Examining Opposition Movements and Regime Stability in Tunisia and Jordan during the

Arab Spring: A Political Opportunities Approach

By

Paul Meuse

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APPROVED:

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Sarah Henderson

_____

Sally Gallagher

_____

Steven Ortiz

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Paul Meuse, Author

Introduction

The Arab Spring can be described as a revolutionary wave of civil uprisings in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region that has led to regime change in four countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen), an ongoing, violent civil war (Syria) as well as major and minor protests among most countries in the region and some beyond. As events continue to unfold over two years later, much of the academic literature examining the Arab Spring has been centrally focused on questions as to a) what factors caused the Arab Spring and b) why outcomes among countries touched by the Arab Spring varied so starkly. Of the scholarship addressing the latter question, most of the literature to date has emphasized the importance of specific external/internal "top down" factors that explain diverging pathways among MENA countries, often neglecting to explore the influence of the "masses" in driving different outcomes. Moreover among those "bottom-up" accounts of the Arab Spring that do incorporate a role for the masses, the focus has generally been on "diffusion processes" across borders, or the utilization of new media, processes that only affected regime breakdown/stability indirectly.

Largely missing among the scholarly literature of the Arab Spring to date have been comparative accounts analyzing the extent to which regime vulnerability might be attributed to the emergence, processes, and outcomes of mass mobilization. To date, most accounts focusing on disparate outcomes during the Arab Spring that incorporate a role for the masses operate on a case-by-case basis, more often than not failing to provide adequate causal models for regime vulnerability that can be applied beyond a single case. As such, the scholarly literature on the Arab Spring by and large lacks cogent theoretical frameworks that both explain diverging outcomes among MENA countries that include

the role of opposition movements as a critical factor influencing regime vulnerability *and* can be applied outside singular cases.

By conducting a comparative case study of Tunisia and Jordan this essay seeks to add to the Arab Spring literature addressing why outcomes varied so significantly among countries in the region, especially given seemingly comparable demographic, socio-economic and political environments in the region as a whole. However, in contrast to most "bottom-up" scholarly approaches to understanding the Arab Spring to date, this essay concentrates on the role of mass mobilization in influencing divergent outcomes in the region, specifically through their *interaction* with top-down institutional factors.

In particular, this essay utilizes a "political opportunity approach" to examine the extent to which external and internal protest environments strengthened or weakened opposition movement processes in Tunisia and Jordan, in turn shaping key-short term events that led to regime breakdown or resilience. Thus of the main purposes of this essay is to examine the relative strengths of domestic and international political factors on protest movement processes so as to better understand and predict which political environments are more conducive or obstructive to regime breakdown. Specifically, four causal factors and their interaction are found to be critical in allowing large-scale protest movements to emerge and regime breakdown to occur. These factors include the presence of broad-based coalitions, divided elites, regime legitimacy, and the nature of the regime alliance system.

In addition to examining theoretical questions of mass mobilization and regime stability in Tunisia and Jordan, this essay assesses the policy implications of these cases for external organizations invested in democracy promotion in the MENA region and

around the world. Based on the findings from these case studies applying the political opportunities approach, strategies for indirect and direct democracy promotion are outlined at the end of the essay.

Literature Review

Structural Approaches

This section outlines the main ways scholars have analyzed regime breakdown and democratization processes to date. Specifically, this section will summarize, compare, and critique "structural" and "institutional elite agency-based" approaches to understanding regime breakdown and democratization, placing these broad categories of scholarly literature in the context of evolving global circumstances. In addition, this section summarizes social movement theory and social movement approaches to authoritarian breakdown and democratization, delineating how this theory can add to the previously outlined "paradigms" of regime breakdown and democratization in the scholarly literature. Finally, this section reviews scholarship examining the Arab Spring to date, emphasizing parallels to the previously highlighted literature and arguing the usefulness of applying social movement frameworks to the events of the Arab Spring.

Some of the most common approaches to understanding authoritarian breakdown and democratization have come from structural theorists, examining specific connections between social structures, regime type, and broad social change, while downplaying factors such as individual and group behavior (agency), culture, and factors related to "political processes." Most structural approaches to democratization and regime type found in political science and sociology trace back to the work of Seymour Martin Lipset, but arguably find their roots in the work of Max Weber, who suggested that modern

democracy in its clearest form could only occur under the unique conditions of capitalist industrialization (Weber 1906, 346). Building on Weber and expanding his scope to societies in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (in addition to 18th and 19th century Western Europe and the United States), by the late 1950's Lipset posited democratization to be inherently connected to particular social structural "requisites," including a growing middle class, increasing wealth, and higher levels of education (Lipset 1959, 101-103).

In a variation on Lipset's thesis but with a specific focus on revolution and regime type, scholar Barrington Moore further developed the structuralist tradition in his classic historical investigation *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966). In this work Moore asserts that a higher degree of bourgeoisie strength tends to weaken feudal structures, opening a path for modernity to take a distinctly "democratic political form" (Bernhard 2005; Moore 1966). Moore's thesis in turn inspired other structural accounts of broad social change and revolution that fit a growing "statist persuasion" in political science and a response to recent third-world revolutions and decolonization (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996, 2).

Responding to recent authoritarian transitions marked by coups, civil wars, upheavals, and political instability, political scientist Samuel Huntington challenged Lipset's original thesis in his work *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), arguing that political order necessarily facilitated economic and social development (Huntington 1968). Accordingly, regimes tend to breakdown not when specific societal conditions are met but more concretely when political institutions are unstable or show signs of "decay." Thus Huntington argued the necessity of particular structural "sequencing" for successful democratic transition to occur, whereby a modernizing dictatorship provides political

order, rule of law, and the conditions for successful economic and social development prior to democratization (Huntington 1968).

Moreover, while the basic relationships between economic development, regime type, revolution and democratization have since been challenged, notably on grounds of determinism, reverse causality, and the omission of key cultural and political factors that lead nations toward or away from democracy, many leading democratization scholars continue to posit some variant of Lipset's original thesis, stressing a more or less linear, probabilistic relationship between socio-economic development, regime breakdown and democratization (Zakaria 2003; Geddes 1999; Przeworski and Limongi 1997).

Institutional Elite-Based Approaches

In contrast to structural approaches, approaches to understanding authoritarian breakdown, "institutional elite" based theories focus on state-centric structural factors but also the specific behavior of political elites acting with autonomy over the polities they ruled. The context for most of these approaches followed the democratization of Spain, Portugal, Greece, and a number of Latin American countries in the 1970's and 1980's. In examining these particular cases of regime breakdown and democratic transitions, scholars working within this paradigm claimed to surmount the failure of previous structuralist theories to account for a democratic "transition" among states with widely varying levels of socio-economic development (O'Donnell et al. 1986a, 1986b, 1986c; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

Following another surge of "democratic transitions" that began with the Philippines in 1986 and extended throughout East Asia and Eastern Europe, democratization scholars began to formulate more nuanced theories scrutinizing

authoritarian breakdown and democratization processes. In particular, scholars sought to utilize the strengths of society and state-centric structural approaches but include agency in attempt to shed more light on the latest pattern of regime and societal transformations. Emblematic of these more nuanced approaches to understanding authoritarian breakdown and democratization is the work of Samuel Huntington as well as democratization scholars Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan.

In Huntington's seminal work *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (1991), the author understands authoritarian breakdown and democratization processes among states during the 1970's and 1980's as the result of large-scale socio-economic processes, cultural and ideological factors, and the direct behavior of elites and opposition groups (Huntington 1991, 45-46, 106-107). Specifically, Huntington theorized that third wave "transformations" evolved through five major phases, each largely determined by elite behavior. These phases include: 1) the "emergence of reformers" within the regime; 2) a calculation of benefits and risks by reformers to holding on to power; 3) the organizing of elections, in anticipation that voters would "continue them in power"; 4) an assumption by reformers that democratizing would produce socio-economic, political and international legitimacy benefits and finally; 5) the assumption by reformers that democracy was the "right" form of government given the respected status of so many other democratic and developed countries (Huntington 1991, 127-129).

In his final analysis, Huntington asserts the primacy of elite behavior over opposition groups in affecting regime breakdown and democratization processes: "In the third wave, the conditions for creating democracy had to exist, but only political [elite]

leaders willing to take the risk of democracy made it happen" (108). As such, the author outlines what he views as the most direct and significant explanatory variable leading to democratization: "the beliefs and actions of political elites" (36). In sum, while Huntington's work fuses both structure and agency, while critically acknowledging the role of mass opposition in influencing to regime breakdown and democratization, it also highlights elite behavior as being the exclusive factor driving nearly every phase of democratic transition, including regime breakdown.

Similarly, scholars Linz and Stepan fuse structure and agency with an emphasis on elite behavior in explaining authoritarian breakdown, though with a somewhat different focus. In their influential book *Problems of Democratic transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (1996), the authors theorize authoritarian breakdown as following specific paths based on a) prior regime type b) stateness c) leadership base of the prior nondemocratic regime d) who initiates and who controls the transition. In addition, the authors outline context variables akin to socio-economic and cultural processes commented on by Huntington: international influences, the political economy of legitimacy and coercion, and constitution-making environments (Linz and Stepan 1996, 66). Akin to Huntington's analysis, Linz and Stepan provide a nuanced theoretical account of authoritarian breakdown in the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century by accounting for large socio-economic and political processes, state structural factors, and individual agency with a significant emphasis on elite choice and behavior.

However, while democratization approaches, notably those theorized after the "third wave" of democratic transitions, provide compelling accounts of the major causes

and processes of authoritarian breakdown, they can be critiqued by failing to provide a more nuanced account of mass influence on democratic transitions. Such broad omissions among this literature signals the importance to institutional elite-based theories of a) individual over collective action b) strategic actors within the "transition game," rather than actors defined by other relevant characteristics and c) state-centric approaches to government-opposition negotiations, precluding the importance of other social actors (Collier and Mahoney 1997, 286).

Moreover, if the masses are mentioned at all by institutional elite-based theorists, they are usually viewed as a largely ephemeral phenomenon, capable of only *indirectly* affecting the political processes of authoritarian breakdown by influencing the strategic choices of elites (Ulfelder 2005, 327). Institutional elite-based frameworks can therefore become problematic when their basic assumptions and theoretical orientations preclude the often crucial significance of collective actors in influencing regime breakdown among authoritarian states.

In addition, by under-specifying the role of opposition movements and the dynamics of authoritarian rule, most cases of authoritarian breakdown specified by institutional elite-based theorists often concentrate on outcomes while ignoring the onset of processes leading up to regime breakdown (Ulfelder 2005, 327). Social movement theory's emphasis on long-term processes of social and political development can help overcome the limitations of democratization theory on this front by providing a more comprehensive picture of agency and agential factors in influencing authoritarian breakdown. Specifically, by underscoring the direct interactions between elites and masses that can lead to regime breakdown, social movement theory can help specify

critical mechanisms that can account for authoritarian breakdown and democratization processes (312-313).

Social Movement Approaches

According to social movement theory the "irreducible act" that defines all social movements, protests and revolutions is "contentious collective action" (Tarrow 2011, 7). While collective action often occurs within institutions, on behalf of constituted groups, it becomes contentious when it is used by people lacking regular access to institutions, acting in the name of new or unaccepted claims and behaving in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities (ibid). Correspondingly, as a form of contentious collective action social movements can be defined as "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow 1998, 4). Social movement theory thus broadly examines and measures the impact and dynamics of social movement emergence, processes, and outcomes, which include, but are not limited to: revolutions, protest movements and democratic transitions from authoritarian states.

While most social movement theory has examined movement emergence, processes, and outcomes in more democratic environments, recent work by social movement theorists has examined the impact of mass movements on regime breakdown and democratization in authoritarian settings (Almeida 2010, 106). These studies include analyses of Southern and Eastern European revolutions (Beissinger 2007; Bunce and Wolchik 2006; McFaul 2005; Osa 2001; Bunce 1999; Oberschall 1996; Collier and Mahoney 1997; Tarrow 1991), democratic transitions in Africa (Bratton and van de Walle 1992, 1994), Asia (Choe and Kim 2012), and Latin America (Tilly 2006; Hipsher

1998; Collier and Mahoney 1997). Noticeably missing among social movement literature prior to the beginning of the Arab Spring in early 2010 were studies examining social movement processes in the Middle East, likely to a geographic and disciplinary bias, the lack of democratization in the region, and the perceived stability of MENA regimes[1].

Social movement scholars have also conducted quantitative analyses of democratic "transitions" occurring since the early 1970's showing the impact of social movements on authoritarian breakdown (Karatnycky and Ackerman 2005; Ulfelder and Lustik 2007; Ulfelder 2005). In particular, scholars Karatnycky and Ackerman examined 67 transitions since the 1970's and find civic resistance to be a key factor driving 50 of these cases (Karatnycky and Ackerman 2005). Similarly, scholars Ulfelder and Lustik find that among states experiencing democratic transition since the early 1970's, the presence of "significantly non-violent collective action" in the preceding two years approximately tripled a country's chances of undergoing a transition to democracy (Ulfelder and Lustik 2007).

While these works linking social movement theory and democratization argue that "contentious collective action" is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for authoritarian breakdown, they conclude that mass mobilization may be "a decisive factor in a significant subset of regime transformations" (Ulfelder 2005, 313). Taking this argument further, recent work by social movement scholars Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly assert that authoritarian breakdown, democratic transition, and

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[1] For accounts of social movement processes in the Middle East occurring under authoritarian states See Holger Albrecht's work *Contentions Politics in the Middle East* (2010) as well as *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (2004) edited by Quintan Wicktorowicz. For some scholarly accounts typical of democratization literature since the early 90's explaining authoritarian persistence in the Arab World, see Diamond, Larry. "Why Are There No Arab Democracies?" *Journal of democracy* 21.1 (2010): 93-112 and Bellin, Eva. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative perspective." *Comparative politics* (2004): 139-157

mass contention are inextricably linked, given that democracy "results from, mobilizes, and reshapes popular contention" (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001, 269). Whatever the role of the masses in influencing authoritarian breakdown and democratization processes, social movement theory acknowledges that contentious events, involving the role and dynamics of mass movements, can in fact be "a cause of regime change, a symptom, or both" (Ulfelder 2005, 327).

In contrast to approaches to authoritarian breakdown found in democratization literature that focus on state institutional structures and elite agency (in addition to structural factors), most theory in social movement literature dealing with regime breakdown outlines structural factors as well as approaches that incorporate the role of opposition movements *and their interaction with* elite groups and state institutional structures. Overall, then, the inclusion of collective actors into accounts of authoritarian breakdown by social movement scholars can arguably overcome shortcomings of many structural and institutional elite-based accounts of authoritarian breakdown, especially among waves of democratic transitions where the role and influence of the masses in affecting democratization processes has been more explicit (Karatnycky and Ackerman 2005; McFaul 2002).

The Arab Spring

How have scholars examined democratization processes in the MENA region during the Arab Spring to date? Furthermore how does this literature fit with previous scholarship on regime breakdown and democratization? Although research on the phenomenon of the Arab Spring is in its very early stages, some scholarly trends found in the literature so far are relevant to this essay. This section will outline these trends based

loosely on works that parallel structural approaches, institutional elite-based approaches, and mass-agency based approaches that invoke the role of the masses in explanations of regime breakdown and durability since the Arab Spring began in late 2010.

Structural Approaches

Arguably the most developed scholarship on the Arab Spring invokes some form of structuralism in identifying the larger socio-economic and political context leading to the uprisings. In fact, most of the "Arab Spring structuralists" seem to come down on some combination of the following factors as having dramatically increased the likelihood of the onset of the Arab Spring: unequal economic development (as well as adverse economic trends—recession, rising unemployment and high prices or scarcity of food); demographic factors (notably a large unemployed youth population and a more educated populace); a lack of political freedom; and finally the presence of corruption (Ansani and Daniele 2012; Dennison et al 2011).

Echoing a Lipset's original "modernization" thesis, some scholars in the structuralist mold have identified economic development, the role of the middle classes, and an increasingly educated populace as specific causes of the Arab Spring demands for democratization (Campante and Chor 2012; Diwan 2012). However, for the most part scholars using a structuralist approach to understand the Arab Spring harken back not to Lipset but rather Huntington in analyzing the roots of authoritarian instability in the MENA region, specifying regime vulnerability caused by a context of recent negative economic growth[2] (Huntington 1991, 59). In particular, these scholars underscore the failures of neo-liberal economic reforms in the region, which by the late 1990's could be

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[2] Huntington also asserted that rapid economic growth could destabilize regimes in some contexts, supporting but not wholly endorsing Lipset's hypothesis (Huntington 1991, 59).

seen as creating largely "jobless growth" and benefitting only a small number of well-connected elites (Noueihed and Warren 2012; Lynch 2011). However other structuralist scholars of the Arab Spring have stressed not economic development but economic structure[3] in driving unrest in the region, noting a decades-long problem of rising mass unemployment and a lack of export competitiveness and labor skills in the region in the context of an increasingly globalized world (Moore 2013, 2).

In addition, scholars examining structural causes the Arab Spring protests point to the recent economic slowdown due to the global financial crisis of 2008, extreme oil price variations, large peaks in global food prices, the sharp increase in the number of people living in poverty in the region between 2005 and 2010 as major factors contributing to unrest and regime instability (Noueihed and Warren 2012, 40-41; Salt 2012; Lagi et al 2011).

Demographic factors likewise figure prominently in structuralist accounts of the large-scale causes of the Arab Spring, echoing the work of Barrington Moore, Jack Goldstone, and others in their structural examinations of the roots of large-scale revolutions. Many scholars in this vein point to the presence of a "youth bulge," or relatively large percent of young people in the region making states "ripe for revolution" (Al-Momani 2011, 161). Many of these accounts of the Arab Spring note that on the eve of the Arab Spring 60 percent of the MENA region population was under 25 years old, with a median age of 24 (Al-Momani 2011; Pew Research Center 2011). Finally, fast-

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[3] Some scholars note that a distinction must be made between MENA states with oil wealth and those without, arguing that non-oil rich states in the region had much fewer options in abandoning neo-liberal economic reforms (Moore 2013, 2-3). For a larger discussion of "rentier" economic structures in the MENA region and social implications see Diamond, Larry. "Why Are There No Arab democracies?" *Journal of Democracy* 21.1 (2010): 97-99.

growing and urbanizing populations in the region have been cited as demographic factors

contributing to the unrest of the Arab Spring (Goldstone 2011, 335).

The Arab Spring: Institutional Elite-Based Approaches

Among the literature that examines the processes of regime breakdown and

resilience during Arab Spring more directly, many approaches taken by scholars to date

parallel methodologies found in democratization literature that emphasize specific elite

choices in addition to the importance of state institutional structures, echoing the work of

Huntington and other democratization scholars. Many of these approaches spotlight the

role of the military and the coercive apparatus in dealing with popular uprisings, and

assert its primacy in influencing regime breakdown/stability. Typical of these approaches

is Eva Bellin's work "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle

East" (2012), in which the author acknowledges the role of opposition movements but

asserts the primacy of elite (military) behavior in affecting regime change: "…for those

regimes that faced mass protest, survival turned, first and foremost, on the question,

would the coercive apparatus defect? Would it prove willing and able to shoot on the

crowds?" (Bellin 2012, 130).

The logic of most institutional elite-based approaches specifically focused on

military defection during the Arab Spring often emphasizes the degree of

"professionalization" and "institutionalization" of the military/coercive apparatus as

critical to understanding state weakness or durability during the protests (Bellin 2012;

Noble 2012; Gause III 2011). The relative institutionalization and professionalization of

the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries, for example, illuminates army leaders' decisions to

abandon autocrats (rather than repress mass protests) whereas strong patrimonial ties

explain the willingness of militaries to engage in high intensity coercion in Bahrain and Syria[4] (Bellin 2012, 133-135).

Correspondingly, other scholars using an institutional elite-based lens to understand regime breakdown during the Arab Spring have focused specifically on regime types as the major factor determining why some regimes fell and others did not, asserting that "monarchical" regimes by nature fared better than "republics" (Menaldo 2012; Menaldo 2011). In a more nuanced account of regime breakdown, democratization scholars Linz and Stepan have echoed their previous work and that of Huntington in contending that the strong influence of regime type and the behavior of elites were critical in determining the probability of regime breakdown. Specifically, the authors assert that the degree of a regime's sultanism, or domination of society based on state institutions and military force that are "purely personal interests of the master" characterizing a regime often determined elite choices, in turn leading to regime breakdown or resilience. The authors contend that during the Arab Spring the more sultanistic the regime, the more difficult the transition due to a greater difficulty of elite "soft-liners" to push out regime "hard-liners" (Linz and Stepan 2013, 26). For example, the authors contend that the more sultanistic regimes in Libya and Syria have experienced more violent and protracted transitions while the less sultanistic regimes in Egypt and Tunisia have experienced military defections and relatively peaceful transitions (Linz and Stepan 2013, 27-29).

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[4] It should be noted that variants of these approaches with a central focus on the military have criticized Bellin's work specifically for not paying attention to non-material bases for regime and military cohesion, including the "primordial" ties of family, kinship, and ethnicity, in addition to the "revolutionary origins," which more clearly explain divergent outcomes among Egypt and Syria in 2010 as well as Egypt in 2010 and Iran in 2009, for example (Lachapelle et al 2012, 8-9, 38-39; Way 2011).

Finally, other scholars using institutional elite-based approaches to analyzing the Arab Spring have posited that oil wealth and the presence of "resource cursed" states in the Middle East is the driving factor behind the differential outcomes in the region since the start of the Arab Spring (Ross 2011). Following this logic, regimes with more oil wealth (Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya[5] and Saudi Arabia) have been more adept at fending off attempts to unseat them whereas the states with little to no oil wealth (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia) in addition to states with modest but declining oil revenues (Syria, Yemen) have had more difficulty staying in power (Ross 2011, 17). Specifically, oil-rich states and their political elites are said to have been able to quell unrest using material incentives made from oil rents (Ross 2011).

The Arab Spring: Mass Agency-Based Approaches

In contrast to both structural and institutional elite-based approaches examining regime breakdown/durability during the Arab Spring, mass agency approaches found in the Arab Spring literature invoke the role of the masses in contributing to processes of regime vulnerability. Moreover most mass-agency approaches found in the literature to date can be grouped largely in two ways: those that emphasize the role of social media and those that focus on the "diffusion" of the protests.

The impact of "new media" in the Arab Spring uprisings figures prominently in the mass agency-based literature on the Arab Spring. Among these approaches, debates over the role of new media in shaping the nature of protest emergence and sustainability in the region and elsewhere during the Arab Spring have been common. On the one hand, many scholars assume the effectiveness of new media in both protest emergence

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[5] According to Ross (2011) the only case of an oil-funded (authoritarian) state to fall during the Arab Spring, Libya, can be attributed to NATO intervention (Ross 2011, 17).

and sustainability during the Arab Spring, and simply argue over which kinds of media played a bigger role. In particular, these scholars assert that social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and text messages) gave the Arab Spring masses a tool that made it possible to share their resentment with like-minded people and to organize successful movements against authoritarian rulers (Beck and Hüser 2012; Joseph 2012; Howard and Hussain 2011).

By contrast, other scholars analyzing the impact of social media have remained more skeptical of its connection to successful mobilization as well as its overall influence on authoritarian breakdown and persistence since the Arab Spring began (Salvatore 2013; Dewey et al 2012; Gladwell 2011). Typically, these scholars underscore the significance of more traditional "mobilizing structures" with defined hierarchies and face-to-face interaction, such as the role of mosques, labor unions, student groups and political parties in rallying protestors and framing protests, in addition to putting pressure on regimes to change, and elites to step down (Salvatore 2013).

In a more nuanced account of the role of new media and recent protests, media scholar Lance Bennett compellingly argues the effectiveness of more personalized, "digitally mediated collective action formations" in communicating simple political messages to outside sources during the Arab Spring[6] relative to conventional social movement protests with "identifiable membership organizations leading the way under common banners and collective identity frames" (Bennett 2012, 742). Such examples of effective political communication, he notes, achieved more than traditional social movement organizations of what social movement scholar Charles Tilly has deemed vital

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[6] Bennett makes the same argument for the recent "indignados" protests in Spain, "Occupy Wall Street" protests in the U.S. and the "Put People First" (PPF) protests in London.

for social movement effectiveness: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (Bennett 2012; Tilly 2010; Tilly 2006; Tilly 2004). Furthermore, Bennett notes that such networks of more personalized political communication can be viewed as complementary to face-to-face interactions, feeding in and out of "squares, encampments, mosques, and general assembly meetings" (Bennett 2012, 744).

Scholars examining "diffusion processes" during the Arab Spring have similarly weighed in on the importance of the masses in influencing authoritarian breakdown and durability since the uprisings began. Nearly all of these scholars note the importance of the masses in toppling the Tunisian dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, inspiring mass protests around the region by demonstrating to millions in the region that in fact "tyrants could be toppled" (Weyland 2012; Lynch 2011; Anderson 2011; Way 2011). Furthermore while scholars focusing on diffusion during the Arab Spring typically include an account of state structural factors and their influence in affecting different outcomes among MENA countries since the Arab Spring began, unlike institutional elite-agency theorists they also emphasize the importance of the masses as autonomous social forces contributing to regime breakdown.

Overall, much of the scholarly literature examining the diverging outcomes of countries during Arab Spring appears to parallel structural or institutional elite agency-based approaches to understanding regime breakdown. Among the mass agency-based approaches examining divergent outcomes in the Arab Spring, by far the largest focus in the literature has been on the role and impact of new media, in addition to diffusion processes. However largely missing from the Arab Spring literature to date are more systematic accounts of the *interaction* between state structural factors and mass agency

processes that likely influenced whether regimes stayed resilient or experienced breakdown.

This essay fills this gap by applying a social movement framework to two specific cases during the Arab Spring, Tunisia and Jordan. Tunisia and Jordan are chosen as case studies due to their having comparable broad-scale socio-economic and political conditions, in addition to similar mobilizing tools, prior to the start of the Arab Spring, yet having widely differing levels of protest and protest outcomes as events in the region unfolded. Moreover, in contrast to structural and institutional elite agency-based approaches, the political opportunities approach provides a lens for understanding democratization processes in Tunisia and Jordan as inextricably linked to mass mobilization processes, at the same time not ignoring the significance of structural factors and specific elite behavior in influencing regime breakdown. Specifically, this essay will analyze the role and influence of mass mobilization on regime vulnerability in Tunisia and Jordan by focusing on the interplay between structural factors, key short-term events, and opposition movement strength during the Arab Spring protests.

Methods and Scope

Political Opportunities Approach

As a means of analyzing mass mobilization processes and their influence on authoritarian breakdown/resilience in Tunisia and Jordan during the Arab Spring, this essay utilizes a macroscopic structural approach to social movement theory known as Political Opportunity Theory[7]. Political opportunities are defined as "consistent—but not

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[7] While often used on its own, political opportunity theory is sometimes utilized in conjunction with a larger framework within social movement studies known as Synthetic Political Opportunity Theory (SPOT). According to SPOT there are three main factors that explain how movements become the focal

necessarily formal, permanent, or national—dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (Tarrow 2011, 32). Specifically, this approach examines dimensions of political struggle related to state institutional factors that provide (or obstruct) opportunities for further protests. In other words, political opportunities are (state) institutional factors that provide opportunities for further protest, whereby changes in these factors lead to changes in levels of protest (Tilly 2006, 43-44).

Thus an analysis of political opportunities that shape social movements deals largely with the structure of a polity being challenged and an emphasis on the importance of resources external to the challenging group, (Tarrow 1998, 19-20). In particular, polity structure deals with 1) the state's capacity for repression or appeasement; 2) the relative openness of the political system; 3) the existence of (domestic and international) elite allies; and the stability of elites and elite cohesion that sustain a regime (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996, 10).

Finally, external resources provided or signaled by the state include assets that can be taken advantage of by even weak or disorganized challengers, such as specific communication or information that reveals allies and exposes the weaknesses of enemies (Tarrow 1998, 19-20, 72). In this manner, the combination of specific state institutional factors, including polity structure and resources provided by the state for a challenging group create the political opportunity environment in which protest movements can thrive

points for collective action and sustain it against opponents and the state: political opportunities and threats, mobilizing structures, and collective action or "cultural" frames (Tarrow 2011; Lichbach 1998). The application of the basic form of the political opportunity approach has been utilized by several leading social movement theorists to demonstrate the emergence, strength, and outcomes of opposition movements, include regime breakdown. For a comprehensive account of what the theory demonstrates see Tarrow's chapter "States and Opportunities: The Political Structuring of Social Movements" in the book *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements (1996)*. For an application of the political opportunities approach utilized within the context of democratization and "democratization paths" see Tilly's work *Regimes and Repression* (2006).

and grow or disintegrate. Again, changes in this environment of political opportunities produce changes in contention (Tilly 2006, 43-44).

Operationalization

In operationalizing the political opportunity approach to compare the cases of Tunisia and Jordan during the Arab Spring, this essay utilizes a model of a political opportunity structure taken from scholar Anthony Oberschall in his comparative study of opposition movements and regime breakdown in Eastern Europe (Oberschall 1996, 95). This particular model is suitable to this essay because it is capable of expounding upon opposition movement processes in authoritarian settings and operationalizes variables dealing with opposition movement emergence, strength, and outcomes linked specifically to regime breakdown and democratization processes. In sum, this political opportunity structure model examines how domestic and international institutional structures created (or inhibited) critical political opportunities for opposition movements, crucially determining the outcomes of key short-term events that led either to regime breakdown or regime resilience. The political opportunity model applied in this essay is visually summarized in Figure 1.

Regime breakdown[8] will be defined in this essay as the process of political elites giving up political power to members of civil society. Civil society is defined here as opposition political parties and other organized groups of political activists that are linked

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[8] This essay defines regime breakdown as a necessary precursor and corollary to other democratization processes often defined as state-building or democratic consolidation by which a government asserts and maintains "broad citizenship, equal and autonomous citizenship, binding consultation of citizens at large with respect to governmental activities and personnel, as well as protection of citizens from arbitrary action by governmental agents" (Linz 2012; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001, 265). The main point for this conceptual separation is to more clearly define opposition movement outcomes, operationalized in this essay as regime breakdown and regime resilience.

to the civic resistance groups involved in the protest movement. Regime resilience, then, demonstrates the opposite case, whereby political elites do not give up political power to civil society groups but continue to hold significant political power over their subjects.

This essay asserts that four major institutional structures (bolded concepts in Figure 1) were instrumental in impacting mass mobilization processes and their effects on critical short-term events that determined whether a regime broke down or stayed resilient. As such, the impact and interaction of these three domestic institutional factors and one international institutional factor can be said to have created a political environment where either a) the opposition movement reached a critical mass that shaped the major events leading to regime breakdown or b) the opposition movement was weakened, negligibly influencing key short-term events and thus leading to an outcome of regime resilience. The rest of this section will unpack these four concepts as well as the four "key short-term events" theorized as critical to regime breakdown/resilience.

Figure 1: Political Opportunity Structure[9]

Arena	Institutional structure	Key short-term events
Domestic	**broad-based coalitions (*)**	failed reforms
	divided elites (*)	erosion of authority
	lack of legitimacy (*)	reform among allies
International	**regime alliance system (*)**	opposition success among allies

(*) sign shows direction of opportunity for challengers, either positive (+) or negative (-) from 2010-2013

- *Regime alliance system*: In the international realm, the regime alliance system is

    operationalized as a significant external institutional factor shaping the

    environment for protest movements in Tunisia and Jordan. This variable is

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[9] This figure is based on a framework provided by Oberschall in his chapter "Opportunities and Framing in the 1989 Revolts" from the book *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (1996) edited by McAdam, et. al.

theorized as having a large impact on mass mobilization due to the ability of

external regime allies to provide resources (i.e. money, weapons) to the regime in

question to appease or coerce the opposition movement, in turn shaping critical

short-term events that led to regime breakdown or resilience. Accordingly while

regime alliance systems always vary by regional context, the alliance system

relevant to Tunisia, Jordan, and most MENA states during the Arab Spring

consisted of regime ties to 1) key Western allies as well as 2) regimes in the

Arabian Gulf, notably Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

- *Broad-based coalitions*: As a critical domestic institutional factor, broad-based

  coalitions refer to significant alliances between the regime and key socio-political

  groups based on ethnicity, religion, class, etc. that are nurtured by material

  "patronage." Sometimes referred to as one of the "hallmarks" of successful

  autocracies, broad-based coalitions consist of groups of regime supporters who

  validate regime policies and counter opponents during crises (Yom and Gause III

  2012, 81-83). As such, these groups are theorized as having the potential to

  undercut opposition movement strength and shape key short-term events that

  significantly impact regime vulnerability.

- *Divided elites*: The presence of divided elites refers to divisions among key

  groups or individuals holding significant political power that are allied to the

  regime. While this variable (like the others) differs by context and country, this

  essay posits that given the general high-capacity of MENA regimes to coerce

  populations, the most salient elite divisions operationalized as contributing to

  opposition movement success during the Arab Spring are divisions between

military or state police elites and regime leaders. However, divisions among key ruling family members can also be said to impact opposition movement strength and short-events leading to regime breakdown and resilience.

- *Lack of (regime) legitimacy*: Finally, lack of regime legitimacy refers to a lack of "moral authority" of a regime over its population (Weber 1958). In particular, regime legitimacy rests on both economic and political (or constitutional), arrangements. As such, a lack of regime legitimacy means people are not willing to follow or obey the government, making these economic and political arrangements vulnerable to overturn (even despite the backing of state force). A lack of regime legitimacy thus provides the opposition with further opportunities to influence regime breakdown (Oberschall 1996, 95).

In addition, four short-term, "volatile" aspects of governance in the domestic arena are operationalized as being influenced by and interacting with the strength of opposition movements and thus vitally contributing to outcomes of regimes breakdown or resilience. Specifically, failed reforms, erosion of authority, and reform among allies are asserted to be critical factors determined by the relative strengths of opposition movements in Tunisia and Jordan.

- *Failed reforms*: These events refer to specific regime responses to opposition protests and demands. The degree to which the proffered reforms fail or not depend on their ability to appease the opposition or lead to their dismissal and thus contribute to increasing or decreasing levels of protests. These reforms can be socio-economic and political in nature and also provide evidence of continued or eroded regime legitimacy.

- *Erosion of authority*: This variable refers to how the loss of regime control over major state bureaucracies and institutions can lead to further political opportunities for the opposition movement. Key examples of erosion of authority in Tunisia and Jordan (in addition to other countries experiencing unrest during the Arab Spring) include the disobeying of orders by army or state police force groups or elites.

- *Reform among allies*: This variable refers to specific political reforms involving groups or individuals working for the state that are allied to the opposition movement. Examples of reforms can be elections, cabinet shuffles, etc., initiated by a regime "ally." Again, these reforms have the potential to appease or further provoke the opposition movement.

- *Opposition success among allies*: This variable operationalizes the impact of "diffusion processes," or the triggering of unrest caused by the cross-border movement of information, tools, etc. related to opposition success in a neighboring country. This key short-term (international) event is theorized as having the potential to "set the terms of new debate and contention, create expectations of reform and provide models that were unthinkable earlier" for the opposition movement, thus contributing to regime vulnerability (Oberschall 1996, 95).

In sum, maintaining the previously mentioned theoretical and operational assumptions, this essay examines how the interplay of four specific institutional political opportunity factors and their relationship with key short-term events influenced both the processes and role of the masses in contributing to regime breakdown in Tunisia and

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Jordan from the beginning of the Arab Spring in late 2010 to the present. Put differently, this essay examines how different political opportunity contexts contributed to different outcomes in Tunisia and Jordan.

Case Study: Tunisia and Jordan

In choosing to compare Tunisia and Jordan, two cases with widely varying outcomes during the course of the Arab Spring, a large puzzle presents itself. Both countries had comparable demographics, socio-economic and political conditions, and regime capacities on the eve of the Arab Spring, yet one country (Tunisia) experienced mass protest mobilization leading to regime breakdown while another (Jordan) experienced moderate levels of protests and regime resilience. An application of the political opportunities approach to these cases will explain why different levels of protests emerged and regime vulnerability differed so starkly, despite similar initial starting conditions. This section will outline similarities among these two countries and present findings based on an application of the political opportunity structure approach.

What did both countries look like on the eve of the Arab Spring? By late 2010 Tunisia and Jordan, like many states in the region, were dealing with: 1) high unemployment 2) limited opportunities for economic advancement, especially for an educated youth population 3) sharp and rising disparities between rich and poor 4) a period of sustained economic stagnation for large parts of the population (Lynch 2012; Tobin 2012). Similarly, each country had a history of political contention with the government and by late 2010 large populations in both countries had become sharply aware of government corruption (Lynch 2012, 73). Unlike some states in the region,

however, both countries boasted more civil society and professional groups, high levels of education, and large middle class (Lynch 2012; Tobin 2012).

In addition, both countries had comparable mobilizing structures, or structures that lend themselves to protest movements. It is significant, for example, that despite having an absence of clear individual leaders among opposition movements prior to the start of Arab Spring, both countries had one major hierarchical organization involved in mobilizing, organizing and sustaining protests: the left trade union "Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens" (UGTT) in Tunisia and the main opposition party in Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood and its political wing the Islamic Action Front (IAF). In addition, prior to the Arab Spring protest movements in both countries involved civil society groups including human rights organizations, professional associations, and feminist organizations (Moghadam 2013; Fernández and Ortega 2012).

Similarly, on the eve of the Arab Spring protestors in both countries had access to the tools of the media[10] that facilitated protests and helped differentiate groups of protestors from the previously mentioned hierarchical organizations of labor, political parties, and civil society organizations. it can be argued that "connective structures" as well as "organization of collective action at the point of contact with opponents" for protest movements in Jordan and Tunisia may owe as much to the tools of the media and the behavior of less formally organized youth activists as with the previously mentioned hierarchical organizations of labor, political parties, and civil society organizations.

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[10] An example of how these media tools emboldened individuals to join protest movements (and why regimes often react so harshly to their use) is given by scholar Arne Klau, who argues that the use of Facebook and Twitter during the Arab Spring allowed protestors to express their dissatisfaction to each other at a very low cost—for example without running the risk of attending public meetings—and so giving them a sense of their own large numbers even before the first demonstrations began (Klau 2011, 17).

These media tools and their application by young activists appear to fit the definition of "connective structures" quite well, linking "leaders and followers, center and periphery and different parts of a movement sector, permitting coordination and aggregation between movement organizations and allowing movements to persist even when formal organization in lacking" (Tarrow 1998, 124). In addition, the spontaneous nature of the protests speaks to likely speaks to the dynamics and willingness of previously non-active protestors joining the movement, in turn owing to both hierarchical organization, non-hierarchical organization, and the connective structures of the media.

In sum, despite having broadly similar demographic, socio-economic and political environments, in addition to comparably strong mobilizing structures, mass mobilization emerged in Tunisia, critically contributing to regime breakdown while a relatively weaker opposition movement emerged in Jordan, putting only mild pressure on the Jordanian regime and leading to regime resilience. What accounts for these major differences in outcomes? In short, why wasn't the Jordanian case similar to Tunisia, or vice versa? The central argument of this essay is that the crucial differences between the two cases can be attributed to starkly different political opportunity structures, specifically the presence or absence of four contextual factors and their influence on mass mobilization processes and key-short term events: broad-based coalitions, elite divisions, regime legitimacy, and the

Tunisia: Narrative of the Arab Spring

Aside from Egypt, Tunisia might be the most widely studied case among scholars and journalists examining democratization processes during the Arab Spring. All of the Arab Spring protests were inspired by the protests launched in Tunisia in late 2010 following the self-immolation of a young street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi, who

had recently been publicly humiliated by a government official ("Country Profile

Tunisia" 2012). Most scholars of the Arab Spring agree that the frustration of Bouazizi's

inability to maintain a livelihood in the face of official obduracy seemed to "reflect the

loss of dignity of an entire people" (Moghadam 2013; Lynch 2012).

In any case, after this event protests broke out in the country that "dwarfed"

previous protests, including similar outbursts of unrests that had occurred only two years

earlier in 2008 (Lynch 2012, 73). Protests quickly spread from the Midwestern regions

of Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine to neighboring governorates as well as governorates in the

northwest, center, and south of the country. After just a few weeks, millions of people

nationwide mobilized in protest, leading to the refusal of the military not to use excessive

force against the protestors and subsequently moving to push longtime dictator Zine el-

Abidin Ben Ali out of power, culminating in his to flee the country in exile on January

14, 2011 (79-80).

Political Opportunity Structure: Tunisia

Overall, both Tunisia's international and domestic political opportunity structure

on the eve of the Arab Spring show a favorable environment for the emergence of mass

mobilization and opposition movement strength, processes that influenced key short-term

events that led to the fall of Ben Ali's regime. The major international and political

factors constituting Tunisia's political opportunity structure can be seen in Figure 2. As

we can see, of four critical factors examined (bolded in Figure 2), were favorable to the

opposition movement. Again, this political opportunity structure tells us that the four

critical institutional factors influenced the opposition movement favorably, in turn

leading to short-term event outcomes that were critical to regime breakdown in Tunisia.[11]

Figure 2: Political Opportunity Structure[12], Tunisia

Arena	Institutional structure	Key short-term events
Domestic	**broad-based coalitions (+)**	failed reforms (economic reforms rejected by opposition)
	divided elites (+)	erosion of authority (military disobedience)
	lack of legitimacy (+)	reform among allies (no political allies among regime for opposition)
International	**regime alliance system (+)**	opposition success among allies (n/a, first country to protest)

(*) sign shows direction of opportunity for challengers from 2010-2013

International Political Opportunity Structure: Regime Alliance System

Overall, the international environment was favorable to mass protest movement in

Tunisia and the subsequent breakdown of the regime of Ben Ali. Specifically, the

structure of Tunisia's regime alliance system showed that the stability of Ben Ali's

regime and "ruling alignments" was not *critically* dependent on being nested in a

structure of political alliances with key western states or regional actors, notably Saudi

Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (Alimi and Meyer 2011). In contrast to several

other MENA cases during the Arab Spring (including Jordan), where external powers

were able to provide resources to the regime to help undercut opposition movement

growth and processes, external powers allied to the Tunisian regime either acted largely

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[11] With the exception of "opposition success among allies," which is non-applicable due to Tunisia being the first country to experience unrest during the Arab Spring, with regime breakdown occurring before nearly all the other follow-up protests began (Lynch 2012, 121).

[12] This figure is based on a framework provided by Oberschall in his chapter "Opportunities and Framing in the 1989 Revolts" from the book *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (1996) edited by McAdam, et. al.

aloof during the demonstrations (Western allies) or were simply not available to provide the regime with resources to appease the protestors or increase the regime's coercive capacity (Saudi Arabia).

Further, given that the regime was unable to attain substantial (material) resources from an outside source to appease the opposition, in addition to having little resources of its own to offer, we can say that the regime alliance system directly contributed to the downfall of the regime by leading to failed (economic) reforms. In sum, the presence of a favorable regime alliance system[13], in combination with an international context of neutral short-term events, contributed to a positive environment for the opposition movement to gain strength and ultimately contribute to regime breakdown in Tunisia.

Domestic Political Opportunity Structure

Turning now to the domestic political opportunity structure for Tunisia's protest movement, it is significant that all three major institutional factors were advantageous to the opposition movement, including broad based coalitions, divided elites and evidence of a lack of regime legitimacy. In turn, the "opportunities" these factors provided the opposition movement critically shaped key short-term events that clearly contributed to regime breakdown—failed reforms, the erosion of regime authority and (failure of) reform among allies. This section will briefly summarize each of these factors, showing how individually and together they provided a positive environment for mass mobilization and led to the breakdown of the regime of Ben Ali.

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[13] One interesting counterfactual to consider is how and whether the regime alliance system would have stayed favorable to the opposition movement over a longer period of time, especially given that a) many authoritarian regimes in the region had incentives to keep the regime of Ben Ali in power and b) the regime of Ben Ali was allied with the most powerful of these regimes. This question thus points to the need for further research on the importance of sequence, timing, and the diffusion of protests across state borders in particular alliance systems, a notably important factor in the success of the 1989 revolutions (Oberschall 1996, 95-96).

Broad-based Coalitions

It is notable that by the eve of the Arab Spring the regime of Ben Ali had no significant "broad class coalitions," or significant alliances between the regime and key socio-political groups based on ethnicity, religion, class, etc., that would have prevented more people from joining the opposition in Tunisia. In addition to the protest movement in Tunisia benefitting from having a relatively homogeneous society of "recruits" to draw from, it also gained immensely from a decades-long erosion of regime-society coalitions housed within the dominant ruling party, likely due to regime cronyism, economic neglect, and scarce resources (Yom and Gause III, 2012, 82-83). Thus by the time protests began in late 2010, the absence of significant broad-based coalitions prevented the regime of Ben Ali from dividing the opposition movement by a) painting the protestors as a "minority" faction or b) offering patronage to salient socio-political groups to bolster their support for the regime. As such, having little to no resources to offer and no salient groups to offer them to, the regime of Ben Ali was left with using tactics of "expediency and coercion"(Tilly 2006, 19-20; Oberschall 1996, 95).

Moreover, the absence of broad-based coalitions in Tunisia meant that any reforms offered by the regime to specific groups would be either accepted or rejected by the entire opposition movement, which is exactly what happened. Accordingly, several scholars and observers of the Arab Spring in Tunisia assert that after the initial protests began to spread, the regime responded as it had in the past, with "standard moves of repression and co-optation" which ultimately failed to contain the protests (Lynch 2012, 77; Noueihed and Warren 2012; Chomiak 2011).

Divided Elites

Similarly, the presence of divided elites was highly significant for opposition movement success in Tunisia, especially during the final days of protest in the capital of Tunis (Bellin 2012; Lynch 2012; Cook 2011). In particular, as the protest movement descended on the capital of Tunis days before Ben Ali fled the country, military general Rachid Ammar reportedly infuriated the dictator by "informing him that his professional military would not shoot at Tunisian citizens" (Lynch 2012, 79). Further, scholars have also noted that in the final days of protest, members of the military moved to push Ben Ali out of power, showing evidence of both divided elites and the erosion of Ben Ali's authority (Cook 2011).

Regime Legitimacy

Finally, a lack of regime legitimacy among the Tunisian masses proved to be a critical factor that contributed to allowing the opposition movement to grow, in addition to influencing the failure of reforms offered by the regime and lack of reform among regime allies. In fact, among the scholarly literature on the Arab Spring to date, there appears to be wide scholarly consensus on the ousting of "an unpopular and illegitimate ruler" (Chomiak 2011, 68). Thus, Middle East scholar Laryssa Chomiak stresses that while the "political cult" of Ben Ali overshadowed oppositional politics in both practice and public representation, in the run-up to the Arab Spring Tunisian society fostered a political culture of dissent rather than obedience that thrived outside formal political institutions:

> Widespread practices, such as dodging mandatory elections, secretly mocking the president and his notoriously corrupt family, cultivating alternative political identities in soccer stadiums, and subversively critiquing the regime in semi-independent and oppositional print publications, signaled the

existence of a political culture of dissent, rather than
obedience and quiescence (Chomiak 2011, 71).

Furthermore while the legitimacy of Ben Ali's regime can be said to have rested

largely on the pillars of Ben Ali's political cult as well as economic legitimacy, as the

protests grew it became evident that both of these legitimacy factors became bankrupt

before the protests even began (Lynch 2012; Noueihed and Warren 2012; Owen 2012;

Chomiak 2011). In particular, the loss of regime legitimacy became more and more

evident, as the discourse and frame of Ben Ali proved empty among the protestors, and

the opposition's discourse and frame came to prevail. As a result, the opposition's

discourse evolved quickly from specific demands for jobs, freedom, and an end

corruption and police brutality into an all-out attack on the regime itself (Noueihed and

Warren 2012, 75).

In addition, Ben Ali's regime legitimacy crisis can in part be attributed to a lack

of allies between the opposition and the state. As the opposition movement gained

momentum, the regime was thus prevented from offering any meaningful political reform

among allies, given that on the eve of the protests there appeared to be no opposition

allies to begin with. The lack of opposition parties involved in the Arab Spring protests,

coupled with the alienation of many in Tunisian society from the ruling political party

further reflected the lack of alliances between society and the regime. In fact, prior to the

Arab Spring protests the ruling party in the country, the Constitutional Democratic Rally

(RCD), appeared to many in society to act more like a "security apparatus than a party"

(Perkins 2004, 198).

In sum, an examination of the political opportunity structure in Tunisia shows a

number of domestic and external factors that were favorable to the opposition movement

and its success in contributing to regime breakdown. Specifically, Tunisia's unfavorable

regime alliance system, lack of broad based coalitions, presence of divided elites, and

lack of legitimacy worked together to provide an advantageous political environment for

the opposition movement, critically shaping key short-term events that led to regime

breakdown.

Jordan: Narrative of the Arab Spring

After Tunisia, the Jordanian protest movement began earlier than almost all other

protest movements in the region though only a few hundred people took part in the first

demonstrations in the capital of Amman when they began in January 2011 (Lynch 2012).

However, youth-led, grassroots movements, and support from the political wing of the

Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Action Front (historically the dominant voice of the

political opposition in Jordan) quickly swelled the protests to around 10,000 people

(Barnes-Dacey 2012; Yom and Gause III, 2012; Tobin 2012). Responding to calls for

political reform in addition to complaints of rising food and fuel prices, inflation and

unemployment, since the start of the Arab spring protests King Abdullah II of Jordan has

sacked and reappointed new prime ministers, called elections, met with the Muslim

Brotherhood, and put $500 million into salary increases for government employees and

subsidies for food staples and fuel (Tobin 2012, 101). Protests have continued to the time

of this writing after several "cabinet shuffles" by King Abdullah, the largest and most

threatening of which occurring on March 24th and 25th, 2011, known as the "Dakhiliya"

protests (named after the interior ministry nearby) (102). In these protests Jordan saw its

first outbreak of violence between protestors and the regime loyalists and police, leading

to one death and more than a hundred injured (Hamid and Freer 2011, 1).

By October 2012 King Abdullah began calling for early parliamentary elections to be held in January 2013, in addition to appointing a new prime minister, Abdullah Ensour, a former minister and vocal advocate of democratic reform. Protests continued through 2012 to the present and recent parliamentary elections in January were boycotted by the Islamic Action Front (IAF). Pro-government candidates were victorious in the January elections, and the previous prime minister, Abdullah Ensour resigned to make way for a new prime minister to be elected by members of parliament ("Jordan Profile" 2013).

Unlike Tunisia, the political opposition in Jordan to date has not collectively challenged the right of the Hashemite regime to rule but rather has only demanded specific policy reforms (Ryan 2013; Ryan 2011). In addition, many scholars have noted that while the protest movement in Jordan was "significant," it failed to reach the "mass mobilization" numbers of movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, (Goldberg 2013; Yom and Gause III, 2012).

Political Opportunity Structure: Jordan

In contrast to Tunisia, the political opportunity structure for Jordan since the beginning of the Arab Spring protests and continuing to the present shows a mixed political environment for the opposition movement. Specifically, of the four significant institutional factors examined in this case study, three have been decidedly unfavorable for the opposition (broad based coalitions, divided elites, and regime alliance system) and one has shown a mixture of advantages and disadvantages (lack of regime[14] legitimacy).

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[14] In examining the extent to which the political opportunity structure in Jordan influenced the opposition movement, it is first important to clarify the term "regime." Unlike Tunisia, the regime in Jordan is based on the power of a "hereditary sovereign" that, similar to the late regime of Ben Ali, exercised (and

As such, relative to Tunisia these critical variables and their interplay have not created a

significant political opportunities for the Jordanian opposition movement, failing to

significantly influence critical short-term events in favor of regime breakdown to date.[15]

A summary of Jordan's political opportunity structure can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Political Opportunity Structure, Jordan

Arena	Institutional structure	Key short-term events
Domestic	**broad based coalitions (-)**	successful economic reforms; some political reform
	divided elites (-)	no erosion of authority (no signs of state disobedience to date)
	lack of legitimacy (+/-)	reform among allies (new prime minister friendly to some opposition groups)
International	**regime alliance system (-)**	opposition success among allies (Tunisia yes, Syria no, Egypt yes and no)

(*) sign shows direction of opportunity for challengers from 2010-2013

International Political Opportunity Structure: Regime Alliance System

In the international arena, the regime alliance system for Jordan proved highly

unfavorable to the opposition movement. Whereas in Tunisia external allies acted aloof

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continues to exercise) significant power in society, including the power to "name cabinets, dictate major domestic and foreign policies, control the state's coercive apparatus, and allow parliaments (where these exist) and judiciaries only limited authority" (Yom and Gause III 2012, 76). Thus, in referring to the Jordanian regime, this essay will be focusing on the institutional rule of a specific ruling family, as opposed to the Prime Minister, parliament, and other state institutions relatively lacking in political power and authority.

[15] Correspondingly, among the critical short-term events outlined in the Jordanian case, this essay finds "opposition success among allies" to be non-critical. While many scholars have argued that the protest movement in Jordan in fact gained strength by simply having external cases of opposition "success" (in particular Tunisia) as models to look to and find inspiration in, other negative models may have mitigated such effects. Specifically, the negative examples of Syria, Iraq and Egypt may have undercut the opposition movement and restrained further demonstrations due to the fear of escalating violence or replicating "bloody chaos" ("Jordan Limits Protests, and Internet, as Tensions Simmer" 2012; Tobin 2012, 106). Thus, this essay finds that while diffusion effects may have had minor advantages for the opposition movement in Jordan, they may also have had significant disadvantages, overall making the key short-term event "opposition success among allies" non-applicable in the Jordanian case.

or proved unwilling to provide resources to the regime to either appease or suppress the opposition, the Jordanian case shows a direct link between external allies and the use of resources by the regime to appease protestors. In particular, the presence, availability, and willingness of external allies, in particular Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council, allowed the Hashemite regime to react to initial demonstrations by "expanding public employment and costly public subsidies" made possible by the promise of oil-fueled GCC assistance (Yom and Gause III 2012, 84).

Correspondingly, Jordan scholar Sarah Tobin has identified the Jordanian government's responses to Arab Spring protests, made possible by external support, as an effective regime strategy of quelling further protests by providing material and economic incentives "designed to distract middle-class Jordanians and aspiring cosmopolitans from issues that substantively threaten to undermine the stability of the country" (Tobin 2012, 104). In short, the Jordanian case shows how the regime alliance system allowed the Hashemite regime to appease opposition groups and potential recruits with substantial (economic) reform early on, thus neutralizing the dangers of "failed reforms" or rejection of reforms by the opposition, a key short-term event that was critical to regime breakdown in Tunisia.

Domestic Political Opportunity Structure

Turning now to the domestic political opportunity structure for Jordan's protest movement, it is significant that two major institutional factors were decidedly disadvantageous to the opposition movement (broad based coalitions, divided elites), with the third major domestic institutional factor (regime legitimacy) providing the opposition movement with both adverse and positive effects. In turn, the lack of political

opportunities these factors provided to the opposition movement in Jordan led to short-term events that allowed the Jordanian regime to stay in power. Specifically, failed reforms, the erosion of regime authority, and the failure of reform among allies neglected to materialize due to an unpropitious protest environment. This section will briefly summarize how each of the major institutional factors shaping the Jordanian protest environment led to starkly different outcomes relevant to Tunisia.

Broad-based Coalitions

Among domestic institutional structures, the presence of broad-based coalitions has proved to be an enduring negative factor for the opposition movement in Jordan. Simply put, "historical alliances" linking key socio-political groups to the Hashemite regime has for years preventing the emergence of larger opposition movements, with the Arab Spring protests being no exception. Moreover unlike in Tunisia, broad-based coalitions in Jordan continue to exist due to the continuing flow of patronage including public sector jobs and economic subsidies maintained by resources provided by external allies, including the GCC and the U.S. (Yom and Gause III 2012).

In particular, the regime maintains a coalition with East Bank minorities who are broadly "pro-monarchy" and have been traditionally economically favored by the state, in addition to Palestinian business and tribal communities (Noueihed and Warren 2012; Yom and Gause 2012; Yom 2011). As the Arab Spring protests began in early 2011, the regime reacted by providing material incentives to many "middle class" Jordanians while simultaneously portraying all of the opposition as "Palestinian" as a way of undercutting the strength of the opposition movement (Lynch 2012, 122; Yom 2011).

In sum, in contrast to the Tunisian case, the Jordanian regime was able to provide credible economic reforms to key socio-political groups based on salient (and relatively non-eroded) bonds, neutralizing the effects of "failed reforms" and allowing the regime to succeed in co-opting groups that would have otherwise joined the opposition.

Divided Elites

Examining the structure of Jordan's elites and the extent of their "unity," to date the relationship between the military, police and Hashemite regime shows no significant divisions, with some scholars even claiming that were protests to escalate the military would no doubt side with the regime (Brand 2011). However, as the protest movement has not reached a "critical mass" to date, it is difficult to tell the degree to which there is unification between regime, army, and security force elites (Lynch 2012, 122). In any case, the absence of any apparent elite divisions means that, in contrast to Tunisia, there has been no significant occurrence of an "erosion of authority" contributing to regime breakdown, proving highly disadvantageous to the Jordanian opposition movement to date.

Finally, the last critical institutional structure to be examined, a lack of (regime) legitimacy, happens to remain an open question and a matter of debate among scholars of the Arab Spring (Lynch 2012; Yom 2012). Moreover for the purposes of this essay, it is not important to provide a definitive answer to this debate, but rather to show the effects of this structure on opposition movement processes and regime breakdown *relative to Tunisia*. Thus overall this essay finds both positive and negative effects for the opposition movement when examining the role of regime legitimacy in the Jordanian

case, demonstrating that relative to Tunisia the role of regime legitimacy has not provided nearly as many political opportunities for the opposition movement.[16]

It is significant that since protests began in Jordan in early 2011, the opposition movement in Jordan has been unprecedented in its scale and strength, revealing evidence of a general increase in lack of "regime legitimacy" and giving specific advantages to the opposition movement. In particular, the opposition movement in Jordan to date has involved extensive levels of youth activism, the "revitalization" of old political movements, from leftist parties to the more organized Muslim Brotherhood and its party (the Islamic Action Front or IAF), as well as a rise in public sphere discussions on virtually all (political) topics (Tobin 2012; Ryan 2011). In short, the fact that the protest movement has stretched Jordan's "generational, ethnic, and gender divides" shows evidence of a lack of regime legitimacy relative to Jordan's past (Ryan 2011).

However it also appears that the monarchic system retains some political legitimacy among all the key socio-political groups in society, even among some of the opposition movement (Abu-Rish 2012; Brand 2011). It is relevant, for example, that to date very few from the opposition movement have actually called for an end to the Hashemite regime; most of the opposition demands have been framed as dissatisfaction with the current government (the parliamentary institution led by a prime minister) and its specific policies[17] (Abu-Rish 2012; "POMEPS Conversations 4 with Curtis Ryan"

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[16] It should be noted that the absence of a stronger or more successful protest movement in Jordan does not necessarily mean the regime enjoyed (and continues to enjoy) greater political legitimacy (Lynch 2013; Yom and Gause III 2012). In addition, scholars and observers of the Arab Spring should note the difficulty of reconciling the notion of regime (or monarchical) legitimacy with "a tightly controlled media, carefully cultivated personality cults, and brutally policed red lines" (Lynch 2012, 5).

[17] However it is significant that more and more Jordanians have been increasingly directing their anger towards the individual figure of King Abdullah, showing evidence of an evolving "cultural frame" and possible increasing lack of legitimacy for the Jordanian regime ("As Elections Near, Protestors Increasingly Turn Anger towards the King" 2013; Abu-Rish 2012).

2012).   In fact the opposition frames of the Arab Spring is said to have been no different from protests of the past two decades, directed away from the monarchy (Brand 2011).

Furthermore, regime legitimacy in Jordan, in addition to showing mixed effects on the Jordanian opposition, has impacted key short-term events in both straightforward and non-straightforward ways. We have seen how the regime has maintained certain levels of "economic legitimacy" by offering many in Jordan's middle class economic incentives to keep the status quo. In addition, the regime has responded to protests by holding elections in addition to sacking and reappointing government representatives (Tobin 2012, 104). While the degree to which the opposition in Jordan has perceived these moves as "reform among allies" or "failed reforms" is difficult to say (given continued but not necessarily increasing unrest responding to each political reform to date), we *can say* that, relevant to Tunisia, the status of regime legitimacy has influenced specific short term events critical to regime stability in mixed ways. Thus, the degree to which the Jordanian regime continues to be stable remains an open question (Lynch 2013).

In sum, an examination of the political opportunity structure in Jordan shows a number of domestic and external factors that were unfavorable or mixed to the opposition movement and its success in contributing to regime breakdown. Specifically, Jordan's favorable regime alliance system, presence of broad based coalitions, and divided elites, and retention of some legitimacy worked together to provide an disadvantageous political environment for the opposition movement, critically mitigating its impact on key short-term events and allowing the Jordanian regime, for the moment, to stay resilient.

Discussion

In comparing the cases of Tunisia and Jordan on the eve of the Arab Spring, it is clear that, despite both countries having broadly similar demographic, socio-economic and political conditions, in addition to comparably strong mobilizing structures, one country experienced mass mobilization leading to regime breakdown (Tunisia) while the other experienced moderate protests leading to regime resilience (Jordan). To account for these diverging outcomes, this essay demonstrates the importance of political opportunity contexts, or the interplay of institutional political factors, in determining the strength, processes, and role of opposition movements in contributing to regime breakdown or regime resilience.

In particular, these case studies demonstrate the importance of four specific contextual factors that interacted to create a more positive protest environment in Tunisia and less positive protest environment in Jordan. These factors include the presence and strength of broad-based coalitions, elite divisions, regime legitimacy and regime alliance systems. By creating a specific *political environment* for mass mobilization processes, the interplay of these international and domestic institutional factors critically shaped three key short-term events that contributed to regime breakdown in Tunisia and regime resilience in Jordan: the presence of failed reforms, the erosion of regime authority, and the failure of reform among opposition allies. This section will summarize how the widely differing outcomes in Tunisia and Jordan during the Arab Spring depended on these specific institutional factors and their influence on opposition movement processes.

First, it is critical to understand the role of regime alliance systems and the wider international context that influences mass mobilization processes and can affect regime stability. As we saw in the cases of Tunisia and Jordan, very different regime alliance

systems had a large effect on opposition mobilization processes and regime vulnerability. In particular, the unavailability of key regime allies in Tunisia (notably Saudi Arabia and western allies) prevented the regime from accessing resources early on to appease or coerce the opposition movement. By contrast, early on during the protests the Jordanian regime was able to offer material and economic incentives to key groups of the middle class who might have otherwise protested, made possible in large part by the regime's ties to wealthy external allies (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council).

Similarly, the role of broad-based coalitions, or links between the regime and key groups in society that might otherwise join the opposition, significantly influenced the strength of opposition movements in Tunisia and Jordan, indispensably contributing to different outcomes among the two countries. In Tunisia, the near absence (or erosion) of salient broad-based coalitions allowed the opposition movement to grow and spread to nearly all levels of society, thus achieving a "critical mass" of protestors and decisively pressuring the regime to fall. However in Jordan, the presence of broad-based coalitions especially between the regime and East Bank minorities, Palestinian business, and tribal groups, has continued to prevent a stronger opposition movement from emerging to effect significant political change, thus allowing the Jordanian regime to stay resilient.

Third, these case studies demonstrate the importance of elite unity to opposition movement success or failure. In both cases, this variable was crucially manifested with regard to the military and the relationship between military elites and regime leaders. In Tunisia, elite division became evident during the final days of protest in Tunis when a military general famously refused to order his troops to shoot at protestors and members of the military moved to push the dictator Ben Ali out of power. By contrast, we have

not seen evidence of elite division in the Jordanian case to date, either between regime leaders and the military, police forces, or ruling family members. However the relative strength of this factor is difficult to gauge given the absence of stronger opposition challenges to the Jordanian regime to date.

Finally, the presence of regime legitimacy cannot be understated as a key institutional factor shaping opposition movements, affecting short-term events, and contributing to different outcomes in terms of regime stability in Tunisia and Jordan. In Tunisia, by the eve of the Arab Spring protests in late 2010 we saw evidence of how the economic and political (constitutional) arrangements of the regime with the masses lacked significant "moral authority." As the protests escalated in early 2011, further evidence of a lack of regime legitimacy was demonstrated by both the rejection of the regime's offers of economic reform and a strongly unified frame among protestors, calling for the regime to "Degage!" or "Get Out!" (Noueihed and Warren 2012, 75).

In Jordan, by contrast, it appears the regime continues to attain some degree of political and economic legitimacy, though the degree to which remains a matter of debate. In any case, given that the opposition movement has to date *not* called for the dissolution of the monarchical regime (only for certain political reforms), certain political reforms (elections, cabinet shuffles) have taken place and and key socio-political groups have accepted the regime's generous offers of economic and material incentives, we can say that the retention of *some* degree of political and economic legitimacy continues to prevent a stronger opposition movement with stronger demands for political reform aimed squarely at the Jordanian regime.

In sum, the interaction of four key institutional variables (regime alliance system, broad-based coalitions, elite divisions, regime legitimacy) and their influence on mass mobilization emergence, strength, and processes can be said to largely explain diverging outcomes in Tunisia and Jordan. Combined, these institutional variables and their effect on opposition movements shaped key short-term events (failed reforms, erosion of authority, and reform among allies) that led to regime breakdown in Tunisia and regime resilience in Jordan. Moreover an application of the political opportunities approach to these cases demonstrates the importance of a) internal *and* external factors b) top-down *and* bottom-up factors and d) the role of the masses in driving diverging outcomes vis-à-vis regime breakdown. In addition, these case studies demonstrate the limits to protest diffusion and the relative unimportance of "regime type" (monarchy vs. autocracy, etc.) in driving outcomes.

Policy Implications/Recommendations

What are the main policy implications of this study? This section will outline general and specific policy implications based on the findings from these case studies. Accordingly this section will outline policy lessons based on the application of a political opportunities framework, aimed at understanding how changes in the international and domestic political context affect the strength of opposition movements and influence whether authoritarian regimes are likely to breakdown. In particular, these policy implications are aimed largely at influencing the policies of a range of *external* public and private organizations and institutions seeking to promote democratization. Types of institutions this essay offers recommendations would include bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the

U.S. Department of State, the World Bank, institutions of the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN), and finally various development and pro-democracy non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

In terms of general policy implications, perhaps the overarching lesson we can draw from these case studies is the importance of context, in particular institutional context. It was rather surprising in fact to realize the extent to which mass mobilization levels and influence on regime vulnerability are determined by the configuration of domestic and international (state) institutional factors. Examining Tunisia and Jordan prior to and during Arab Spring protests, for example, shows how different political opportunity contexts influenced mass mobilization where comparable socio-economic and political conditions, in addition to comparable regime capacities and mobilizing structures did not. Policy implications that flow from this general finding thus include, among other things, the significant limitations of

- Democracy promotion efforts based solely on blanket efforts to modernize MENA economies

- Democracy promotion efforts emphasizing only large-scale mobilizing structures, including political parties and labor unions

- Democracy promotion efforts based mainly on the endorsement of multi-party elections

External institutions, including USAID, the World Bank, EU institutions, etc., have hitherto emphasized each of these major democracy promotion policy initiatives in the MENA region, while ignoring specific contextual factors that are crucial in determining the strength of opposition movements and the vulnerability of regimes. As

shown in these case studies, the contextual factors that matter most for directly influencing mass mobilization, regime breakdown, and democratization include: the regime alliance system, the presence of broad-based coalitions, the unity of elites, and the presence of regime legitimacy. Accordingly, specific policy implications for democracy promotion organizations based on these critical contextual factors will be highlighted below.

First, it is critical to understand the role of regime alliance systems and the wider international context that influences mass mobilization processes and can affect regime stability. As we saw in the cases of Tunisia and Jordan, very different regime alliance systems had a large effect on opposition mobilization strength and regime vulnerability. In terms of policy implications, one lesson learned is that if the goal of external actors is to aid opposition groups in their attempt to affect policies or achieve regime breakdown, it is crucial that key international allies have coordinated foreign policy aims. Likewise, external democracy promotion groups might do well to create schisms between key allies that are preventing further mobilization efforts. Accordingly, more of an emphasis should be put on diplomatic training of political elites with the explicit intention of coordinating more opposition-friendly political opportunity environments among key regime allies.

Similarly, the salience of broad-based coalitions in influencing the domestic context for opposition movements in Tunisia and Jordan provides some policy lessons worth noting. In particular, democracy promotion organizations should identify a) the primary coalitions preventing further opposition mobilization and b) the means by which these coalitions are sustained. Once these facts are established, democracy promotion

organizations can then set to work directing aid and resources towards growing and further unifying the opposition movements.

Third, the importance of elite unity, specifically the unity of the military and the nature of civil/military relations provides policy lessons for democracy promotion organizations. As we saw in the Tunisian case, the independence and professionalization of the military was critical to the endgame involving a stand-off between the regime of Ben Ali and the protestors. In addition, the Tunisian case shows As such, democracy promotion efforts can support efforts to a) encourage the "de-politicization" of the military and b) foster dialogue and relationships between the military and civilians. Correspondingly, if more lines of dialogue open between the military and civilian groups in Jordan, the probability of a violent crackdown might lessen and opposition groups would likely have a better idea of what to expect if mass mobilization were able to put more pressure on the regime to fall, shaping the domestic environment further in favor of the opposition.

Finally, the relevance of regime legitimacy cannot be understated as a factor encouraging or discouraging opposition movements, affecting short-term events, and contributing to regime breakdown. However, it might also be the most difficult factor to draw policy lessons from, given its difficulty to measure. Nevertheless, based on the case study of Tunisia, it became apparent early on during the protests that the regime of Ben Ali had very little legitimacy among the masses, be it economic, political, cultural, or otherwise. By contrast, the question of regime legitimacy in Jordan continues to be an open question, and might continue to be as long as the regime stays in power. Perhaps the policy lessons on this front fall to the academic realm, where pro-democracy

researchers can provide more bottom-up studies of regime legitimacy, particular among key socio-political groups in Jordan and elsewhere.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative case study of Tunisia and Jordan using the political opportunity approach demonstrates how, despite having broadly similar demographic, socio-economic and political environments, in addition to comparably strong mobilizing structures, mass mobilization emerged in Tunisia and critically contributed to regime breakdown, while a relatively weaker opposition movement emerged in Jordan, putting only mild pressure on the Jordanian regime and leading to regime resilience. Specifically, these case studies demonstrate how four contextual (institutional) factors were critical to mass mobilization emergence and strength and thus vital for understanding the relative strength of authoritarian regimes in the MENA region. Put differently, these case studies illustrate how successful opposition movements leading to regime breakdown *can only occur* when certain state institutional factors are weakened enough to tilt the protest environment to favor the protesters. These state institutional factors include broad-based coalitions, elite unity, regime legitimacy and regime alliance systems.

Furthermore based on these case studies democracy scholars and practitioners should strive to examine the relative strength of these variables and how they interact with one another in order to better understand the processes of opposition movements and the likelihood of regime breakdown among authoritarian states. While one can argue that the overarching policy lesson from these case studies is a demonstration to democracy promotion organizations and practitioners the importance of context and the dangers of

applying a "one size fits all" approach to aiding democratization efforts, specific policy

lessons can also be drawn from these case studies. In particular, democracy promotion

organizations should examine how these previously mentioned factors operate in specific

countries and adapt democracy aid accordingly, thus indirectly and directly promoting

democratization by targeting groups and processes that make regime change more likely,

rather than providing undifferentiated or "blanket aid" for groups based solely on efforts

to "modernize" or bolster "multi-party competition."

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