. During Hafiz al-Asad's tenure as president, his role as system arbitrator kept the separate institutional actors from competing for influence. This scenario and arrangement has changed since Bashar became president. Without a single arbitrator to establish a ruling consensus and order, the institutions proved capable of asserting themselves against one another as they compete to maintain influence. In this context, a political field becomes oligarchic. Hence, the best analysis on post-Hafiz Syria indicates a system of rule in which institutional centers of power compete for influence.[512]

Egypt's security services, by contrast, are depoliticized. The services' role falls outside the boundaries of where politics is practiced. Instead, they play a more traditional role of keeping opposition activists contained. Egyptian security services do not seek out activists for their opinions about governance, bilateral relations, or trends within groups. Additionally, the security services do not enlist the help of a known opponent to preemptively solve a situation of social unrest. Information is gathered internally. As far as association or friendly relations between activists and security officers, this trend is noticeably absent in Egypt. The lines between security services and activists are delineated more clearly in Egypt.

The security services in Egypt are highly depoliticized (as they should be). Conversely, security services are politically active and autonomous agents in Syria's arena. Their politicized institutional base affords them the ability to maintain their influence as they compete with one another for activist contacts. As an institutional bloc, the security services demonstrate an ability to assert themselves vis-à-vis the other institutions such as the party and the presidency. As such, it dilutes the potential for a concentrated location for non-elite co-optation unless the institutional playing field is altered.

Before concluding the section on the of the security forces' abilities to co-opt opposition in Egypt and Syria, it must be noted that these states are, beyond a doubt, thoroughly authoritarian. I have likely downplayed the significance of the coercive element in this section. While I presented the Egyptian and Syrian security services' choice of options as increasingly becoming sophisticated by using coercion in a more selective and targeted fashion, the fact remains the coercive element remains a viable fallback strategy for containing and/or fragmenting opposition group development.

For example, one only needs to look at the Egyptian government's repression of the Muslim Brotherhood following the group's legislative electoral gains in 2005 to see the depths and range an authoritarian state will go to contain opposition that it cannot seem to defeat politically or non-violently. The type of coercion the state uses against the Muslim Brotherhood is also in stark contrast to the type it employs against the extra-parliamentary movement Kifaya. For example, usually the security forces surround a demonstration but do not repress it. When the security services do repress protesters, the result -- more often then not -- has been the fragmentation of Kifaya. So, in this sense, the security services' targeted and selective use of repression serves as a disruptive tool to induce fragmentation within a dissenting group's ranks.

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[511] Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006): 70-127.

[512] Perthes, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad" and Volker Perthes, "Syria: Difficult Inheritance," in Perthes (ed.), *Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004): 87-114.

The point of this discussion is that the role of state repression and coercion against opposition as a means of containing opposition is increasingly being used if the manipulation of the legal framework fails to sufficiently contain and control opposition. Hence, while I intentionally chose to emphasis the co-optative character of the security forces, it should be clear that the overall job description of security services in an authoritarian state is to serve as the coercive last-stop to contain or fragment opposition groups.

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter examined the relationship between institutions ability to co-opt, mobilize, and neutralize non-elite individuals in Egypt and Syria's authoritarian regimes. Non-elite individual co-optation is occurring in Egypt and Syria but it transpires differently. The key difference between the two systems is the presence of politicized or depoliticized institutions that participate and contribute to organizing politics. The clearest empirical designator is that in Egypt's depoliticized institutional arena, official affiliation is important while in Syria's politicized arena it is not. A government that can include new non-elites, who are perceived as neutral or in opposition, is a government that has a higher capacity to adapt. Such a government also can more easily create new structures to incorporate groups by affiliating them to its ruling party. However, it is in a highly depoliticized arena that formal institutional affiliation is necessary.

Maintaining a depoliticized ruling party reinforces the presidentially dominated character of Egyptian politics. It also further nurtures the party's inability to assert itself as a countering balance to the chief executive. Those who chose to participate in politics do so without the support of viable institutional support. The regime's flexibility bolsters an Egyptian president so that no institution's behavior or structure can readily challenge his rule.

Similarly, depoliticized arenas encourage the employment of new strategies such as national councils. These councils facilitate regimes to enter problematic debates. In fact, the councils allow regimes co-opt the debate itself. The process of councilization helps formalize informality in a way a president can bypass existing institutions. It also expands regime power by marketing the advance of incremental political reform and change. Rather than indicating reform, however, it masks a process of attracting undecided, apolitical, urban professionals into a state of acquiescence.

Depoliticized political orders also help to confine politics to a particular locale into which only the ruling party can recruit new non-elites. It also facilitates the executive's ability to keep the security apparatus from connecting to social actors or from getting involved in politics. Keeping the security services depoliticized and separate from the political field keeps them loyal to the executive and keeps them as defenders of the regime against emerging opposition figures and movements.

A lack of strongly politicized institutions contributes to a system's adaptation because of its ability to channel, neutralize, and exclude political participants. While such measures can be viewed as indicators of a lack of political development, the opposite is true in the sense of system adaptation. While political science theory derides personalized political orders as traditional, there is tremendous resilience and adeptness at adjusting to changing circumstances. While usually adapting under a guise of a reform project, a tightly defined political arena in which politics remains based on flexible individual patronage networks actually facilitates a regime's ability to manage and control change. It also allows a regime to remake itself and change its composition without altering the personalized nature of politics. Conversely, politicized institutional arenas demonstrate different trends. Syria's political order is supported by pillars of the regime nurtured under the leadership of a president who could check their autonomy. His son and successor must now confront the pillars of his father's regime to establish his dominance over them. While this interaction does not translate into a competition for absolute dominance of the system, it demonstrates the manner in which institutional gridlock results between the presidency, the ruling party, and the security services. In this example, politicized institutions behave as they do because each institution seeks to safeguard its influence and interests. Such a framework makes adapting the regime more challenging.

The competition between the ruling B`ath party, the multiple security services, and the presidency actually hinders the system's ability to evenly include non-elites in a concentrated process of remaking the political establishment. Competing politicized institutions also make it difficult to strike a governing consensus. While the situation remains fluid, unless one institution establishes an arbitrating role, it seems unlikely that the Syrian system will be able to adapt to emerging problems or govern in an efficient manner.

This does not imply that the system is in eminent danger of collapse or failure, but it does suggest that the regime's ability to remake and adapt itself is lower. Adaptation is, thus, made more difficult because non-elites are not brought in through a concentrated fashion. Noticeable differences can be discerned between the authoritarian regimes of Egypt and Syria. The Egyptian system is, indeed, better at co-opting the middle class and activists. But, on the other hand, the B`ath party is much better at incorporating the rural masses than the NDP in Egypt. At the very least, the strengths and weaknesses of the two regimes are different. Yet, as I have argued, Egypt's system gives it an overall advantage in system adaptation. The following chapter provides this study’s conclusions and the implications of this comparison.

Chapter Five
Conclusion

5.1 Preliminary Conclusions

Egypt and Syria's political systems are best characterized as transitioning from populist to post-populist authoritarianism. Both countries witnessed military coups that overthrew civilian regimes and attacked the *ancien regime'*s elites' economic foundations through land reform and nationalizations. Scholars, such as Hinnebusch, have called this "authoritarianism of the left."[513] In these settings, the newly established regimes concentrate their limited power on undermining the elite of the previous order in favor of the masses. After displacing traditional landed and commercial upper classes, the regime consolidates power and rallies support through its new populist economic policies. Peasants and workers witness the expansion of their rights and privileges.

In addition to incorporating more popular sectors of society, these regimes use authoritarian controls and structures to consolidate the shaky pillars that prop them up. Specifically, they contain opposition, create corporatist structures to mobilize and control the constituents of their social coalitions, and propagate all-encompassing nationalist ideologies to provide a framework for popular legitimacy as the state assumes control of the economy. In short, statism and populist economic policies are the main tools of the newly established regimes. These policies emphasize neither capitalism nor communism as new regimes reject Western ideologies in an attempt to break with their previous colonial minders. Land reforms and nationalizations are the key economic tools used to weaken upper-class opposition as popular support is mobilized to ensure that the masses are dependent on the state. Initially, infrastructural improvements, industrialization, and redistribution of wealth produce substantial economic growth. Yet, state-led growth eventually proves unsustainable. Capital accumulation falters because of planning flaws, inefficiency from over-centralization of the economy, or the use of public sector industry for populist payouts. Examples of populist payouts are maximizing employment, which lead to overstaffing, or price controls to ensure goods are affordable to a majority of the population, which results in deficits. What the state does during this phase is renegotiate the state-society agreement in such a way that it essentially purchases political acquiescence by delivering economic benefits for a majority of the population. But this experimentation with populism ultimately exhausts state-led development because of its high cost.

The shift to post-populism ushers in an era where authoritarian structures remain but the regime's power serves different (even contradictory) aims than in the populist era. While populism can be described as authoritarianism of the left, post-populism changes the orientation to the right and is conservative. Liberalization (*Infitah*) projects reorganize the political and economic spheres.

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[513] Hinnebusch, *Syria: revolution from above*, 2.

The hallmarks of an *Infitah* are an opening to foreign and private investment, the opening of protected economies to imports, the gradual reduction of price controls, and the incremental privatization of the public sector. In extreme cases, post-populist countries enter into Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programs (ERSAP) with international financial institutions such as the IMF. Economic openings are complemented by political openings to include old and new members of the upper class while depoliticizing opposition sectors. This includes allowing elites from the previous regime a role in politics and in the economy once again. The results of post-populism are greater economic inequalities and the exclusion of previously included members of the ruling coalition. The first members usually excluded are peasants and labor as the ruling elite begins to represent more bourgeois business interests. It is on this business class that the regimes base their support while narrowing their previously inclusive ruling coalitions. Shifting the ruling coalition is a delicate balancing act in any post-populist reorientation, because of concerns about social instability or regime collapse. Post-populism can also include international alliance shifts and managed political liberalization experiments.

Egypt and Syria are on similar trajectories in that they were populist and are transitioning to post-populist authoritarian regimes. Yet their similar trajectories do not amount to a shared model of political development, because the surface commonalities belie key differences in each state's individual experience, varying institutional arrangements, and conflicting foreign policies. Also, the "post-populism" label does not indicate what follows after populism is jettisoned. Do post-populist regimes eventually evolve into bureaucratic authoritarianism,[514] make the leap to democratization, slide back towards populist authoritarianism, or can they remain suspended in the post-populist phase? The answers remain unclear, as they should be. Despite the caveat that post-populism does not indicate where these states are heading, the post-populist model gives rise to inaccurate conventions that become accepted if only because they are so often repeated.

For example, one convention holds that Syria is essentially Egypt, just not as advanced. The reasoning suggests that it is simply a matter of time before Syria will have to take the same post-populist decisions as Egypt. Both Syrian and Egyptian political observers communicated this sentiment during field research. It also finds implicit support in some of the academic literature. This thesis's purpose has partly been to dispel the myth that Egypt and Syria are similar post-populist regimes (except in the most general of ways). Moreover, I have argued that Egypt and Syria do not resemble one another in degrees of institutional politicization, co-optation styles, coalitional composition, or adaptive qualities. While I have not engaged in a political-economic approach in evaluating Egypt and Syria, the focus of this thesis is on explaining how the degree of institutional politicization affects the management and reconstitution of the ruling coalition of elites and non-elites in the ruling coalition. Hence, the relative weight of depoliticized and politicized institutions in different political orders creates different opportunities and possibilities for the co-optation of elite and non-elite actors. It is this balancing act that indicates the ability of an authoritarian regime to adapt and change. Consequently, focusing on a post-populist trajectory as an explanation for anything other than general development patterns is misleading because of the great differences between the two authoritarian systems.

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[514] Bureaucratic Authoritarianism (BA) was primarily practiced in Latin American states in the 1950s and 1960s. It relies on an alliance between military officers and existing landed and bourgeoisie elite in a narrow, exclusive coalition in which economic development is paramount. In this form of authoritarianism, the masses suffer the worst of the capitalist development project, which sharpens class distinction and invariably leads to class conflict and capitalism. According to Brooker's *Non-Democratic Regimes*, coalition coups of the military and existing landed elite insulate them from economic policies. This, in turn, allows such states to achieve higher level of modernization. Also, see David Collier, "Overview of the Bureaucratic Authoritarian Model," in Collier, ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America,* ed. by Collier, 19-32. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979): 19-32. The difference between Post-Populist Authoritarianism and BA is the latter is an exclusionary system while the former is a middle ground between populism and BA.

While this thesis began discussing the confrontation between the United States and various Arab regimes over reform and democratization, its conclusions indicate that U.S.-Arab reform debate is as misguided as the "Syria is Egypt" convention. This is because the American discourse misunderstands regional governance patterns by equating all Arab authoritarian regimes. While the "Syria is Egypt" convention proves erroneous because of the vast differences between the two regimes' capacities for system adaptation, American calls for generalized "Arab reform" are equally flawed and ill-conceived. The American call for reform performs a reductive function because it views not just Egypt and Syria but all the countries of the Middle East as similarly authoritarian. The current Bush administration has simply turned up the rhetorical volume on the refrain of a broken record. The U.S.'s use of the ideal of democracy as an all-purpose solution has appeared in various guises such as projects to aid civil society, USAID missions, and the encouragement of institutional reform. Official U.S. rhetoric is most remarkable when discussing its relation to the governance dilemmas Egypt and Syria confront in adapting their regimes. The distance between U.S. rhetoric and on-the-ground Arab regime actions have rarely been further apart. This gap partly reflects the uncertain nature of post-populism. Egypt and Syria are in the same region and share a political history and experiences but neither suggests that one reflects the other -- time-lag or not. It is in highlighting differences, rather than similarities, that this comparative study proves most fruitful.

5.2 Egypt and Syria: Similar but Different

The most basic conclusion of this work is that neither Egypt nor Syria is democratizing, and neither is likely do so under the current political systems. Yet, this study's findings are not the first to advance such a claim. For example, Kienle showed economic liberalization was accompanied by political deliberalization.[515] Similarly, Ehteshami and Murphy also documented the reversals experienced by Arab governments in relation to democratization paradigms.[516] Others such as Kassem[517] and Bank[518] have elucidated the various strategies and tactics that maintain authoritarian rule. Brownlee has offered explanations for why some authoritarian regimes collapse and others remain.[519]

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[515] Kienle, *A Grand Delusion*.

I would argue that this process is better understood as system adaptation than as reform initiatives. Firstly, as Brumberg notes, leaders never willingly undertake policies that could eventually lead to their losing power.[520] Yet, rulers have an interest in regulating the adaptation of their rule and the regime. Secondly, there are vast differences at work in Egypt and Syria in their degrees of institutional politicization and depoliticization and elite and non-elite co-optation. These differences, in turn, affect system adaptation in the two countries.

Egypt and Syria were never similar in terms of governance abilities or attributes. Geographic and agricultural dynamics, sectarian diversity, identity, different colonial powers, varying levels of industrialization, and comparative advantage for trade are only some of the differences in the historical legacies that the two states inherited when they gained independence. Yet, the states allied together, seemingly disregarding the vast differences between them. In the process, both adopted populist regimes and rhetorically championed Arab nationalism and unity in their foreign policies.

While the regimes appeared superficially similar, their underlying differences have not been significantly accounted for in the social science literature. Social scientists have tended to compare with an eye towards the similar, rather than differences. Hence, similarities have been the primary focus of contemporary social science studies about Egypt and Syria. However, even the most cursory readings of post-independence history reveal more differences than similarities. For example, Nasser created and was able to consolidate his regime, while Syria experienced a politically tumultuous period of coups and counter-coups that included a brief, but failed, union with Egypt between 1958-1961. The B`ath party came to power in 1963 and made greater advances towards establishing a populist regime, even as Nasser intensified his populism and state command of the economy. Another seven years would pass before Hafiz al-Asad launched his corrective movement in 1970, an initiative that was clearly triggered by the populist experiment's loss of legitimacy following the 1967 defeat to Israel. Hence, the only similarities are the calls for Arab nationalism, the role of radical officers in bringing the regimes to power, experimentation with different degrees and durations with populism, and military defeats. The rest of the contributing variables are not catalogued by existing social scientists. In the post-1970 era, more overt differences emerged and have continued to affect how politics is conducted in the two countries currently.

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[516] Anourshiravan Ehteshami and Emma Murphy, "The Transformation of the Corporatist State in the Middle East," *Third World Quarterly* vol. 17 (1996): 753-772.

[517] Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*.

[518] Bank, "Rents, Cooptation, and Economized Discourse," 155-179.

[519] Brownlee, "And Yet They Persist," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 35-63.

[520] Daniel Brumberg, "Authoritarian Legacies and Reform Strategies in the Arab World," in Brynen, Korany, and Noble (eds.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World: Volume 1, Theoretical Perspectives, (*Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995): 235.

Shortly before Asad came to power in Syria, Anwar Sadat took over the presidential reins in Egypt. Although Egypt and Syria were at different stages of political and economic development, their paths momentarily intersected at this point. Sadat and al-Asad were both weak for different reasons. Sadat's personal position was weak vis-à-vis the Nasser-loyalist elite entrenched in politicized institutions. This relative weakness, in turn, constrained his ability to drastically alter the political arena. Al-Asad, for his part, was aware that he had the military in his corner, but lacked political pillars on which he could build a stable regime. Both presidents wanted to lead their countries away from a total dependence on state-led development. Another commonality is that Israel occupied lands belonging to both countries. While it is misleading to treat the 1973 October War as a cause of the initiation of post-populist politics, it can be viewed as the critical juncture that accelerated system divergence in Egypt and Syria's political systems.

Prior to their joint venture in attacking Israel to reclaim their occupied territories, similar regime patterns are detectable in Egypt and Syria. Both countries were emerging from deepened populist experiments, and both were under the USSR's international patronage until Sadat expelled Soviet advisors in July 1972. The major difference in the pre-1973 war era was that Sadat inherited a massive single party that was organized, politicized, and autonomous of the new president. On the other hand, al-Asad took over a well established ideological, but measurably smaller, party than Egypt's ASU. Hence, both leaders inherited populist-leaning authoritarian regime structures in which neither president had full control. Sadat and al-Asad embarked on limited economic liberalization programs, purged political opponents, and created new institutions and constitutions to facilitate the consolidation of their rule after assuming the presidency. In this reading, despite the difference in party size, both systems appeared to be similarly oriented in terms of governance styles and objectives. The 1973 October war can be described as a starting point at which some degree of divergence in institutional politicization in the two countries could be detected.

The 1973 war against Israel and Egypt's deceptive maneuvers towards Syria suggests that Egypt abandoned Arab nationalism as a rhetorical foreign policy tool in favor of an "Egypt First" approach. The aftermath of the war sealed the divergences between the Arab states. Following the 1973 war, Sadat used his newly acquired legitimacy windfall to negotiate with the Israelis and realign Egypt as a client of the American political establishment. This contributed to the acceleration of his liberalizing project, which featured a radical re-ordering of the Egyptian economy in a particularly stark post-populist transition. The shifts within the economy led to the incremental exclusion of peasants from the ruling coalition as pre-revolutionary elites were re-incorporated. Private investment and loans sanctioned from its superpower patron encouraged the redirection of Egypt's international economic alignments. The push for economic change also produced significant changes in Egypt's institutions as the composition of the single party changed towards a more business friendly class while the military became more dependent on the president through various subsidies and economic opportunities for military officers.

Sadat began the process of institutional decapitation of the ASU in 1971. Frequent ministerial and party appointments allowed him to secure personally loyal public servants in order to dismember the organ in favor of a managed multi-party experiment in 1976. The significance of such re-ordering is that in the wake of the 1973 war and the re-alignment with the U.S., Sadat was able to dismember political institutions quite easily as part of his post-populist restructuring. The NDP, which replaced the ASU, never functionally developed in terms of being a politicized structure. Hence, Sadat destroyed the party institution in favor of a centralized arena that de-emphasized the role and scope of a ruling party. Similarly, Sadat depoliticized the security services and military without hollowing them out. Instead, he restructured the chain of command to lead to and from his office. While this professionalized the armed services, it also contributed to the rise of a centralized, executive-dominated, depoliticized institutional arena. It is this arena with its depoliticized institutions that Hosni Mubarak inherited in 1981 and maintains to date.

Conversely, in Syria, the aftermath of the October war was less amenable to accelerating al-Asad's post-populist experiment. Not only could he not choose to align with the U.S., he was forced to confront an institutionalized arena and a state that was unconsolidated. Further exasperating these structural constraints, Syria became embroiled in the Lebanese civil war to defend itself from the Israeli military threat, a near-civil war against its Islamists, and internal splits within the al-Asad family as brother competed against brother for the presidency. Given the differences between this context and Egypt's environment, al-Asad had different institution-building options at his disposal. As a consequence, al-Asad encouraged the institutionalization of the presidency, the B`ath party, and the security services to anchor the Syrian political system and state. In so doing, al-Asad created institutions with a higher degree of politicization.

Although they become inactive in the 1980s and 1990s, the institutional power centers, which amalgamated personalities and structures, reemerged and reasserted themselves after al-Asad's death in June 2000. This is why Bashar al-Asad's presidency differs from that of his father -- the presidency, the ruling party, and the security services asserted themselves in a competition of system influence that resembles an oligarchic rather than a personalized presidential-authoritarian system. Hence, the divergence in Egypt and Syria's political establishments can be traced to the 1970s. The two presidents' maneuvers as well as domestic and international realignments permitted a deepening of post-populism in one case but not in the other. Yet each system was marked by a differing degree of institutional politicization or depoliticization.

5.3 Politicized and Depoliticized Institutions and Elite Co-optation

After establishing the varying degree of politicized and depoliticized institutional types in Egypt and Syria, [521] it is possible to examine the effects of such institutional types on a regime's ability to co-opt elites. It is a regime's ability to co-opt elites (and non-elites) that indicates the effectiveness of system adaptation. In elite co-optation, the process of coalition change and management has a framing role. It is through coalition change and the physical inclusion and exclusion of elites that we understand the politics of elite co-optation. Coalition management, on the other hand, describes a separate process by which elites are kept from defecting from the establishment. By assuming that the reform of a political system potentially threatens the status quo, we can classify changes to a regime as serving the purpose of system adaptation. Given that Egypt and Syria exhibit diverging institutional arrangements, it is not surprising that their adaptive qualities should also differ. The co-optation of elites provides explanations for the differing capacity of system adaptation. For example, elite co-optation in Egypt and Syria is directed at a similar end, namely, keeping the elite arena stable and cohesive so as to prevent elites from defecting from the system. It, therefore, is a chief means of maintaining order among the establishment's key agents. Yet, given the variance in the degree of institutional politicization and depoliticization, elite co-optation occurs differently.

Egypt's elite arena has a higher capacity to adapt than Syria's in terms of alterations to the ruling coalition. This ostensibly indicates that new elites can be introduced and excluded more rapidly than in Syria. The central explanation for this lies in Egypt's depoliticized (centralized) institutions. In the absence of institutional anchors that support and protect Egypt's political elites, individuals brandishing extensive patronage networks continuously compete with other elites to maintain their positions. Rather than one's official positions in the party structure, it is connections to the chief executive that primarily determine the maintenance of elite status. As a consequence, a long tenure in the ruling elite is by no means sufficient insulation against exclusion. This was evident in the case of Egypt's `Amr Mosa, whose ten-year appointment as foreign minister was abruptly terminated. In this situation, he could not draw on institutional support, as his patronage networks all but disappeared when he was relieved of his duties. In other examples, Yusif Wali, Safwat al-Sharif, and Kamal al-Shazli were all members of the highest echelons of Egyptian elite politics for over two decades. Yet, in the past four years, attacks on their patronage networks have considerably weakened them. And just as elites can quickly be excluded from a ruling coalition, they can also be rapidly elevated. Gamal Mubarak and his policies secretariat offer an example of this -- the rise of the president's son and his group of technocrats shows how easily individuals can be parachuted into the top elite strata because of the prevailing depoliticized state of the party institution. The reason for the Egyptian elite arena's amenability to change can be found in the high levels of depoliticized institutions, which cannot counterbalance the president's centralized control over the political arena.

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[521] As noted in the introductory chapter, the degree of institutional politicization and depoliticization has been simplified throughout this thesis from its more nuanced and representative understanding. Essentially, security services and bureaucracies are a state's apolitical arm and presidencies and political parties are the state's political wings. Neither Syria nor Egypt reflects this assumption. In Syria, the apolitical and political entities are politicized while in Egypt, the apolitical and political institutions are depoliticized (with the exceptions of Egypt's overdeveloped presidency). Hence - for better or worse - I have referred to Egypt as possessing depoliticized institutions while Syria maintains a politicized institutional arena. In addition to this note, it is important to mention that "depoliticized" can describe a centralized presidential order while "politicized" institutional arenas possess a decentralized presidency.

An analysis of Syria's elite arena reveals different trends. While Bashar al-Asad maintains the best-endowed office constitutionally, politicized institutions such as the ruling B`ath party and the security services are capable of impeding the president's objectives. This makes it difficult for Bashar to exclude elites that oppose him. Syria's UN vote on resolution 1483 was a manifestation of this -- Bashar ordered that Syria accept the resolution, and his party's Regional Command respected his wishes, voting overwhelmingly in the affirmative. Yet, institutionally supported party members such as Farok al-Shara` and `Abd al-Halim Khaddam intervened against the president. The foreign ministry even ordered Syria's U.N. representative, Faysil Makdad, to vote no. After some confusion and embarrassment for Syria in the U.N., Makdad registered a noticeably late "yes" vote on the resolution. The aftermath produced no retribution against Khaddam or al-Shara` even though they disobeyed a direct presidential order. In this example, top elites can oppose the president and not be removed. This is attributable to elite support anchored in institutions rather than elites operating individually in politics. Any tampering with the elite arena is discouraged by the constraint of the institutional framework and the multiplicity of institutional stakeholders. Hence, it is difficult to bring a group of new elites into the party or to alter its composition, because this would threaten the party's role in power sharing as well as the patronage networks within it. For the same reason, it is difficult to achieve agreement on a coherent governing consensus among the politicized institutions. This factor decreases the regime's ability to adapt.

Similarly, elites ingrained in the system's structures appeal to institutional power brokers rather than to the president for their continuation in the system. While the president has a role in configuring his cabinet, he cannot drastically alter elected party positions. This makes Bashar less able to induce change against the will of the party's RC than one of the party's own members would be. An example of this is seen in Miro and Sulayman Qaddah's arguments during RC meetings. While Bashar could exclude Miro from being PM, he could not remove him from the party. Yet, when Miro indicated that he was willing to transfer his established institutional weight to Bashar's office, Qaddah threatened his expulsion from the party. Miro quickly fell back in line with the B`athist leadership apparently feeling the threat was plausible. This demonstrates that Syria's elite arena is more rooted in institutional considerations and is more oligarchic in character than the Egyptian elite arena.

The fact that Syria's politicized institutions can and do assert autonomy against each other produces system gridlock. Their behavior demonstrates that elite cohesion and the prevention of defections are primarily institutionally determined, rather than personally determined by the system's chief executive. This decentralizes power within the political arena. While institutions can resolve their internal problems, they tend to come into conflict with other institutional pillars in the system. Hence, co-optation plays out differently in Syria. This, in turn, leads to difficulties in arriving at consensus among the various institutional participants. As the degree of institutional politicization and elite co-optation varies between Egypt and Syria, so does the inclusion and exclusion of non-elites.

5.4 Non-Elite Individual Co-optation

Chapter Four examined the institutions' ability to co-opt, mobilize, and neutralize non-elite individuals in Egypt and Syria's authoritarian regimes. Non-elite individual co-optation occurs in both Egypt and Syria, but in different fashions. The key signifier between the two systems is the degree of institutional politicization, which contributes to how politics is organized. The clearest empirical designator is that official affiliation – as seen in the NDP's Higher Policies Council - is important in Egypt while it is not in Syria. Depoliticized institutional orders allow a regime the ability to easily create new structures to incorporate groups by institutionally affiliating newly co-opted individuals to its ruling party. Formal institutional affiliation helps determine who can and cannot be included within the system. A party that is loosely defined and organized around individuals with patronage networks is unable to assert itself as a bloc against the executive's power. Egypt's ruling NDP is an institution that consists of internal individual patronage networks. Those who chose to participate in politics do so without viable institutional support. In many ways, its ruling party and whoever is involved in it at a particular time represent the political wing of Egypt's regime. This flexible character of the party has enhanced the presidency in such a way that no institutional structures can readily challenge his rule in any sustained way.

Similarly, depoliticized institutional arenas encourage the employment of new governing strategies such as national councils. These councils provide regimes with additional tools for engaging in problematic issues and thereby permit the state to quasi-nationalize debates that civil society groups may have previously monopolized. The process of councilization – as seen in the National Council for Human Rights -- helps expand regime power by marketing the advance of incremental political reform and change. Rather than indicating reform, however, it masks a mechanism of attracting the participation and acquiescence of undecided, apolitical, urban professionals.

Depoliticized institutional orders also concentrate co-optation in the sense that only the ruling party can recruit new non-elites. A depoliticized order, therefore, excludes the security services and civil society from effectively developing politicized institutions would allow opposition to the political order or the president. It thereby reinforces and contributes to the continuation of centralized presidential rule. It also allows the executive to prevent the security apparatus from connecting to social actors or getting involved in politics. Keeping the security services depoliticized and separate from the political field keeps them loyal to an executive as well as maintains them as the defenders of the regime against emerging opposition figures and movements outside the system.

A lack of politicized institutions contributes to a system's adaptation by helping it to channel and exclude participants. While such measures can be seen as indicators of a lack of political development, they indicate quite the opposite with regard to a system's ability to adapt to challenges and crises. While political science theory derides personalized political orders as traditional, depoliticized institutional orders display tremendous resilience and adeptness at adapting to changing circumstances. Though such regimes usually adapt under a guise of a reform project, a tightly defined political arena in which politics remains based on individual patronage networks actually facilitates their ability to manage and control change. These characteristics also allow a regime to remake itself and change its composition without altering the personalized character of politics.

Conversely, politicized institutional arenas produce different outcomes. Syria's institutions or regime pillars developed under a president who could check their autonomy. Following Hafiz al-Asad's passing, his son confronted these regime pillars to maintain his own influence as president against these politicized institutions. While this interaction did not translate into a competition for absolute dominance of the system, it resulted in institutional gridlock between the presidency, the ruling party, and the security services. Because of the competition between Syria's institutions, politics is more restrictive from the point of the president in Syria than in Egypt. Depoliticized institutions absorb formal participation and afford the Egyptian president the ability to informally manage and compartmentalize the political arena. Conversely, in Syria, competition between the ruling B`ath party, redundant security services, and the presidency actually hinders the system's ability to evenly include non-elites in the concentrated process that continuously regenerates the political establishment. Competing politicized institutions make consensus politics problematic. Hence, non-elite individuals are unevenly co-opted among the various institutions.

While the situation remains fluid, unless one institution establishes itself in an arbitrating role, it seems unlikely the Syrian system will be able to adapt to emerging problems in an efficient manner. This does not imply that the system is in danger of collapse or failure, but it does constrain the regime's ability to remake and adapt itself. Institutional competition and its effect on co-optation reduces the Syrian regime's capacity to adapt. Hence, politicized institutional orders face more difficulties when adapting.

5.5 Systems Are Changeable…This is not Destiny

This thesis argues that since the 1970s a depoliticized (centralized) institutional arena has shaped Egypt's political arena while a politicized (decentralized) institutional arena characterizes

Syrian politics. This is based on previous scholarship, field research, and a map of Egypt and Syria's political arenas that I developed over four years. Yet, it would be intellectually misleading to assume that Egypt and Syria are forever locked on their current path of development. While I do not maintain high expectations for either system to make the transition to democratization, there is a potential for the institutional arenas to evolve. I expect the maintenance of depoliticized institutions to remain the hallmark of Egypt's arena. Even in a post-Hosni Mubarak scenario, whether a civilian or military leader takes office, the maintenance and ongoing accumulation of presidential power vis-à-vis the existing depoliticized institutions appears likely. While any new leader will be expected to confront a consolidation period where political arrangements and boundaries are renegotiated, the next Egyptian president does not risk the system slipping into a Syrian-style oligarchic governance phase. While there does not appear the risk of ruling by oligarchy, the next Egyptian president's power still depends on his ability to dominate weak institutions rather than share power with them.

Keeping with this thesis's argument, Syrian institutions appear likely to remain politicized in the near-term. Yet, a politicized institutional order is not destiny. Indeed, just as Sadat used shrewd political timing and opportunities provided by international events to implement changes in his inherited system, Bashar al-Asad could potentially pursue a similar path of eliminating entrenched institutions and replacing them with depoliticized ones. In fact, recent developments indicate that this strategy may already be underway.

Given the maneuvers at and after the 10th B`ath party congress in June 2005,[522] it is arguable that Bashar is beginning to consolidate his presidency at the expense of the oligarchic institutional rule that persisted in the first five years of his leadership. Whether the international and domestic situation continues to be amenable for Bashar's further consolidation or for the dismantling of the politicized institutional regime that his father built and controlled remains uncertain. Perhaps Bashar will prefer to establish his dominance over these regime pillars and then arbitrate between them, as his father did. Alternatively, he may choose to destroy existing regime pillars and establish newer ones based more on the personality of the president as Sadat did in 1970s Egypt. Yet, even if Bashar proves capable of engineering such a change, he will still need, at least, depoliticized institutions on which to base his rule.

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[522] For example, vice-presidents Khaddam and Mushtariqa have resigned from their RC positions, as have Qaddora, Ahmar, Qaddah, Fayad, and Miro. Farok al-Shara` has been elevated to the Vice-President position. Bashar loyalist Walid al-Mo`alim was appointed as FM while other more Bashar-friendly B`athists will be ministers in the next cabinet reshuffle. Similarly, long-time heads of security were replaced in the lead-up and aftermath to the 2005 conference. Names of those excluded include Hisham Ikhtiyar, Hasan al-Khalil, and Bahjat Sulayman. Names of the newly included are Bashar's brother-in-law, Asif Shawqat in military intelligence, `Ali Yunis with the struggle companies, `Ali Mamlok in general intelligence, Fuad Nassif Khairbik in global intelligence, and Mohamad Monsora in political intelligence. In short, the Syrian president is stronger now than when he assumed the presidency.

The point of this discussion is not to predict the outcome of power struggles in Syria. Rather it is to emphasize that Syria's politicized institutional arena, established and constructed during the 1970s and 1980s by Hafiz al-Asad, is not a structural trap that will condemn Syria to one path. Human agency, international and regional events, and the ability to alter and craft institutions in the future will determine what types of changes are seen in Syria. Yet, changes to institutional arrangements and system anchors in Syria will produce changes in the state's ability to co-opt elites and non-elites and its adaptation. If Bashar is to sustain the ongoing depoliticizing changes in Syria, the state could become institutionally more like Egypt.

5.6 Theoretical Implications

According to modernization and democratization theory, institutions are supposed to increase a political system's ability to depersonalize politics. The logic goes that as society becomes more complex in its composition and interest articulation, institutions are required to channel and organize politics. A political "system" develops to fulfill these functions. Yet, as the Syrian example shows, politicized institutions are forced to engage one another, which slow down the process of co-opting elites and non-elites as well as formulating a governing consensus. This process is described as "system gridlock" in this thesis. This makes system adaptation and the ability to redesign the structures that make up the regime a more arduous process. Politicized institutional political orders inhibit, rather than facilitate, the adaptation process. While this is related to authoritarian theories of neo-patrimonialism, there are some key differences.

Neo-patrimonialism is categorized as a development of personalized or traditional politics. In the literature (particularly on the Arab world), the theory is primarily viewed as a social phenomenon that is inherited from the colonial period, which, in turn, affects contemporary economic and politics. The existing literature does not substantially account for how differences in neo-patrimonial regimes manifest themselves in political institutions. Specifically, this points to the amount of variance in regimes that are effectively blending Weber's concepts of traditional and legal-rational types of governance. As was noted previously, some authoritarian regimes may possess more traditional than legal-rational characters while others maintain qualities that are more legal-rational than traditional. Yet, the central fact is that both types are currently classified as neo-patrimonial regimes. In this thesis, I have explained how neo-patrimonialism effects institutions and structures as well as showed variance in neo-patrimonial authoritarian regimes. This is not by any means to discredit the existing literature but rather to build on it and use it differently than currently exists. As a consequence, while neo-patrimonialism does focus on introducing and adapting social changes, I have chosen to examine neo-patrimonial adaptation through a structural format.

This study suggests that politicized institutional arenas are capable of introducing change and co-opting elites and non-elites, but at a slower rate as compared to depoliticized institutions. In the case of Egypt, it is evident that the state does not lack institutions. Egypt has every conceivable contemporary governance institution, but those structures lack political strength. In the absence of strong institutions, the political system is made up of a multi-party system dominated by the presidential-controlled ruling party. With the security services also out of politics, the president's office is in a position to freely manipulate and shuffle and rotate elites and non-elites. The lack of institutional autonomy means that politics consists of individuals whose institutions are unable to rally on their behalf in the face of presidential appointments, demotions, or policy changes. This also facilitates established patronage networks to disintegrate and the networks to realign under newer elites if powerful elites are targeted. Because politics remains rooted in personalities, the political arena is more easily adapted and changeable. This gives depoliticized institutional regimes the ability to confront and overcome challenges by adapting to new conditions without fundamentally changing the status quo. In this vein, Syria's regime remains less adaptable than that in place in Egypt. While in the short term neither regime is on a path towards democratic reform, institutional settings – be they politicized or depoliticized – will continue to shape challenges to the political status quo.

Modernization and derived democratization theories continue to assert themselves as a viable social science theoretical tool. George W. Bush's presidency and his administration's decision to invade Iraq to redesign and democratically transform the Arab world has revived democratization theorists' interest in the Middle East. This stands in contrast to the work of many scholars who cogently argue that political science applied to the Arab world should emphasize authoritarianism rather than transition studies. As Carothers argues, the transition and democratization literature was important for understanding the initial upheavals in the political and economic areas of the post-Cold War period, but that model ran its course. As he notes, "it is increasingly clear that reality is no longer conforming to the model."[523] An obvious repercussion of this argument is that democratization theories are slowing our understanding of the changing nature of authoritarianism in various regions in the world. Thus, Carothers suggests, "It is time to recognize that the transition paradigm has outlived its usefulness and look for a better lens."[524] Both Syria and Egypt appear to display similar modes of governance despite being at different stages along the populist to post-populist authoritarian trajectory. Yet, substantial differences characterize each state's institutional arrangements, its style of co-opting elites and non-elites, and adaptive qualities. It is within this context that this thesis tries to argue that differences should be emphasized when studying Arab political systems. It is also for this reason that the field should set aside more general democratization and modernization theoretical frameworks, which tend to simplify and make such systems look as if there is more in common than reality reveals.

Egypt and Syria are authoritarian political systems in post-populist phases of their development. Yet, even though these similarities dominate as a focal point of inquiry, too many differences persist in terms of how these systems adapt and remain viable. By describing these systems as possessing depoliticized and politicized institutional arenas, I have highlighted differences in Egypt and Syria's institutional types, co-optative abilities, and capacity for system adaptation. In this vein, the type of institutions and co-optation determines and explains how regimes build, maintain, and adapt an authoritarian political system.

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[523] Thomas Carothers "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (January 2002): 6.
[524] Ibid.

5.7 Adaptation vs. Reform

As noted in the thesis's opening paragraphs, there is a quiet but ongoing struggle between Western and Arab governments today. The former claims to want homegrown reform that leads to democratization while the latter repeats its desires for reform by arguing that more inclusive governance will develop over time. Neither outcome is likely. The question of how to interpret such a struggle and its potential outcomes was this inquiry's inspiration. The essential problem that this thesis explains is why seemingly similar authoritarian regimes in the Arab world have different adaptive qualities. This variance of adaptation is attributable to the differences of depoliticized and politicized institutional political orders. Hence, this thesis's objective is to illustrate why it is erroneous to view all Arab authoritarian regimes as monolithic and similar. As scholarship on Arab politics tends to focus on regimes' shared trends, this thesis's conclusions focus on the differences in regards to the central regime power expansion strategy – co-optation. Instead of relying on coercion as the central means to maintain order, a constant reworking of, management of, and change in the elites of a ruling system provide the necessary cohesion that makes adaptation viable. Similarly, expanding and recruiting non-elites into the system enable regime soft power to expand throughout society.

It is within this context that an authoritarian regime adapts and overcomes challenges that could threaten its viability and durability. This, then, is in direct conflict with the reform calls by Western states, which focus on fundamental changes in the structures and basis of governance. Any political system with established patterns of behavior is more likely to adjust and adapt its arena rather than drastically alter the foundations of governance. Without doubt, political systems that fail to adapt court destabilization, but changing the fundamental structures of power is also a recipe with unknowable and untested repercussions in the Arab world. For the time being, Arab leaders have chosen to go with the adaptation devil they can manage rather than the reform devil they cannot. Adaptation, rather than reform, is the process of change that Arab governments are currently pursuing. As was previously noted, Adaptation is changing in order for the regime's domination of power remains the same over the society it rules.[525] Rather than understanding Arab political systems as on the verge of collapse or weak, we should recognize that the different regimes are sustaining system continuity by making adjustments to the elite and non-elite groups incorporated in the regime’s social coalition. Some, however, do this more quickly than others. It is within this framework, that I have attempted to show that the reason for system adaptation capacity is inextricably linked to a regime’s institutional structure.

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[525] Adaptation, as seen throughout this thesis, is a messy concept precisely because politics is immune from manufactured academic concepts. Nonetheless, while adaptation is always change, change cannot be exclusively seen as reform.

Authoritarianism, and all its individual variations, remains a central factor to the study of governance. Through examining the process of renewal, inclusion, and maintenance of elites and non-elites vis-à-vis institutional considerations, co-optation explains why such systems can adapt. It also explains why this form of governance continues to be relevant. Rather than viewing such a process as reform, authoritarian adaptation is a better framework for studying Arab governance in the 21st century.

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