

**Regime Elites and Transitions from
Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative
Analysis of the Tunisian and Egyptian
Uprisings**

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List of Abbreviations

BTI MI:	Bertelsmann Transformation Index Management Index
BTI SI:	Bertelsmann Transformation Index Status Index
CPI:	Corruption Perception Index
CSF:	Central Security Forces
EMP:	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
ENP:	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU:	European Union
FH:	Freedom House
FIS:	<i>Front Islamique de Salut</i> /Islamic Salvation Front
FLN:	<i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> /National Liberation Front
IFI:	International Financial Institution
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
INRIC:	<i>Instance Nationale pour la Réforme de l'Information et de la Communication</i> /The National Authority to Reform Communication and Information
MB:	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA:	Middle East and North Africa
MOI:	Ministry of Interior
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NDP:	National Democratic Party
RCD:	<i>Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique</i> /Democratic Constitutional Rally
SSIS:	State Security Investigations Service
UGTT:	<i>Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens</i> /General Union of Tunisian Workers
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
WFP:	World Food Programme
WGI:	World Governance Indicators

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Abstract

Regime Elites and Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Analysis of the Tunisian and Egyptian Uprisings

Ian Kelly

This thesis proposes an explanation for why elites in authoritarian regimes withdraw their support for incumbents when faced with mass popular uprisings. Building upon the substantial scholarship on MENA (Middle East and North Africa) elites, I argue that the elite cadres supporting the region's incumbents are drawn from three distinct elite constituencies: the military, the ruling party, and, the incumbent's extended personal network and the security services, each of which possess their own distinct interests and preferences regarding regime change. The argument is tested against two endogenous and exogenous variables, synthesised from the authoritarian resilience literature. Through the use of an analytic narrative this thesis finds that the withdrawal of elite support during the mass uprisings was the result of long-term processes in both regimes. First, the increasing personalisation of both regimes contributed to withdrawal of elite support from both countries' ruling parties and militaries. And second, the implementation of structural adjustment programmes accelerated this personalisation and inhibited the abilities of both countries' ruling parties to mobilise support for the regime during the uprisings. The thesis further finds that the degree of military involvement in the formal political sphere contributed to shaping the divergent outcomes experienced by both Tunisia and Egypt in the immediate aftermath of the ouster of Ben Ali and Mubarak.

Chapter 1 – Regime Change in the Middle East and North Africa: Moving Beyond Immediate Explanations

1.1 Introduction

The Arab uprisings rocked the authoritarian status quo in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The uprisings took the scholarly and policy-making community by surprise and both have attempted to grasp the myriad changes that have swept across the region since. An established scholarly consensus has emerged throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century that, not only had authoritarianism become entrenched in the MENA, but that it had found ways to endure and adapt (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004; Heydemann, 2007; Schlumberger, 2007). These developments even led some within the scholarly community to posit the idea that the MENA had entered a phase of ‘post-democratization’ (Valbjørn and Bank, 2010). The occurrence of the Arab uprisings has, however, undermined this consensus and revived debates about political change in the region (Howard and Walters, 2014).

The uprisings require cautious analysis. Albrecht (2012: 251) notes that the broader conceptual frameworks used to examine political developments in the MENA appear unable to grasp the magnitude of the events that have occurred since December 2010. Pace and Cavatorta (2012) argue that approaches to explaining political change in the region require a re-think. However, this does not diminish the fact that change occurred: some long entrenched autocrats fell from power while others clung on. Indeed, the provisional balance sheet of the uprisings indicates that substantial change has occurred. Mass uprisings saw autocrats ousted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. The Bahraini uprising was repressed swiftly and brutally, while a popular uprising in Syria has metastasised into violent civil conflict. This raises an interesting question: why did some regimes succumb to popular uprisings while others did not? Given that many of the region's autocracies suffered the same problems, this divergence is quite interesting.

There are two main approaches to the study of regime change: the functionalist school (structure-led change), and the genetic school (actor-led change) (Rustow, 1970). According to functionalist analysis, we should consider a country’s socioeconomic development in order to understand the regime change process. This entails an in-depth analysis of socioeconomic factors that ‘produce’ actions and strategies, resulting in a change to a country’s political structure. The genetic school instead focuses on how political actors within an authoritarian regime respond to a crisis and move to change

the political system through interacting with each other. These actions produce outcomes that affect the regime change (Pridham, 1995: 449-450). In light of the Arab uprisings, both schools sought to explain regime change; the functionalist school analysed socioeconomic conditions in the region, while the genetic school considered popular mobilisation. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the shortcomings of such explanations and, therefore, justify the validity of an approach based on elites.

1.2 The Structural Dimension of Regime Change

The idea that countries attempting to transition away from authoritarianism have to rely on a pre-existing number of socioeconomic conditions, in order to start their transition, is quite widespread within the literature still. These prerequisites include a vibrant civil society, a certain level of economic development, a democratic political and civic culture, and a range of satisfactory socioeconomic indicators. Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) was the first to systematise the relationship between regime change and economic development, arguing that improving socioeconomic conditions created the necessary conditions for democratic transition, and used different indicators of economic development to test this relationship. This work positively linked wealth, industrialisation, urbanisation, and education with democracy. Lipset (1963: 31) used the notion that ‘democracy is related to the state of economic development’ to explore democratising trends to in the developing world. It posits, for example, that authoritarian regimes would democratise once domestic socioeconomic indicators reached a specific point in terms of increased wealth, education, urbanisation, and industrial development. In a study attempting to determine the regularity between democracy and wealth, Londegran and Poole (1996: 3) claim that ‘income has a small but statistically significant democratising effect’. Nonetheless, there are limitations to their study in terms of control variables and sampling, such that the results may not be as clear-cut.

This type of analysis, applied to the MENA, produces considerable insights into how economic and social changes may have affected the timing and pattern of the regime change process, but it carries little explanatory power, as political actions are dependent on actors and not wholly predetermined by structural constraints. Writing on the failed Algerian transition of the early 1990s, Abdelaziz Testas comes to the opposite conclusion of that drawn by Londegran and Poole. Indeed, Testas (2002) argues that the fall in income permitted the opening up of the political space. Luis Martinez (1998: 276-279) further writes that rising incomes permitted the ruling elite to strengthen their

authoritarian rule over the country. In his study of the civil war following the cancellation of elections in 1992, Martinez analyses how improvements in economic and financial conditions allowed the regime to, not only fight the war against insurgents, but also employ some of the redistributive policies that had characterised Algeria prior to the 1980s financial crisis, thereby garnering political support for its actions.

The functionalist school has framed much of the scholarly community's immediate reactions to the Arab uprisings, and many have argued, like Testas, that poor socioeconomic conditions permitted an opening up of the political space in the MENA (Chomiak and Entelis, 2011; Dahi, 2011; Springborg, 2011). Structural problems have long blighted the region, which manifested themselves through a combination of persistently high unemployment rates, rampant corruption, internal and regional social inequalities, and the further deterioration of economic conditions owing to the Global Financial Crisis (Mitchell, 2002; Noland and Pack, 2007; Achcar, 2013). Beginning in the 1970s, a number of states in the region began to liberalise their economies. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the region's states, with the exception of the oil-exporting monarchies, entered structural adjustment programmes under the auspices of the IMF and the World Bank (Brynen et al., 2012: 220). The region abandoned its commitment to state-led economic growth and replaced it with a neoliberal emphasis that championed liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation. These efforts did not deliver much in terms of economic development, however. When it comes to the initial decision to actively oppose the region's autocracies, there is a consensus that poor economic conditions and social hardships were at the core of various activist's motivations (Larémont, 2014: 24-46; Zurayk and Gough, 2014). Referring to an earlier period of mobilisation in the region in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Sadiki (2000: 80) puts it best when arguing 'economic malaise is at the root of both societal pressure and political changes'.

Structural grievances were commonplace across the MENA (Achcar, 2013: 17-52), and they became linked with, and fuelled, political demands. One of the slogans heard during the Tunisian uprising was: 'We can live on bread and water alone but not with the RCD (The *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique*— Ben Ali's ruling party)' (Larbi, 2011). While economic hardship affected individual decisions to join anti-regime protests (Rushdy, 2011), it does not sufficiently explain why sustained mass mobilisation saw regime change in some countries. Neither does an increasing awareness of the state's authoritarian and repressive nature explain it either. While

functionalist arguments are certainly persuasive, a comparative analysis of socioeconomic indicators suggests the need for a more refined approach. The data in Table 1.1 shows socioeconomic development indicators from the six countries in the MENA that experienced mass popular uprisings in the winter of 2010 and early 2011, and Iran, where mass anti-regime protests occurred in the aftermath of the 2009 presidential election. The common trait shared by these countries is that, despite the unique events that took place in each country, incumbent authoritarian regimes faced a systemic threat that either led to their ouster or the deployment of strong repressive countermeasures.

The data in Table 1.1 comes from a number of sources. The data on political rights and liberties are from the Freedom House Index (FH) (FH, 2011). The data on a country's Human Development Indicator's (HDI) Rank and Gross National Income (GNI) based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) are from the 2010 UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP, 2010). The data on unemployment figures comes from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) (WDI 2010). The available socioeconomic data from the region is somewhat suspect however, because of the opaque nature in which it is calculated (see King, 2009; Soliman, 2011; Murphy, 2013). However, this analysis will incorporate them because their availability allows us to make comparisons across a large number of cases.

Table 1.1 Countries with mass uprisings in the MENA. Socioeconomic development indicators 2010

	FH: Rights	FH: Liberties	HDI Rank	GNI/capita (PPP 2008\$)	Unemployment (% of total labour force) ¹
Bahrain	6	5	39	26,664	7.4
Libya	7	7	53	17,068	18.8
Iran	6	6	70	11,764	13.5
Tunisia	7	5	81	7,979	13
Egypt	6	5	101	5,889	9
Syria	7	6	111	4,760	8.4
Yemen	6	5	133	2,387	17.8
Average	6.43	5.6	84	10,930	12.6 (10.4) ²

The data in Table 1.1 reads in the following way. The Freedom House (FH) ratings measure from 1 to 7, with a lower number indicating a positive judgement regarding political rights and liberties. The HDI ranking measures from a low number to a high number, and, the higher the number, the higher the level of development.

¹ The World Bank World Development indicators, Unemployment, total (% of total labour force). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> [Accessed June 20 2015]

² This is the regional average for the entirety of the Middle East and North Africa.

Countries ranked between 1 and 42 have a very high level of human development; those between 43 and 85 have a high level of human development; those between 86 and 127 have a medium level of development; and those between 128 and 169 have a low level of human development. GNI based on PPP is the net output of industry per person after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs in 2008 US dollars. The percentage of those unemployed refers to those in the labour without work who are available for work and seeking employment.

Initially, the data seems to support the argument that socioeconomic conditions posed a systemic threat to those countries where uprisings occurred. It is plain to see from Table 1.1 that those countries that experienced uprisings are 'not free' politically, and 'limited' or 'very limited' in the scale of political liberties afforded to their populations. Moreover, taking the scale of unemployment into account, the average level of unemployment amongst these countries was above the regional average, with Libya and Yemen significantly above it. This apparently supports the argument that poor socioeconomic conditions created an opening up of the political space.

However, closer inspection of the data reveals significant variation in these countries' levels of socioeconomic development. For example, there is a significant difference in socioeconomic development between the 'more developed' Bahrain and the 'less developed' Syria. It is also interesting to note that the 'less developed' Egypt has a lower unemployment rate than the 'more developed' Libya. Similar to Iran, Tunisia falls into the middle of these two groups, in that it has a limited per capita income but one of the most advanced economies in the region (Coupe, 2011: 721-728) and both also demonstrate a similar unemployment level. There is further variation in individual unemployment levels of these countries, as unemployment in Bahrain, Egypt, and Syria is below the regional average. This comparison demonstrates that mass protests can turn into systemic threats to authoritarian regimes irrespective of the level of socioeconomic development. The data in Table 1.2 emphasises this point, as it takes into account the state of development in those countries that did not experience sustained mass popular uprisings, at least not to the extent of those in Table 1.1. This data comes from the same sources as Table 1.1 and reads in the same way.

Table 1.2 Countries with no mass uprisings in the MENA. Socioeconomic development indicators 2010

	FH: Rights	FH: Liberties	HDI Rank	GNI/capita (PPP 2008\$)	Unemployment (% of total labour force) ³
UAE	6	5	32	58,006	4.2
Oman*	6	5	n.a.	n.a.	8.2
Qatar	6	5	38	79,426	0.4
Kuwait	4	5	47	55,719	1.8
Saudi Arabia	7	6	55	24,726	5.4
Jordan	6	5	82	5,956	12.5
Algeria	6	5	84	8,320	10
Morocco	5	4	114	4,628	9.1
Average	5.75	5	65	33,825 (29,597) ⁴	6.5 (10.4) ⁵

* UNDP data for Oman included with that of the UAE

At the outset, this data appears to contradict the findings in Table 1.1, as the countries of Table 1.2 have a higher level of political freedoms and socioeconomic development. The Freedom House data indicates that more political rights and liberties are granted to the populations of those countries that did not experience uprisings, but a closer inspection reveals that these regimes are still ‘not free’, with the problematic exception of ‘partly free’ Kuwait and Morocco. Thus, the countries in Table 1.2 are as authoritarian as those crisis-ridden countries in Table 1.1. The average HDI rank of the countries in Table 1.2 is better than that of the countries in Table 1.1 and their average level of unemployment is below the regional average. Again, this data obscures significant variations in each country’s respective state of socioeconomic development as there is a significant developmental gap between the Gulf monarchies on the one hand and Algeria, Jordan, and Morocco on the other. Put simply, ‘more developed’ and ‘less developed’ countries were both able to avoid uprisings. There is a wide gap in per capita income between these two groups of countries and there is a wide disparity in unemployment figures. Unemployment in the Gulf monarchies obscures the fact that unemployment in Algeria and Morocco is slightly below the regional average, while Jordan is above it. Indeed, the average level of unemployment across all three countries is 10.5 percent; 0.1 percent above the regional average. These findings support the contention that popular uprisings can turn into threats for authoritarian regimes, irrespective of the levels of socioeconomic development.

³ The World Bank World Development indicators, Unemployment, total (% of total labour force). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> [Accessed June 20 2015]

⁴ This figure includes Oman.

⁵ This is the regional average for the entirety of the Middle East and North Africa.

It would also be equally misleading to characterise people’s desire for democracy and social justice as contributing to an opening up of the political space. Table 1.3, again, considers those countries where popular uprisings took place. The Freedom House, again, indicates the political rights and freedoms afforded to citizens and the table uses this data in conjunction with that from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) and Transparency International. The data from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index consists of data from its Status Index (SI), which measures political and economic transformations, and its Management Index (MI), which measures the level of a country’s development (BTI, 2010a). The SI identifies the state of a country’s economic and political transformation (BTI, 2010b). It takes into account where a country stands on its path towards democracy and the market economy, which includes not only aspects such as economic performance but elements of social justice, such as social safety nets, sustainability, and equality of opportunity. The MI is a good governance indicator of sorts and informs on the efficiency and governance capacities of decision-makers (BTI, 2010a). It measures the quality of the output of decisions based on the ‘level of difficulty’ with which decision-makers cope. It serves as an indicator of citizen’s satisfaction with their governments, irrespective of the political freedoms afforded to them, and the degree of political legitimacy they enjoy. There is also data from Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which measures the level of corruption in the public sector of each country under examination (Transparency International, 2010).

Table 1.3 Countries with mass uprisings in the MENA. Political and economic indicators 2010

	FH: Rights	FH: Liberties	BTI: Status Index	BTI: Management Index	CPI Ranking
Bahrain	6	5	6.05	4.36	4.9
Libya	7	7	4.49	3.05	2.2
Iran	6	6	3.65	2.31	2.2
Tunisia	7	5	4.98	4.30	4.3
Egypt	6	5	4.82	4.30	3.1
Syria	7	6	3.88	2.77	2.5
Yemen	6	5	4.08	4.04	2.2
Average	6.43	5.6	4.56	3.59	3.05

The data reads in the following way. The SI and MI numbers read from 1 to 10, with a larger number indicating a higher level of development. The BTI MI numbers read from 1 to 10, with a higher number indicating a higher degree of satisfaction in

economic and political decision-making. The CPI numbers read from 0 to 10, where 0 perceives a country to be highly corrupt and 10 perceives it to be very clean.

The data from Table 1.3 indicate that those countries that experienced uprisings are limited in the scale of their political and economic transformations. Moreover, there is a strong perception that the governments in these countries are highly corrupt. However, when compared to those countries that did not experience uprisings, it becomes clear that there is little variation regarding political and economic transformation and perceptions of corruption, as Table 1.4 makes clear.

Table 1.4 Countries with no mass uprisings in the MENA. Political and economic indicators 2010

	FH: Rights	FH: Liberties	BTI: Status Index	BTI: Management Index	CPI Ranking
UAE	6	5	5.83	5.47	6.3
Oman	6	5	5.53	4.58	5.3
Qatar	6	5	6.06	5.59	7.7
Kuwait	4	5	5.91	4.30	4.5
Saudi Arabia	7	6	4.63	3.94	4.7
Jordan	6	5	5.15	4.46	4.7
Algeria	6	5	4.86	3.92	2.9
Morocco	5	4	4.47	4.02	3.4
Average	5.75	5	5.30	4.53	4.9

The countries in Table 1.4 appear less corrupt than those in Table 1.3 are. This, however, obscures the high CPI scores garnered by the UAE, Oman, and Qatar, which significantly affect our perceptions of these countries that did not experience popular uprisings. The most significant difference between the countries where uprisings occurred and those where they did not is located in the BTI's MI. It is interesting to note that the region's three most inefficient regimes, according to the MI, namely, Iran, Libya, and Syria, witnessed the most serious form of protracted uprisings (Albrecht, 2012: 257). Furthermore, these countries, alongside Yemen, are the lowest ranking performers on the CPI, postulating a possible link between regime efficiency and the level of corruption within the region. In contrast, the two states that triggered the uprisings, Tunisia and Egypt, perform relatively well on the MI, with Tunisia also performing relatively well on the CPI. Tunisia and Egypt perform similarly to Jordan and Kuwait, and ahead of Algeria, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia on the MI, while performing better on the CPI than Algeria and Morocco, but falling behind Kuwait, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. In summarising the relationship between structural conditions

and regime change in the MENA, Albrecht (2012: 257) notes that no definite pattern allows socioeconomic factors to explain this occurrence.

In summary, this warrants caution when seeking to explain why the uprisings developed into a systemic threat in Tunisia and Egypt and not in comparable countries, such as Algeria or Jordan. Because they do not take any control or input from actors into account, structural conditions cannot explain how perceived economic grievances evolved into collective action. As William Quandt (1998) makes clear, social and economic factors may constrain the choices that are available to actors but they cannot be the only explanatory variable. Agency has a role to play and can influence the deeper workings of these structures. The idea is to find a balance where social and economic forces work as explanatory variables in conditioning the actions of human agency. If any analysis based on these broad social and economic factors is to be fully representative, actors must enter the equation. Those actors, who implement and subsequently react to them, shape domestic social and economic developments. Pollack (2002: 306) argues that:

[T]he decisions actors make must also be taken into consideration, since the actors are notably influenced by this framework and cannot be understood without it. However, if the transformation of political, economic, judicial and social structures is to be explained, it again becomes clear that a mere structural explanation is also insufficient and that a recourse to agency is also unavoidable.

The focus of some studies is purely on conditions that do not explain either why authoritarian regimes collapsed or what were the causal mechanisms that triggered this change. Focusing upon prerequisites may help explain, *ex-post facto*, the reasons behind regime change or may give a broader understanding of the country's economic and social situation, but these types of explanation are not firmly established, as the variance of their real impact is rather large. It turns out, for instance, that some conditions, held as essential, could be detrimental in different contexts, as the discussion on economic performance and regime change seems to demonstrate. It is important to analyse the explanatory variables the functionalist school has to offer. Nevertheless, Gilbert Achcar (2013: 144) argues that, rather than viewing socioeconomic variables as the explanatory factor in bringing about regime change in the region, we should consider socioeconomic conditions as factors heightening political tensions that would culminate in a popular uprising, rather than as explanations for regime change. Applying this type of analysis to the MENA region produces considerable insights into how economic and social changes may have affected the timing and pattern of the Arab uprisings, but carries little

in the way of explanatory power, as political actions are dependent on actors and not wholly pre-determined by structural constraints.

1.3 Popular Mobilisation and Regime Change

The genetic school looks at regime change through the interplay of domestic actors. This approach champions the interests, goals, and strategies of actors. The emphasis is on actors because regime change, irrespective of its outcome, is the product of ‘complex political processes involving a variety of groups struggling for power . . . and for other goals’ (Huntington, 1991/1992: 588). Regime change is thus ‘path-dependent’, meaning that, by examining the interests of actors and what kind of resources are available to them, it is possible to understand how regime change developed and where it would lead to. Actor-led approaches have received a significant deal of attention as explanatory approaches for regime change in the wake of the Arab uprisings. This is particularly evident with regard to popular mobilisation, as scholars have focused their attention upon unstructured social mobilisation and non-traditional leaderless and horizontal political and social actors (Aarts and Cavatorta, 2012).

Recent work has emphasised the importance of non-violent popular mobilisation in bringing about regime change in authoritarian systems (Karatnycki and Ackerman, 2005; Ulfelder, 2005; Welzel, 2007). Writing on the collapse of the German Democratic Republic, Pollack (2002: 321) argues that the agency of the demonstrating population played a ‘decisive role’ in shaping the outcome. The agency of the population has become important in explaining regime change, as the strength, cohesion, and strategies of opposition forces have come to be viewed as crucial in the process (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Diamond, 1999). Strong opposition movements shift the balance of power and resources away from state elites and raise the costs of supporting authoritarianism. Where opposition forces mobilise large numbers of people for protest movements or elections, incumbents must employ more evidently autocratic means to retain power (e.g., the employment of repression or the stealing of elections). The employment of these methods is costly for the incumbent regime; they erode public support, generate tensions within the regime, and risk punitive action from external actors. Thus, the greater the opposition’s mobilising capacity, the higher the probability that the incumbent will opt for toleration rather than repression (Dahl, 1971).

Underlying popular mobilisation is contentious politics, the ‘episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims

would, if realized, affect the interests of one of the claimants' (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001: 5). The uprisings are not isolated political phenomena, like the bread riots that occurred in Egypt in 1977, or those that swept the Maghreb in the 1980s. As Korany and El-Mahdi (2012a: 2) make clear, irrespective of the changes that will come to the MENA, the uprisings delineated a clear political 'before' and 'after'.

The literature on social movement theory puts forth three concepts that are particularly useful in understanding popular mobilisation and explaining its success in provoking regime change: 'mobilising structures' and resource mobilisation; 'Political Opportunity Structure' (POS); and framing. Mobilising structures and resource mobilisation are concerned with collective action, the crux of contentious politics. Mancur Olson's work grounded this neo-institutionalist approach in market-based reasoning and the free rider model (1973; 1977). Contemporary approaches to contentious politics emphasise the pooling of resources – be they economic, political or social – and the ways in which different structures can mobilise people for the purpose of political dissent (Tarrow, 1996).

During the Tunisian uprising, the country's leading labour federation, the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT), was decisive in sustaining demonstrations against the Ben Ali regime as its local movements provided leadership and structure to the nascent protest movement throughout the country (ICG, 2011a: 4). The UGTT's leadership of the protest movement allowed it to shape the narrative and direction of mobilisation in Tunisia, which, according to one observer, boosted the movement's strength as it served to mobilise the labour movement.⁶ Secular-Islamist rapprochement and cooperation throughout the 2000s also aided resource mobilisation. This rapprochement and cooperation broke down barriers of distrust within the opposition and unified it against Ben Ali (Penner Angrist, 2013: 555).

Resource mobilisation was also evident during the Egyptian uprisings. Local activists used their networks and exiting relationships with each other, and with the media, to spread their message. Traditional media outlets sought to interview those demonstrating in Tahrir Square, who in turn used these opportunities to articulate their message (Lindsey, 2012: 59-60). Social media also proved to be an important resource at this time, contributing to both 'the birth and sustainability' of the demonstrations (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1212). Moreover, labour activists capitalised on their networks within Egypt's workplaces and throughout the workers' movement at large to mobilise against Mubarak (Bishara, 2012: 92-99). In an important development,

⁶ Personal Interview with Amna Guallali, Human Rights Watch Tunisia, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

Egypt's 'Ultras', football supporter's groups, used their established organisational structures and the tactics they had developed combating Egypt's police as invaluable resources to capture the protest space in Tahrir Square and protect demonstrators from police brutality (Tuastad, 2013: 3). The regime's decision to cut off phone and Internet access on January 28th provided another fillip to the protest movement, as parents were forced to take to the streets to get news about their children. Because of this, they saw police brutality first-hand. Incensed and shocked, parents spontaneously pulled together to defend both themselves and their children. The protestors improvised food chains and brought supplies to Tahrir Square, as doctors established emergency clinics on the spot (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012b: 11; Ghaffar, 2011: 56).

The severing of communications channels thus turned a constraint into an opportunity. This leads to the second pillar of contentious politics: the Political Opportunity Structure (POS). That populations overcome obstacles to collective action and start to mobilise is a response to changes within the POS (Meyer, 2004). Hence, the 'when' of social mobilisation – when opportunities to mobilise present themselves – goes a long way towards explaining the 'why' (Tarrow, 1994: 17). Changes in the POS, the 'dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure' (Tarrow, 1994: 85), are important in understanding how popular mobilisation affects regime change. It has also been postulated, however, that collective action and mobilisation may follow if the costs of inaction outweigh the costs of mobilisation (Goldstone and Tilly, 2011).

The years leading up to the Egyptian uprisings saw a change in the country's POS. The most significant change was the scheduled presidential election in 2011 in which the only likely candidates were the infirm Mubarak and his presumed heir apparent, his son Gamal, which frustrated hopes that change could be brought about through existing institutions (Cook, 2012). Social media also contributed to a change in POS, as it allowed citizens to access information sources other than those controlled by the regime. This contributed to the development of a distinct social consciousness amongst Egypt's youth, one which was more amenable to democratic ideals and less tolerant of the Mubarak regime than older generations of Egyptians (Lynch, 2011, 304-307; Herrera, 2012a: 340-348). The development of a distinct online social consciousness amongst Egypt's youth precipitated change within Egypt's POS, as it contributed to the development of a counter-hegemony that was not amenable to the interests of the Mubarak regime.

The uprising saw a further strengthening of the POS. Police brutality saw the volume of demonstrators increase to such an extent that police forces were overwhelmed and routed (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012b: 11). Divisions within the Egyptian elite bolstered these changes, even at the highest levels of government. Mubarak's position was undermined when he ordered the military into the streets (ICG, 2011b: 16-17). While the military followed Mubarak's orders and deployed throughout the streets of Cairo, the nature of their deployment indicated fragmentation within the regime. As one observer of the military deployment in Central Cairo at the time noted, the deployment of mechanised divisions were of little use in the city's tight urban spaces when a larger infantry presence was required to suppress the protestors.⁷ Fragmentation within the regime increased as the uprising continued (Hope, 2012). Leading figures were either removed from their positions or jumped ship and escaped Egypt. The Mubarak regime appeared to be on the run and, according to another protestor, this gave rise to a collective sense that there was an opportunity for change.⁸

Thus, as Korany and El-Mahdi put it, the POS is an 'open door' that the population realise they can push through or a door that they realise they are strong enough to push open (2012b: 12). In this regard, the POS plays a double role. First, it is important in determining the chances of a protest's success. Second, it addresses the problem of agency and structure by acting as a bridge between the two in order to emphasise the population's role in influencing the political outcome of a struggle. As a model, the POS underlines the organic interaction between agency and structure.

The third pillar of contentious politics is framing. Frames help people to define their interactions in similar terms so that they are given 'similar meaning', and by doing so, come together to pursue a shared political ideal. Emphasising similarities in this manner creates a frame of alignment, which offers the population 'interpretative schemes . . . to make sense of events [in a consensual way, and thus] . . . guide collective action' (Snow and Benford, 1992: 138-140). Framing thus creates the necessary resonance to transform individual subjectivity into shared inter-subjectivity and to transform dispersed, disgruntled individuals into an organised protest movement that have a shared identity and objectives.

This shared inter-subjectivity was initially realised in the Arab street through both old and new media. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube,

⁷ Personal Interview with Wael Nawara, journalist at Al-Monitor and co-founder of the Al-Dostour Party and National Association for Change. Cairo, February 10, 2014.

⁸ Personal Interview with Nateem Yasser, Researcher at the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Cairo, February 11, 2014.

bolstered traditional broadcasters such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya (Lynch, 2012: 89-91). When photographs and videos of the demonstrations were widely diffused, it helped to increase the strength of the existing opportunity in Egypt. The imagery in these photographs conveyed a wide array of information that resonated with many Egyptians, showing both the repression arrayed against the demonstrators and the camaraderie that was developing between the demonstrators and the Egyptian armed forces (see Rushdy, 2012: 242-243).⁹ While media coverage helped to increase the strength of the opportunity and fuel the uprisings, it did not cause it (Korany, 2012: 287).

The Tunisian opposition also sought to frame Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation on December 17th 2010 as symbolic of the Ben Ali's rule. Bouazizi, an unemployed vegetable seller from the small town of Sidi Bouzid, worked to support his sister's university studies. Earlier that day, the police had confiscated his wares and publicly humiliated him (Gelvin, 2012: 26-27). Fearing for his livelihood, and that of his family's, he attempted to complain to the local municipality but to no avail. In response to this treatment, he set himself ablaze outside the municipality building (ICG, 2011a: 3). That same day, teachers from the national secondary education syndicate took Bouazizi to hospital and union members accompanied members of his family to the municipality office to express their anger at how the regime had treated him. Local members of the UGTT actively framed what happened to Bouazizi as political assassination, not an individual suicide resulting from socioeconomic misfortune: he was cast as the victim of a regime that had neglected its people (Penner Angrist, 2013: 560). These actions touched off a week of protests and civil disorder in Sidi Bouzid, which quickly spread across Tunisia. Following Bouazizi's death on January 4th 2011, the UGTT formed a committee of the marginalised and activated their contacts throughout Tunisia's interior to provoke further demonstrations (ICG, 2011a: 4). With framing, his suicide came to embody those grievances afflicting Tunisian society.

When the three pillars of contentious politics are utilised together, they create a system, or an interactive whole, with the power to explain how and why popular mobilisation brings about regime change. The rate and effectiveness of mobilisation in toppling dictators depends very much on the balance sheet of costs, benefits, constraints, and opportunities – the POS in other words – and whether these are acted upon collectively rather than as dispersed groups – depending on the degree of framing.

⁹ Zeyad Gohary has published a collection of images of the 2011 uprising that vividly demonstrate some of these points. See, Zeyad Gohary, 'Images of the Revolution' in Rushdy (2011: 262-286).

There are nonetheless doubts regarding the efficacy of popular mobilisation in bringing about regime change. In those instances where popular mobilisation contributed to ousting autocrats, incumbent weakness facilitated regime change (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 69). In many seemingly protest-driven instances of regime change, the inability of incumbents to prevent large-scale elite defection or use coercion to repress their opponents contributed directly to their fall from power; protestors knocked down a broken and battered door rather than gaining the strength to open one and push through. This is evident in Pollack's (2002) analysis of the GDR as he disregards the extent to which the East German elite understood the crisis within the communist system. By the time mass pressures emerged in the GDR, it had become readily apparent that the Soviet empire was crumbling across Eastern Europe.

Empirical insights from the Egyptian and the broader MENA case also demonstrate the limitations of solely focusing upon mobilisation-based explanations. Pre-existing groups may have made important contributions in organising anti-regime demonstrations but they were not the sole protagonists. Millions unexpectedly took to the streets in Egypt (Rushdy, 2011). Despite their powerful example, organised groups were not 'entirely responsible for drumming up the massive February 2011 demonstrations' in Bahrain (Kerr and Jones, 2011). The hype surrounding the use of social media during the Arab uprisings has blinded many observers to the fact that enormous popular mobilisations have previously taken place in the MENA without social media (Pratt, 2007: 59-98).

There are also further reasons to doubt social media's efficacy. First, its role as a facilitator of communication diminished throughout the uprisings, many of those demonstrating in Tahrir Square resorted to much more basic methods to get their message across once there (Beaumont, 2011). Second, the reporting on the use of social media further obscures that social media can, not only be used for progressive political purposes, but be used by authoritarian governments for their own purposes (Morozov, 2011). Egypt's NDP had its own Facebook page but its popularity amongst the online community is shown in its 158 'likes' (Herrera, 2012b: 93). In addition, authoritarian governments maintained some semblance of control over Internet activities in their countries. The Ben Ali regime regularly practiced censorship and restricted access to a number of websites that were critical of the regime (Filiu, 2011: 43-44), and the Mubarak regime was able to cut off Internet access during the Egyptian uprising (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011: 1216). While cutting off Internet access in Egypt did not have any noticeable effect on mobilisation dynamics, as previously discussed, it did

serve to highlight the limitations of social media-based approaches to mobilisation. In summarising social media's relationship with the Arab uprisings, Khondker (2011: 678) notes that that factors internal to the regime had as much to do with determining the outcome of the demonstrations as those external to it. He writes that 'the most important underlying factor was the presence of revolutionary conditions and the inability of the state apparatus to contain the revolutionary upsurge'.

The opportunity structures in both Tunisia and Egypt changed to such an extent that it allowed popular mobilisation to succeed. However, as an analytical tool, mobilisation-based approaches remain unsatisfactory in explaining the occurrence of regime change, as they are reliant on developments internal to the authoritarian regimes under examination to succeed. Accordingly, we must engage with the second aspect of the genetic school, the elite, and explain why they were not able to manage the 'revolutionary upsurge' in the MENA.

1.4 The Importance of Internal Factors: Bringing in the Elite

The analysis of structural and mobilisation-based explanations suggests that regime change cannot be understood without taking into account the internal politics of the autocracies themselves, the traditional point of departure for studies of regime change (see O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). Dalacoura (2012: 69) states that regime change depended on 'whether regimes managed to retain the loyalty of their key allies, most crucially the army and security services, and important sections of the citizenry'. Thus, we need to peer inside the 'black box' of authoritarianism in order to explain why regime change occurred. In some instances, regimes were able to face down mobilisation, while, in others, they could not. An understanding of the internal dynamics of authoritarian politics will allow for the development of a potential explanation for regime change.

The reaction of leaders was crucial in determining how the uprisings developed and concluded, and these reactions reflected the deeper elite dynamics at work within individual autocracies. First, whether the regime was differentiated from the state or totally identified with it (Anderson, 2011), and second, the position and choices of state institutions, especially the military and the security services. For example, when popular uprisings deposed Ben Ali and Mubarak, the military stood aside. In contrast, the established ties between the Alawite sect, the Sunni business community, the military and security services in Syria explain Assad's continued ability to maintain his hold on power (Álvarez-Ossorio and Gutiérrez de Terán, 2013). In the Yemeni and Libyan cases

internal fracturing and conflict were partly attributed to the relations between the regimes, on the one hand, and, the military and security forces on the other (Barany, 2011: 33-35). In Yemen, a strong central authority capable of monopolising coercion was absent, leaving the coercive apparatus to fall under the sway of the ruling Saleh family (Erlanger, 2010). In Libya, this internal division was partly due to fragmentation of the military, and, paramilitary and security organisations (Brownlee, 2002). Qadhafi implanted this fragmentation to ensure that no group could pose a credible threat to his rule in Libya.

Finally, the regimes' ability to withstand the uprisings depended upon whether they commanded popular legitimacy. Those protesting in Egypt comprised a wide range of social classes, excluding the wealthy elite associated with the regime (Kandil, 2011: 20-28). The Tunisian uprising was also the product of a wide-ranging anti-regime consensus that was a symptom of the regime's shrinking support throughout the 2000s. In contrast, the regimes in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen oversaw divided societies. In all four cases, social and political notables continued to support their respective regimes. For example, the Yemeni regime was 'less repressive, more broadly inclusive and adaptable', making it better able to co-opt the opposition using an extensive patronage network while, simultaneously, keeping avenues open for participation, dissent, and negotiation (ICG, 2011c: ii). These factors and the fragmented nature of the opposition help explain why Saleh continued to hold on to power for so long, albeit at the risk of civil war. What then is required is the development of a potential explanation for regime change that takes into account the internal dynamics of the MENA's autocracies and explains why some elites chose to abandon their respective incumbents during popular uprisings. It is this question the study seeks to answer.

1.5 Conclusion: Mapping the Road Ahead

From this discussion of regime change in the MENA, it emerges that a scholarly focus on functionalist and mobilisation-based explanations is limited. Despite the limitations of these approaches, a discussion of functionalist and mobilisation-based approaches do provide some insights which will contribute to developing an explanation for regime change that structurally includes elite variables.

The first point to take into account is the relationship between structural conditions and regime change. While structural conditions did not necessarily bring about regime change in the MENA, they are important in framing how actors perceive the costs and benefits of a potential regime change. Thus, rather than analyse the

relationship between structural conditions and regime change, it is important that we analyse the how elites integrate perceived structural conditions into their calculations.

The second point to address is that of the POS. If the population interpreted a change in the POS of the MENA, it is reasonable to assume that incumbent elites also perceived these changes. The more likely occurrence is that incumbent elites saw the emergence of popular mobilisation as an opportunity to realise and re-evaluate their specific interests, as they perceive interests differently to the population (Izquierdo Brichs and Lampridi-Kemou, 2013). In addition to changing actors' incentive structures, the POS also addressed the issue of timing as it explains why actors choose to take action when they do.

The genetic school has much to offer in developing an explanation for regime change that structurally includes elite variables. The identification of the relevant elite actors and their interactions, together with an analysis of the strategies used to realise their interests, mitigates the problem of over-determinism and puts human agency centre-stage. Despite these considerable strengths, there are weaknesses in the approach. Firstly, actors in the elite environment should not be isolated from the political process. Focusing on elite actions is significant, as their strategies and objectives determine the trajectory of regime change. Secondly, the analysis of elite actors should avoid the trap of mono-causality. This is a problem in those studies focusing on one single element and conflating it with the sole explanatory variable, be it the occurrence of mass mobilisation, or declining socioeconomic conditions. Thirdly, scepticism should surround all personal accounts, on the basis that those involved may tend to see their actions as overly relevant. Finally, it is important not to concentrate only on the occurrence of authoritarian breakdown itself and the factors that brought it about. A path-dependent regime change needs to take into account all the phases of its development. The next chapter will discuss elites and regime change in detail. It will theorise elites within the literature and their interaction with the process of regime change in the MENA. The remainder of the thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 3 will put forth the research design and theoretical framework. Chapters 4 and 5 will apply the theoretical framework to Tunisia. Chapters 6 and 7 will follow the same structure, but will address Egypt. To finish, Chapter 8 will put forth a conclusion and discuss the implications that arise from the thesis. It will also briefly discuss how to extend the scope of this research beyond Tunisia and Egypt.

Chapter 2 – The Theory: Elites and Regime Change in the Middle East and North Africa

2.1 Introduction

The retention of elite support is pivotal to the maintenance of authoritarian rule. Indeed, the most cited argument for authoritarian collapse is O'Donnell and Schmitter's (1986: 19) dictum: 'there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence – direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavages between hard-liners and soft-liners'. While the merits of the hard liner/soft liner dichotomy are open to debate (see Przeworski, 1986; Collier and Collier, 1991; Bermeo, 1992), a large scholarly consensus has emerged within studies of authoritarianism arguing that the withdrawal of elite support for the incumbent precipitates regime change in authoritarian systems (see Bueno de Mesquita et al, 2003; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006, 2007; Reuter and Gandhi, 2011). Thus, there is a necessity to consider elite actors.

This is especially important when considering the political changes sweeping the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Pace and Cavatorta, 2012; Howard and Walters, 2014). The purpose of this chapter is to justify the research in light of the existing literature on elites and regime change in the MENA. The chapter outlines the arguments within the authoritarian resilience literature, detailing how incumbents retain the support of elite actors. The chapter then theorises elites in the MENA and subsequently outlines a theoretical framework in which to situate the study. The conclusion will then briefly discuss the value of this research.

2.2 Authoritarian Resilience and Regime Change in the Middle East and North Africa

Studies of political change in the MENA have oscillated between democratisation and authoritarianism over the last two decades. During the 1990s, many scholars accepted the broad assumptions of the then-dominant democratisation paradigm (see Huntington, 1991; Przeworski, 1991) and incorporated its assumptions to search for both prospects and failures of democratic change in the region (Anderson, 1988; Salamé, 1994; Sadiki, 2000). Nevertheless, the region's seeming immunity to the global democratising trends of the 1980s and the 1990s, the failed Algerian transition aside (see Quandt, 1998; Cavatorta, 2009), became a source of bewilderment to the scholarly community. This bewilderment did not prove problematic to some transitologists as

Schmitter (2001: 104) wrote of the MENA's 'emergent democracies'. He further declared it 'safe for transitologists and comparativists to travel to the Middle East and North Africa' by explicitly asserting that the political dynamics of the MENA should be interpreted according to the tenets of the democratisation paradigm.

The 2000s marked a change in how scholars approached the study of authoritarianism in the MENA. As Eva Bellin (2004: 142) makes clear, the failure of transitology to explain authoritarian persistence in the region was not borne of a failure to consolidate democracy but rather a failure to initiate democratic transition at all:

Cumulative failure to achieve the prerequisites of democracy clearly undermines the consolidation of democracy. But alone it cannot explain the failure to carry out democratic transition because many countries burdened with failure have nonetheless made that leap successfully . . . The puzzle posed by the Middle East and North Africa is not why democracy has failed to consolidate in this region (failure would be expected) but rather why the vast majority of Middle Eastern and North Africa states have failed to initiate transitions at all. Herein lies the exceptionalism of the region.

Why the MENA's authoritarian regimes failed to initiate transition at all led scholars to embrace the paradigm of authoritarian resilience during the 2000s. Rather than seek to explain the absent phenomenon of democracy, this body of work sought to explain how governments in the region reconfigured authoritarian rule to accommodate and manage changing economic, social and political conditions (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004; Anderson, 2006). Specifically, this body of work seeks to analyse how political rule in the MENA is 'effectuated, organized, and executed' (Schlumberger, 2007: 6). It recognises that the MENA's polities are homogenous in being characterised by authoritarian governance and takes this authoritarian durability as its dependent variable (Schlumberger, 2007: 7). The literature aims at understanding the inner logic and dynamics of authoritarian rule, thus moving the frame of analytical reference from democratisation to authoritarian rule.

There is no 'single model or template' available for regimes to follow within the authoritarian resilience literature (Heydemann, 2007: 2). The literature details a range of methods with which the incumbent autocrats of the MENA maintain their hold on power: inhibiting the opposition through managed elections (Lust-Okar, 2005), allowing radical Islamist opposition to participate in the political process in order to cow secular opposition (Willis, 2006); the managed liberalisation of the political system, which allows dissenting opinions to be voiced within prescribed limits (Brumberg, 2002); the use of repression (Spinks et al., 2008; Josua and Edel, 2014); the

use of oil rents to finance patronage networks and social welfare programmes in exchange for political acquiesce (Luciani, 1994: 132; Sadiki, 1997); and, garnering international support, which sees external strategic interests realised in exchange for existential and material support (Korany, 2005; Aarts, 2007; Hinnebusch, 2014). When it comes to the analysis of elite actors, and the regime change process, an overview of the literature suggests four variables that are instrumental for incumbents in retaining elite support and guarding against the withdrawal of such support: the degree of institutionalisation, political-economic factors, legitimation-based explanations, and the provision of international support. Within each variable, there are a number of analytical perspectives to consider.

The first variable is the degree of institutionalisation within the elite. This consists of two distinct analytical perspectives: institutionalism and patrimonialism. Regarding the first perspective, the more institutionalised the elite are, the more willing they will be to disengage from power and allow political reform to proceed (Bellin, 2004: 145). The less institutionalised the elite, the less amenable it will be to reform. Within this context, when we speak of institutionalism, we speak of the qualities used by Weber to distinguish bureaucracies from patrimonially driven organisations. An institutionalised elite group is predictable, rule-governed, and meritocratic. There are established paths of career recruitment and advancement, and promotion is performance-based. Some ruling parties in the region are staffed in this manner. Brownlee's (2007a) analysis of ruling parties argues that the institutional constraints of the party provide a setting in which mitigates elite conflict and finds mutually acceptable solutions to elite conflict. Brownlee (2007: 157-201) identified Egypt's National Democratic Party (NDP) as a key source of elite cohesion during the 1990s and early 2000s, which provided a setting for the realisation of elite interests, promotion, and access to material patronage. The NDP also resolved intra-elite conflicts through institutional mechanisms. Moreover, party membership was open to all those who wished to join as recruitment efforts took a bottom-up approach throughout the 1990s (al-Din Arafat, 2011). A number of the region's militaries organised themselves similarly (Barany, 2011). Most notably, the Algerian military went to great lengths to publicly separate itself from politics in 2002, after a decade of ruling the state, and create a 'clean' image for itself (Werenfels, 2007: 60). This decision was deliberately taken by the military leadership, who believed that exposure to the vicissitudes of politics would unnecessarily compromise the institutional integrity of the military (Cook, 2007: 42).

In contrast, an elite group established through the second perspective, patrimonialism, rules through cronyism (Bellin, 2004: 145). Personal ties determine staffing decisions and there is no distinction between a public and private mission. This gives rise to widespread corruption and the abuse of power. Accordingly, institutionalised procedures cannot maintain discipline. The exploitation of primordial cleavages instead maintains discipline, which necessitates balancing the rivalry between different ethnic/sectarian groups. Hafez Assad ruled Syria through patrimonial means, relying on his extended family and members of the Alawite community, a religious sect that Assad was a member of, which comprised eleven percent of the Syrian population upon his coming to power (Batatu, 1982: 20). Religious and familial affiliation offered access to power as financial and political resources flowed to the Alawite community whose members held key posts in the ‘officer corps, the internal security forces, and the Ba’ath party’ (Michaud, 1982: 30). These links thus intertwined the ‘fate of the Alawi community to [Assad’s] political fortunes’ and drove a wedge between the regime’s partisans and its opponents. This continued under Assad’s son and successor, Bashar. Three families dominate contemporary Syrian politics: the Assads, the Makhloufs, and the Shalishes. The three have extended their reach to the Ba’th party, the military, the security services, and the private sector (see Álvarez-Ossorio and Gutiérrez de Terán, 2013).

Patrimonialism confers a number of distinct advantages upon authoritarian regimes that can contribute to their longevity (Brownlee, 2002). These include demobilising the opposition and establishing a loyal support base through selective favouritism and access to discretionary patronage. It further makes authoritarian regimes resistant to any form of regime change, particularly democratisation (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: 82-97). Institutionalised elite groups in contrast will have more tolerance for political reform (Bellin, 2004: 145). First, institutionalised elite groups have a corporate identity distinct from the state. They have distinct identities and career paths. These actors can envision separation from the state. They believe that, even if they were to relinquish power, they will be able to survive in the post-regime change period. Thus, they believe they will not be ‘ruined by reform’ (Dahl, 1971; Bermeo, 1997).

The second variable to take into account is political-economic. Material patronage maintains elite support in the region. With their financial foundations compromised, the elite are likely to fracture from within, as they cannot provide the means to which they have become accustomed. Writing on this phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa, Herbst

(2001: 372) writes that democratic transition was less the work of a strong society and more the consequences of weak states. Political-economic variables in the MENA have centred on two distinct perspectives: rentierism and economic liberalisation.

Rentierism analyses what has been termed the 'rentier state' (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987). Put simply, 'a rentier state is defined as any state that receives a substantial portion of its income in the form of external rents' (Shambayati, 1994: 308). Regarding the contemporary MENA, 'the term refers most often to the oil states whose income is derived from the international sale of petroleum' (Okruhlik, 1999: 295). Significant external rents also take the form of worker's remittances, location rents (ownership of strategic transit routes), strategic rents (grants and soft loans in the form of military and budgetary aid), and official developmental aid (Richter, 2007: 182). Rentier states are vulnerable to the volatility of the international market (Brynen, 1992: 70-71). Accordingly, oil states are vulnerable to international fluctuations, as are the remittances of those foreign workers employed in the oil-producing states (Brynen, 1998: 81-82). Those reliant on location-based and strategic rents are also subject to the whims of the international system. The price of oil determines the cost paid for the use of transit routes while the strategic concerns of external actors determines the amount of strategic rent paid (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987: 52-60).

Despite the risks associated with the use of the rentier model, the MENA's incumbent autocracies have used rentierism to finance the interests of elites. According to Luciani (1987), continuous access to high rents, via the export of oil and gas, explains the survival of the region's monarchies. It also relates to the strategic rent accrued by Jordan and Morocco, important geostrategic clients of the West. For the monarchies, these two approaches are complimentary, strategic support from external powers supplements resource revenues (Yom and al-Monami, 2008). Saudi Arabia is a rentier state par excellence. The Saudi economy is solely reliant on the export of oil and oil revenues, mainly through expenditure-related budgetary policies, maintain non-productive sectors of the economy. Moreover, rentier income has concentrated power within the al-Saud family and the state's first function is to ensure that oil revenues look after the family's interests (Lecha and Zaccara, 2013: 163). The redistribution of oil rents first accrues to members of the royal family, then amongst members of the tribal leaders who comprise the state's founding elite, and, the religious, commercial and military elite through a range of clientelistic mechanisms that mainly take the form of managerial and administrative positions within the state. In North Africa, Morocco and Tunisia may lack the petroleum resources of their neighbour, Algeria, but the two have

relied on other forms of rent to finance their elite: foreign aid, tourism, and remittances from abroad ensure that the state will serve itself first, which includes covering the costs of bloated military and security services (Entelis, 2008: 12). Rent also brings with it another attendant benefit for the elite: it grants them ‘access to substantial discretionary resources so that, even if the country is overall in poor economic health, the state is still able to hew to conventional economic wisdom and pay itself first’ (Bellin, 2004: 148). Rentierism, however, is also a double-edged sword. The distribution of rents creates economic winners and losers, which accordingly generates dissatisfaction and opposition to the regime amongst the latter group (see Crystal, 1989).

The second political-economic perspective concerns the process of economic liberalisation. As discussed in Chapter 1, the MENA underwent a process of economic liberalisation and subscribed to the tenets of the Washington Consensus. While the adoption of neo-liberal reforms may not have been beneficial to many in the region (see Brynen et al., 2012: 213-232), some elite segments did benefit. North Africa was a prominent early adopter of economic reform. The nominal intent of economic reform was to encourage movement toward a free market economy but structural adjustment instead saw a reconfiguration of authoritarianism. There were two reasons for this (Dillman, 2001: 201-210). First, foreign investors were required to cooperate with state officials in order to gain access to business opportunities that could potentially prove profitable. This practice was encouraged in Egypt and saw foreign investors partner with businessmen who had exhibited close ties to the Mubarak regime, as well as Mubarak’s son, Gamal (Elaasar, 2010; Lesch, 2012). And, second, there is the paradox of privatisation in the region. Where privatisation has occurred, it has not been as the result of competition. Those who benefitted acquired state assets at below-market prices and established oligarchic control of their respective markets. A prominent individual in this regard is Rami Makhlouf, Bashar Assad’s cousin. Makhlouf controls Syria’s airports, communications and cement sectors, and his interests have extended into the hotel, transport, and media industries (Leverett, 2005: 83-84). His influence is such that business cannot be done without his permission (Nkem Ifjekia, 2006; Haddad, 2012). Despite privatisation, resources did not move from state control. The privatisation of the Moroccan public sector masked a personalisation of public services that directly benefitted the royal family and entrepreneurs associated with them (Coupe, 1997: 63-64; Graciet and Laurent, 2012). This personalisation saw a number of privatised firms purchased by Omnium Nord Africain (ONA), a holding company in which Hassan II held a significant stake after 1980. By 1988, ONA had become the third largest

company in Africa, controlling large segments of the market in many sectors by buying up public, private, and foreign companies (see Henry and Springborg, 2012: 217-226).

The third variable, legitimation, concerns the relationship between the population and the elite. Specifically, the degree of popular mobilisation shapes the capacity and will of the elite to hold on to power. Violently repressing thousands of people, even if it is within the capacity of the incumbent regime, is costly, as it may jeopardise domestic and international support. The high costs of repression will not deter those elites who believe reform will ruin them. The slaughter of thousands at Hama by Hafez Assad in 1982 attests to this point, as do the actions of his son Bashar during the Syrian uprisings, and subsequent civil conflict (see Friedman, 1989; ICG, 2011d; Heydemann and Leenders, 2012). Where the elite does not perceive reform to be detrimental to their interests, the high costs of repression will lead elites to side with reformers. Within the MENA popular mobilisation had not, prior to 2011, proved detrimental to incumbent regimes because they had established a popular legitimacy in order to survive (Schlumberger, 2010).

The use of legitimacy varies across the MENA but Schlumberger (2010: 239-246) distinguishes between four 'core competencies' that are employed for regime survival. The first component is religion and is particularly important in Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. All three monarchies have built part of their legitimacy on religious dimensions. The Kings of Jordan and Morocco have partly established their legitimacy on ancestral ties to the Prophet (Feliu and Parejo, 2013: 79; Barré and Masciulli, 2013: 258) while the Saudi monarchy's legitimacy rests on the king's position as custodian of the holy sites of Mecca and Medina, which date back to the state's founding (Lecha and Zaccara, 2013: 156). These monarchies used religious legitimacy as a tool of authoritarian persistence and often employed it against Islamist opposition in times of crisis (Krämer, 2000).

The second component is tradition, which serves as a tool of legitimation in the Gulf monarchies. The reinvention or co-opting of traditional practices is partly a consequence of the relative youth of the gulf monarchies that were British creations of the twentieth century (Demmlehuber, 2011: 6-10). The Gulf monarchies embedded tradition in their state-building practices to legitimise their exercise of power over society. What makes tradition important, according to Schlumberger (2010: 242), is how leaders depict themselves: as the current representatives of a long line of venerable ancestors who have passed the wisdom of ruling from father to son and who are, thus, naturally qualified to rule. Sultan Qabous of Oman is case in point. Qabous has

managed to transform, in a decades-long process, traditional allegiances that were formally directed toward local families and tribes to the larger nation-state through ‘symbol politics’ (Wegner, 2007), and consequently achieve an ‘incorporation of tradition into the state’ (Valéri, 2007: 147-149).

The third component of legitimacy resides in the MENA’s republics and its ideologies. The leadership of the region’s republics have based their claims to leadership on revolutionary and often Arab socialist ideals (Schlumberger, 2010: 243-245). Legitimation through ideology has evolved throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as regimes moved away from their revolutionary and Arab socialist inceptions. This evolution was partly the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which undermined those collective ideals the republics had made central to their ideologies. The republics have sought to re-legitimise themselves through ideologies that stress their role as guardians of the state by emphasising their openness to political and economic reform on the one hand, and their role as protectors of the citizenry, from terrorism and extremism, on the other (see Brand, 2014).

The fourth component of legitimation is material legitimation, which refers to the political-economic distribution of state resources. The distribution of material resources is key to maintaining the support of society as a whole. Rentier income allows MENA states to pursue distributive policies that are far above levels that domestically produced goods allow for. The main point to take into account is that ‘even limited resources from abroad can buy an enormous amount of legitimacy’ (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987: 62). Rentier income financed large-scale social welfare spending that saw the material and educational needs to the region’s looked after in exchange for political acquiescence (Pratt, 2007). Moreover, economic liberalisation did not erode the politics of material distribution, quite the contrary (see Schlumberger, 2008). However, legitimation-based perspectives must acknowledge that while ‘different legitimation strategies abound, the other side of the equation – the acceptance of those strategies by the target audience – is often omitted, since it is hard both to define and to operationalize’ (Bank et al., 2015: 183).

The final variable is that of international support, which takes the geopolitics of the MENA into account. The loss of international support triggers both an existential and financial crisis that affects both the will and capacity of elites to support the incumbent (Bellin, 2004: 144). This scenario proved key in Eastern Europe, where Soviet withdrawal of support for the Brezhnev doctrine contributed to the collapse of the coercive backbones of Eastern Europe’s communist regimes (Janos, 2000: 342).

With regard to international support, the MENA enjoys a unique position in the international arena. As was the case in other regions, authoritarian states in the MENA profited from the Cold War, receiving patronage from both the East and West (see Khalidi, 2009; Hinnebusch, 2014a: 37-54). In contrast to other regions, the MENA did not see its access to international patronage end with the Cold War due to Western security concerns that survived the fall of the Iron Curtain. Three key concerns drive Western interests in the region. First, access to a reliable oil supply and the commitment to economic liberalisation (Halliday, 2005: 261-299). Second, guaranteeing the security of Israel, particularly on the part of the United States and Germany (Kepel, 2004). And, third, containing the threat of Islamist terrorism, which has proved more alarming in Europe and the United States since the 2000s (see Kepel, 2008a, 2008b).

These concerns have provided western policymakers with a compelling rationale to persist in providing support to many authoritarian states in the region. Authoritarian governments in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia, amongst others, have received foreign and military aid in the hope that these regimes would deliver on Western security concerns by assuring the continuous flow of oil and gas to the West and the containment of radical Islam (Bellin, 2004: 149). This aid is largely unconditional and Brand (1995: 81-83) and Yom (2009: 163) both stress that it finances the repression and co-optation of domestic opposition movements. The provision of military aid also funds domestic patronage networks. Arms deals cement the support of foreign powers, particularly the United States amongst the oil-rich monarchies of the Persian Gulf, and thus bolster authoritarianism. As Yom and Gause (2012: 85) argue, a combination of ‘diplomatic assurances, economic grants and military interventions’ account for the important foreign patronage that the United States grants throughout the region, and it is this patronage that has decisively contributed to regime survival in the region. Economic interests have also factored into the survival of authoritarian regimes. Writing on the US relationship with Saudi Arabia, Paul Aarts (2007: 266) contends that ‘it is in the best interests of the United States to see that the current regime stays in power’, as regime change would have dire consequences for the United States and the global economy. These dire consequences, according to Aarts, would either be a reduction or increase in oil production, both of which would be consequential. It is thus apparent that playing upon the West’s strategic concerns has allowed authoritarian regimes in the MENA to sustain international support and is the provision of this support that has bolstered the ability of authoritarian regimes to maintain their hold on power.

The MENA's incumbent autocracies have also used Western concerns to stymie externally led efforts at political reform. Initiatives to promote democracy and political reform have often floundered when groups that are not deemed receptive to Western actors are the beneficiaries of this process, the most prominent examples being the Muslim Brotherhood's strong showing in Egypt's parliamentary elections in 2005 and Hamas' electoral victory in the Gaza Strip in 2006 (see Durac, 2009; Brownlee, 2012). Moreover, this does not take into account how external actors perceive the costs of change. The countries of the (then) G8 have assigned differing levels of priority to democracy promotion in the region, which are in turn shaped by public opinion that is sceptical of democratisation in the region and the fact that many of the MENA's opposition groups lack friends in the West (Sayyid, 2007: 228). International support in the region is not the strict preserve of Western actors. Those MENA states that are not on friendly terms with the West also have their external backers. Syria, for example, has enjoyed the support of both Russia and China in defiance of Western interests (Hinnebusch, 2014b).

The variables discussed above tell us much about the mechanisms put in place by the MENA's incumbents to retain elite support and, by extension, maintain authoritarian rule. This discussion indicates the authoritarian resilience literature's suitability as a body in which to situate this research. As the following paragraphs make clear, autocrats elsewhere share their counterparts in the MENA's affinity for authoritarian upgrading, suggesting the literature's potential for integration into the broader comparative field. First, institutionalisation also shapes elite attitudes to regime change elsewhere. Highly institutionalised elites displayed little trepidation in defecting from the regime when they believed that reform would not damage their interests. The Indonesian military concluded that opposing Suharto would not damage the integrity of the military institution and Taiwan's ruling Kuomintang also believed the party's institutional strength would allow it to prosper following democratisation (Lee, 2009; Tien and Chu, 1998; Tucker, 1994). In contrast, those regimes constructed along patrimonial lines remained durably authoritarian over the long-term. Joseph Mobutu appointed family members and ethnic kin to strategic positions in Zaire's government to maintain his hold on power. Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has remained durably authoritarian and the religious ties binding the elite to the incumbent Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as his predecessor Ayatollah Khomeini, has been a contributing factor in this regard (see Buchta, 2000, 2005).

Second, political-economic perspectives have also been employed to retain elite support outside of the region. Regarding rentierism, Ross (2001: 356-357) notes the correlation between the presence of natural resources and the persistence of authoritarianism. Rentier expenditure dampens pressure for democracy through low taxes, high public spending, both of which stymie economic modernisation, and the financing of repressive activities and has been successfully utilised in both Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Franke et al., 2009). Rentier income also funds the coercive backbone of the Iranian regime, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), via an indigenous arms industry and military procurement from states including China and Russia (Buchta, 2000: 67-68, 2004: 8). Similar to the MENA economic liberalisation has also provided an opportunity for authoritarian maintenance in the former Soviet space. Privatisation saw an oligarchic class emerge in Ukraine before the liberalisation of the country's political system (Hale, 2005: 150) while the liberalisation of the Kyrgyz economy proved the regime with an opportunity to establish domestic patronage networks and shore up its support base (Jones Luong, 2004: 115-116).

Third, authoritarian incumbents also favoured legitimisation strategies. The communist regimes of the Soviet Union implemented material legitimisation strategies that provided socioeconomic benefits including 'comprehensive social security, full employment, stable prices, easygoing industrial discipline and steadily rising living standards' (Alagappa, 1995: 61; White, 1986: 468). Iran, on the other hand, relied on religious legitimisation by serving as a model for oppressed Muslims the world over (Milton-Edwards, 2005: 82). The authoritarian states of sub-Saharan Africa championed an ideology built on anticolonialism (Coleman and Rosberg, 1964; Zolberg, 1966).

Lastly, international support also affects the ability of incumbents to retain elites support. For example, the withdrawal of Soviet support for the Brezhnev doctrine contributed to the collapse of the coercive apparatus in Eastern Europe's communist regimes (Janos, 2000: 342). In the same vein, the United States withdrawal of support for authoritarianism in Latin America delivered an existential and material shock to a number of the region's autocracies (Snyder, 1998). Contrary to this, those regimes with the support of international patrons possess the ability to ward off calls for regime change. President Bongo of Gabon relied on French support to maintain his hold on power. The threat of French military intervention and the deployment of French troops outside the capital discouraged explosions of popular and made opposition challenges futile (Yates, 1996: 113-114; Gardiner, 1994: 27). Contemporary Russia props up a

number of authoritarian regimes in its sphere of influence. For example, its active support for Belarus is instrumental in maintaining the Lukashenko regime. Heavily subsidised natural gas and revenues from the resale of Russian arms and gas accounted for approximately 20 to 30 percent of Belarusian GDP and one third of the government's revenues (Aslund, 2002: 182; Karol, 2006).

The efficacies of these variables indicate the authoritarian resilience literature's ability to travel beyond the MENA. Indeed Central Asia's embrace of authoritarian upgrading saw Jones Luong (2003: 333) dub the region 'the next Middle East'. Furthermore, this efficacy also gives credence to the literature's potential for application to the broader comparative field. Despite this potential, and the literature's utility for the present research, there are a number of shortcomings that require acknowledgment in light of the Arab uprisings.

From a theoretical vantage point, the unexpected occurrence of the Arab uprisings, which took the scholarly community by surprise (Gause, 2011), have led to a degree of soul-searching amongst regional experts, as long-held assumptions have been called into question (Jung, 2011). To start with, it is immediately apparent that the 'upgrading authoritarianism' argument put forth by Heydemann (2007) has encountered significant difficulties in both explaining why the uprisings occurred and concluded in the manner they did. That regime change has occurred in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen casts doubt on the validity of the authoritarian resilience paradigm and the mechanisms through which ruling elites were able to hold on to power. It would be a misnomer to say scholars saw authoritarianism as inevitable and everlasting in the MENA. Indeed, Sluglett (2007) notes the region has not been synonymous with stability. Nonetheless, how the political and economic reforms championed in the last twenty years influenced society or society's reaction to them, received scant attention (Pace and Cavatorta, 2012: 127). One facet that was always missing from the literature was the notion of 'unintended consequences' that were brought about through any form of authoritarian reconfiguration (Haugbølle and Cavatorta, 2012: 98). While specific political and economic reforms were introduced into the region in order to bolster authoritarianism, it should be taken into consideration that these reforms may have unintended consequences for those guiding them. As ruling elites attempted to steer society in one direction, the dynamics unleashed by authoritarian reconfiguration may have actually contributed to steering society in a direction antithetical to their interests. The implementation of neoliberal economic reforms throughout the region seemingly confirms this point. Rather than create economic opportunities for the population, these

reforms gave birth to a crony capitalist class that set incumbent elites on a collision course with the middle class (Aita, 2011; Springborg, 2011; Achcar, 2013; Kadri, 2014). In other instances, economic reform gave rise to domestic constituencies that were able to use their new found wealth to contribute to regime stability through the provision of private welfare while simultaneously being able to resist co-optation by the regime, as was the case with Syria's Zayd movement (Pierret and Selvik, 2009). A further unexplored facet of unintended consequences is how political and economic reforms affected upon intra-elite dynamics within the region's autocracies. While there is evidence to support the claim that unintended consequences set regimes on collision courses with their populations, the literature has not theorised how political and economic reforms changed the nature of intra-elite relations within authoritarian regimes.

There are also specific limitations in the literature that mandate consideration regarding elites. First, the literature does not take the institutional makeup of the region's autocracies into account. There has been analysis of the institutional makeup of the region's autocracies, such as Herb's (1999) discussions of the region's monarchies. However, this work has tended to focus on one component part of an authoritarian regime, such as the military or the ruling party (Droz-Vincent, 2007; Brownlee, 2007a), to the detriment of intra-elite interactions throughout the regime. As Kandil (2012a: 2) notes, this reflects a tendency to perceive seemingly apolitical actors such as the military and the security services as appendages rather than full partners in the ruling bloc. Where scholars have attempted to take the institutional structure of the MENA's autocracies into account using both qualitative and quantitative indicators, they have either tended to be overly detailed, taking the form of single-country studies (see Hibou, 2011; Sassoon, 2012), or, too abstract, such as Lust's (2011: 153-155) insertion of the region's autocracies into a range of established authoritarian typologies, which overlooks the empirical detail that contributes to the MENA's unique political ecology. Both make comparison impractical as the differing classifications of authoritarianism lead to differing interpretations of elite strategies and interests. Given their differing histories, one could reasonably assume that the Algerian military and the al-Saud family view political Islam through different prisms. This necessitates taking the institutional structures of the region's autocracies into account in developing an explanation for regime change as institutional constraints shape the preferences and outlooks of actors (Brooks, 2008) because there is a stark institutional divide between those states that experienced uprisings and those that did not, the deviant cases of Bahrain and Algeria

aside. What this indicates is a moment of systemic crisis for the region's presidential republics, but not its monarchies (Albrecht, 2012: 257). Moreover, Bahrain did not experience regime change. Rather, the Gulf monarchies benefitted from the Arab uprisings and instead became the region's centre of power (Kamrava, 2011). The challenge in understanding the relationship between elites and regime change thus requires us not to subordinate elites to institutional structures but rather to understand how the two interact in framing elite choices in an actor-driven analytical framework.

A second, more serious shortcoming in explaining why elites continue to support the incumbent is the tendency to analyse those measures employed by the incumbent without accounting for their relative importance and efficacy (Albrecht, 2015: 40). This is a consequence of the research design applied in scholarly inquiries of the MENA, using the authoritarian resilience literature. Scholars tend to select cases based on the positive observation of the dependent variable, which in the literature's case has tended towards authoritarian durability. Studying the efficacy of methods designed to ensure elite support in cases where elites did not withdraw support 'did not allow analysts to move beyond the selection of stochastic variables that may, or may not, have an effect on regime stability' (Albrecht, 2015: 40). This does not allow us to make informed judgements as to which strategies of elite maintenance are particularly efficient in ensuring elite support. Thus, intriguing questions remain unanswered: which methods really matter in maintaining elite support? When do they matter? Which types of elites are particularly prone to withdrawing support, party members, or generals? Who are most likely to continue supporting the leader? To address these questions, an analytical framework that utilises sound theoretical concepts drawn from the literature, and which recognises the observed differences in the MENA's autocracies, is required.

These shortcomings have prompted calls to re-visit the literature in light of the Arab uprisings. As Pace and Cavatorta (2012: 127) make clear, the literature is still useful in making comparisons across cases and deriving inferences from specific case studies. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity to develop nuanced exploratory models of the elite dimension of regime change. What is required is a re-thinking of the literature, rather than its wholesale abandonment (Heydemann and Leenders, 2011). Indeed, the nature of this study indicates the suitability of the literature at hand, as the dynamics of authoritarian durability and the wave of regime change associated with the Arab uprisings are fundamentally linked (Brynen et al., 2012:1) and explaining transitions from authoritarianism require the use of different analytical tools to those used in explaining transitions to democracy (Bellin, 2012). Thus, it is in understanding how

authoritarian durability collapsed that we can understand regime change. It for this reason that this study will situate itself within the authoritarian resilience literature and, as the chapter subsequently demonstrates, there is much work that can be drawn upon and incorporated into the literature that provides both an opportunity for a re-thinking and developing a potential explanation for regime change that structurally includes elite variables.

2.3 Theorising the Elite in the Middle East and North Africa

Having considered the strengths and limitations of the authoritarian resilience literature, the chapter now seeks further elucidation on the elite dimension of regime change through a discussion of the more general research on political elites. The interaction between elite actors and the process of regime change have been a constant theme within the political science literature since the first wave of elite studies emerged in early twentieth century Europe. The two most influential scholars at this time were Mosca (1939) and Pareto (1963). Both argue that power is unequally distributed and that society is divided into a small minority, with significant power – the elite – and a majority of the population that does not have power. Their research agendas – the change or maintenance of a given system through a focus on elite influence – are still of great interest in contemporary scholarship. However, their key assumptions: that the elite are ‘internally homogeneous’, ‘drawn from an exclusive segment of society’ and ‘essentially autonomous’ (Putnam, 1976: 4), coupled with Pareto’s binary ‘elite/masses’ concept, lead contemporary analysis of elites astray. First, they move the focus of elite studies away from complex intra-elite struggles, a vital issue in understanding the regime change process. And, second, the impact of non-elite actors on political decision-making is not taken into account. Rather unsurprisingly, it is difficult to apply elite theories borne in early twentieth century Italy to the MENA’s contemporary context.

The second wave of elites studies, conducted between the 1950s and the 1980s, analysed elite recruitment and composition on the one hand, and the establishment of causalities amongst their social backgrounds, attitudes and political behaviour on the other. The study of Western democracies dominated this body of scholarship but it also comprised an abundance of literature on the nascent elites of the newly independent MENA states. These studies reflected the political and economic transformations that the region was subject to during the 1950s and focused upon a broad range of young elites and their social and political backgrounds, particularly their political alignments

and worldviews (Heradstveit, 1974; Tachau, 1975). These studies were more empirical than theoretical in their approach and more apologetic than critical in their analyses of the region's elite, particularly those in the military. However, they offered a range of general hypotheses and predictions of how the region's elite expected to change and what these changes indicated for the MENA.

The second wave made a number of contributions to our understanding of elites in the MENA. First, it dispelled the notion that elites were a small and self-perpetuating group. Rather, the elite became a group where there was 'the possibility of peaceful competition among a variety of would-be elite groups' (Lenczowski, 1975: 4). These approaches predicted the rise of more competitive systems because of the need to incorporate 'an oversupply of aspiring elites' (Zartman, 1982: 31). Consequently, elite interaction and intra-elite struggles received considerably more scholarly attention. Of note is Quandt's (1969: 10) study of post-independence Algeria's elite, which concluded that independence did not produce a united elite in Algeria, a finding contrary to the common assumption that 'mobilization against a common enemy will unite men who may have had few or even hostile relations previous to this experience'. It was rather the case, as Werenfels (2007) argues, that the struggles that developed within the Algerian elite after independence were the result of elite factionalism, which developed during the independence struggle.

The second contribution these studies made was their abolition of the established powerful elite/non-elite masses dichotomy. Weinbaum (1980: 154), who introduced the term 'intermediating elites', softened the boundaries between elites and non-elites. These elites presented a mediating force between the nation's highest level of decision-makers and the masses that comprised the public and included party members and other local notables not occupying formal positions within the elite. Zartman (1980: 88) further brought 'demand-bearing groups', collective political actors who did not necessarily have common social ties but formed along ideological and political dimensions, into elite analysis. To a certain extent, factionalism and clientelism, which were representative of vertical rather than horizontal segmentation, further dissolved the boundaries between elites and non-elites. With regard to Morocco, Waterbury (1970) demonstrated that vertical segmentation functioned as the basis of the political system, a pattern that has continued into the twenty-first century (Jamal, 2007: 103-104). In approaching the study of elites, the second wave focused upon the linkages developed between elites and the linkages that they further developed with the rest of society.

While making a number of advances in analysing the elites of the MENA, these studies also exhibited a number of shortcomings. First, elites were analysed through modernisation theory. Werenfels (2007: 19) writes that:

[E]ven if the studies on the Arab world did not fully subscribe to its teleology or to the idea of universal and fixed paths to modernization . . . most of the research done in this era distinguished between ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ elites and implicitly assumed that higher elite education levels and a ‘modern (technocratic) elite habitus’ would eventually bring political change.

Furthermore, this adherence to a bipolar traditional/modern framework overlooks hybrid forms of social and political organisation, such as latter-day re-inventions of traditional structures and the long-term effects of imposing a ‘modern culture’ on the country under question.

A second shortcoming is the weak focus placed on two important structural factors. First, the precise natures of the region’s economies were not taken into account nor their effects on the political process. And second, neither were the impact of external factors incorporated. Algeria is exemplary in this regard. Due to its increasing hydrocarbon revenues, Algeria was able to quickly jump into modernity in technological terms. The structure of the Algerian oil economy was that of a ‘rentier state’. The country’s economic dependence on an external rent was the elite’s source of legitimacy, as it was able to control the distribution of this rent to secure the population’s support. This rent has been the principal source of elite power since the country’s independence from France, which saw political acquiescence exchanged for improving socioeconomic conditions (Volpi, 2007: 81). The regime was taken aback when ‘the drop in the price of oil in 1986 translated itself into a brutal regression of the value of exports, from 13.5 billion US dollars in 1985 to 9.6 billion US dollars both in 1986 and 1987’ (Khennas and Mekideche, 1995: 76). As Cavatorta (2009: 75) notes, ‘the economic crisis had a significant impact on different political actors, which were forced to deal with a transformed structure of incentives’. Rentierism points to elite dependence on the global economy, which is, but one of several non-domestic variables that have influenced elites in the MENA over the previous three decades. Werenfels (2007: 20) notes that most studies on Arab elites considered such external factors only indirectly.

The third shortcoming is the tendency that developed in early elite studies to establish causality between the social background of elites, and the interests and attitudes these backgrounds formed, and the behaviour of elites with respect to political

action (Lenczowski, 1975: 7; Almond and Verba, 1963: 33). Quandt (1969) uses a more sophisticated variant of this argument adding the variables of socialisation and experiences, which he sees in a two-way causal interaction with values and attitudes. In turn, values and attitudes are in a two-way interaction with political behaviour. However, this implied link between elite characteristics and behaviour remains vague. Stone (1980) questions such variables and, in his 'theoretical models with variables', puts question marks behind all arrows indicating such causalities.

In her assessment of the second wave of elites studies, Werenfels (2007: 21) argues that, although it is fairly easy and 'problematic' to detect direct causalities between social background and social values, it is not possible to establish direct and simple causalities between elite attitudes and political behaviour without taking into account further variables. The limited ability of the second wave to explain political change was further weakened by the longevity of Arab regimes and this led to a decline in interest. Students of political sociology did occasionally analyse new or re-emergent elites, particularly the emergence of the entrepreneurial elite and professional groups, and the emerging alliance between these groups and the traditional state elite (Picard, 1990; Springborg, 1993). This interest usually emerged within the context of studies that were concerned with political and economic adjustment. Having said that, these studies did little to explain political developments in the Arab world, as they 'took for granted the continuity of the existing regimes and the ruling strata', meaning that studies from the 1970s, or with respect to that period, remained largely valid in their depiction of the ruling elite up to the late 1990s (Perthes, 2004a: 3). This depiction of politics in the region was not, however, consistent with the empirical reality of political life in the region. Significant change had occurred in the region between the 1970s and the late 1990s but, as they did not reflect the change espoused by those working in the democratisation paradigm, they were not analysed by the broader academic community (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004: 378-380).

The death of four longstanding heads of state in 1999 and 2000 – Kings Hussein of Jordan, Hassan II of Morocco, Amir Isa of Bahrain, and President Hafez Assad of Syria – renewed scholarly interest in the MENA's elite. This analysis tended to focus on the question of succession, a question asked for two decades because of the longevity of some incumbents (see Drysdale, 1985; Pearson, 2001). In those states, where succession had occurred, the processes and personalities of the new leadership were the subject of analysis (Willis, 1999; Khalaf, 2000). This discussion often overlooked those elites surrounding and supporting the newly minted incumbent. Because of the region's

autocratic nature, the changes that occurred in decision-making circles centred on the incumbent received limited attention. Long-tenured leaders retained the services of trusted advisors, aides and ministers rotating them in and out of government positions. Accordingly, questions pertaining to the how the elite evolved and developed their worldview were rarely examined in light of the changes that occurred between the end of the second wave of elite studies and the dawn of the twenty-first century.

In light of this renewed scholarly interests in the MENA's elite, Perthes' edited volume on the process of elite change sought to elucidate those factors that shaped the attitudes and agendas of the region's then emergent elite, in light of the generational change that was occurring at the time. The 'politically relevant elite' (PRE) is the topic of analysis in this work. The PRE are those 'people in a given country who wield political influence and power in that they make strategic decisions or participate in decision-making on a national level, contribute to defining political norms and values, and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues' (Perthes, 2004a: 5). The PRE encompasses a range of actors expanding beyond the traditional political elite to include those 'persons whose strategic position in large and powerful organizations and movements enable them to influence political decision-making directly, substantially, and regularly' (Higley and Moore, 2001: 176). Membership of the PRE is context-dependent, 'as relevance depends on the political structures as well as on the political culture of the different Arab states' (Perthes, 2004a: 5). For example, religious leaders in Saudi Arabia are part of the PRE but not in Ben Ali's Tunisia. In the former, they contribute to defining the legal framework of the state; in the latter, they were subject to repression (Glosemeyer, 2004: 152-153; Perkins, 2013: 69-73). Relevance is the key criterion for membership of the PRE and what determines relevance differs throughout the region. Thus, in order to determine a state's PRE, structural analysis of the relevant state is required.

The PRE is three concentric circles highlighting differing degrees of political influence (Perthes, 2004a: 6). The first, or inner, circle comprises the core elite – those who participate in decision-making on national issues and define the 'national interest'. The second circle is that of the intermediate elite – those who exert a considerable influence but do not have the power to decide on strategic issues unless delegated. The third, or outer, circle is that of the sub elite – less influential elites capable of indirectly influencing strategies through their position in government, the bureaucracy, the media or other organisations. The boundaries between these circles are not fixed. Elites have 'elastic formations with unclear boundaries' (Burton and Higley, 2001: 182) which

makes movement in and out of the PRE, and between its circles, a major feature of social mobility in the MENA.

Five context-dependent criteria shape movement within the PRE (Perthes, 2004a: 13-29). These criteria further shape movement in and out of the PRE. The first three criteria are the endogenous qualities that individuals bring to PRE. The first criterion is the professional background of individuals and whether they come from the state or private sector. The second criterion is that of education. This includes not only formal educational qualifications that are of use in crafting policy but ideological and social education in institutional settings, such as the ruling political party or being part of a prominent and well-connected family. The third endogenous criterion is that of age. The generations into which actors are born shape the individual experiences of PRE members. These endogenous criteria shape the outlook of individual actors and their perceptions of changes in the political system. Moreover, these factors shape how actors perceive their peers and determine whether they are relevant within the elite.

The final two criteria shaping movement within the PRE are structural. The fourth criterion is that of regional and international relations. There is a crosscutting effect with regard to this criterion as elite makeup also affects the conduct of foreign policy. Changing foreign policy requirements, borne of either domestic or external causes, necessitate the inclusion of actors with specific skill sets in the PRE. The final criterion is the domestic agenda of the country under question. The adoption of market reforms, and the pace at which they are implemented, condition movement within the PRE. Policies supporting the implementation of some form of political pluralism have also influenced PRE membership as opposition politicians are co-opted into the PRE or use their status to shape the domestic political agenda.

Perthes' work contributes to our understanding of elite politics in the MENA. First, it recognises that elite boundaries are not fixed and that actors can move between them depending upon the context in which actors find themselves. There is no clear distinction between the elite and the non-elite. Theoretically, anybody could enter the elite if they demonstrated the required skills. Perthes' thus builds upon Weinbaum's 'intermediating elites' and integrates them into a structure that formalises their movement in and out of elite strata. Second, structural factors are incorporated; this is something earlier studies of the region's elite did not do. Domestic political and economic agendas, as well as the international relations of the MENA, also contribute to explaining elite movement within the PRE, as well as in and out of it. However, this body of work does not consider elites with regard to the process of regime change.

Rather, it addresses how actors become part of, and progress through, the elite stratum of politics. Nevertheless, Perthes' work is an important contribution in aiding our understanding of the elite. It puts forth a range of factors, both endogenous and exogenous, to both explain what requirements are needed for actors to become the elite and what shapes their perceptions and actions.

Renewed scholarly interest in the MENA saw Izquierdo Brichs (2013) incorporate power dynamics into the study of intra-elite interactions. Within this study elite politics are analysed through the lens of elite interests and defined in terms of power. This work shares echoes of that conducted by Lenczowski (1975) and Zartman (1982). The overriding objective of elites is to improve their position in the social hierarchy through competition with other elites. Within Brichs' study elites are defined as those 'individuals with superior hierarchic position within social institutions and whose survival in this position depends on their capacity to compete for power accumulation' (Izquierdo Brichs and Lampridi-Kemou, 2013: 11). Thus, elite interactions are those of circular competition as elite aspirations are always relative to, and measured against, those of other elites. Elites define their primary interests in terms of the 'differential accumulation of power': the accumulation of power greater than one's rival (Nitzan and Bichler, 2002: 37-41). The desire to accumulate power greater than one's rivals leads to competition over a number of resources that include, but are not limited to, political, economic, informative, coercive, and ideological power. Furthermore, power aligns with the competitive process itself. Accumulated power is an effective type of power that is useful in accumulating further power. In essence, power begets power.

Intra-elite competition over resources shapes the societies and power structures in which elites operate in four distinct ways (Izquierdo Brichs and Lampridi-Kemou, 2013: 9-10). First, the position of elites within the system depends on their ability to compete with other elites. Accordingly, elite relations are in perpetual competition both of, and for, power. Second, elite survival is dependent upon the accumulation of power. Elites measure accumulated power against one another and this compels elites to compete with one another. Third, power is multidimensional. Elites influence one another as the power resources over which they compete are under the control of multiple actors. Fourth, power is not an abstraction and neither are those elites involved in a power relation. Elites cannot be a country or state but are individuals and groups. The analysis of power relations is focused upon individuals, meaning that, whenever reference is made to the state, the military, corporations, and other institutions, it must

be borne in mind that reference is being made to those elites who control these institutions.

Elite backgrounds shape their relations with one another, and more specifically their capacity to maintain alliances with one another. Integration refers to the structure and character of internal elite relations and in terms of 'cohesion' or 'unity' (Putnam, 1976: 115-121). There are two types of integration: moral and social integration. The former refers to the ideas and values shared by elites and their awareness of the ties between each other, the latter to the frequency and nature of the contacts and relationships between them (Giddens, 1974: 5). Integration is an important factor in determining regime stability. Higley and Burton (2001: 13-14) note that a high degree of elite integration contributes to continued political stability. The Saudi elite exhibits a high level of both moral and social integration, being the extended members of the al-Saud family. The extension of the Saudi royal family throughout the elite also makes it possible for members to occupy, not only positions of political power, but also exercise control over economic decision-making, thus allowing the royal family to shape the distribution of resources (Lecha and Zaccara, 2013: 155-162). In contrast, the Lebanese elite displays a low degree of social and moral integration at the national level, which contributed to the destabilisation of the political system until the signing of the Doha Agreement in 2008 (Goenaga and Mateos, 2013; Irani, 2013).

The capacity to generate and manage alliances reflects differences in elite integration. The degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity within the elite is particularly useful in this regard. Homogeneity contributes to the creation of similar interests and perceptions towards society (Whitley, 1974: 65). This forms alliances, which allows the regime to last longer, or allows the competition within the elite to be better regulated. Again, the Saudi elite typifies the importance of a high degree of homogeneity in managing elite interests. Despite tense relations on some occasions between members of the royal family, particularly over the question of succession, disputes have always been resolved through negotiation and, in some instances, the introduction of institutional measures designed to direct the succession process (Glosemeyer, 2005: 221). In the opposite vein, heterogeneity can lead to instability, and potentially violent conflict. Lebanon is an example of elite tension that led to instability, armed conflict, and eventually, civil war (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe, 2008: 66-69). This contributes to making a regime dependent upon the level of differentiation within the elite. All other things being equal, a high degree of differentiation is a source of instability, while a low level is a source of stability.

Izquierdo Brichs' conceptualisation of the elite aids our understanding of the endogenous factors that shape elite dynamics within the MENA. In particular, it details how elites perceive one another as competitors in a contest over different resources. This work further demonstrates that the social background of elites factors into their stability. Where elites are highly integrated, the chances of elite withdrawal lessen. There are, however, limitations to this work that must be acknowledged and mitigated. First, while the study acknowledges that elites are in a perpetual competition with one another over power resources it does not conceptualise how they form and realise their interests. Put simply the study does not take into account the possibility that different elites perceive the accumulation of resources in differing manners to one another. Rather, there is an underlying assumption that elites view all resources similarly. This may not hold true when the particularities of the MENA's various elite cadres are taken into account. Military elites may view control over coercive resources in a different light to elites residing in the ruling party. In the same vein, military elites and party elites may attach different values to different economic resources. For example, control over state expenditure on the armed forces may be a priority economic interest for the military but, for party elites, their primary economic interest may how they could best benefit from the liberalisation of the economy. Thus, the competition over resources is not simply about access to resources, but how elites perceive these resources. What is required in order to explain regime change is a means with which to articulate and perceive elite interests.

The two contemporary approaches to elite studies outlined above do much to address the limitations of the second wave's work. First, both studies have sought to address the relationship between the social background of elite actors and political outcomes. Perthes has done this through analysing how the social background and educational skills of actors has allowed them to advance within the PRE, while Izquierdo Brichs has posited a positive relationship between high levels of elite integration and elite stability. Second, Izquierdo Brichs has also made the argument that the competition over resources shapes political outcomes as elites seek to dominate their competitors in the power accumulation process. Thus, the ability of elites to shape politics is not solely dependent on social background. Third, Perthes' approach incorporates structural dynamics to a larger extent than the second wave did, as a regime's economic policy and international relationships also contribute to shaping political outcomes. There are limitations to both works however that requires addressing in order to develop an explanation for regime change that structurally includes elite

variables. First, Perthes' work is specifically concerned with elite change. However, an analytical framework could incorporate this work with some modification. Second, in order to address the limits of Izquierdo Brichs' work, the differential accumulation of power must be conceptualised in a way that both retains elite agency and structures elite incentives. Analysing the differential accumulation of power through the prism of institutional approaches to regime change in authoritarian systems that could potentially link distinct interests to distinct elite groups could accomplish this. This is plausible, given that Izquierdo Brichs' contention that elites, in institutional terms, are those controlling these institutions.

2.4 The Theoretical Framework

The central theoretical point arising from the authoritarian resilience literature's limited engagement with the elite dimension of regime change in the MENA is that direct and indirect pressures, the efficacy of which are not wholly determined, shape elite actions. Furthermore, the literature's engagement with elite politics does not outline a manner in which to articulate elite interests and preferences. Since regime change is akin to a game where different actors have diverging interests and strategies Karl (1990: 5) advocates studying the 'strategic calculations, unfolding processes, and sequential patterns that are involved in moving from one type of political regime to another'. Elites possess conflicting views regarding regime change, views shaped by their interests. Consequently, explaining elite behaviour during regime change requires analysing elites through the prism of their interests.

During the 1990s and 2000s, a school of thought emerged within the comparative literature that posited a link between the withdrawal of elite support for the incumbent and regime change within authoritarian systems. This work built upon the existing transition scholarship that previously established a relationship between intra-elite conflict within authoritarian systems and the liberalisation, and potential democratisation, of these systems (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski, 1986). As the comparative field evolved, scholars of regime change began to decouple the study of transitions from authoritarian rule from the study of transitions to democracy (Geddes, 1999a). Recent scholarship in the comparative literature on regime change, specifically transitions away from authoritarian rule, analysed the institutional makeup of authoritarian regimes to explain why elites withdraw their support for the incumbent (see Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006).

Rather than marginalise elite actors, this focus on institutional makeup and the structural environment in which they operate contributes towards shaping and defining the scope of elite agency, thus preventing the incumbent from becoming the narrative's crucial factor (Stacher, 2012: 34). The structural constraints in which elites operate do not marginalise their agency; rather they provide a range of options that actors can pursue. As Przeworski (1986: 48) notes, 'objective factors [structural constraints] constitute at most constraints to that which is possible under a concrete historical situation but do not determine the outcome of such situations'. Accordingly, institutions remain subordinate to elite agency, not forums that shape and condition elite behaviour.

Research explaining authoritarian behaviour from an institutional perspective is gaining prominence and has been incorporated into area studies, which provides an opportunity for this study to elevate the authoritarian resilience literature into the broader comparative field. In his analysis of Algeria Mortimer (1996) contends that the institutional interests and resources of key protagonists set the country on the path to civil war. A recent study by Kamrava (2010) analysed how incumbent elites in the MENA used institutions to strengthen their hold on power. Institutional perspectives are also found at work in Central Asia. In her study of institutional design, in particular, the establishment of electoral systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Jones Luong (2000) combined rational choice and historical institutionalism to explain how elites achieved outcomes amenable to their interests. In these works, the structural frameworks in which elites operate shape their perceptions and interests, on the one hand, and constrain their available options, on the other, thereby encouraging and facilitating cooperation within and across institutions such as the executive, the ruling party or the military (see Smith, 2005; Brownlee, 2007a). Thus, the institutional cadres comprising an authoritarian regime become central in explaining their persistence and breakdown as they either prevent or provoke elite splits (Slater, 2003: 81). Furthermore, these institutional approaches can incorporate elite interests and perceptions. Izquierdo Brichs and Lampridi-Kemouassert that when we refer to institutions we are in fact referring to the elites who control them. Gandhi (2008: 34) recognises this shift in scholarly thinking, writing that '[I]t should be evident that dictators do not rule alone. They govern with institutions that are particular to their type'.

There are studies that analyse the relationship between the institutional makeup of authoritarian systems and regime change. One of the most prominent is that put forth by Geddes (1999a) on the relationship between the elite cadres comprising authoritarian systems and their breakdown. Drawing upon earlier work conducted by Huntington

(1990: 110-112), Geddes (1999a: 121-122) categorises authoritarian regimes as belonging to one of a number of distinct conceptual types: military, single-party, personalist, or amalgams of these types. Within military regimes, the officer corps exercises power and influences policymaking. In single-party regimes, one party controls access to office and control over the policy process, though other parties may exist and contest elections. Personalist regimes differ from both military and single-party regimes in that access to and the spoils of office depend on the whim of an individual leader. The leader may be a military officer or have created a party to support him, but neither the military nor the party exercises independent decision-making power independent of the leader.

Within Geddes' typology, the specific interests of elite cadres determine attitudes towards regime change (2004: 15). Military elites will exit power where the interests or autonomy of the military is threatened. Single-party elites will rarely bring about authoritarian breakdown over policy disagreements or the issue of succession, only exiting power when their own political survival is threatened; they are better leaving the regime than staying with it. Elites within personalist regimes have a lot to gain in ousting their ruler but rarely do so. It is only through the occurrence of exogenous events, such as a serious illness of the leader that reduces their efficacy in maintaining elite cohesion. This is when we would expect to see elites exit the ruling coalition to better their interests. An analysis of the survival rates of authoritarian regimes categorised using Geddes' typology indicates that different regime types have different survival rates (1999a: 131). As military elites can return to the barracks in the event of interests not being realised, they rule on average for nine years. Single-party regimes are the most durable authoritarian type, according to Geddes, remaining in power for an average of twenty-three years. Personalist regimes, while less vulnerable than military types, are more vulnerable than single-party types, staying in power for an average of fifteen years. Thus, it is apparent that different elites are vulnerable to different stimuli.

Despite positing a link between the institutional makeup of authoritarian systems and a particular form of regime change, in this case authoritarian breakdown, there are those who are critical of Geddes. Hadenius and Teorell (2007: 145) argue that the typology omits several forms of autocracies. The most notable omission is that of monarchies but they further argue that the use of the single-party typology obscures two distinct types, true one-party regimes (where no opposition is allowed) and dominant-party regimes (where a single-party rules yet opposition parties are allowed compete). They are further hesitant to designate personalist regimes as a regime type, concurring

with Paul Brooker's (2009: 42-44) argument that the exercise of personalist rule is a supplementary feature of authoritarianism and a trait more or less present in a regime the longer a ruler is in place. The final criticism put forth by Hadenius and Teorell is that Geddes' work does not capture the changes in a regime's power structure over time and the consequent changes in balance of power between the incumbent and their elite cadres. To this end, they have developed their own typology of authoritarian regimes, which with the notable exception of monarchies, maps comfortably onto that of Geddes (Hadenius and Teorell, 2007: 146-148). Despite the criticisms levelled at Geddes' work, it is still an important contribution in explaining why elites withdraw their support for authoritarian leaders, as it posits a link between structurally conditioned elite interest realisation and the process of regime change.

Another prominent theory put forth to explain regime change is that of the winning coalition and the selectorate. This theory exposes the generic differences between various regime types, be they democracies, monarchies, military juntas or other regime types (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003: 41-55). It claims that the differences in the makeup of the selectorate and the winning coalition explain a variety of outcomes that include economic performance, conflict behaviour, and political survival, which is where our interest lies. The selectorate is a subset of the population that have a say in determining the leader. In a democracy, the selectorate would consist of all enfranchised citizens. The winning coalition is a subset of the selectorate and is large enough to maintain a leader in power. Without the support of the winning coalition, a leader cannot stay in office. If members of the winning coalition defect to support a rival, the leader must be able to quickly replace them with other members drawn from the selectorate or risk removal from power. In order to secure the support of the winning coalition, the leader confers private benefits upon its members. There is a natural incentive to keep numbers within the winning coalition small so that leaders can provide concentrated benefits to its members and ensure their continued loyalty.

Bueno de Mesquita et al. contend that the size of the selectorate and the winning coalition have implications for the leader's political survival (2003: 39-41). The leader's position is most secure when the winning coalition is small and the selectorate large. In such a scenario, the leader can easily find replacements for those who defect from the winning coalition given the selectorate's large size. The respective size of each group also influences the provision of public goods. When the winning coalition is large, the cost of doling out private benefits becomes expensive. Leaders instead choose to provide public goods as a means of rewarding their supporters, which in turn is

beneficial to all members of society (in democracies). However, where the winning coalition is small, leaders do not have the same incentives to invest in public goods.

The key insight of the winning coalition is that leaders will primarily cater their policy choices to the subset of the citizenry whose support they require to stay in power. Though the concepts underlying Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s theory are very useful in explaining political behaviour, there are weaknesses to this work. Frantz and Ezrow (2011: 16-17) note that Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s argument is difficult to evaluate, given that, in most dictatorships, it is not clear who comprise the selectorate. Apart from those members in the winning coalition, who tend to be highly visible because of their position, it is not obvious which individuals in authoritarian regimes have a say in the selection of the leader. Consider a regime dominated by elites drawn from the military: the incumbent and the elite rely upon other members of the military for the regime to last. These low-level members, however, rarely have a say in the selection of their leaders. Magaloni (2008: 716) further argues that the winning coalition theory is problematic, as dictators cannot simply co-opt powerful elites on the spot. She notes that 'if political rivals are powerful enough they would be better off seeking to overthrow the dictator, regardless of whether or not they receive a transfer, creating problems of commitment on the other end'. Moreover, the dictator will also possess initiatives to defect if elites are not conducive to maintaining power. To protect against the threat of defection, Magaloni advocates that the creation of a parallel institution to the winning coalition, such as a political party, is conducive to regime maintenance. The creation of a parallel institution indicates to members of the winning coalition that their membership will pay off in the long run, as there is an advancement path for progressive ambition.

While prone to criticism about how the selectorate and the winning coalition are constructed, Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s work, again, serves to illuminate the relationship between elite actors and regime change. First, their work asserts a relationship between the distribution of private goods and the retention of elite support, a corollary to Geddes' finding on the relationship between cadre interest and authoritarian breakdown. Second, the theory of the winning coalition and the selectorate speaks to the importance of the size of the elite, noting that, the greater the elite becomes in size, the more difficult it is to distribute private goods and retain elite support.

The theory that the withdrawal of elite support precipitates regime change in authoritarian systems underpins this project. Incorporating elite interests, as determined

by their institutional constraints, into our analysis allows us to test this theory. Therefore, we can hypothesise that elite cadres will withdraw their support for the incumbent during the occurrence of popular uprisings when their interests are not realised. What is required for the hypothesis to be accepted necessitates understanding how elite interests in the MENA influence regime change. An overview of the authoritarian resilience literature and a discussion of the how elites in the MENA have been theorised indicates that the region's elite are influenced by a number of direct and indirect pressures. Accordingly, these pressures influence interest realisation and how elites perceive the costs of regime change and provide the basis from which independent variables can be synthesised. What has been missing from this body of work has been a mechanism that allows for distinct elite interests to be articulated and incorporated into the analysis of regime change. In order to both conceptualise and articulate elite interests in the presidential republics of the MENA, this project engages with the comparative literature and utilises a modified version of Geddes' authoritarian typology. Rather than apply the typology at the macro level, it will be applied at the level of the winning coalition. Additionally, the utilisation of Geddes' typology allows for within-case variation, as the presidential republics of the MENA are alliances of military, single-party and personalist cadres. The next chapter will discuss how the typology is utilised.

2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was twofold. It first sought to justify the study in light of the scholarly difficulties that have recently befallen the authoritarian resilience literature. And second, it sought to put forth a theoretical explanation for why regime change occurs in authoritarian systems. The scholarship on authoritarianism argues that regime change occurs when elite actors withdraw their support for the incumbent. This scholarship also established a link between interest realisation and the withdrawal of elite support, arguing that those who saw their interests realised were less likely to withdraw support. It hypothesised that the institutional makeup of elite cadres within authoritarian regimes shapes how elite actors perceive and realise their interests. Accordingly, an argument developed that elite actors will withdraw their support for authoritarian incumbents during the occurrence of popular uprisings when their interests are not realised. In order to test this hypothesis, a range of variables will be synthesised from the authoritarian resilience literature in order to contextualise the study within the politics of the MENA.

The discussion of the authoritarian resilience literature put forth a range of analytical perspectives to explain how authoritarianism had become entrenched as a form of governance in the MENA. These perspectives outlined a range of mechanisms that saw authoritarianism persist and elite support retained. A number of these analytical perspectives also overlapped with the criteria shaping elite movement and attitude formation. Furthermore, the literature's arguments also demonstrated an ability to travel beyond the MENA, thus indicating that a synthesis of the authoritarian resilience and comparative literatures is possible. The limits encountered by the literature in the wake of the Arab uprisings provide an opportunity for this synthesis. Thus, this study makes a theoretical contribution to the authoritarian resilience literature by suggesting that elite interest realisation shapes regime change and incorporating institutionalist perspectives from the comparative literature to accomplish this. That elite interests affect regime change is the point of departure for this thesis. Specifically put, this thesis argues that interests specific to distinct elite cadres drive regime change. Thus, it is not simply 'elite interests' that drive regime change rather it is defined interests particular to specific cadres within the winning coalition.

The discussion of elites in the MENA contends that the movement of elite actors within authoritarian systems and the formation of their attitudes and preferences are shaped by an array of criteria some of which are endogenous to elite actors themselves and others which pertain to the structural environments in which elites operate. This literature also asserts that perpetual competition for resources shapes elite dynamics. However, this body of scholarship is limited in that its focus is on elite change within established authoritarian systems, rather than regime change. Nonetheless, the criteria and dynamics that shape elite change and attitudes provide a base from which we can understand elite attitudes toward regime change. There is a further limit regarding the perpetual nature of elite competition, much like the limitations of the authoritarian resilience literature, it does not conceptualise what factors shape and realise interests. Incorporating the institutional makeup of elites may potentially mitigate this limitation. There are also definitional issues to address. The behaviour of elite actors in authoritarian systems is central to research but neither term is explicitly defined in this chapter. Although the meanings behind these terms carry implicit meanings for members of the scholarly community, it is necessary that both are explicitly defined within the context of this study and the following chapter addresses this.

Finally, no studies of the MENA's presidential autocracies have taken the interests of elite cadres into account in the manner that this thesis proposes. As

previously discussed, there have been in-depth examinations of single-countries or comparative studies of specific cadres, which did not take into account their interactions with other segments of the elite or acknowledge them in some cases. According to the theory set out in the previous section, the withdrawal of elite support precipitates regime change in authoritarian systems and it hypothesised that elites withdraw their support for the incumbent when their interests are not realised. However, there have been no empirical tests of this hypothesis. A study examining interest realisation within the MENA's elite cadres would be a significant contribution, as it would widen our empirical understanding of the region's politics and regime change.

Chapter 3 – The Research Design: Explaining Regime Change in Authoritarian Systems

3.1 Introduction

At the heart of this project lies an interest in the conditions that may explain regime change in authoritarian systems. Specifically, there is an interest in how the realisation of elite interests affects regime change. The previous chapter grounded this research in a body of theory, from which a number of explanatory variables that affect interest realisation can be synthesised. This project examines the mechanisms by which elite interests are realised within authoritarian systems through comparative case studies. The project utilises analytic narratives to provide structure to the case studies.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research design. The first section will detail the research question and the theoretical and real-world contributions of the research. The second section will specify the components of the project's analytical framework. In particular, it will focus on outlining the institutional structures in which the elites of the Middle East and North Africa's (MENA) presidential republics operate. The third section will identify the dependent and independent variables and outline the means by which these variables will be operationalised. The fourth section will discuss the comparative approach and justify the selection of the case studies, while the final section will explain the choice of the analytical narratives technique and the data to be employed in this project, particularly interviews.

3.2 The Research Question

The attempt to construct an explanation for regime change in the MENA that includes elite variables as essential explanatory variables is the motivation behind this research. The theory that the withdrawal of elite support for the incumbent causes regime change in authoritarian systems underpins this project. Chapter 2 detailed a link between the withdrawal of elite support for the incumbent and regime change in authoritarian systems. It further argued that the institutional structures in which elites operate determines the scope of their agency and shapes the perception of their interests vis-à-vis regime change. Accordingly, this guides the thesis' main research question that seeks to discover *under which conditions do authoritarian elites withdraw their support for the incumbent during mass uprisings and thus precipitate regime change in*

authoritarian systems? The question particularly seeks to unravel the effects of elite interests in provoking regime change, while simultaneously incorporating the institutional structures that elites operate in as these structures shape elite interests and incentives. The overarching puzzle in this study concerns the relevance of elite interests in shaping regime change and an empirical study of this sort will contribute to a better understanding of the relevance of elite interests to regime change in authoritarian systems.

There is a necessity for the research question to make ‘a specific contribution to an identifiable scholarly literature’ (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 15). This thesis hopes to make a scholarly contribution to the authoritarian resilience literature in three specific ways. First, it aims to explain how the unintended consequences of authoritarian reconfiguration in the MENA affected elite interest realisation. Second, it will decipher the mechanisms through which elite interests are realised by engaging with the comparative literature and taking the institutional makeup of elite cadres into account. And, third, through analysing regime change, rather than authoritarian persistence, we will be able to test the efficacy and importance of those measures designed to retain elite support in the region.

3.3 The Theoretical Framework: Explaining Regime Change and Articulating Elite Interests in the Presidential Republics

In order to answer the research question, the chapter will now explore the various elite cadres comprising the MENA’s presidential republics because these regimes witnessed a moment of ‘systemic crisis’ (Albrecht, 2012: 257). Although an actor-driven process, the structural constraints in which actors operate also shape regime change. These institutional structures shape the interests, outlooks and strategies of elites (Brooks, 2008: 15). Nonetheless, intentionality of action requires consideration. Hence, the focus here is on the interaction between the institutional constraints in which elites operate and path-dependent decision-making.

Chapter 2 established elites withdraw their support the incumbent when their interests are not realised. This section details the specifics of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 to explain why this is so. Before attending to the framework, there are definitional issues to address. The previous chapter discussed three different conceptualisations of the term elite, all of which are equally valid. However, this framework employs Svobik’s (2012: 5-6) definition of the ruling coalition to define the elite. The elite, from hereon in also termed the ruling coalition, are those ‘individuals

who support a dictator and, jointly with him, hold enough power to guarantee a regime's survival'. Put simply, the members of the ruling coalition are 'the essentials' without whose support the incumbent would be finished (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 5).

The terms authoritarianism and democracy also require definition. As this study seeks to explain transitions away from authoritarianism, not transitions to democracy, it is important to make the analytical distinction between the two clear. Linz (2000: 255) describes authoritarian regimes as those 'political systems with limited, not responsible political pluralism, without intensive nor extensive political mobilization, and in which a leader or small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones'. The thesis utilises Linz's definition of authoritarianism because the following subsection makes clear that it captures the elemental nature of the MENA's presidential republics. Overseeing these systems characterised by limited pluralism and political mobilisation is an incumbent, ably supported by a small group, possessing ill-defined power exercised in a predictable manner, that of maintaining the regime.

Democracy has been defined to such an extent that some have reasonably asserted the term lacks meaning (see Storm, 2008). This work does not seek to engage in a deep debate about the term and instead employs a minimalist definition. This removes the normative burdens placed on the term (Przeworski, 2003: 12), and, makes a clear distinction with authoritarianism. This being so, this work defines democracy as 'a regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections' that grants those entering office 'the authority to exercise government free of the legal constraint of having to respond to a power not constituted as a result of the legal process (Przeworski et al., 2000: 15). What empirically distinguishes democracy from authoritarianism, and separates the two, is its uncertainty. Political outcomes in authoritarian systems are predictable but uncertainty is the essence of political life in democracies; all actors must modify their commitments to adjust to the abiding political reality (Przeworski, 1991: 14).

3.3.1 The Presidential Republics of the MENA

The MENA's presidential republics emerged during the postcolonial period. Like authoritarian systems elsewhere they share an aversion to popular power and inclusion within the political system (Hinnebusch, 2006). They are highly individualised systems constructed along neo-patrimonial lines that grant the incumbent a hybrid of

bureaucratic and personal authority (Hinnebusch, 2015: 213). This grants the incumbent wide latitude in constructing their ruling coalition, which consists of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ groups. The modern group has its origins within the institutions of the state, such as the ruling party or the military, while those in the traditional group derive their position from likenesses based on kin, sect or region. The balance between these two groups varies according to individual regimes but they all share a common function: to maintain the president in power for life (Owen, 2012: 37). Despite differences between the presidential republics, in terms of policy interests, the components from which they build their elite coalitions exhibit a remarkable degree of similarity. Owen writes that (2012: 38-39):

At the apex of such systems stands the presidential office, the presidential family, and a small group of advisors drawn from the military, the security services, and the business elite. Next in order of importance come the senior members of the army, the intelligence agencies, and the police, together with a small group of crony capitalists who obtain access and influence in exchange for a role in providing additional resources for the regime in terms of money and, sometimes, organizational skills . . . To this should be added the role of well-organized government parties . . . [and their] overwhelming national presence with huge propaganda functions as well as ancillary police duties involving surveillance and information gathering.

Why actors withdraw from the ruling coalition during popular uprisings remains unanswered when we consider the MENA’s presidential republics. First, determining the efficacy of the strategies employed by the incumbent to retain elite support is difficult (Albrecht, 2015: 40). And, second, studies of the institutional makeup of the region’s elite cadres have analysed either in-depth single-case studies or abstract comparative typologies, both of which their limitations. To answer the research question, the thesis will employ a theoretical framework occupying the middle ground between these two approaches that seeks to utilise theoretical concepts drawn from the literature.

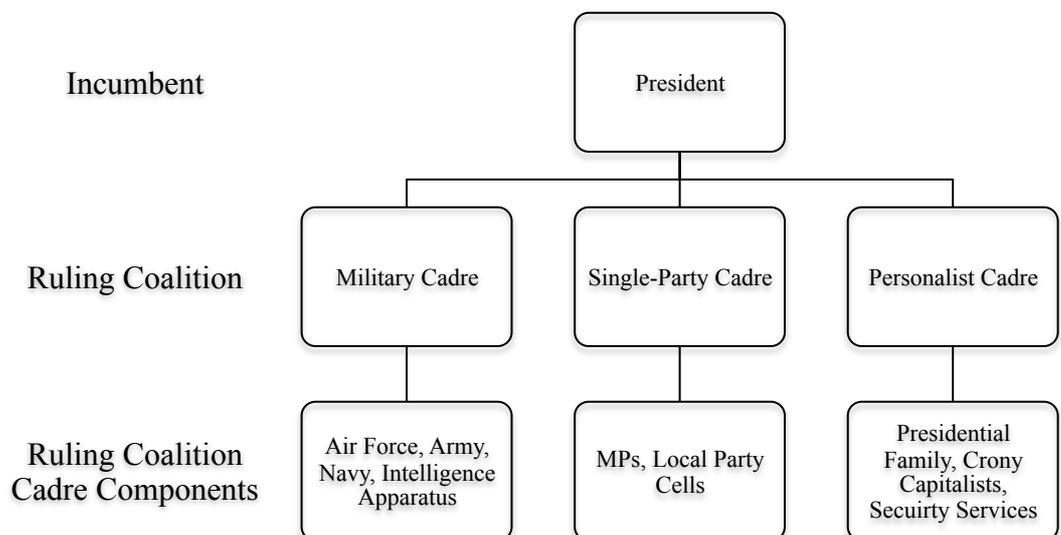
As proposed in Chapter 2 the interests determined by the institutional constraints in which elites operate explain their decision to withdraw from the ruling coalition. Incorporating institutional constraints into a theoretical framework allows us to articulate elite interests, which then allow us to determine how those in the ruling coalition perceive the costs and benefits of regime change. The theoretical framework constructed in this thesis draws upon Geddes’ established typology of authoritarian regimes (1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2004). The framework departs from Geddes in the application of her cadre interests argument. Rather than analyse regime change at the

abstract level of ‘the regime’, this thesis does so at the level of the ruling coalition. The framework follows Geddes in terming the members of the ruling coalition the military, single-party and personalist cadre, each of which possess distinct interests and preferences towards regime change.

These three cadres constitute ideal types. They do not reflect the interests of individual elite actors within each cadre; rather they reflect the institutional interests of each cadre as a whole (Izquierdo Brichs and Lampridi-Kemou, 2013: 10). Thus, institutional interests subsume individual elite interests in order to improve the cadre’s overall interest realisation. The military cadre illustrates this logic. An air force general may seek improved fighter jets and an admiral improved radar capability for the navy. While these interests reflect individual interests on the part of both officers, they are also consistent with the institutional interests of the military cadre: the maintenance of a capable military force. This focus on institutional interests does not diminish the research’s argument as it seeks to make a theoretical interpretation of events as they occurred not provide details on the specific interests of individual elite actors.

Figure 3.1 details the structure of the MENA’s presidential republics, per Owen’s description, whilst incorporating Geddes’ typology. At the apex of this structure is the incumbent president, supported by the ruling coalition, the military, single-party and personalist cadre, and, the specific components of each cadre. The following subsections place these groups within the structures of the military, single-party, and personalist cadres. This allows the thesis to develop testable hypotheses for each cadre.

Figure 3.1 The Presidential Republics of the MENA



3.3.2 The Military Cadre: The Armed Forces

The military elite of the MENA comprise the senior ranks of the office corps and directly or indirectly exercise influence on policymaking (Geddes, 2003: 51-52). There are four degrees of military involvement: none, indirect, corporate, and personal (Svolik, 2012: 32-33). Indirect military involvement suborns the military to civilian rule but allows military officers to informally participate in political structures, such as cabinet meetings, in order to exercise influence (Kamrava, 2000: 75). Corporate and personal involvements deal with direct involvement (Svolik, 2012: 33). Corporate involvements sees the military's role within government institutionalised through an established decision-making body or through policies that formally incorporate the military into areas of government that are traditionally the domain of civilian politicians (such as education or healthcare). Personal military involvement on the other hand implies a policy-making concern, with the military institution above all else. The military's prominence as a political actor within the MENA has waned somewhat in recent years, as presidents have increasingly entrusted domestic protection to their various security services (Owen, 2012: 44). Nonetheless, incumbents recognise the importance of retaining the armed forces' support and have put measures in place to ensure this (see Bellin, 2004; 2012).

Research on the attitudes and preferences of officers from across different societies indicate that those in the military cadre come from a variety of social backgrounds. In light of this, officers hold differing ideologies and sympathise with different societal and political interests. Consequently, no generalisations can be made about the interests or political leanings of individual officers (Geddes, 1999a: 125). There is nevertheless an established consensus that most professional soldiers place a higher value on the survival and efficacy of the military institution above all else (Finer, 1975; Decalo, 1976; Janowitz, 1977; Bienen, 1978). This interest implies a concern with the maintenance of hierarchy, discipline, and cohesiveness within the military; autonomy from civilian intervention; and the provision of budgets with which attract high calibre recruits and procure ultramodern equipment (Stepan, 1971; Nordlinger, 1977). A high value is thus placed on the military's ability to defend the nation, which 'entails the maintenance of a strong military force' (Needler, 1975: 71); an ability the military feels unable to realise unless it remains unified and adequately supplied.

Incumbent presidents have retained the support of the MENA's military cadres through overseeing an increased professionalization of the armed forces.

Professionalization has not seen the military suborn itself to civilian command (Huntington, 1957: 80-85) but, rather, saw an increase in autonomy and the introduction of modern equipment and technology (Kamrava, 2000: 69). Military training has improved, in terms of both content and resources, and promotion has become less arbitrary and more merit-based. There has also been an expansion in the number of ‘professional’ cadres of specialist officers and military experts throughout the various levels and branches of the armed forces. Professionalization has been a boon to the military. It has strengthened its corporate identity and sense of efficacy, both militarily and politically (Kamrava, 2000: 70).

The costs of retaining military support – professionalization, and the attendant wages, salaries and pensions of the military corps – have also been defrayed in large part through the armed forces’ engagement in business ventures (Owen, 2012: 45). This is doubly beneficial: incumbent regimes were able to defray the costs of military operations while the military institution was able to insulate the issue of national defence from potential economic mismanagement in the civilian sphere (Droz-Vincent, 2007: 201). The militaries of Egypt and Syria are actively engaged in the business sector. Both developed indigenous arms industries and are active in the civilian economy (see Sadowski, 1999; Haddad, 2012). The Algerian military is also active in the private sector, having positioned itself at the intersection of the state and the private sector. The officer corps are the *parrains* (godfathers) of the business community; exchanging business licences and access to goods for a percentage of the profits generated (Dillman, 2000: 75; Cook, 2007: 45).¹⁰ Incumbents cannot take the military’s docility for granted, however. As an institution, it has its own interests to protect in terms of its budget, control over personnel, and, in some instances, specific policy concerns, with regard to national security and its economic interests (Owen, 2012: 45-46). To safeguard these interests, incumbents typically appoint a senior general as Minister of Defence.

The interests of the military cadre imply that the armed forces will only favour regime change if the civilian government prevents the achievement of their goals and that many will only push for regime change if there is a belief that the military as an institution is threatened or compromised. These preferences are consistent with

¹⁰ Individual military officers have also been provided with lucrative opportunities to participate in business ventures or enter the public sector upon retirement to cement their ties to the incumbent regime (see Bou Nassif, 2013). However, the provision of these opportunities does not fall within the scope of this research as the interests of military elites discussed above speak to those held by active duty officers and their concern for the military institution, not private economic gain.

Nordlinger's (1977: 142) observation about the importance of threats to the military as an institution in the decision of officers to join coup conspiracies:

Only a small proportion originally entered the military in the hope of attaining governmental offices. Many praetorians took up the reins of government with little enthusiasm. Most of them would probably have preferred to remain in the barracks if their objectives, particularly the defence or enhancement of the military's corporate interests, could have been realized from that vantage point.

The worst possible threat to the military cadre is civil war and a split in the armed forces (Geddes, 2004: 9). That being so, the most important concern for many officers in deciding whether to countenance regime change is their assessment of whether others will follow. Thus, the interests of military elites prioritise the survival and efficacy of the military as an institution itself. While personal enrichment can rank high in the motives of many military elites, the realisation of this interest is borne through the survival and effectiveness of the military as an institution. Because of their interest in maintaining the corporate interests and institutional integrity of the military as an institution, military elites will acquiesce to remaining in power as long as its interests are realised. Accordingly, this makes the military cadre generally adverse to regime change (Droz-Vincent, 2011: 5). However, the officer corps will not continue to support the regime if it leads to the disintegration of the military as an institution or its fragmentation into openly competing factions. If military interests are threatened, the officer corps will favour regime change. For the military cadre, there is life after regime change, as all but the highest ranked military elites return to the barracks with their status and career untarnished, and often with their budgets and salaries often increased by nervous post-regime change governments (Huntington, 1991: 116). Where the integrity of the military institution itself is threatened, the officer corps will move to displace the civilian government. This will only occur when there is consensus amongst the senior officers since the worst possible outcome for the military cadre is a civil war in which elements of the military fight on each side (Stepan, 1971; Valenzuela, 1978). We can thus hypothesise that *the denial of military interests within the ruling coalition will lead the military to withdraw its support for the incumbent and voluntarily exit the ruling coalition during popular uprisings. Furthermore, in those instances where the military institution is threatened, the officer corps will displace the civilian government and assume power if there is consensus amongst the senior officers.*

3.3.3 The Single-Party Cadre: The Ruling Parties

The members of the single-party cadre comprise the ruling body of the regime party. These cadres exercise some form of control over the actions of the leader at least part of the time, control the career path of party officials, organise the distribution of benefits to supporters, and, mobilise citizens to vote and show support for the party in other ways (Geddes, 2003: 52). Because of this, the cadre performs two interlinked duties, it ensures both elite and popular support for the incumbent, which ensures the party performs its core function of keeping the regime in power (Sartori, 1976; Schedler, 2006a, 2006b).

The MENA's ruling parties contribute to the maintenance of elite support for the incumbent through the distribution of material benefits and selective co-optation. The effective distribution of material patronage and the provision of (potential) opportunities for promotion make single-party elites dependent on the incumbent remaining in power. Joseph Sassoon's (2012) analysis of Saddam Hussein's Iraq illuminates these methods in vivid detail. The most coveted symbol of Ba'th Party loyalty in Saddam-era Iraq was the 'Identity Card of the Friends of Mr. President Leader Saddam Hussein, May God Protect him' (Sassoon, 2012: 209-210). Holders of this card were privy to a range of benefits that included, but were not limited to, meeting Saddam Hussein once a year, grants and holiday bonuses, priority over other citizens in meeting government officials, and an annual gift of two summer suits and two winter suits. Moreover, support for regime enhanced promotion prospects within the party. To advance within the Ba'th Party, members had to exhibit loyalty and an abiding commitment to the party's rules, regulations, and responsibilities (Sassoon, 2012: 47). 'Political education' accompanied promotion, thus ensuring future loyalty to the party. These incentives contributed towards maintaining support for the incumbent in the long-term, as the institutional constraints of the ruling party provide a setting in which elite conflict can be mitigated and mutually acceptable solutions to elite conflict found (Brownlee, 2007a; Gandhi, 2008). The interests of single-party cadres are consequently much simpler than their military counterparts: they simply want to remain in office (Geddes, 1999a: 129). Some enjoy the rewards of office; some value the opportunity to shape policy; and others enjoy the access to illicit benefits granted by political office. Single-party cadres value the survival and unity of the party as a factor in their own survival, not as a means to other ends.

Ruling parties not only make defections less likely but they also ensure that those who defect are unlikely to succeed in those systems where incumbents seek legitimation

through democratic institutions and elections (Magaloni, 2008: 738-739). In such contexts, strong ruling parties, not only mobilise the population to support the regime or defy challenges against the incumbent, but also help win elections through ‘ballot-box stuffing and other forms of fraud [that] require coordination, discretion, and discipline among numerous lower-level authorities – which party organizations provide’ (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 63). Ruling parties also help control legislatures, a crucial forum for controlling policy-making and in avoiding conflict with other branches of the regime, such as the presidency or the military. Finally, strong ruling parties can facilitate authoritarian succession. They can either offer a pool from which to select potential successors or provide the mechanisms with which to facilitate a smooth transition (Brownlee, 2007b, 2008; Hess, 2010). Smooth authoritarian successions have occurred in those states with strong government parties such as Malaysia, Mozambique, and Tanzania (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 64). This also occurred in Syria when Bashar Assad succeeded his father Hafez as president. The Ba’th party had mobilised around the younger Assad in the years prior to his father’s death and he further cemented control of the party by appointing his loyalists to key positions (Perthes, 2004b; Brownlee, 2008: 41-42).

Ruling parties also contribute to maintenance of authoritarian rule in society. They do this in two ways. First, they mobilise support for the regime. Algeria’s single-party system, presided over by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), contained five separate organisations tasked with mobilising support for the regime: the *Organisation Nationale des Moudjahidine*, the *Union Nationale de la Jeunesse Algérienne*, the *Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes*, the *Union Nationale des Paysans Algériennes* and the *Union Nationale des Travailleurs Algériens* (Werenfels, 2007: 36). In 1987, official figures put membership of these organisations at 4 million people, out of a total population of 24 million (Fattah, 1990: 128). The main task of the FLN and these organisations was to implement the decisions taken by party leadership, expand the regime’s control over the population and prevent the emergence of political forces that could challenge the regime through channelling them into the regime’s institutional structures (Werenfels, 2007: 36). And, second, local party cells, youth wings, and other grassroots structures are also used to monitor and suppress the opposition, thus becoming an ‘extension of the state’s police power’ (Widner, 1992: 8). Writing on the Iraqi Ba’th party, Sassoon (2012: 224) notes that ‘opponents of the regime faced constant harassment’; indeed, the party leadership called on local cells to apply

increasing pressure against those who opposed the regime and employ methods up to and including arrests and assassination.

Despite the efforts undertaken to retain party unity, factions do form within single-party cadres. They do so around policy differences, leadership positions, and the issue of succession (Geddes, 2004: 15). Leadership struggles and succession crises may occur but, with the exception of extraordinary situations, single-party cadres want to remain in power. During these power struggles, the members of the single-party cadre will keep their heads down and wait to see who emerges victorious, as the cadre's membership realise it is better to remain united in the ruling coalition rather than disunited outside of it. Accordingly, single-party cadres prefer practicing co-optation rather than exclusion. None of the party's factions would be better off, or capable of ruling alone and neither would any faction voluntarily exit office, unless exogenous events changed the perceived costs and benefits of regime change (Geddes, 1999a: 134). Through their control over the allocation of patronage and employment opportunities in government, single-party cadres can claim the loyalty of the most ambitious and upwardly mobile in society. The single-party cadre is also more likely to be open to all those who aspire to join the ruling coalition and less likely to limit its membership like the personalist cadre. Single-party cadres are vulnerable to exogenous shocks but in the absence of these shocks, they are unlikely to be destabilised by internal rivalries or external opposition.

Strong ruling parties are important pillars of authoritarian rule, helping to manage and regulate elite conflict through the organisation and distribution of material patronage. By providing institutional mechanics for rulers to reward loyalists and by lengthening actors' time horizons through the provision of future opportunities for promotion, parties encourage elite cooperation over defection. As long as the party remains in power, losers in short-term power or policy struggles are likely to remain loyal in the expectation of access to spoils in the future. Where governing parties are weak or absent, regime elites see fewer opportunities for political advancement from within and are thus more likely to seek power from outside the regime. Consequently, single-party cadres are unlikely to voluntarily exit the ruling coalition during the occurrence of mass uprisings because of endogenous factors (Geddes, 1999a: 134). Rather, they would attempt to co-opt those demonstrating and secure an amicable end to the uprisings. However, single-party cadres are willing to withdraw from the ruling coalition if their interests and survival are threatened (Geddes, 2004: 15). The factors that compel single-party cadres to exit the ruling coalition are exogenous rather than

endogenous, as they are vulnerable to external shocks (Geddes, 1999b: 8). In the absence of these shocks, they are unlikely to be destabilised by internal rivalries or external opposition. We can therefore hypothesise that *single-party cadres will not voluntarily exit the ruling coalition because of endogenous factor during the occurrence of mass uprisings. However, if exogenous factors threaten the interests and/or survival of single-party cadres, they will withdraw from the ruling coalition at this time.*

3.3.4 The Personalist Cadre: The Presidential Family, The Cronies, and The Security Services

Membership of the personalist cadre is more fluid than that of the military and single-party cadres. Access to the ruling coalition depends much more on the discretion of the incumbent than the formal institutional structures of the armed forces and the ruling party. Personalist cadres draw upon the network of family, friends and allies surrounding the incumbent (Geddes, 1999a: 130). Within the MENA, personalist cadres are drawn from two distinct groups, the extended family and friends of the incumbent, and the various security services typically housed in the Interior Ministry.

The role of the presidential family varies throughout the MENA. Some, such as Ali Saleh of Yemen, used their extended family to control the state. The Yemeni state was effectively reorganised as a family enterprise, as state institutions and the economy became the preserve of the extended Saleh family (Dresch, 2002: 149; Novak, 2006; Erlanger, 2010). Saleh's son, Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, was Commander of the Republican Guard, while three nephews all attained the rank of colonel and occupied important security posts. Others, such as Anwar Sadat in Egypt and Bashar Assad in Syria, encouraged their wives to assume a role akin to a combination of queen and US first lady (Owen, 2012: 43). They attained postgraduate degrees and became engaged in 'politically neutral' charitable activities, such as literacy campaigns, that gave the impression of a vibrant civil society and concern for the rights of women (see Elaasar, 2010; Kawakibi, 2013).

The incumbent determines the scope of family power. Sons, and sometimes sons-in-law, are the most important of the familial actors. They assume a wide variety of roles at the behest of their fathers (and fathers-in-law), whether as potential successors, political managers, economic managers, or as loyal commanders of vital units in the military (see Dresch, 2002; Brownlee, 2008; Beau and Graciet, 2009). To perform these roles, they must pass through a period of testing in which some might not choose to serve as potential successor, like Alaa Mubarak, while others, like Uday Hussein, were

found lacking (Owen, 2012: 43). Others, such as Bashar Assad have passed these tests and ably succeeded their fathers (Álvarez-Ossorio and Gutiérrez de Terán, 2013: 186-187). Some, like Mubarak's second son and presumed heir, Gamal, also play a secondary role as a source of regime financing (see Elaasar, 2010: 216-217). It is clear sons and the rest of the incumbent's extended family must all be considered as part of a single team dedicated to the promotion of a mutual family interest: the maintenance of the incumbent (Owen, 2012: 44).

Incumbent presidents also surround themselves with friends who use their privileged access to obtain favourable business terms in exchange for political and economic support. These cronies are dependent on the state and its policies for their enrichment (see Heydemann, 2004). The opportunities for cronyism differed from state to state, as they were largely the result of the economic circumstances in which regimes found themselves and their need to restructure their economies (Owen, 2012: 53).

The second group within the personalist cadre are the security services: the various police, paramilitaries, and intelligence services typically housed within the region's Ministries of the Interior (MOI). The security services comprise part of the personalist cadre because their mission is qualitatively different to that of the military cadre's. Whereas the military's mission is national defence, the security services' is to protect the regime (Droz-Vincent, 2014: 183). The security services guard the regime from internal threats and have direct contact with the incumbent. They are not only a repressive body but an essential go-between on administrative matters, which range from resolving local conflicts to issuing bureaucratic papers and authorisations (Droz-Vincent, 2011: 3). They are informed by a particular internal logic that needs to identify, monitor, and control threats to the regime (Owen, 2012: 46). In many cases, such as Syria, the powers and responsibilities of the security services often overlap (MEIB, 2000); a precaution that serves to both strengthen regime security against domestic threats and prevent the emergence of internal ones (see Batatu, 1999; Ziadeh, 2011). In order to carry out their duties, the security services have a wide legal berth. In Egypt, the work of the security services was supported by a range of laws, including an emergency that was in force until 2011, which permitted the government to ban any and all public gatherings, censor and close down media outlets, and arrest or detain individuals without charge (Leila, 2010). These practices were primarily used to 'stifle political dissent'. Even without these legally enshrined powers, there is much evidence to suggest that the security services were empowered to act outside of the law, torturing

arrested persons and threatening them with re-arrest or the arrest of family members, if they tried to lodge a complaint (Rodenbeck, 2010: 13).

The provision of access to material resources retains the security services' loyalty, which comes from a variety of sources. The first is state expenditure, which has consistently increased since the 1990s (Owen, 2012: 47). Second, the leadership of certain security services had private sector interests like their military counterparts (Haddad, 2004). And, third, the members of these institutions were the recipient of direct monetary aid, as well as plots of land and apartments (Sassoon, 2012: 212). Members of the security services were also provided for in retirement, typically companies owned by their former colleagues (Rodenbeck, 2010: 13). Furthermore, these individuals amassed a significant amount of sensitive political and economic information during the course of their work, making them particularly in demand in retirement.

Members of the personalist cadre are opposed to regime change. Familial and/or sectarian ties, as well as material inducements, bind them to the incumbent. For their material interests to be realised it is imperative the incumbent stay in power. Regarding the personalist cadre Bratton and Van de Walle (1997: 86) who write that its members:

[A]re unlikely to promote reform . . . Recruited and sustained with material inducements, lacking an independent political base, and thoroughly compromised in the regime's corruption, they are dependent on the survival of the incumbent. Insiders typically have risen through the ranks of political service and, apart from top leaders who may have invested in private capital holdings, derive their livelihood principally from state or party offices. Because they face the prospect of losing all visible means of support in a political transition, they have little option but to cling to the regime, to sink or swim with it.

Personalist cadres will not willingly withdraw their support for the incumbent during the occurrence of mass uprisings because they are entirely reliant on their access to the incumbent to realise their interests (Geddes, 1999a: 130). Thus, the personalist cadre is wholly set against regime change and neither endogenous nor exogenous factors will cause it to voluntarily exit the ruling coalition. We can accordingly hypothesise that *members of the personalist cadre will not voluntarily exit the ruling coalition during the occurrence of popular uprisings.*

In conclusion, when faced with popular uprisings, we expect the elites cadres of the ruling coalition react in the following ways. If their interests are threatened, the military cadre will opt to exit power and return to the barracks. Alternatively, where the military institution itself is threatened, the military cadre will displace the civilian

government. In either case, it abandons the ruling coalition. Single-party cadres will attempt to negotiate an amicable end to the situation and will only voluntarily exit the ruling coalition if their interests are threatened by exogenous factors. Personalist cadres are set against the occurrence of regime change and neither endogenous nor exogenous factors will lead to a voluntarily exit from the ruling coalition.

3.3.5 The Time Period

The time period incorporates the popular uprisings and political developments that occurred in the preceding two decades because elite withdrawal from the ruling coalition cannot only be tested during the occurrence of a popular uprising. This is for two reasons. First, analysing elite responses during the occurrence of a crisis would be a tautological exercise, as elite splits tend to become visible during these times (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 61). And second, the longer authoritarian regimes remain in power, the longer they provide observers with differing traits of authoritarianism, as certain factions and policies become favoured over others, which consequently affects interest realisation (Brownlee, 2007a: 28 n.9).

To test for the withdrawal of elite support for the incumbent, the argument has two levels of analyses. First, it will test for the endogenous realisation of elite interests before the occurrence of popular uprisings and trace the changes that have occurred over time and examine how elite cadres perceived their membership within the ruling coalition. Through realising their supporters' interests incumbents can guard against internal threats to their authority. However, the use of these tactics foments competition within the elite as favourites emerge under the incumbent's patronage that may destabilise the regime in the long-term (Lee, 2009: 645). Second, the study will trace the effect of the exogenous variables prior to and during the occurrence of mass popular uprising, which will determine whether or not members of the ruling coalition will countenance regime change. Exogenous factors provide an opportunity for marginalised elites to move against the regime and their rivals within it. The occurrence of a popular uprising is an opportunity to do just that, as those protesting can appeal to marginalised elites within the regime (Schmitter, 1985: 18-19). The disgruntled regime elite thus becomes the 'swingmen', whose support can hasten the transition process within authoritarian regimes (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 25). Whether marginalised elites favour regime change depends on conditions exogenous to regime dynamics that affect their decision-making in the midst of a popular uprising, which allows the thesis to

assess the impact of ‘unintended consequences’. For each case study, the examination of endogenous and exogenous factors will comprise an individual chapter.

3.4 The Variables

Having outlined the institutional constraints that shape elite interests and their preferences regarding regime change, this section presents the specific variables at play in the theoretical framework. The dependent variable will be discussed first and is followed by the four independent variables. The first two are endogenous to the ruling coalition and the second two are exogenous to it.

3.4.1 The Dependent Variable: Regime Change

The dependent variable is regime change in authoritarian systems. It is important to bear in mind that the study of transitions to democracy and the study of transitions away from authoritarianism be decoupled from one another (Bellin, 2012). This study refers to the latter; the former is a separate and distinct analytical inquiry. To explain regime change in authoritarian systems, it is important to define what it is we seek to explain. In discussing the presidential autocracies of the MENA, this study will follow general practice and use the term ‘regime’ to identify the president, the administration, the state and system collectively (Sedgwick, 2010: 254). This differs from some scholarly interpretations that may define ‘regime’ as meaning something close to ‘administration’, which distinguishes the regime (in the sense of administration) from the state (Fishman, 1990: 428). In the authoritarian systems of the MENA, as has been discussed, state and administration are often hard to distinguish, and people don’t generally make the distinction between president, administration, state, and system. In Mubarak-era Egypt, where there was no distinction between president, administration, state and system, the term *hukuma* (government) was used to denote the regime (Sedgwick, 2010: 254). In this study, when the term regime is used, it refers to the *hukuma*, not just the administration. The study nonetheless agrees with Fishman (1990: 428) on one point regarding the term ‘regime’: it is the centre of political power that shapes relations with broader society.

It will now be detailed how regime change will be measured. The changes that occurred in the MENA did not radically alter the pre-existing power relationships in society, thus this change cannot be seen as revolutionary (Larémont, 2014: 3; Durac, 2011; Hanieh, 2015). Tunisia may be the notable exception in this regard having gone further in reforming its political system compared to others in the region (Marzouki,

2015). Accordingly where change occurred it was change that affected the operation of the incumbent regime. When we speak of change, we speak of who rules and how they choose to rule. In order to explain the change of *who* rules and *how* they rule Huntington (1971: 316) has formulated a value-free concept of regime change that liberates the process from its normative assumptions. Regime change, as defined by Huntington, is change in the value or content of any of the components of a given political system. These are: the values, attitudes, orientations, myths and beliefs relevant to politics and dominant in society; the structures and formal organisations through which society makes authoritative decisions including political parties, the legislature, the executive and the bureaucracy; the formal and informal social groups and economic formations that participate in politics and make demands of political structures; the individuals occupying leadership positions in political institutions and groups who exercise more influence than others and determine the rules of the political ‘game’; and, the policies and patterns of governmental activity that are consciously designed to affect the distribution of benefits and penalties within society.

Regime change in authoritarian systems involves a change in these components during popular uprisings. In order to operationalise the dependent variable and correctly identify the degree of change, there are two distinct forms of regime change. There are two outcomes that can be observed when regime change occurs in authoritarian systems: authoritarian breakdown and authoritarian transformation.

Authoritarian breakdown refers to the formal end or dismissal of an official political body. Within studies of regime change, authoritarian breakdown has often been folded into studies of transitions to democracy rather than studies of transitions away from authoritarianism. As previously mentioned, the two are analytically distinct, and, moreover, the occurrence of authoritarian breakdown does not necessarily imply successful democratisation (Geddes, 1999a: 115-116). Authoritarian breakdown is a distinct form of regime change that sees ‘[t]he institutions, procedures, ideas, and individuals connected with the previous regime . . . considered tainted and the emphasis was on a sharp, clean break with the past’ (Huntington, 1991: 147). It represents a change of both the ‘who’ and the ‘how’ of governance and sees a change in leadership, policies, groups and structures. Breakdown will be used interchangeably with collapse and dissolution, and the prefix, ‘authoritarian’, may be dropped. Within this thesis, the Tunisian case study represents an occurrence of authoritarian breakdown.

Authoritarian transformation refers to the reordering of the component parts of an authoritarian regime and represents a partial dissolution of the incumbent regime

(Shehata, 2011: 31). Elite actors within the regime itself play a decisive role in shaping the process of authoritarian transformation, however unlike in other transformation processes there is no transition away from authoritarian rule (Huntington, 1991: 124). While some institutions and actors associated with the previous authoritarian regime will have disappeared, the historical core of the regime will remain in place (Albrecht, 2012: 266). Thus, authoritarian transformation represents a survival strategy for authoritarian regimes. The least popular and most visible members of an authoritarian regime, such as the leader and the cabinet, will be jettisoned in order to maintain the system. Authoritarian transformations represent a transformation of the 'who' rather than the 'how' and offer a *de facto* continuity between the previous authoritarian regime and the one that has emerged. There is procedural continuity but not personnel continuity. It is a change in the leadership, groups, and structures comprising the regime under examinations and continuity in policies and culture. Within this thesis, the Egyptian case represents an occurrence of authoritarian breakdown. The measures chosen to operationalise the dependent variable are clearly observable, thus ensuring empirical verification or falsification. This ensures that the dependent variable will be able to maximise correctness (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 109).

With the specifics of the dependent variables outlined, attention will now be given to the independent variables. The model identifies four independent variables, two endogenous to the ruling coalition and two exogenous to it. The first endogenous variable, elite perceptions and interpersonal ties, details the social ties binding the members of the ruling coalition and the incumbent to one another and how they perceive their interests. The second endogenous variable is material, which speaks to the material resources afforded to members of the ruling coalition. The first exogenous variable, popular legitimation, details how the population perceives the incumbent regime, and how this affects the realisation of elite interests. The second exogenous variable, international support, explains how the provision of material and existential support from external actor actors affects interest realisation.

3.4.2 Elite Perceptions and Interpersonal Ties

Elite interests are not solely realised through material gain. Interests are also realised through non-material sources of cohesion such as shared ethnic or ideological ties or a history of shared struggle (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 61). These non-material sources of cohesion recall Chapter 2's discussions of institutionalism and patrimonialism, and integration, homogeneity and heterogeneity. Elite cadres staffed on

patrimonial lines are resistant to regime change, believing that regime change will damage their interests, whereas those staffed along professionalised lines do not believe regime change will damage their interests (Bellin, 2004: 145). Moreover, elite cadres that share a high degree of moral and social integration with the incumbent will perceive their interests similarly, as they share similar values and interact regularly (Giddens, 1974: 5). Homogeneity reinforces this integration as it contributes to the creations of shared interests and perceptions toward society (Whitley, 1974: 65). On the other hand, heterogeneity contributes to the creation of different interests and perceptions. Hence, we can infer that highly integrated and homogenous elite cadres staffed on personalist lines are more likely to have their interests realised, as their interests and perceptions towards society align with those of the incumbent. Contrary to this, less integrated and heterogeneous elite cadres staffed along professionalised lines are less likely to have their interests realised, as their interests and perceptions towards society do not align with those of the incumbent. The question is how to determine the strength of the ties between the incumbent and the elite cadres within the ruling coalition.

To answer this question, the social backgrounds and political agendas of those in the ruling coalition must be taken into account and considered alongside those of the incumbent. The social backgrounds of elites refer to the educational, ideological and generational experiences that shape their interests and perceptions. Third-level education has traditionally been seen as a preserve of the elite in the MENA and a 'foreign degree', either from a Western university abroad or one based on the region, is seen as a valuable tool for inclusion within the elite (see Richards and Waterbury, 2008; Romani, 2009). These schools provide opportunities for upward mobility within the technocratic segments of the ruling coalition, such as the provision of jobs within the ruling party (Perthes, 2004a: 16), and opportunities for advancement within the military cadre, as many officers routinely undertake further study with the United States military or gain practical experience with as officers in Gulf armies (Droz-Vincent, 2014: 189).

Educational qualifications are not sufficient on their own for interest realisation, rather, they are a means to an end. Interests and perceptions that are ideologically congruent with those of the incumbent must accompany these qualifications for interests to be realised. Membership of the military, the ruling party, the security services, or the incumbent's personal network contributes to the development of distinct ideological interests and perceptions. For example, the Iraqi Ba'th party served as a centre of political indoctrination that bound party members to the personality cult of

Saddam Hussein (Sassoon, 2012: 186-192). Membership of the regime's institutional structures therefore supplement educational qualifications, which are important in helping the states of the MENA adapt to the political climates they operate in (Perthes, 2004a: 17). Therefore, a combination of ideological congruency and technocratic education is beneficial for the realisation of elite interests. This has been borne out in contemporary recruitment patterns to the ruling coalition, as elite actors have demonstrated both ideological loyalty and professional competence, which has been encapsulated by Rami Makhoul in Syria, Gamal Mubarak in Egypt and the Hariri family in Lebanon (see Leverett, 2005, Brownlee, 2008, Goenaga and Mateos, 2013).

The generation into which ruling coalition members are born shapes the development of their perceptions and interpersonal ties. Generations in a number of the MENA's countries can be clearly defined in relation to historical moments and members of a generation may perceive themselves as being marked by a shared historical experience. In this regard, they would constitute a generation 'for itself' rather than 'in itself' (Mannheim, 1952: 291). Common historical experiences have shaped the political outlook of ruling coalition members. Many members of the Egyptian and Syrian elite had their political outlooks shaped by the 1973 Arab-Israeli war while the generation of the revolution in Algeria, those who opposed French Colonialism, is still an important political force. Indeed, the generation of the revolution has attempted to preserve its political outlook through passing their revolutionary legitimacy onto their children, with the establishment of the *Organisation Nationale des Enfants des Chouhada* (the National Organisation of the Children of Martyrs) (Werenfels, 2007: 66). Common historical experiences work to shape how those within the ruling coalition view policy; this is especially true when one takes economic policy into account. The postcolonial generation of elites adopted a generally left-wing stance using increasing direct or indirect oil revenues to expand the state and public sector (Werenfels, 2004: 190-191). The succeeding generation of elites came to view economic policy differently. Having been shaped by declining oil prices and the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s this generation came to develop economic views that were more favourable to the market and liberalisation (Richards and Waterbury, 2008: 216-261).

Finally, the development of shared perceptions and interpersonal ties between elites are shaped by their respective political agendas. Perthes (2004a: 24) writes that the implementation of market reforms throughout the MENA has shaped movement in and out of the region's ruling coalitions, as incumbents seek to promote those actors with whom they share a political outlook. The last decade and a half has seen incumbent

leaders promote those favouring economic liberalisation to the ruling coalition. For example, Bashar Assad has appointed several US-educated economists to prominent positions within the Syrian Economy Ministry to oversee reforms, much to the ire of those previously close to his deceased father (Álvarez-Ossorio and Gutiérrez de Terán, 2013: 191). Thus, we can assume that incumbents will favour those in the ruling coalition who share their political outlooks in specific areas like economic policy or defence policy (Cook, 2007: 41-42).

The strength of the impersonal ties that develop within the ruling coalition, and between its members and the incumbent, contribute to the realisation of elite interests. Where strong interpersonal ties have developed through a high degree of integration and homogeneity elite interests is more likely to be realised for the ruling coalition's respective cadres. This contributes to stability and reduces the incentives for elites to withdraw their support for the incumbent. Where there is a low degree of integration and a high degree of heterogeneity within the ruling coalition, elite interests are not likely to be strongly realised for those who do not exhibit strong interpersonal ties with the incumbent. In this instance, those elites whose interests have not been realised are more likely to withdraw their support for the incumbent during popular uprisings.

3.4.3 Material Patronage

Elite interests are also provided for through material means. The military cadre requires personnel and equipment, the single-party requires jobs for its members and those in the personalist cadre require access to illicit financial opportunities. The accumulation of material patronage is also highly symbolic. It represents a commodification of power and signals to those within the regime and throughout society the elite status of the recipient (Nitzan and Bichler, 2002: 36-38). The acquisition of material patronage thus indicates the importance of elite cadres within the ruling coalition. In this regard, we are not simply seeking to measure the material patronage accrued by each elite cadre within the ruling coalition in monetary terms but rather its effects on interest realisation and attitudes towards regime change (Tsourapas, 2013: 25).

In order to analyse the material dimension of interest realisation, and how this affects elite attitudes towards regime change, we must follow the money and trace the distribution of material patronage within the ruling coalition. To trace the distribution of material patronage, the study will use Richter's (2007) 'fiscal sociology of resilient authoritarianism', which analyses the distribution of material patronage.

Tracing the distribution of material patronage, rather than analysing rent revenues or the expected benefits of economic liberalisation, brings with it an attendant benefit. It allows us to mitigate the effect that economic fluctuations have on the distribution of resources, as those in the ruling coalition will always strive to pay themselves first.

Material patronage is distributed in three ways. First, the material resources and privileges directed towards the military cadre are taken into account. This includes an analysis of the state expenditure that goes towards the military, the strength of the military's private sector business interests (if any), and the material privileges doled out to members of the military. The region's militaries have been the recipients of significant military expenditure, which far outstrips the military expenditure of those outside the region (see The International Institute of Strategic Studies – IISS, 2012). A number of the region's military cadres have private economic interests that have seen them enter a number of different industries (Droz-Vincent, 2014: 189). Moreover, those in the military have access to cheap housing, improved medical care and scarce consumer goods. The expenditure distributed towards the security services can also be analysed in the same manner to an extent. Data pertaining to expenditure on the region's security forces is not readily available in the same manner that data on the region's militaries are (Hanlon, 2012). Where data on expenditure on the security services is cited, it comes from secondary sources. There is, however, readily available data on the material privileges the security services have and this data will be incorporated into the empirical analysis.

Second, the region's embrace of economic liberalisation has provided incumbent regimes with an opportunity to put in place large networks of domestic patronage (see Henry and Springbrog, 2010). Large parts of the region's business elite control sectoral monopolies or are part of oligopolies that control the market in order to further their interests and those of the incumbent. Typically, those in the business elite are to be found in the personalist cadre and exhibit close ties to the incumbent. Their access to material patronage has been facilitated through their co-optation of the privatisation process or their placement in public roles that have allowed them to regulate sectors in which they have economic interests. As King (2009: 179) notes, official statistics on the privatisation process are often non-existent or not credible, or entirely fabricated in some cases (Hibou and Medded, 2011: 12), which makes tracing the distribution of material patronage difficult. Rather than rely on statistical data to trace interest realisation, the project will rely on interviews and secondary data. This necessitates tracing the relationship between members of the ruling coalition and the process of

economic liberalisation to determine whether their ties to the incumbent allowed them to co-opt this process for their own benefit. Tracing this relationship will allow us to determine whether those in the ruling coalition co-opted economic liberalisation either through their placement in public roles or their personal ties to the incumbent.

And third, single-party elites use the machinery of the state to realise their interests. In order to ensure that members of the ruling party continue to support the incumbent, the party's leadership co-opt its members through the provision of basic services, food subsidies and the distribution of business licences. The most prominent reward offered by the single-party cadre to its members is employment in the state bureaucracy (Assaad, 1997: 114). Again, data on public sector employment and expenditure in the region is often non-existent or not credible. In order to establish the commitment of incumbents to supporting the single-party cadre, the study will employ publically available World Bank data on public sector expenses, which will be used to determine the extent of the public sector's involvement in the economy.¹¹ This indicator, Expense as a percentage of GDP, refers to the cash payments for the operating activities of government in providing goods and services. It also includes compensation of employees, subsidies, grants, social benefits and other government expenses. Within the empirical chapters this data will be titled as Public Expenditure (as % of GDP). This data will be supplemented with secondary and interview data that will detail how material patronage is distributed through the single-party cadre.

3.4.4 Popular Legitimation

The first exogenous variable is that of popular legitimation, which considers a regime's relationship with society and whether or not society deems the regime as their legitimate rulers. While the legitimating strategies employed by incumbent regimes are easily identifiable and were discussed in Chapter 2, how society responds to these strategies is rather difficult to measure. Levi makes clear that (2006: 13):

Legitimacy is a complex concept that includes many elements, but no one – including Weber himself – has successfully sorted out which of the various elements are necessary or how to measure indicators or their interactions.

The legitimation strategies employed in the presidential republics took the form of either ideological or material legitimation, both of which served as social glues binding

¹¹ See, 'Expense (% of GDP), The World Bank. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.XPN.TOTL.GD.ZS> [Accessed September 15 2015]

society to the incumbent regime (Schlumberger, 2010). Measuring the effectiveness of these legitimization strategies requires taking into account two distinct measurements: output alienation and descriptive representation. Output alienation is built on the relationship between the self and the state in that ‘it is typically expressed as suspiciousness of the motives or abilities of politicians, and denial that governmental institutions work to assure responsiveness to constituents’ (Weatherford, 1991: 255). Descriptive representation is found where there is ‘a high degree of congruence between representative and represented on some list of salient political traits and views’ (Weatherford, 1991: 260). Where a society exhibits a high level of output alienation and a lack of descriptive representation an incumbent regime can be deemed illegitimate.

In order to determine the legitimacy of the regimes examined in the case studies, secondary sources, interview data, and statistics will be employed. The statistical data will incorporate socioeconomic development indicators as well perception indicators, taken from the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), that seek to measure ‘the capacity of government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies [and] the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them’ (Kaufman et al., 2010: 4). The WGI data reads percentile rank terms from 1 (lowest) to 100 (highest) amongst all countries worldwide. The data used to determine these ranks is built on perceptions data that captures the following (Kaufman et al., 2010: 4):

- Voice and accountability: the extent to which a country’s citizens perceive they are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association and access to a free media.
- Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism: the extent to which a country’s citizens perceive that the government will be destabilised or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism.
- Government effectiveness: the extent to which a country’s citizens perceive the quality of public services, the civil service and its degree of independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of government commitments toward such policies.
- Regulatory quality: the extent to which a country’s citizens perceive the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development.

- Rule of law: the extent to which a country's citizens have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, the courts, and the likelihood of crime and violence.
- Control of corruption: the extent to which citizens of a country perceive public power is executed for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as 'capture' of the state by elites and private interests.

The WGI uses perceptions-based data for three reasons (Kaufman et al., 2010: 18). First, agents' perceptions matter because they base their actions on perceptions, impressions and views. If citizens believe that the state bureaucracy is inefficient or corrupt, they are unlikely to avail of its services or hold it in high regard. Second, in many areas of governance there are few alternatives to relying on perceptions data. And third, while objective and fact-based data may capture the *de jure* notion of recorded laws, these often differ from the *de facto* reality that exists on the ground. The use of these indicators allow for output alienation and descriptive representation to be measured, which in turn allows to determine if the cases under examination commanded popular legitimacy. In this respect the WGI share similar effects to the distribution of material patronage within the ruling coalition in that we are attempting to see how authoritarian government affected the actions of those living under it. And it is these effects that will be articulated in the interview data. Where the regime is deemed legitimate by society, elites will not exit the ruling coalition, as it will damage their interests to do so. Conversely, where the regime is deemed to have lost legitimacy, it may serve the interests of ruling coalition members to withdraw their support for the incumbent.

3.4.5 International Support

The second exogenous variable to take into account is international support. The dominant actors in the international system monitor changes within those states that are pivotal to the realisation of their strategic interests and the MENA is no exception within this regard. Determining the level of support afforded to a particular country necessitates taking a ruling coalition's ties to the international system into account. There are two measures that can be adapted to assess the degree of international support afforded to the MENA's autocracies: leverage and linkage (Levitsky and Way, 2006a: 200). This work primarily deals with the efforts exerted by the West, the United States and the EU, to foment regime change but the concept of leverage and linkage could also

apply to non-Western states. Leverage is a regime's vulnerability to external pressures to undergo regime change. Pressure is exerted in a number of ways such as conditionality and punitive sanctions. The leverage exerted on states varies across cases and is primarily rooted in the size of a country's state and economy. Governments in weak aid-dependent states are more vulnerable to pressure than those in larger states with substantial military and/or economic power (Levitsky and Way, 2006b: 382). Moreover, leverage is limited by countries' foreign policy objectives. Where an external state's economic and/or strategic interests are at play autocratic governments can use this bargaining power to ward off calls for regime change. Indeed, competing foreign policy objectives have often stymied collective action when it comes to imposing punitive actions against certain states (Crawford, 2001). Finally, leverage is linked to the presence of 'black knights', counter-hegemonic powers whose support for a regime may help blunt the demands of those calling for change (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 41).

Leverage is at its most effective when combined with linkage, the concentration of ties between a country and the international community. There are six dimensions to linkage: economic linkage, intergovernmental linkage, technocratic linkage, societal linkage, information linkage, and, civil-society linkage (Levitsky and Way 2010: 43-44). Linkage is rooted in a variety of factors including colonialism and geopolitics but its most important source remains geography (Levitsky and Way 2006a: 202). For example, countries located near the United States or EU are generally characterised by greater interaction across a large number of areas including the economic and political spheres than more geographically distant countries. Linkage raises the cost of authoritarian rule; it heightens the salience of government abuse; it increases the probability of an international response; creates domestic constituencies amenable to democracy; and, it strengthens already established democratic forces vis-à-vis authoritarian incumbents (Levitsky and Way, 2006a: 202-203).

Both leverage and linkage determine the international support afforded to an authoritarian regime and its political trajectory (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 53). Where there is high leverage and high linkage external actors are able to pressure members of the ruling coalition to undergo regime change. Where there is high leverage and low linkage there is strong but intermittent pressure for superficial regime change, which indicates international support for the incumbent regime and an ability on the part of external actors to shape domestic outcomes. Where there is low leverage and high linkage there is consistent but diffuse international pressure to bring about regime

change. This indicates a low level of international support for the incumbent authoritarian regime but an inability to compel regime change. Where there is low leverage and low linkage there is weak external pressure for a country to undergo regime change.

International support contributes to the realisation of elite interest in two ways. First, it provides direct material support for members of the ruling coalition in the form of either foreign or military/security, which allows elites to realise their political ambitions. Second, it confers existential support upon the regime and the political interests of those in the ruling coalition. It is important to bear in mind that the use of this variable necessitates taking a 'feedback flow' into account (Cavatorta, 2009: 38). Domestic actors do not simply react to the level of international support afforded to them; they further attempt to influence it in order to improve upon their position. The decisions taken at the domestic level have repercussions at the international one and re-shape and shift the positions of international actors. Thus, we should further bear in mind that the actions of domestic actors may also serve to lose international support rather than gain it and this may affect the interests and strategies of ruling coalition members during popular uprisings.

Having detailed the variables within the theoretical framework, the two subsequent sections will detail how the research question will be answered. This will involve explaining the cases chosen for examination, the methodology used to answer the research question, and, how data was gathered for this purpose.

3.5 The Comparative Approach and Case Selection

3.5.1 The Comparative Approach

In order to answer the research question the project compares two cases. While not a method *per se*, the comparative approach is one of the most adequate ways to connect theory with what is actually going on in the world. Comparison serves as an ideal instrument, with which to verify or falsify relationships between social phenomena, and, in order to determine the veracity of the relationship between social phenomena, we need to reduce the complexity of reality, which the comparative approach allows us to do (Pennings et al., 2006: 23). Comparative research must have an extensive theoretical argument underlying it, and a methodologically adequate research design to undertake it (Pennings et al., 1996: 20). This study follows these rules and replicates the comparative approach across two case studies with clearly

defined and operationalised variables underpinned by the rich literature on authoritarian resilience and elites in the MENA. The theory-guided question in comparative analysis is ‘to what extent the political in terms of explanatory units of variation, can indeed be accounted for and shaped by the political actions in one social system compared to another’ (Pennings et al., 2006: 27). This approach and the attempts to explain it through systematic comparison distinguish the comparative approach from other approaches in the social sciences.

There are methodological debates within the social sciences concerning if, when, and how to compare. The principal problem within the debate is that of ‘many variables, a small number of cases’ (Lijphart, 1971: 685). Both are clearly related but while the former is common to all social research, the latter is peculiar to case study research. An additional problem concerns the distinction between ‘lumpers’ and ‘splitters’ (Collier and Collier, 1991: 13). Splitters are quick to see what contrasts cases and to focus on their distinctive attributes, while lumpers are quick to identify commonalities that contribute to grander theory. The research drawn from splitters is valuable in terms of generating new hypotheses and providing basic data. With lumpers, on the contrary, there is a danger of generalising from cases that may not be conducive to such generalisations because of their unique historical, social, or political contexts (Collier and Collier, 1991: 14). Collier and Collier (1991: 14) argue that an analytic middle ground is missing between the two that would allow us to simultaneously address the differences between cases and employ ‘the systematic examination of similarities *and* contrasts among cases as a means of assessing hypotheses’.

It is critical to recognise the fact that any claims of two countries being similar or different does not give them the status of being different or similar cases. For example, Egypt and Syria look similar in terms of their political dynamics, with both commonly thought of as ‘presidential monarchies’. The reality is that Egypt has more in common with Tunisia than it does with Syria. This does not mean that Egypt has more in common with Tunisia or vice versa. It means that ‘it shares with each important similarities and differences’, ensuring that a methodological stance that adopts such a middle ground ‘recognises the contribution of both splitters and lumpers, but insists on a flexible application of a middle position that acknowledges a diversity of similarities and contrasts among any combination of cases’ (Collier and Collier, 1991: 15).

Accordingly, Collier and Collier (1991: 15) recommend a ‘most similar *and* most different systems design’, a combination of the ‘most similar systems design’ (Przeworski and Teune, 1970) and the ‘most different systems design’. A ‘most similar’

design is intended to reduce variation in the context to the barest possible minimum through the selection of cases that are by and large identical, except for the relations between the variables under review that represent the research question (Pennings et al., 2006: 35). The logic of the ‘most different’ design approach is to compare countries that have no common features except for the outcome under investigation (Landman, 2003). These two approaches constitute ‘ideal types’ and the reality is that the matching and contrasting of cases that both approaches posit is never perfectly achieved in any real analysis (Collier and Collier, 1991: 15). A combination of these approaches through a ‘most similar and most different’ design is more empirically realistic. It allows for an analytical middle ground between the splitters and the lumpers. It further ensures that ‘the context of analysis are analytically equivalent, at least to a significant degree’, while their differences ‘place parallel processes of change in sharp relief because they are operating in settings that are different in many respects’ (Collier, 1997: 4). In effect, it recognises that the two case study countries of Tunisia and Egypt share important similarities and differences. The study can make causal inferences through exploiting these similarities and differences when attempting to explain the outcome. For these reasons, the project will employ the ‘most similar and most different’ design.

3.5.2 The Countries Selected for Examination

The above is contingent upon choosing the appropriate case studies. The project chose Tunisia and Egypt with the criteria of a ‘most similar and most different’ in mind. The Arab states of the MENA provide a particularly apt region from which to choose cases. Engagement with the region further extends our understanding of regime change because it provides an opportunity to test the efficacy of those strategies designed to retain elite support in a region where they have not been stringently tested previously. Additionally, the Arab states of the MENA share a number of characteristics that aid comparison (Brownlee et al., 2015: 8-9). The most obvious of these shared characteristics is language and religion. Although this research does not subscribe to essentialist theories that locate the MENA’s persistent authoritarianism in cultural factors, it does recognise that shared cultural characteristics aid in the diffusion of political and economic ideas. Second, the Arab states of the MENA display shared patterns of economic development. As previously detailed in Chapter 1, the region’s states, with the exception of the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, began liberalising their economies during the 1980s and the 1990s (Brynen et al., 2012: 220), although one should note there is considerable diversity within these economic subtypes. Third, the

Arab states of the MENA are embedded in and shaped by a single security environment. Since the Iranian Revolution, the Arab states of the MENA have been a cornerstone of US security policy in the region centred on the defence of Israel, the containment of Iran, the protection of Gulf energy resources and combating terrorism.

The overall analysis of Tunisia and Egypt is a ‘most similar design’. The two are both located in North Africa on the southern bank of the Mediterranean, but they do not share a border. However, choosing countries from the same area lends itself to the comparative method because of the cluster of characteristics that areas tend to have in common, thus ensuring that geography acts as a natural control (Lijphart, 1971: 688). The two also share a number of similarities making them ideal comparators. Both are former colonies, Tunisia of France and Egypt of the United Kingdom, which saw the postcolonial elite implement authoritarian government through the legitimacy garnered in their respective independence struggles (Rogan, 2009: 294-304). The two also share a similar demographic profile, being predominantly Sunni Muslim (Entelis, 2011: 512; Deeb, 2011: 400).¹² Both have also followed the same broad contours in their postcolonial evolutions. The postcolonial period saw both countries experiment with socialist economic policies to varying degrees before engaging in the controlled liberalisation of their economies. Egypt began this process in the 1970s, while Tunisia followed suit in the 1980s (Soliman, 2011; Murphy, 1999). Politically, both remained durably authoritarian between independence and 2011, and, during this time demonstrated considerable skill in managing the political arena through creating a façade of inclusivity that managed to limit the formal participation of those considered a threat to the regime (Storm, 2014: 94-106; Albrecht, 2013). Tunisia and Egypt also operate in the same geopolitical environment and they have similarly aligned foreign policy interests, supporting a number of Western economic and strategic interests. Both have looked to the United States while Tunisia has also cultivated close ties with France (Brownlee, 2012; Kallander, 2013). Furthermore, the dynamics of the regime change process in both countries was broadly similar. The popular mass uprisings that occurred in both consisted of peaceful protest for the most part and neither country suffered the degree of internal fracturing that shaped the regime change process in Libya and Yemen.

It is important to note that this study is not choosing to utilise a control case, that is, a case study where regime change did not occur during the same period. The

¹² It should be noted that Egypt has a significant Coptic Christian minority, approximately nine percent of the population. While the Copts were targets of state repression they gradually became a pillar of support for the Mubarak regime because of their fear of the rise of political Islam (see Sika, 2012).

reasoning behind this choice is relatively simple. The research question has been designed to examine the occurrence of regime change during mass popular uprisings, and as Pennings et al. (2006: 10) assert:

The issue is to control for contextual or exogenous variation given the Research Question. For instance, if we wish to analyse the role of parties in government with regard to welfare statism, we could decide – on the basis of the research question – to restrict ourselves to a certain type of party or government.

In this regard, the study's research question is focused upon developing an explanation for why elites withdraw their support for authoritarian incumbents during the occurrence of mass popular uprisings. Furthermore, the choice of case studies reflects the nature of the research design employed in studies of the MENA. These studies have not accounted for the importance and efficacy of these methods employed by incumbents to retain elite support in studies of regime, which were undertaken in instances where regime did not occur (Albrecht, 2015: 40).

The cases selected represent a 'most different' systems design on the basis that, as we shall see, they vary in the nature of their authoritarian dynamics and the specific natures of the regime change that occurred. Both the Tunisian and Egyptian ruling coalitions were composed of military, single-party, and personalist cadres. However, the prominence afforded to each country's respective cadres differed between cases, as did the nature of military involvement; military involvement in Tunisia was initially indirect before ceasing altogether while in Egypt it was personal in nature. The cases also differ in the nature of the regime change that occurred. Tunisia experienced authoritarian breakdown and the beginning of the transition process saw all vestiges of the Ben Ali regime expunged from public life. Egypt experienced authoritarian transformation; there was only a partial dissolution of the Mubarak regime, which eventually allowed the military cadre to take control of the state. The differing nature of regime change that occurred in both Tunisia and Egypt further allows us to avoid selection bias, as the case selection has allowed for the possibility of variation on the dependent variable (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 129). This study is primarily concerned with the relationship between elite interests and regime change in authoritarian systems, so this ensures that the influence of other independent variables are held relatively constant, thus providing greater explanatory power for the role of elites.

The choice of Tunisia and Egypt raise two further issues that require consideration. First, why were only two case studies utilised, and were they the

appropriate choices to draw from the MENA? And second, are these two cases generalisable; can the inferences drawn from Tunisia and Egypt explain regime change not just in the MENA's presidential republics but travel further afield? There are a number of reasons why Tunisia and Egypt were chosen from the available cases in the MENA. The decision to explain why actors withdrew from the ruling coalition in the presidential republics limited the number of available cases to six (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen). Algeria did not witness mass uprisings and because the study does not utilise a control case this saw it eliminated from consideration. The cases of Libya, Syria and Yemen provided complications that eliminated them from consideration. The three states' ruling coalitions are built on tribal and/or ethno-sectarian ties that blur the lines between the elite cadres under examination (Owen, 2012: 94-110; Álvarez-Ossorio and Gutiérrez de Terán, 2013). At the time of writing Syria has not yet witnessed regime change despite mass uprisings. Like Algeria, the decision not to utilise a control case would also have seen Syria eliminated from contention as a case study. Taking these two factors into account Tunisia and Egypt emerged as the logical choices to choose as case studies for the reasons detailed earlier in this section.

Although Tunisia and Egypt are logical choices for the comparative analysis one must ask can the inferences drawn from them be generalisable. The long-held assumption within the social sciences argues that we cannot draw generalisations from a limited number of case studies. Schmitter (2008: 290) summarises this position arguing that single-n case studies rarely provide a convincing base for generalisation, and, further argues that middle-size samples that control for contingent factors such as geography inhibit generalisation by their very nature unless they are replicated with different cases. However, Schmitter concedes that replication can be a powerful factor in determining whether inferences are generalisable. When one considers the theoretical framework in this study we can reasonably assert that it can be generalised and travel beyond the MENA as the cadres through which elite interests are realised represent ideal types. The framework and hypotheses originate in the comparative literature and do not display a bias towards any geographic region. This indicates that the framework can account for local variance. Moreover, Chapter 2 made clear that autocrats elsewhere employ many of the mechanisms used by the MENA's incumbent autocrats to maintain elite support and their hold on power. For the study to be replicated elsewhere the independent variables would not require meaningful change. There may however be contextual changes to acknowledge. For example, the nature of fiscal patronage might

differ between the MENA and another region but it would not obscure the importance of material transfers in retaining elite support. Coupled with the recent scholarship arguing that we can generalise from a small number of cases (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 77) and this study's potential for replication it emerges that the inferences drawn from this study are generalisable.

3.6 The Methodology and Data Collection

3.6.1 The Methodology: The Analytic Narrative

In order to answer the research question, and evaluate the impact of the independent variables, this study will employ the analytic narrative approach. An analytic narrative is the combination of analytic tools within the narrative form. It is a narrative in that stories, contexts and accounts are examined while it is analytic in that it extracts 'explicit and formal lines of reasoning, which facilitate both exposition and explanation' (Bates et al., 1998: 10). The rationale behind the analytic narrative is the construction of a logically persuasive and empirically valid account that attempts to explain how and why events occurred. The application of narrative and history prides a rich empirical account allowing for process tracing and evaluation of the model (Bates et al., 1998: 13).

Although the analytic narrative provides a number of advantages for this study, the use of this approach is not without its critics. Carpenter (2000: 654) critiques analytic narratives on the basis that there appears to be some confusion as to what narratives actually are, at least when they are not bound within formal models, writing that this confusion renders analytic narratives as being 'sequences of facts chronologically arranged' at their most sophisticated. Elster is harsher, arguing that analytic narratives fail to complete the proposed programme, that being the application of formal theories to elucidate complex cases. Rather, they become guilty of the sin they seek to avoid, becoming 'just so stories' (Elster, 2000). There is a recognition that this is a problem with the use of analytic narratives, but this has been countered with the fact that all an analytic narrative can do is lay out the basis for analytic decisions and apply the criterion of falsifiability to the proffered hypotheses (Bates et al., 2000: 700). Elster (2000: 693) further contends that the method suffers due to the lack of incorporation of independent evidence for intentions and beliefs. That is, how individuals construct their understanding of the world. Again, this criticism is recognised by those who engage in the use of analytical narratives but in their defence, Bates et al. (2000: 697) argue that,

as of yet, there is no model in existence that can adequately capture the evidence for intentions and beliefs. The final criticism is that analytic narratives attempt to generalise from small-N studies (Esalter, 2000). In saying that, this has always been a problem of the social sciences as noted in the previous section (see King, Keohane and Verba, 1994), but for Bates et al. (2000: 702) the analytic narrative approach attempts, at least if nothing else, ‘to bring some analytical tools to the task of studying case studies, a question long of interest to political scientists’. Furthermore, some scholars argue that it is possible to generalise from case studies (see Flyvbjerg, 2001: 66-77).

Despite the problems associated with the use of an analytic narrative, it is a useful tool for undertaking comparative studies given its emphasis on repeated iteration between theory and data (Bates et al., 2000: 698). The analytic narrative approach lends itself to this project for a number of reasons. Analytic narratives generally refer to rational choice theory and game-theoretic models in particular, but are applied to other forms of theory, with a range of models serving ‘as the basis of analytic narratives’ (Bates et al., 1998: 3). Rational choice theory, and game theoretic models, as Margaret Levi (2004: 202) notes, ‘is only one of the flavours of analytic narratives’. For example, Ira Katznelson (1997) uses the label to describe his approach to large-scale macro-historical questions, while Skocpol and Somer’s (1980) preferred method is ‘macro-analytic comparative history’. This is similar to what Levi (2004: 203) describes as ‘causal narrative’, a process by which the sequences and variables in a historical narrative are disaggregated in a way that allows for cross-case comparisons. As an approach, analytic narratives are attractive to those scholars seeking ‘to evaluate the strength of parsimonious causal mechanisms’, compelling scholars to make causal statements and to identify a small number of variables (Levi, 2004: 212). The project’s framework, and the variables within it, drew primarily from the authoritarian resilience literature. As such, analytic narratives produce a ready-made framework for a work focused on the processes of political change. This makes the analytic narrative approach particularly suited to the structure of the current project as many scholars working within the authoritarian resilience literature have used comparative approaches to analyse the relationship between authoritarian maintenance and a broad range of explanations.

In addition, the framework developed in the thesis is concerned with capturing the impact of intra-elite dynamics on the occurrence or non-occurrence of political change, specifically the impact of elite variables on the occurrences of regime change during periods of political crises. An advantage of analytical narrative is that they allow the

researcher to deal with dynamic processes that have a temporal dimension, and allow for the consideration of time-sensitive concepts such as path dependence (Levi, 2004: 214-215; Parikh, 2000: 679). Narrative-based accounts are much more likely to capture these elements. Finally, analytical narratives are well suited for (very) small-N studies (Bates et al., 1998, 2000). As this project adopts two case studies, this further supports the suitability of analytical narratives as a method for this project. The balance of advantages and disadvantages suggest that the analytic narrative is the best one for this research question.

3.6.2 The Data

The research utilises both primary and secondary data. The primary data mainly consists of interviews gathered during fieldwork in Cairo and Tunis, during February 2014 and January 2015 respectively. The secondary data (books, journals, local and international press, governmental and NGO reports, and descriptive statistics) provides the bulk of the data employed in the thesis. Despite the abundance of available secondary data on the MENA in the scholarly field, there are practical limits and issues of validity to consider. First, because of their opaque nature, accessing information on the organisational structures of authoritarian regimes is difficult. While we may possess the ability to identify those at the apex of such regimes, there is much organisational information that cannot be accessed in some instances, such as budgetary data. Furthermore, the available data on authoritarian regimes in the MENA may not speak to their organisational makeup but rather their interactions with society or the ruling coalition. The Tunisian and Egyptian Interior Ministries are examples of this. The published work on these institutions primarily concerns the effects of their repressive actions or their relationship with the other components of the ruling coalition. Where studies address their organisational makeup, there is a strong reliance on interview data, whose validity cannot be adequately assessed (see Hanlon, 2012: 5; Brumberg and Sallam, 2012: 4). Although the lack of data constitutes an obstacle in drawing inferences the inferential leverage derived from this study is not wholly reliant on having complete data (Collier, Henry and Seawright, 2010a: 196). As Collier, Henry and Seawright (2010b: 24) make clear, the inferential leverage we can draw depends not on the breadth of its coverage but the depth of its insight.

The use of secondary sources also requires that we consider the validity of the data. Is the data used in this study relevant to the task at hand? The use of Freedom House data raises this question. Chapter 1 utilised Freedom House data to determine the

political status of the MENA's constituent states. According to Giannone (2010) Freedom House is biased towards the US foreign policy interests, a consequence of the methodology used to code scores and that many of its board members hail from the conservative wing of the US political establishment. Nevertheless, this bias has receded with the conclusion of the Cold War and improvements in the coding process (Steiner, 2012). However, the question remains whether the data appropriate to the task at hand and for the purposes of its use in Chapter 1 the Freedom House data was. Merkel (2004: 35) writes that Freedom House data is 'sufficient for trend reports and the development of first hypotheses, but for in-depth comparative analyses with a small sample, they are not refined enough'. The data employed in Chapter 1 sought to illustrate political conditions in the MENA and not conduct in-depth analysis with it. An additional measure taken to ensure that the data employed in this study is valid is triangulation, the use of data from three or more sources to corroborate empirical accounts (Pierce, 2008: 90).

The research sought to address the gaps in the secondary and used primary data to both supplement and triangulate the secondary sources. Some gaps in the data could not be filled and where this occurred the empirical chapters acknowledge this. The primary data mainly consisted of interview data obtained during fieldwork in Cairo and Tunis. The data was gathered during open-ended interviews that sought to gain insight into the Tunisian and Egyptian ruling coalitions via first-hand accounts of those who participated in elite structures or had experiences engaging with these structures. I wanted to gain an understanding of the intra-elite dynamics at work in both ruling coalitions and the motivations that shaped these dynamics. I further endeavoured to uncover how these regime's actions affected society and, in turn, how these actions affected society's perceptions of these regimes. Interviews reveal contextual insights that the secondary data cannot (Goldstein, 2002: 669). They allow us to know how people perceived a series of events (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002: 673), which can support and strengthen the inferences drawn from the secondary data. Put simply, interviews are 'a conversation with purpose' (Webb and Webb, 1932: 130) that can strengthen the secondary data through direct engagement with those involved in the phenomenon under investigation.

The use of interviews raises important methodological issues regarding validity and reliability (Berry, 2002: 679). These issues are similar to those regarding secondary data; how appropriate is the measuring instrument and how reliable is the data? These obstacles are particularly acute given the nature of this study, which relied on open-

ended interviews to gather primary data. As Berry (2002: 679) open-ended questions are a paradox: ‘the valuable flexibility of open-ended questioning exacerbates the validity and reliability issues that are part of this approach’.

The methodological risks associated with interviews are potentially quite high. Three, in particular, require addressing (Berry, 2002: 680). The first is the subject’s persuasive power. Inevitably, some interviewees are more objective than others, and there is also the risk of finding one interviewee more convincing than others and having that interviewee shape the overall understanding of the issue at hand. Multiple sources and an awareness that interviewees are under no obligation to tell the truth to mitigate this problem to an extent. Second is the issue of exaggerated role complex in which the interviewee emphasises their personal role thereby excluding other actors and information. The third potential problem is linked to probing issues. Interviewers, whether consciously or not, possess a preconceived idea of what they are looking for and probing interviewees to suit these preconceptions could be a problem. To offset these difficulties, other primary sources were also considered. Accompanying interviews were political memoirs and interviews, by both protagonists and analysts, given to journals, newspapers and magazines. The Wikileaks cables also supplemented this data and provided insights into how members of the US diplomatic corps perceived the political climate and members of the establishment in Tunisia and Egypt. The use of this data is also open to the same criticisms one could direct at the use of interviews. Andrew Gamble (2002: 150), in an argument that is applicable to interviews and diplomatic cables, stresses that ‘memoirs [...] are valuable sources on the inside story but often have less to say to the outside story’. Nonetheless, these data sources provide useful insights and as mentioned above, it is important to consider alternative sources. Moreover, the use of interview data and the Wikileaks cables provides a means for determining the validity of the data used to assess the project’s hypotheses, as it comprises two distinct sources that both had access to and experience of interacting with segments of both case studies’ ruling coalitions. The interviews allowed for wide-ranging discussions that could expand upon potential points of interest, which allowed me to contextualise answers and understand the reasoning that underlined the interviewees’ responses (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002: 674). The interviews supported the conclusions drawn from the secondary data and provided subtle nuance and context in some respects.

To select interviewees I initially used two types of non-probability sampling; purposive sampling, where a pre-defined and visible set of actors were asked for

interviews, and snowball or chain-referral sampling, which involved identifying an initial set of subjects and requesting they suggest other potential interviewees (Tansey, 2007: 765). However, conducting interviews proved much more difficult than anticipated because of the political climates in both Egypt and Tunisia during fieldwork (February 2014 and January 2015), which blunted the efficacy of purposive sampling and chain-referral. I contacted former members of the Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes, particularly members of the NDP and RCD, who were still politically active, but these requests were either declined or ignored. In Egypt, I arranged to interview three former members of the NDP. Only one interview actually took place. One interviewee cancelled without offering an explanation and the other only consented to answer questions off the record. The same occurred in Tunisia. The reluctance of former party members to speak on the record reflected the prevailing political climates in Egypt and Tunisia. During private conversations in Cairo and Tunis, I was made aware that former party members did not wish to discuss the Mubarak or Ben Ali regimes as it might hinder their prospects of re-entering political life as some former regime members had successfully done. One Egyptian interviewee told me that, in the Egyptian case, at least, being interviewed by a foreign researcher would open interviewees up to character assassination.¹³ I also conducted interviews with members of state institutions, journalists, civil-society activists and well-informed private citizens. Although not members of the ruling coalition the interviewees were knowledgeable about the political dynamics at work in Egypt and Tunisia, and, because of their educational, financial and/or social status constituted members of the 'elite' or 'notable classes' in the broadest term. These interviewees displayed a willingness to speak on the record and refer me to other potential interviewees.

The lack of access to former members of both ruling coalitions nevertheless affected the use of non-probability sampling as I could only interview those outside of the ruling coalition. This weakened the evidence gathered but not critically so. Although the evidence I gathered could not reveal in-depth understandings of either the Tunisian or Egyptian ruling coalitions it did support the conclusions drawn from the secondary data. Nonetheless, we must consider 'who is speaking to whom, for what purpose and under what circumstances' (George and Bennett, 2005: 100). Did the interviewees have good knowledge of elite dynamics in Tunisia and Egypt, and, what were their motivations in providing information? The interviews saw distinct overlapping themes

¹³ Personal Interview with Wael Nawara, journalist at Al-Monitor and co-founder of the Al-Dostour Party and National Association for Change. Cairo, February 10, 2014.

emerge in both Tunisia and Egypt, which demonstrated that both sets of interviewees possessed knowledge that effectively captured the political zeitgeist of both countries. However, their interpretation of political dynamics and elite reactions to these dynamics differed because of their different personal and professional backgrounds. Thus, while each interviewee's perspective of political dynamics was similar, their interpretations of how these dynamics affected political developments differed. Accordingly, interviewees were able to offer a broad knowledge of elite dynamics through their personal and professional experiences.

The second part of the question about the motives of interviewees is much more difficult to answer. All interviewees expressed a desire to present a nuanced interpretation of events in Tunisia and Egypt that looked past Western media coverage, which, according to interviewees, misrepresented developments in both countries. None of the interviewees had explicitly political motives for participating in the interviews, nor was their information explicitly biased. As these individuals were not members of the Ben Ali or Mubarak-era ruling coalition they displayed no indication of exaggerated role complex because they did participate in the uprisings in such a manner that required burnishing or downplaying their actions. In saying that, answers were informed by interviewees' experiences of living and working under the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes. This unintentional bias manifested itself in how interviewees answered the questions put to them. For example, those associated with the Mubarak regime but not active members of the ruling coalition offered qualifying answers that attempted to portray segments of the former ruling coalition in a more flattering light. The same occurred in Tunisia, albeit to a lesser extent. Civil society and opposition actors, on the other hand, were more likely to be critical of both regimes' socioeconomic performances and in their perceptions of the elite. Where biased information emerged, it was considered alongside the other interview data and the secondary data to create a more nuanced portrait of elite dynamics.

A locally based interpreter assisted me in undertaking interviews in Cairo and Tunis. In both cases, the interpreter managed the practicalities of conducting the interviews, such as arranging locations and transport, and assisting with translation from Arabic where necessary. The interviews conducted spanned from thirty minutes to over one hour and provided rich data for analysis. The interviews took place in English with the exception of one interview in Egypt, which was conducted in Arabic, and were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviewees had the option of using Arabic (or French in the Tunisian case) but opted to use English by choice. Finally, the

interview data was analysed using thematic analysis. I organised into themes and sub-themes through identifying topics that ‘occur and reoccur’ (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 38). Distinct themes emerged quickly and consistently across the interviews in each case.

The research’s reliance on secondary data raises an interesting question about the use of primary data. Specifically, it raises the question of whether increased primary data, such as additional interviews conducted in Arabic or further ethnographic research in the field (see Bray, 2008) would alter the findings? One could reasonably assert that increased data would alter the research’s findings, as it would allow for a deeper understanding of the interests and strategies of those comprising the Tunisian and Egyptian ruling coalitions. However, this answer is not as robust it initially appears when one considers the methodologies underpinning Middle Eastern studies and comparative politics as well as the purpose for which this work assembled evidence.

This discussion of additional primary data speaks to the different methodological traditions underpinning Middle Eastern studies on the one hand and comparative politics on the other. The former emphasises local context and the variations that exist within and between them. To make its arguments this tradition relies upon primary data gathered during fieldwork through ethnographic approaches such as interviews or participant observation. This data is then analysed using thick description from which inferences are drawn. However, the context-specific nature of the evidence may preclude this work from travelling beyond the boundaries of a single case. If this study sought to position itself as a work of Middle Eastern studies that heavily relied upon primary sources it is likely that increased access to primary sources would alter its findings given the limited number of interviews I conducted and the previously mentioned gaps in the secondary data.

Comparative politics, on the other, hand privileges the similarities that exist between cases and searches for coherent comparative causal theories that can be generalised across them. What ultimately distinguishes it from Middle Eastern studies is its scholarly aim. Middle Eastern studies seek to tell us about a single case but comparative research instead seeks to ‘substitute names of variables for the names of social systems’ (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 8). Accordingly, the intent of comparative politics is not just to arrive at a conclusion for one case but prerequisites for all. Thus, while the research may lack the data to provide in-depth descriptive coverage of the Tunisian and Egyptian ruling coalitions, it does possess sufficient

evidence to make theoretical interpretations about them as a work of comparative politics.

The research assembled evidence to make a theoretical interpretation and increased primary data would have altered the research's findings. Additional interviews conducted in Arabic would certainly provide supplementary detail to the arguments' empirical aspects and contribute to an increasingly nuanced portrayal of the individual members of the Tunisian and Egyptian ruling coalitions but do not amend the fundamental premise underpinning this research: that the withdrawal of elite support precipitates regime change in authoritarian systems. This is because the elite cadres under examination represent institutional interests not individual ones. Rather than consider the interests of individual generals this thesis considers the overall interests of the military.

Initially, this research sought to position itself between Middle Eastern studies and comparative politics. However, practical difficulties, notably the lack of sufficient primary data, affected the research's ability to accomplish this. Although the lack of primary data did not affect the research's theoretical interpretations or underlying hypotheses, it does affect how this research is perceived. Initially, the research sought to be considered as Middle Eastern studies but the difficulties in accessing primary data undermined this task. However, the successful synthesis of elements from the authoritarian resilience and comparative literatures indicates that this work should be part of the comparative tradition. Despite the gaps in the data, the theoretical interpretations within this research indicate it possesses the ability to travel beyond the MENA and provide inferences not just for the two cases under examination but perquisites for all.

3.7 Conclusion

Unlike many other studies of regime change in the MENA, this study takes into account a previously neglected dimension, the institutional makeup of the elite cadres in the region's presidential republics. The institutional structures in which elite actors operate define their agency. Consequently, elite actors develop a set of interests and preferences regarding the regime change process that reflect their institutional makeup. Thus, the institutional structures, in which elites operate, require examination to explain why elites exit the ruling coalition during popular uprisings and withdraw their support for the incumbent. Regarding the case studies under examination, the interests of their respective elite cadres have not been duly analysed in the literature in a holistic manner.

The realisation of elite interests has implications for the political systems of the cases under consideration and society as a whole, as these interests contribute to shaping political trajectories. Thus, it is important to examine the interests of elite actors and how this affects the process of regime change during popular uprisings.

A discussion of the interests and preferences of the elite cadres of the MENA's presidential systems allowed for the formulation of a set of hypotheses. They are not entirely separable from one another but it is possible to look for evidence supporting or disproving the claims made. This is because one of the innovations of this project is to analyse interest realisation before the occurrence of regime change. It follows that the impact of interest realisation may change over time. Thus, the influence of the independent variables may also change over time. At a specific moment, a particular variable may affect and change specific elite incentives. In addition, some may seem to be in conflict with one another, while others may mutually reinforce each other. This is because there are multiple elite cadres within the ruling coalition, which gives rise to different agendas and objectives. Strategies may combine or collide with the intention of modifying regime change. From this discussion of interests and preferences, we have also derived a set of variables that can be analysed in detail. These variables play a central role in contribution to the maintenance of authoritarianism in the MENA. Through adapting these variables and testing their effects, through the prism of elite interest realisation, we can determine how they shape the process of regime change as they help to contextualise the process within the boundaries of the MENA. The case study chapters will survey the gathered evidence and place it into context.

Chapter 4 – Endogenous Interest Realisation within the Tunisian Ruling Coalition: The Narrowing of the Regime

This chapter examines the endogenous realisation of elite interests within the ruling coalition of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the President of Tunisia between 1987 and 2011. Before the uprising, it appeared that Ben Ali was firmly in control of political life in Tunisia. Indeed, Alexander (2010: 123) wrote that, in the year the uprising began, authoritarian rule was a ‘safer bet over the medium term’. However, this chapter argues that this control was illusory and masked a deep internal erosion of the regime. The chapter will offer a narrative overview of the Tunisian uprising, before outlining the components of Ben Ali’s ruling coalition. The endogenous realisation of elite interests within the ruling coalition will then be analysed, specifically elite perceptions and political ties, along with the distribution of material patronage. The conclusion will be a brief summary of how the endogenous realisation of elite interests affected dynamics within the ruling coalition.

4.1 The Tunisian Uprising

The Tunisian uprising brought together several dynamics that had shaped politics and society during Ben Ali’s time in power. First, there was the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of two families, that of Ben Ali and his wife Leila Trabelsi. Having deposed Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia’s first president, via ‘medical coup’ in 1987, Ben Ali initially drew his authority from the ruling party, the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD) (ICG, 2011a: 1). Moreover, he established an unwritten pact with secular sectors of society to repress the Islamist opposition (Alexander, 2010: 66). This pact remained in place until 2005 (see Angrist, 2013) and the distribution of economic benefits, and the success of the governments’ economic reforms in the 1990s, strengthened it (see Murphy, 1999). Over time, this alliance gradually deteriorated from within, as the two ruling families sought to concentrate power in their own hands (see Beau and Graciet, 2009).

Second, the regime allowed no opposition of any kind. Criticism of the president, civil society activity, the Arab press, and whatever parts of the Internet the regime deemed dangerously were all outlawed (Bamyeh, 2012: 50). The regime circumscribed the space for political dissent. Those active opposition parties were nothing more than clients of the regime while those genuinely opposed to Ben Ali were victims of state

repression and forced to go underground (Storm, 2014: 94-100). Civil society in Tunisia was also highly constrained and its activities curtailed. There were prohibitions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the freedom to form associations. As Amna Guallali, a human rights activist, makes clear, ‘public freedoms were not present in Tunisia and those that were calling for these freedoms were basically silenced’.¹⁴

Third, the denial of political freedoms found common ground in the denial of socioeconomic rights that challenged the established discourse of Tunisia’s economic miracle.¹⁵ Although the Tunisian economy had improved markedly during the 1990s, a large percentage of the country’s poor continued to reside in the interior regions, particularly the rural mid-west and south (see King, 2003). In contrast, the coastal regions had grown economically at the expense of the interior due to a combination of historical influences and lopsided development policies. Despite comprising less than ten per cent of the country’s population in 2010, the coastal provinces of Sousse, Monastir, and Mahdi had more infrastructure than the provinces of the midwest and the south (Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, Gafsa, Kebili, Tozeur, Medenine, Tataouine), which combined to cover 70 per cent of the country’s landmass (Aleya-Sghaier, 2014: 31).

Compounding Tunisia’s regional inequalities were two further economic factors. First, the two ruling families had exhibited strong predatory economic behaviour. This behaviour developed over time, beginning in the mid-1990s, and saw state assets sold to members of the president’s extended family at discounted prices through both legal and extra-legal means (Schraeder and Redissi, 2011: 9-10). This behaviour gave the extended Ben Ali and Trabelsi families a large degree of control over the Tunisian economy, making people reluctant to speak out against them for fear of losing their job. As one political activist wryly put it, ‘Ben Ali was not only the president of Tunisia but the employer of Tunisians’.¹⁶ And second, Tunisia experienced a youth bulge throughout the 2000s. As of 2010, 42 per cent of the population was under 25, and it was the youth who disproportionately suffered with regards to socioeconomic conditions. Third-level qualifications were no avenue to employment; between 40 and 60 per cent of those graduating in 2009 were unemployed (Aleya-Sghaier, 2014: 32). Taking these factors into account, the IMF official Moncef Guen (2011) opined that it was ‘easy to understand how the frustration of the youth led to massive participation in

¹⁴ Personal Interview with Amna Guallali, Human Rights Watch Tunisia, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

¹⁵ To be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁶ Personal Interview with Achraf Aouadi, Chair and Founder of I Watch, Tunisian Transparency and Anti-Corruption NGO, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

the revolution, especially in the deprived areas of the country'. These factors combined to form an explosive cocktail that was dangerous to the regime.

Indeed, these dangers had been underscored prior to the uprising. In early 2008, the police repressed a revolt in the Gafsa mining region and the southern city of Erdayf over unfair hiring and labour conditions (Chomiak and Entelis, 2011). A communications blackout imposed in Tunisia at the time stopped news of the revolt spreading, though opposition channels gave full coverage of events.¹⁷ There were further clashes in 2010 between protestors and the police in the southeastern border town of Ben Gardane when it emerged that that the Trabelsi family wanted to establish business interests there. The regime did not view these protests as portents of danger, however. Amine Ghali, a political analyst, recounts that many in Tunisia at the time thought that cyclical outbursts in the region would become an expected part of the political process.¹⁸

Tunisia's political cocktail did finally explode on December 17th 2010 in the interior town of Sidi Bouzid. Mohamed Bouazizi, a 25 year-old fruit vendor, set himself on fire outside the town's municipality office after having his wares confiscated by the local police (Gelvin, 2012: 42-43). He died on January 4th from his injuries but his actions ignited a wave of protest across Tunisia's interior (ICG, 2011a: 3-5). Protests quickly spread and the regime could not keep up as Amine Ghali recounts:

[It's] what I call the 'popcorn effect'. Each time, each day, each afternoon, every two hours, you have a new region going, a new city, village, whatever. It seemed that the deployment capacity of the police could not match the deployment of the uprising itself, even though it wasn't actually a deployment, it was an entirely spontaneous thing.¹⁹

The uprising first spread west to the city of Kasserine and then to the southern cities of Gafsa and Kebili. Unlike 2008, the regime failed to contain the rebellion or impose a media blackout, as social media was used to spread information (ICG, 2011a: 7). Social media not only spread information, it also exposed the regime's repressive activities to a wide audience:

In 2008 there was not such a big social media movement and the availability of information was not as important as it was in 2011. People started to share their visions of the repression, videos of the people who were killed, the dead with

¹⁷ Interview with Amna Guallali.

¹⁸ Personal Interview with Amine Ghali, Program Director, The Kawabiki Transition Centre, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

¹⁹ Ibid.

bullets in their head . . . This significantly changed the importance of the movement, it became global in Tunisia and spread out across all the regions.²⁰

Despite mobilising the RCD, the police and the military, the regime was powerless to contain Tunisia's explosion of popular anger. The failure of the regime to suppress the situation on the ground allowed the uprisings to spread throughout the country. The protests soon spread to the north and south of the country as well as Sfax, the country's second largest city, and the coastal regions, before finally arriving in Tunis. The *Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (UGTT), the country's largest trade union, further aided the cascading protests. The UGTT had always split between those who challenged the regime and those who wished to work alongside its institutions (King, 2003: 131-139). Nonetheless, it was a powerful actor in Tunisian society and on the eve of the uprising, it consisted of 24 regional unions, 19 labour federations, and 21 general unions (Schraeder and Redissi, 2011: 13). The UGTT's actions were initially undertaken at the local level as the union's national leadership sought a mediating role to bring about an end to the protests. However, the indiscriminate repression employed against protestors and UGTT members, as well as the risk of schism within the union prompted the national leadership to call for a strike in Sfax on January 12th followed by a general strike on the 14th (ICG, 2011a: 3-6).

With the Sfax strike on January 12th, Ben Ali realised the enormity of the situation in Tunisia (ICG, 2011a: 6). The strike, which attracted 30,000 people, prompted Ben Ali to deploy the armed forces to the streets of Tunis – a significant development when one considers that the military played no role in domestic security or protecting Tunis. The protests had overwhelmed the police and the planned UGTT strike on January 14th necessitated the military's deployment. Moreover, Ben Ali called upon the military to use force against the protestors. When the Army Chief of Staff, General Rachid Ammar, refused this order, Ben Ali attempted to place him under house arrest. The military withdrew from the streets of Tunis on January 13th, an action that indicated divisions within the regime (Brooks, 2013: 206). The massive demonstrations that occurred in Tunis on January 14th were a historic and decisive moment in the course of the uprising (Aleya-Sghaier, 2014: 34-35). The demonstrations occupied all of Habib Bourguiba Avenue in the city's centre and thousands protested outside the Ministry of Interior (MOI) calling on Ben Ali to go. That evening the national broadcaster, TVM, announced that Ben Ali had been temporarily deposed and that the Prime Minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, had replaced him, pursuant to article 56 of the Tunisian

²⁰ Interview with Amna Guallali.

constitution. The following day Ben Ali arrived in Saudi Arabia, where he has since been living in exile. Subsequent developments saw the formation of a national unity government, including opposition figures, which was to oversee the running of the country until national elections (Murphy, 2011: 302).

The Tunisian uprising was a popular revolt whose immediate outcome was the result of the military's refusal to employ lethal force against those protesting. The ouster of Ben Ali saw regime change occur, more specifically an instance of authoritarian breakdown. The military's actions at this time did not precede a coup and within a month of Ben Ali's deposition civilian politicians assumed responsibility for Tunisia's democratic transition (Stepan, 2012: 96). At the same time, actions were undertaken to remove the vestiges of the Ben Ali regime from Tunisian life. A number of officials associated with the former President, including General Ali Serati, the head of the Presidential Guard, and Rafik Belhaj Kacem, the Interior Minister were arrested (Murphy, 2011: 303). The RCD was also wound up and its properties shuttered. While the subsequent transition to democracy has proven difficult and there are questions about how deep democracy is in Tunisia (Brownlee et al., 2015: 125-146; Storm, 2014: 128-129), Tunisia certainly experienced authoritarian breakdown.

How the choices of those in Ben Ali's ruling coalition affected the course of events requires explanation. The narrative points to the importance of elite actors, and there are a number of factors that we should bear in mind. First, despite its two million declared members the RCD was unable to organise counter-demonstrations in favour of the regime despite. A former high-ranking party member informed the ICG (2011a: 9) that it was difficult to mobilise the party's rank-and-file because many sympathised with those protesting. The loss of rank-and-file support for the regime indicates that the RCD's position within the ruling coalition was not as strong as one might have thought.

Second, the Tunisian military played a decisive, albeit ambivalent, role during the uprising. Unlike its counterparts throughout the region, neither Bourguiba nor Ben Ali privileged the military. Rather, it was left to fend for itself and had become loyal to the state rather than the regime (Brooks, 2013). However, the military's actions during the uprising may not have been borne out of loyalty to the state but rather a history of disagreements between itself on the one hand and the security services on the other.²¹

Third, at its core, the Tunisian uprising was about socioeconomic conditions. Unemployment, increasing poverty, and the insatiable economic appetites of the president's extended family brought many out to protest. What is often left out of this

²¹ Interview with Achraf Aouadi.

discussion is how socioeconomic conditions and the impulsive appetites of the president's extended family affected dynamics within the ruling coalition.

And fourth, external reaction to the Tunisian uprising was muted to a large extent. While protests gathered pace and repression was employed, the United States, and Europe maintained a heavy silence. The notable and perhaps most significant exception, given the depth of ties between the two countries, to this was the former French Foreign Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, who offered Ben Ali the services of French security forces to help control the uprising.²² The silence emanating from the West was because, in Robert Fisk's (2011) words, 'Tunisia wasn't meant to happen'. As the poster child in a rough neighbourhood, Western policy-makers did not expect significant change to occur in Tunisia, despite a number of academics arguing that the Ben Ali regime, as it stood, was untenable (see Durac and Cavatorta, 2009; Hibou, 2011). As this chapter and the next will make clear, intra-regime dynamics contributed to the occurrence of authoritarian breakdown in Tunisia. In order to better understand these dynamics, the following section details Ben Ali's ruling coalition and how it evolved over time.

4.2 The Ruling Coalition and Political Life in Ben Ali's Tunisia

Throughout Ben Ali's time in power, authority in Tunisia resided in the executive, which dominated the legislative and judicial branches. Between independence from France in 1957, Tunisia had known only two Presidents, Habib Bourguiba (1957-1987) and Ben Ali (1987-2011). The legislature, the Chamber of Deputies, created the office of Prime Minister in order to serve as a de facto Vice President in the event of the incumbent's death or disability (Coupe, 2011: 709), a mechanism Ben Ali exploited to oust the ailing Bourguiba via 'medical coup' in 1987 (Entelis, 2011: 518). The Chamber is not responsible to the Prime Minister but to the President and serves in a consultative role effectively rubberstamping already agreed-upon decisions. Given the RCD's dominance of political life during Ben Ali's presidency, this is hardly surprising.

The judiciary was also cast in a subservient role and unable to reach verdicts independent of regime diktats. Many in the judiciary lamented this situation and were vocal in their criticisms of the regime (Yahtaoui, 2001). However, judicial independence was not a great concern amongst the judiciary. Many leveraged their

²² See the full text of Alliot-Marie's statement under the heading 'Violences en Tunisie et en Algérie. Réponses du Ministre d'Etat, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes, Michèle Alliot-Marie, à des Questions d'actualités à l'Assemblée Nationale', Paris January 11 2011. Available at <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr> [Accessed March 11 2015]

position to further their own interests (see Gobe, 2010) while others were complicit in the regime's repressive activities.²³

During Bourguiba's presidency, the ruling party was then called the *Neo-Destour* and later renamed the *Parti Socialiste Destourien* (PSD). The PSD was the core institutional structure underpinning the regime. Bourguiba maintained his hold on power through pitting party barons against one another. He cycled influential party elites in and out of power; consequently, the party leadership focused their attention on competing with one another rather than attempting to unseat Bourguiba (Angrist, 2007: 188). The regime also possessed a modest security apparatus at the time, which was used to quash dissent. However, it became apparent during the 1970s and the 1980s that the security services were not capable of maintaining internal order on its own and the military, an institution Bourguiba intentionally marginalised in order to guard against a possible coup, was called upon on a number of occasions to maintain order (Camau and Geisser, 2003: 192).

Upon coming to power in November 1987, Ben Ali sought to revitalise the PSD. A combination of statist excesses, Bourguiba's recurrent health problems, and the accompanying intrigues of succession politics, saw the party drained of the prestige it had acquired during Tunisia's independence struggle (Angrist, 1999: 93). The party was renamed and became the RCD in 1988. More importantly, a recruitment drive was undertaken that sought to attract those previously marginalised under Bourguiba: the business community, professionals, intellectuals, women, and young people (Willis, 2012: 132). Encouraged by the promise of reform, and the benefits of involvement, as well as concerns prompted by the rise of the Islamist *Ennahda* party, many Tunisians responded positively to the RCD. The party expanded rapidly throughout the 1990s and by the time of its third congress in 1998 had over two million members (Braun, 2006: 43-47).

The RCD's renewal was not limited to an expansion of party membership, as the single-party cadre's revitalisation saw an increasing prominence of personalist and military cadres. Ben Ali began his career in the military and further burnished his credentials while in the MOI. Because of this, he lacked a base within the RCD when he became President. To secure his position, he reshuffled the party leadership. Technocrats, who lacked either prior political experience or political basis within the RCD, were soon given leadership positions. These appointees were loyal to Ben Ali and did not constitute a threat (Alexander, 1997: 37). This marked the beginning of a

²³ Interview with Amna Guallali.

process that saw the RCD become an ‘organizational sinew’ of the regime that served Ben Ali’s interests, rather than rule as it did under Bourguiba (Angrist, 2007: 188). Accompanying the changes in the RCD’s leadership were the expansion and professionalization of the MOI’s security forces. The military was also brought into the political fold, albeit for a brief period of time, and was represented on the Council for National Security. This was recognition of the military’s status as a ‘dormant force’, whose support Ben Ali required to stay in power. The political profile of both the security services and the military were further enhanced as members of both institutions were placed into leading state and party positions (Murphy, 1999: 171). However, the military cadre’s prominence as a political actor was not long lived, as Ben Ali began to distance the armed forces from the centre of power (Hanlon, 2012; Brooks, 2013). The gradual isolation of the military and the restructuring of the RCD’s leadership marked the beginning of a process that saw power and prestige move to the MOI and Ben Ali’s extended family, who began to exert a significant political and economic influence in the mid-1990s.

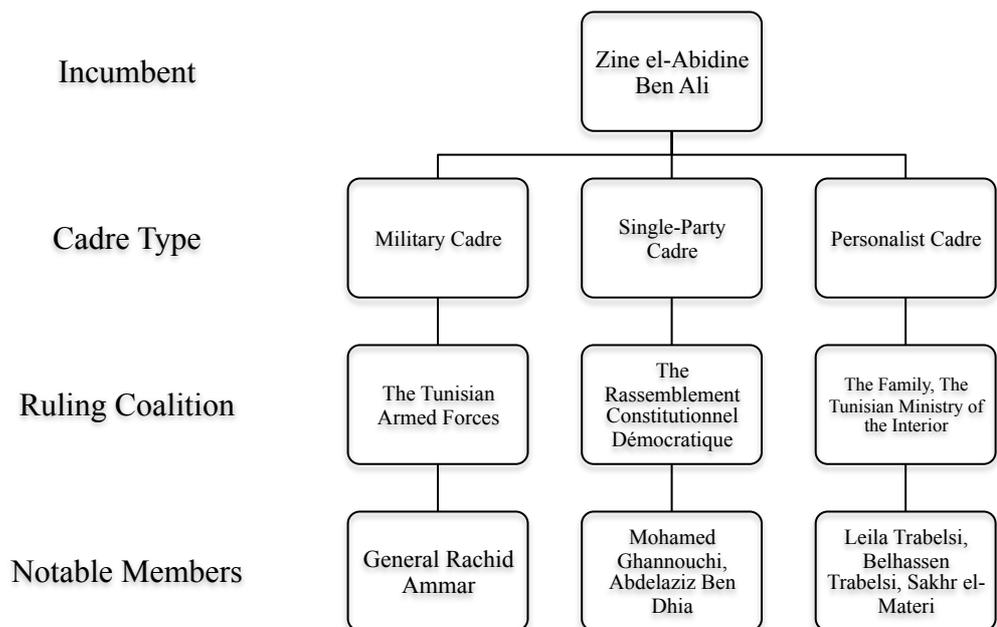
While the political system was effectively closed to opposition voices, Ben Ali was aware of the need to present a veneer of democratic legitimacy to external audiences. The electoral code was revised in 1993 and nineteen seats in the Chamber of Deputies were reserved for opposition parties (Braun, 2006: 42). These revisions did not pose a threat to the regime’s hegemony, however. The electoral code was revised in such a way that it created the image of gradual political reform but kept opposition parties too weak and divided to challenge the RCD (Alexander, 2010: 62-63). Rather than challenge the RCD, these reforms saw opposition parties compete with one another, as their leaders utilised these parties as a means to realise their personal interests (Camau and Geiser, 2003: 236-237).

The regime saw a gradual shift in power away from the formal structures of government to a range of informal structures that orbited Ben Ali. The Tunisian ruling coalition gradually evolved to become what Steffen Erdle (2004: 214) described as the three strands of the presidential sphere: the palace, the lieutenants and the entourage. The palace was Ben Ali’s personal apparatus, located in the presidential palace in the Tunis suburb of Carthage. It comprised the administrative services that were concerned with the day-to-day business of government and a small group of technocratic presidential advisors, comprised of ministers and senior officials within the RCD. The palace was Tunisia’s effective government and unrivalled centre of power.

The lieutenants were Ben Ali's personal nominees in what were termed the power ministries (Interior, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, International Cooperation and the economy-related portfolios) and the sixteen members of the RCD's politburo. The most important of the lieutenants at this time were those in command of the MOI's security forces. The ministry's various security forces were widely reviled in Tunisia for keeping Ben Ali and the regime in power (Hanlon, 2012: 5). The MOI was a 'virtual state within a state' and its functions still remain opaque today. There are no officially published statistics and the ministry's website offers little information on its activities, which inhibit our understanding of the ministry's activities during Ben Ali's time in power. What information can be sourced on the ministry's activities came from secondary sources and personal interviews.

The entourage consists of those related to, or affiliated with, the president and his wife, Leila Trabelsi. The members of this group came to be known as the 'The Family' throughout Tunisia and hail from a number of different groups related to Ben Ali through family or marriage. The only elite cadre left out of the presidential orbit was the military, which as an institution was gradually sidelined. However, Ben Ali did recognise the importance of retaining the military institution's support and did not purposefully antagonise it. Figure 4.1 outlines the Tunisian ruling coalition and its division into military, single-party and personalist cadres.

Figure 4.1 The Tunisian Ruling Coalition



The Tunisian ruling coalition was an intertwined informal grouping held together through institutional, political and familial affiliations. It included the leading representatives of central government and those who attained political prominence through their membership of the RCD, as well as a number of powerful families who exerted substantial influence without the requirement of formal office (Erdle, 2004: 214). These actors were bolstered by the military and the MOI, although the latter was held in higher regard (Brooks, 2013: 208). The single-party cadre administered the affairs of state whilst the personalist cadre provided the regime's coercive backbone. The military cadre was the regime's dormant force, politically marginalised but nonetheless recognised as an actor whose support must be retained. At the centre of all this was Ben Ali, the 'puppet master' around whom the ruling coalition's interests coalesced.²⁴ Interestingly, it became clear that Ben Ali also envisioned himself as the puppet master to an extent. The President's progressive monopolisation of power was accompanied by his dominance of public symbols of power (Willis, 2012: 133). Beginning in the mid-1990s, elections to the Chamber of Deputies were widely overshadowed by presidential elections, which were held on the same day in order to emphasise Ben Ali's leadership. Public portraits of the president began to appear across the country and his daily activities came to dominate television news bulletins and the front pages of the country's complaint press. This evoked a public profile akin to the Moroccan monarchy or, much more intentionally, Habib Bourguiba, as Clement Henry's (1965: 71) description of the latter's rule as 'presidential monarchy' rapidly came to apply to his successor as well.

4.3 Elite Perceptions and Interpersonal Ties: The Increasing Personalisation of the Ben Ali Regime

Upon coming to power, Ben Ali initially sought to balance the regime's single-party, military and personalist cadres against one another. The military and the MOI were afforded equal prominence with the RCD. However, the mid-1990s saw a gradual shift in power that favoured the regime's personalist cadre. The reasons behind this shift in power lie in the decision to liberalise the Tunisian economy and the desire to maintain internal security. There were three trends that marked this shift in power. First, the shift in decision-making from the formal machinery of government to the presidential palace weakened the RCD. Second, the President's extended family

²⁴ Personal Interview with Youssef Cherif, Political Analyst, The Cherif Consultancy Company, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

emerged as a powerful actor within the personalist cadre during the mid-1990s. And third, the preoccupation with internal security saw the MOI afforded increased prominence while the military became marginalised.

4.3.1 The RCD: The Decline of the Party and the Rise of the Technocrats

The 1980s were difficult economically for Tunisia and by 1986 the country implemented a World Bank and IMF supported Structural Adjustment Programme. Tunisia's privatisation policy was launched in 1987 under Ben Ali, who had come to power convinced of the wisdom of economic liberalisation (Marco et al., 2001: 11; King, 2009: 178). The honeymoon period offered to Ben Ali upon becoming President allowed him to begin the process of transitioning the Tunisian economy to one driven by the private sector (Khiari and Lamoum, 1999: 108; Henry and Springborg, 2010: 169). To implement these changes, Ben Ali surrounded himself with technocrats who were recruited into the RCD (Payne, 1993). They were advocates of wholesale economic liberalisation and were appointed to either government ministries, via the creation of secretary of state posts, or to the higher echelons of the public service (Murphy, 1999: 184). Subsequent cabinet reshuffles saw some promoted to head government ministries, including Ben Ali's final Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi in 1999. These technocrats shaped decision-making within the ruling coalition; they offered Ben Ali the necessary professional expertise required to implement his policy agenda. More importantly, for Ben Ali at least, was their lack of an independent power base within the RCD. As Erdle (2004: 216) writes, the RCD's technocrats were a 'dream team of dependable, and disposable, members'.

The technocrats constituted a parallel government of approximately forty mostly unknown presidential advisors (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 59). They were based in the presidential palace where decision-making became highly centralised at the expense of the RCD-dominated Chamber of Deputies (Hibou, 2011: 269). As the regime entered the 2000s, the government and the legislature became nothing more than implementing bodies that exercised a negligible influence on policy formulation and political decision-making. Rather than support a specific governing ideology, these bodies became dedicated to an individual, Ben Ali, and the implementation of his agenda (Erdle, 2004: 216). The nature of policy formulation underscores the strength of the technocrats based in the presidential palace and the weakness of the government and the RCD's representation in the Chamber of Deputies, despite its electoral dominance (Storm, 2014: 86-92). The technocrats set the policy agenda for the government and it was the

former who set the latter's work programme (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 59). Youssef Cherif describes how this situation worked:

[W]hat you had in Tunisia was that you had ministries but you also effectively had a prime ministry inside the palace. This was not the office of prime minister per se but the office of the technocrats. The main decisions were taken inside the presidential palace. In the palace you would find an advisor for cultural affairs and he would effectively be the real Minister for Culture. Whenever a decision had to be taken he would call the Minister of Culture and order him to do what he says. You would find advisors ranked higher than ministers themselves. That was how it worked.²⁵

The RCD's dominance of the Chamber of Deputies also betrayed its political irrelevance to the palace. Parliamentary work took place in seven permanent commissions dedicated to a specific policy area. As deputies could not initiate legislation, these commissions provided an opportunity to shape decision-making. However, these commissions were little more than talking-shops as and approved the legislation in the form the initiating Ministry first presented it because RCD deputies feared not being proposed as candidates in subsequent parliamentary elections if they were to voice criticism of the regime or its legislative priorities (Angrist, 1999: 98-99). Furthermore, not being proposed as a candidate would see the privileges of office disappear, as well as the ability to redistribute benefits to their constituents.

The importance of the technocrats in shaping Ben Ali's legislative agenda meant that recruitment into its ranks was stringent. Those recruited into the technocracy were highly intelligent, often lawyers or academics.²⁶ Because the state bureaucracy and the RCD were intertwined (Hibou, 2011: 115), Ben Ali had come to rely on the former to provide technocrats. Those who entered the bureaucracy were highly educated, graduates of either the state's largest administrative academy, the *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA), or a *Grande École*, one of the state's engineering schools. The overlap between the bureaucracy and the RCD also ensured that those in the civil service were sufficiently invested in the party and came to see it as an institution that could advance their interests.²⁷ Moreover, many technocrats, including the former Interior Minister, Hedi Mhenni, and Secretary General of the Presidency, Abdelaziz Ben Dhia, were placed into the leadership structures of the RCD, with the former having also served as the party's secretary general (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 60). Accordingly, educational qualifications were not sufficient to enter the technocracy. A

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Interview with Amine Ghali.

record of party membership and close ties to the incumbent leadership was also essential (Erdle, 2004: 216) because it provided aspirant technocrats with the necessary political competences and contacts to supplement their technical qualifications.²⁸

The centrality of the technocracy to decision-making represented a substantial shift in the forces undergirding the RCD, which earned Ben Ali the resentment of party barons who had been in place since Bourguiba's time. They had not only lost the succession game to Ben Ali but had also found themselves politically marginalised, as they did not support the regime's policy agenda (Murphy, 1999: 232). Such policies reduced the patronage they could distribute to supporters – a core dynamic of political life under Bourguiba. Nor was the party leadership outside of the technocracy silent about its concerns. Indicative of the RCD leadership's anger at Ben Ali was a declaration critical of the regime, which claimed to represent the silent RCD majority (Angrist, 2013: 552). The declaration, signed by *les Destouriens Démocrates*, criticised the increased personalisation of the regime, particularly those measures designed to strengthen the executive at the expense of other institutions (Geisser and Gobe, 2005/6). There were reformers within the RCD who were marginalised by the technocratic cadre,²⁹ and this declaration was reflective of this. A party member informed the ICG (2011a: 9-10) that many RCD members were opposed to what they saw as a regime that was no longer in the hands of the party but one that was in the hands of the President and his extended family. Regarding Ben Ali's treatment of the party, Mohamed Jegham, a former Defence Minister, remarked that 'RCD cadres no longer existed. We were treated at best like peons, at worst like lepers' (ICG, 2011a: 9-10). The disaffected old guard nevertheless chose not to walk away. They reasoned, as theoretically expected, that it was better to stay within the ruling coalition rather than exit it (Angrist, 2007: 187). Indeed, the old guard became accustomed to competing with one another for Ben Ali's favour recognising that breaking away from the regime would have resulted in a diminished status.

Despite these tensions, the RCD appeared to be a powerful force. As of 2008, the party had 2.2 million members (Beau and Graciet, 2008: 64) and gave rise to the perception that Tunisia had fallen under the sway of a hegemonic ruling party (King, 1998). Indeed, the party pressed home its advantage and undertook an ideological remaking of its local cells in order to align their interests with Ben Ali's policy agenda (Angrist, 1999: 94). However, the RCD also became increasingly irrelevant at the local

²⁸ Interview with Youssef Cherif.

²⁹ Ibid.

level. Members did not contribute to shaping the policy agenda but rather provided information on local activities and ensured that regime directives were implemented (Hibou, 2011: 87). The party was relegated to mobilising the local population in support of the regime through liaising with local notables and associations (Murphy, 1999: 212, 231-232; Camau and Geisser, 2003: 214-218). The party's perceived strengths also hid a divergent outlook that had developed at the local level, as local cells had come to believe that those in the palace did not best represent their interests. Moreover, as Anis Samali, an election observer, makes clear, many only joined the party to protect what they had already earned:

Others were forced to join; you have people working in the ministries and the municipalities . . . I'll give you the example of my mother. My mother was working in the Ministry of Health and every year she was given a membership card. She didn't do anything but she was automatically given one, she was automatically registered as a party member. A party official would basically say to her 'I know your name and who you work with in the ministry'. She was given a card with her name and address on it and was asked to pay for her membership for the year. This was how the RCD had so many members. However, they weren't actually asking for involvement in the party. All they wanted was my mother's membership. She didn't have to be involved in the party or be an active member but if she refused to join, that was a problem. There's a difference between not being in the party, that's not a problem, and refusing to join the party. If you refuse to join the party you're perceived as a problem. They want members to give the illusion of strength. So what you have is a party that has two million members of which only ten thousand are active. And these ten thousand active members are the ones centred on Ben Ali; they are the ones involved in the decision-making.³⁰

When the RCD's position in the ruling coalition is analysed, an interesting picture of the single-party cadre emerges. First, there was an element within the cadre, the technocrats, who were highly integrated with the President and shared a similar outlook. Both were committed to economic liberalisation and the technocrats provided the technical and ideological nous to implement it. This allowed for interest realisation within the technocracy as its members could influence policy. However, the remainder of the single-party cadre had been marginalised. The ability of the party old guard and its representation in the Chamber of Deputies to influence policymaking was limited, while the interests of local members were ignored. Nevertheless, the marginalised factions within the party did not withdraw from the ruling coalition following reasoning that it was better to be within the ruling coalition rather than outside of it.

³⁰ Personal Interview with Anis Samali, Project Chief Mourakiboun, Tunisian Election Monitoring NGO, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

4.3.2 The Personalist Cadre (1): ‘The Family’

The shift in power to the personalist cadre was most evinced by the strong influence Ben Ali’s extended family exerted over Tunisia’s economic sphere. The country’s privatisation policy favoured a rent-seeking urban and rural elite that began with the kin of the President (King, 2009: 179). This familial network, heretofore known as ‘The Family’, was presided over by Ben Ali and his second wife, Leila Trabelsi. The Family consisted of the extended Ben Ali and Trabelsi clans, as well as their relatives, including Ben Ali and his siblings; Leila and her siblings; the El-Materis, the family of Ben Ali and Leila’s daughter Nesrine and her husband Sakhr; and, Ben Ali’s sons-in-law from his first marriage (Slim Chiboub who is married to Ben Ali’s eldest daughter, Dorsaf; Marouane Mabrouk who is married to Cyrine Ben Ali; and, Slim Zarrouk who is married to Ghazouna Ben Ali) (Erdle, 2010: 145-146). The entire network, which was centred on approximately sixty families, consisted of hundreds of individuals.

The Family’s primary interest was self-enrichment. Indeed, this was Leila Trabelsi’s primary concern and she worked to establish a secure economic, political, and social position, not only for herself, but also for The Family (Mirak-Weissbacj, 2012: 72). The details surrounding Leila Trabelsi’s political ascent are open to interpretation and insinuation (see Beau and Graciet, 2009: 13-15). What can be categorically stated is that Trabelsi is Ben Ali’s second wife who he married in 1992, after taking her as his mistress during the 1980s. They have three children together: daughters Nesrine and Halima, and a son, Mohammad, who was born in 2005 (Mirak-Weissbach, 2012: 67). Trabelsi initially played no political role, but began to exert a significant influence throughout the 2000s. The increase in Trabelsi’s influence coincided with rumours that Ben Ali’s health had begun to deteriorate. Suha Arafat, the widow of Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, had confided to, then, US Ambassador to Tunisia, Robert F. Godec, in 2007 that Ben Ali had been weakened by an ongoing battle with cancer and that he simply did what his wife asked of him.³¹ While the particularities of the President’s health were never detailed, US diplomatic cables make clear that speculation about his health was rife at the time.³² Irrespective of Ben Ali’s health, it was clear that Trabelsi

³¹ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, *‘The Png’ing of Suha Arafat: Many Rumours, Few Facts’*, November 16 2007, 07TUNIS1489. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TUNIS1489_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

³² Cable Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, *‘Ambassador’s Farewell Call on President Ben Ali’*, July 28 2009, 09TUNIS523. Available at: <https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/07/09TUNIS523.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]; Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, *‘Ben Ali Back in the Saddle, But Speculation about his Health Continues’*, December 10 2009, 09TUNIS895. Available at: <https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/12/09TUNIS895.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]

was aware of the speculation and exploited it. With the presidential palace firmly set as ‘the command and control centre for the country’ (Erdle, 2010: 136), Trabelsi commandeered the technocrats within the palace and ordered them to treat her as de facto President. In an incident detailed by Beau and Graciet (2009: 30-31), she informed Ben Ali’s advisors of what to do when he was ill:

You know as well as I do that the president is going through a phase of depression because he exerted himself in service to the country. Therefore, I ask you to be gentle with him, and avoid overloading him with news or dossiers, which might worsen his condition. You can, in any case and on any subject, turn to me beforehand. I would know how to present things to him.

In this instance, Trabelsi effectively issued presidential directives to government officials regarding procedures that she required be followed. If Ben Ali was indisposed, she was to be briefed first, despite lacking an official position within the Tunisian government. With the day-to-day of government decision-making centred in the presidential palace, Trabelsi was well placed to make sure this directive was followed. There was a growing perception in Tunisia during the late 2000s that Ben Ali was increasingly ceding power to Leila as his health declined. Those who worked in the palace noted that ‘For the time being Leila rules . . . Several scenes made us think that the head of state suffers from a kind of senility that Leila plays with and enjoys’ (Ben Choudra, 2011: 56-57). Amna Guallali supports this contention, further arguing that Ben Ali was retreating from governing:

Ben Ali was losing his grip on the situation in Tunisia as he became older. They said he was sick but he definitely wasn’t playing as pivotal a role as he had played before. His family was gaining more and more power . . . It was the situation of a president who started to become more and more isolated, it seemed that not every element of power was in his hands. His wife’s family were becoming like a mafia and were damaging everything, including him.³³

While Ben Ali may have retreated from day-to-day decision-making in Tunisia, the US embassy also made it clear in a number of cables that he was alert to political developments and willing to move on issues when they arose.³⁴ He quickly resolved a tax issue between Tunisian authorities and a private American school while the speech following his November 2009 swearing was particularly combative, as he rounded upon both foreign and domestic critics. Moreover, Beau and Graciet (2009: 53) argue that

³³ Interview with Amna Guallali.

³⁴ *Ambassador’s Farewell call on President Ben Ali*; Cable. Embassy Tunisia to Secretary of State, ‘*Ben Ali Sworn In, Holding Grudges and Settling Scores*’, November 13 2009, 09TUNIS834. Available at: <https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/11/09TUNIS834.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]

Ben Ali's lack of involvement in the day-to-day running of the government was undertaken consciously by the president: he rather chose to focus upon matters of domestic and foreign security rather than the palace intrigues which interested Trabelsi. What's more, they further claim that while Trabelsi was nothing more than a schemer, Ben Ali was the ultimate arbiter of all decisions within the palace and was the one who wielded real power. Nonetheless, the picture that emerges throughout the 2000s is one of Ben Ali ceding at least some semblance of political authority to Leila Trabelsi. Indeed, she had sought to position herself as successor to her husband.³⁵ However, her unpopularity and lack of a support base from outside of her family, and doubts about her competence, led her to abandon this idea (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 51).

Where Trabelsi encountered success was in co-opting Tunisia's economic liberalisation process to enrich her family.³⁶ Before marrying Ben Ali, the Trabelsi family lacked assets (Schmid, 2007) but her marriage saw this change, as they acquired stakes in a range of business sectors. Trabelsi accomplished this through arranging marriages between members of the Family and important actors within the Tunisian business community. She sought an alliance with Hedi Djilani, the head of the *Union Tunisienne de l'Artisanat et du Commerce* (UTICA), Tunisia's main employer's organisation. To formalise this alliance Trabelsi had her brother Belhassen divorce his wife and marry Djilani's daughter Nefissa. The marriage sparked outrage in Tunisia as many suspected that Nefissa Djilani was 'sold' to consummate the alliance between the two families (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 74). Further cementing this alliance between the regime and the Djilani family was the marriage of Djilani's younger daughter to one of the President's nephews, Sofiane Ben Ali.³⁷

Another prominent marriage orchestrated by Trabelsi was that of her daughter Nesrine to Sakhr El-Materi.³⁸ While there were tensions between the two families, the marriage cemented The Family's position within Tunisian society because of the El-Materi's position as an established family within the bourgeoisie (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 126). It was this pedigree that further burnished Sakhr El-Materi's credentials within the personalist cadre:

His grandfather, Dr. Mahmoud El-Matri, was a famous activist in the nationalist movement in the 1930s. His father was a military officer and was sentenced to life

³⁵ *The Png'ing of Suha Arafat*.

³⁶ This will be fully detailed in Section 4.4.2.

³⁷ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'Corruption in Tunisia Part IV: The Family's Holdings', July 5 2006, 06TUNIS1672. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06TUNIS1672_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

³⁸ El-Materi will be spelled in this manner except where quoted.

imprisonment for an attempted coup against Bourguiba in 1962. He was later pardoned by Bourguiba and is now a member of the Chamber of Advisors. Sakhr El-Matri and his father recently opened a shelter for cancer patients. The El-Matri family is also prominent in business.³⁹

This marriage was a strategic choice for Leila Trabelsi. First, it integrated a leading family from the Tunisian bourgeoisie into the regime, making it much more difficult for the bourgeoisie to form an opposition bloc. And second, it provided the regime with a potential successor. While Ben Ali's son, Mohammed, was the designated crown prince, his young age was an impediment to him being an effective president. El-Materi was therefore an ideal candidate to succeed to the presidency. In addition to having amassed a large fortune through his business activities, he was also an involved RCD member, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and head of the RCD organisation in Carthage. He had also undertaken to serving as a point of contact between the regime and key ambassadors but whether he was mandated to undertake this duty was not determined.⁴⁰ El-Materi did not use these positions to establish a public profile but rather to build networks and establish a profile within the regime. This allowed El-Materi to influence Ben Ali because he routinely complained that the technocrats would often 'bring the wrong information' to the president, therefore implying he had to get involved to correct matters.⁴¹ The increasing stature being afforded to El-Materi within the regime was, according to Youssef Cherif, part of a deliberate strategy to position him as a successor to Ben Ali:

His [Ben Ali's] son-in-law Sakhr El-Materi; he was obviously being groomed to succeed him. This guy married his daughter in the mid-2000s. He was given a bank and the authorisation to run a radio station. He entered the RCD and became one of the leaders of the party. He was obviously grooming him and was still grooming him up until the uprising.⁴²

The Family's access to the ruling coalition was predicated upon their proximity to Ben Ali that allowed Leila Trabelsi to further their interests in self-enrichment. They did not appear to possess the technical skills or experience required to assist in implanting the President's policy agenda; it was made clear that many in Tunisia mocked Family for their (previously) low social status, lack of education and

³⁹ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, '*Ben Ali's Son-In-Law Sakhr El-Matri: A Rising Force in Tunisia*', February 26 2009, 09TUNIS108. Available at: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09TUNIS108_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

⁴⁰ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, '*Tunisia: Dinner with Sakher El-Matri*', July 27 2009, 09TUNIS516. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09TUNIS516_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Interview with Youssef Cherif

conspicuous consumption.⁴³ The, then, US ambassador, Godec, characterised Sakhr El-Materi as displaying a limited knowledge of international politics and economics, despite being positioned as a potential successor.⁴⁴ He also described Nesrine Ben Ali as a naïve and clueless product of a sheltered and privileged upbringing. The Family's lack of educational qualifications also shaped the activities they undertook in the private sector. Amine Ghali argues that The Family did not contribute to economic or private sector growth in Tunisia; instead, they moved in on productive sectors of the economy and co-opted them for their own benefit.⁴⁵ Selim Ben Yedder further elaborates on this aspect of The Family's interest in self-enrichment when discussing the IT sector. Outside of Cyrine Ben Ali's ownership of Tunisia's sole Internet provider (King, 2009: 180), none in The Family sought to enter the IT sector. As Ben Yedder notes, this was because none of The Family had the technical knowledge required to understand the complexity of the IT sector and this was why their business interests were confined to mainly physical assets in Tunisia that they could directly control.⁴⁶

The Family were highly integrated into the Tunisian ruling coalition. This integration was made possible by Ben Ali's apparent retreat from governing, which enabled Leila Trabelsi to manage the day-to-day functions of the presidential palace. It was this proximity to the President that allowed Leila to put in place The Family's network of economic interests. The Family also exhibited a high degree of homogeneity with Ben Ali's outlook and were particularly supportive of Ben Ali's economic liberalisation programme. This was made clear in US diplomatic dispatches, which repeatedly noted that Sakhr El-Materi had expressed an interest of opening the Tunisian economy to franchising.⁴⁷ Interestingly, none of The Family displayed a technical knowledge that made them indispensable to the ruling coalition. Rather, their loyalty was secured because it was their access to Ben Ali that allowed them to realise their material interests.

⁴³ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, '*Corruption in Tunisia: What's Yours is Mine*', June 23 2008, 08TUNIS679. Available at: <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/06/08TUNIS679.html> [Accessed March 2 2015].

⁴⁴ *Tunisia: Dinner with Sakher El-Matri*.

⁴⁵ Interview with Amine Ghali

⁴⁶ Personal Interview with Selim Ben Yedder, CEO of Cynapsys Tunisia, IT Company, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

⁴⁷ *Corruption in Tunisia; Tunisia: Dinner with Sakher El-Matri*; Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, '*Ambassador calls on Sakher El-Materi*', October 23 2009, 09TUNIS970. Available at: <https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/10/09TUNIS970.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]

4.3.3 The Personalist Cadre (2): The Ministry of Interior

The second component of the ruling coalition's personalist cadre was the MOI. Ben Ali had become preoccupied with the maintenance of internal security during the 1980s and early 1990s following the rise of political Islam in Tunisia and neighbouring Algeria (Willis, 2006; 2012: 4). The maintenance of internal security required a large security apparatus that shared the President's fixation with internal order (Daguzan, 1998: 74). The MOI shared this fixation with Ben Ali, who, despite beginning his career in the military, had his worldview shaped during his time in the MOI (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 60). The MOI thus became the regime's 'praetorian guard' (Alexander, 2011) and worked to realise Ben Ali's worldview:

The Interior Ministry was instrumental in carrying out the repressive objectives of the regime. It played a key role through the State Security Department, which was the political police. The political police were supposed to follow and put every opponent of the regime under surveillance . . . They were quite an important part of the repression because they used to prevent the opposition from organising conferences or holding meetings . . . The judiciary was also instrumental in this repressive regime because they conducted trials, and these trials were considered unfair nationally and internationally as they didn't offer the defendants the guarantee of a fair trial. Most of the evidence came from confessions extracted through torture and the judges never really did their job of investigating torture cases.⁴⁸

During Bourguiba's time in power, the MOI was controlled by, and accountable to, the government through the Minister of the Interior but under Ben Ali the ministry soon became a tool of the presidency. As President, Bourguiba did not directly interfere with the work of the MOI and largely delegated authority over the security forces to his respective Interior Ministers (Essebi, 2009: 131-135). Indeed, Bourguiba went as far as to introduce a constitutional amendment that placed the security forces 'at the disposal' of the government not the presidency (Lutterbuck, 2015: 820). In contrast, Ben Ali sought direct control of the MOI and upon coming to power repealed the aforementioned constitutional amendment thus strengthening the presidency's control over the security apparatus. However, Ben Ali did not directly assume the position of Interior Minister he instead relegated the official minister to a façade role. For example, Ben Ali assumed direct responsibility for senior appointments within the MOI. He not only nominated the Directors of the Interior Ministry but also lower-ranked officials (Hached and Ferchichi, 2014: 75). Furthermore, numerous accounts detail the President bypassing his Interior Ministers to provide direct instructions to police directors and

⁴⁸ Interview with Amna Guallali.

lower-ranked officers with whom he maintained regular contact (Manai, 1995: 169). Ben Ali's direct control of the security sector also manifested itself in his staffing of the MOI's upper echelons. Unlike his regional counterparts, Ben Ali did not appoint Interior Ministers possessing extensive experience in the security sector instead appointing civilians with no specialist knowledge to the position, which precluded these appointees from establishing a power base within the ministry. Contrary to those Ben appointed as Directors-General of National Security, the country's highest-ranked police directors were either military officers possessing a string sense of discipline or police officers personally close to Ben Ali who could be expected to follow orders without question (Lutterbuck, 2015: 821).

It is important to bear in mind at this point the lack of available evidence on the Tunisian MOI. The evidence presented in this study came from interviews and secondary data and does not presume to offer a fully formed picture of the MOI's organisational structure or institutional behaviour. However, there is enough data to demonstrate the MOI's willingness to use repressive measures to protect the Ben Ali regime, which speaks to its personalist tendencies. The MOI had a byzantine organisation and its institutional arrangements remain classified. Nor is any other official information of the ministry available for public consumption (Hanlon, 2012: 5). However, it consisted of two directorates: the police and the National Security Directorate (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 61). The police's job was to manage the public duties of the ministry, such as traffic management. The National Security Directorate was responsible for the maintenance of internal order, intelligence, document management and cybercrimes. Entry into this directorate required specialist training with a particular emphasis placed on computer knowledge (Hibou, 2011: 82). Within this directorate was the Presidential Guard. This unit, which was 5,000-6,000 strong, was tasked with protecting the President and his family. The MOI also undertook duties that belied its personalist tendencies. The ministry possessed a broad remit, which in addition to its 'ordinary' policing duties such as law enforcement, traffic management and document management, included a number of distinctly political functions. For example, the constituent forces of the MOI were also charged with conducting investigations into everything that is 'relevant for political, economic, social and cultural life', which granted the MOI a free hand to conduct any information-gathering duties it saw fit (Lutterbuck, 2015: 821). A lack of formal regulation characterised the MOI under Ben Ali and the MOI functioned less based on law and established legislation than the verbal orders of the President and regime leadership (see Shelley,

1996). A number of police officers noted to Lutterbuck (2015: 89) that formal laws did not primarily guide their work: first came the direct verbal orders of Ben Ali followed by the orders the Family and only then came the law. Consequently, the MOI's duties primarily consisted of protecting the regime through serving the interests of Ben Ali and his extended family.

The MOI relied on a combination of physical and administrative repression to maintain internal order. Torture was regularly employed by the Judicial Police in order to coerce confessions from those suspected of committing crimes (Hanlon, 2012: 6). The MOI's greatest strength lay in the administrative repression it could employ against those it deemed a threat to the regime. Its reach extended throughout the Tunisian bureaucracy, where it exercised a de facto power of appointment (Hibou, 2011: 82). The backgrounds of civil service applicants were thoroughly vetted to ensure RCD affiliation. Applicants' personal backgrounds were also looked into, as well as those of their family and friends to check for potential Islamist or opposition sympathies. The ministry also had the power to dismiss existing bureaucrats if their political allegiances were suspect. Although dismissed civil servants often garnered favourable verdicts in appealing these decisions, they were never enforced.

The MOI also extended its repressive capabilities into the online lives of Tunisians. The ministry demanded that all online business in Tunisia be conducted using unencrypted data, which meant that there was no data protection for consumers, while simultaneously denying access to content that was critical of the Ben Ali regime. Thus, the information the regime could gather on Tunisians increased, as their ability to access information was simultaneously reduced. Ben Yedder recounts:

When we had to send customers information we used VPNs (Virtual Private Networks). They have to be encrypted so that no one can have access to this information. It's a requirement put in place to protect the customer but it wasn't so simple in Tunisia. All information had to be unencrypted for the National Information Authority so that it could be scanned and analysed by the regime . . . At the same time the regime blocked access to sites that were critical of it. There was a big Internet filter. We didn't have access to the entirety of the Internet; just the Internet Ben Ali wanted us to see.⁴⁹

The various police forces housed within the MOI were also employed with political intent. The political police were integrated into the regular police forces, despite operating under a parallel hierarchy. Under Ben Ali the political police maintained secret files on both regime and opposition figures, which contained

⁴⁹ Interview with Selim Ben Yedder.

potentially damaging and false information about numerous individuals in Tunisian society (Hanlon, 2012: 6). The ministry also co-opted other bodies within the Tunisian state to do its work including the customs service, the revenue service and the national social welfare fund (see Hibou, 2006). This allowed the MOI to exercise indirect control over people's behaviour, which demonstrated 'the ability of police institutions to mobilise the panoply of institutions in accordance with their own aims and objectives to infect public logic and seep into the way everyone behaves' (Khiari, 2003: 102). The information gathered by the MOI constitutes an effective mechanism of surveillance, intimidation and dissuasion. Engagement with the state, whether one is applying for a job or a business permit, means either an open door or an insurmountable obstacle (Hibou, 2011: 83). Thus, one's access to the state was dependent upon the intelligence gathered by the ministry.

Whilst nepotism undoubtedly characterised the Family it was also prevalent, if less discernible, within the MOI. Ben Ali did not engage in obvious forms of cronyism when staffing the ministry's leadership, however those from Tunisia's eastern coastal region, where the President hailed from, dominated its ranks (Lutterback, 2015: 825). Nepotism also characterised the MOI's broader recruitment and advancement. According to Lutterback (2015: 826), the single most important criterion for accepting candidates to the MOI was the recommendation of an influential personality within the ruling coalition who had ties to Ben Ali. Such a reference not only determined admission but the career path of the candidate: the more influential the reference the higher the recruit would climb within the security apparatus to where they would be in a position to serve their adviser. For influential members of the ruling coalition recommending a candidate for the MOI provided an opportunity to secure one's future interests. Furthermore, it also served to bind those in the ministry to the regime as their positions were ultimately attained through Ben Ali's benevolence.

The MOI was an integral part of Ben Ali's ruling coalition as the guarantor of internal security. The institution displayed a high degree of integration with the President as both shared an interest in maintaining internal order and gathering intelligence on those opposed to the regime. Furthermore, Ben Ali's direct control of the institution allowed him to bind the MOI to his presidency's fortunes. He not only determined the scope of the ministry's duties but the composition of its leadership, which remained loyal to him, while also putting in place a recruitment programme that only saw loyalists accepted into the MOI's ranks. It was these shared interests and Ben Ali's direct control that permitted the MOI to act in the manner it did throughout

Tunisia, and the Presidential Guard was made ultimately responsible for the security of the regime.

4.3.4 The Military Cadre: Isolation and Exclusion

The military cadre under Ben Ali initially experienced a period of indirect involvement within the ruling coalition before becoming marginalised and excluded throughout the 1990s. This treatment was not solely a reflection of Ben Ali's interest in domestic security but of how the military had traditionally been perceived within the Tunisian elite. In contrast to Algeria, Tunisia did not have to fight a war to secure independence from France. Therefore, the military was unable to create a narrative around itself in which it emerged as the midwife of independence (Gaub, 2014: 25). Nevertheless, during the period of French withdrawal, the military established itself as the defender of the Tunisian state.

Following independence, Bourguiba considered a powerful military that maintained a strong public profile a risk. The military was consequently forbidden from participating in political life and relegated to undertaking UN-Sanctioned peacekeeping missions in sub-Saharan Africa while coercive functions became the preserve of the MOI (Willis, 2012: 86; Gaub, 2014: 26). This treatment of the military saw Bourguiba invest in a number of security accords with France and the United States that were to provide for the defence of Tunisia (Faria, 1996). The rationale behind this treatment was self-preservation, as Bourguiba considered a powerful military institution a threat to his authority (Faria, 1996); a decision he felt was justified in light of military involvement in two unsuccessful attempts to oust him (Willis, 2012: 83). This marginalisation of the military was such that Ben Ali's appointment to the position of Prime Minister was the first occurrence of a military officer in Tunisia being appointed to cabinet.

It is perhaps unsurprising that, upon assuming the presidency, Ben Ali incorporated a number of senior officials from both the MOI and the military into civilian politics. Four of the nine members of the newly restructured RCD leadership had backgrounds in either the military or the MOI (Murphy, 1999: 185). The establishment of the Council for National Security saw the military's indirect role in politics formalised. The council was established with the intent to 'collect, analyze and assess information on domestic, foreign and defence policies with the aim of safeguarding internal and external state security' (Ware, 1988: 595). Those who accompanied Ben Ali's rise from his military and security background were described as follows (Ware, 1988, 594):

They are contemporaneous in age; they received their commissions in the immediate post-independence period; they were trained initially in French military schools; they are considered both technocrats and men of prudent but decisive action; and all, apart from Katib, have obtained their advanced technological training in American military institutions.

The incorporation of the military cadre into the political sphere indicated the importance Ben Ali attached to the institution. Indeed, Murphy (1999: 186) suggested these efforts were undertaken so that the aspirations of the military cadre could be integrated with those of the regime's civilian elements.

Nevertheless, the extent of military involvement with the Ben Ali regime initially remained unclear. At the outset, it appeared that military involvement was indirect, as military officers were incorporated into the RCD's structures and the Council for National Security but it soon came to resemble that of Bourguiba era civil-military relations. Developments in the 1990s indicated that Ben Ali sought to follow this pattern and marginalise the military. A professionalization programme was undertaken with the intention of distancing the military from politics (Willis, 2012: 103; Gaub, 2014: 26). Despite enjoying a higher public profile than it did under Bourguiba, the military was exiled so that Ben Ali could establish a personalised power base (Willis, 201: 104). Those military officials appointed to senior positions within the RCD were replaced by loyal party members, while those who had undertaken military training with Ben Ali owed their position more to their ties with the President than to their military capabilities (Camau and Geisser, 2003: 212). These developments saw the military become politically isolated and it was deployed to Tunisia's interior in order to undertake public work's projects (Hanlon, 2012: 4). These duties kept the military distanced from politically sensitive issues, as comments to a US Congressional Delegation indicate:

The Minister described the GOT's (Government of Tunisia) defense policy as not limited to the military but as encompassing all Tunisian institutions Approximately half the military is occupied with border security. The rest are involved in infrastructure development and humanitarian aid and disaster assistance, especially in remote areas where the private sector is reluctant to go, and in humanitarian or peacekeeping missions with the UN and the African Union. The security forces under the MOI (Ministry of Interior) are responsible for terrorism not the military. The two ministries have joint patrols along the border except in the south where the army is responsible. At times the army has intervened

to support the security forces.⁵⁰

An important episode that detailed the military's declining prestige compared to the MOI occurred in the early 1990s. The Barakat Essahel case was an alleged coup against the regime by a group of military officers, who were falsely accused by then Interior Minister of Abdallah Kallel of conspiring to overthrow Ben Ali (Lutterbuck, 2015: 816). Although most of the accused were subsequently released or declared innocent, Ben Ali used this event to purge and tighten his control over the military. The event also demonstrated the growing prestige of the MOI. The investigations into the alleged coup were conducted by the MOI, not the military authorities that were formally responsible (Hached and Ferchichi, 2014: 69-70). More importantly, in the wake of the incident, the military were subjected to heavy MOI surveillance and monitoring. The outcome of the affair was political isolation. One military officer bluntly stated that 'The regime did not like us' (Hanlon, 2012: 4). Amine Ghali argues that this isolation reflected a deliberate desire on Ben Ali's part to keep the military weak:

It was kept strategically weak and had absolutely no visibility in Tunisia. Before the revolution you would never see a tank or a military vehicle in the street. The military had very limited institutional and non-institutional privileges compared to the police . . . This went back to Bourguiba. He thought rather than strengthen the military it was better to sign strategic deals with France and the United States. We always had small military forces. They were kept in their barracks. The military is not a big thing: no resources, no influences, no visibility, nothing.⁵¹

Control of the military was exerted through exclusion; it was kept distant from the centre of power and balanced against a well-resourced MOI. What's more, its mission of providing for the national defence of Tunisia was lessened because of security accords the country had entered into with France and the United States. The military's lack of direct involvement saw it isolated from the remainder of the ruling coalition. This isolation was, however, beneficial to the military cadre (Gaub, 2014: 26-28). First, it was generally subject to little political interference in promotions and appointments. Second, it regularly undertook training at all levels. The officer corps also took supplementary training in US military institutions. Because of this, educational levels and professional standards within the officer corps were quite high. Third, the military was insulated from the political machinations of the palace (Brooks, 2013: 213-214).

⁵⁰ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'CODEL Schiff Meetings with the Defense Minister and Parliamentarians', July 22 2009, 09TUNIS506. Available at: <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/07/09TUNIS506.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]

⁵¹ Interview with Amine Ghali.

And fourth, the military was not utilised as a repressive force. It was therefore seen as an apolitical institution that was little feared throughout Tunisia (Hanlon, 2012: 5). Exclusion was ultimately beneficial to the military cadre, as it allowed the institution to develop a distinct corporate identity that was loyal to the state rather than the regime (Brooks, 2013: 214-215). Moreover, this isolation from the remainder of the ruling coalition saw the military cadre develop an outlook that was not wholly congruent with Ben Ali. Thus, the military was able to conceive of its interests without Ben Ali.

4.4 The Distribution of Material Resources in Ben Ali's Tunisia

The distribution of material resources within the ruling coalition provides further evidence that the personalist cadre was becoming increasingly favoured under Ben Ali. First, economic liberalisation had seen the RCD partly lose its ability to direct the distribution of material patronage, while the Family enriched itself through the co-optation of the country's privatisation process and predatory economic practices (Cook, 2009: 171). And second, the resources and benefits afforded to the military and the MOI further reveal the esteem in which Ben Ali held both institutions.

4.4.1 The RCD: Distributing Opportunity

The implementation of economic liberalisation saw the state progressively abandon the social contract that was established by Bourguiba (King, 1998: 113-114), and its replacement with a 'patina of continued populism' under the patronage of the RCD and Ben Ali (King, 2009: 179). Rather than distribute monetary assets directly, the RCD was an intermediary between its members and the regime. The party accessed financial resources through regularly appropriating sums of money from individuals and public and private business (Hibou, 2011: 89). The party also possessed indirect resources that it did not strictly own, but which it managed, such as social programmes and mobile health services. By not directly controlling the resources, it distributed the RCD was able to insulate itself from any accusations of misappropriation or embezzlement.

The strength of the RCD's material distribution lay in its adaptability. Rather than distribute strictly material benefits to its members, the party, in collaboration with the MOI, was a necessary interlocutor in obtaining permissions for undertaking economic activities in Tunisia. Party membership provided a path to obtaining authorisation to open a business, access credit and obtain licences (Hibou, 2011: 89). Party membership aided in expediting requests to the bureaucracy, such as accessing documents and the

granting of societal ranks, which determined the state benefits individuals were entitled to. It also allowed party members to access benefits that were not available to most Tunisians as Selim Ben Yedder notes:

Party membership was a facilitator: you could get access to what you needed indirectly through the party. You could get some advantages . . . If you needed licences you could get them and you were afforded privileged communication with the state. You could always get the right paperwork for what you needed as well. If the building authority only gave you permission to build six floors you could talk to a party contact and they would give you a piece of paper to build more floors.⁵²

Membership of the RCD allowed individuals to benefit from the party's ability to intercede with the bureaucracy. That the party was able to facilitate the distribution of opportunities explained why many joined, as Anis Samali makes clear 'If you wanted to open a store you needed an official paper and if you weren't in the party how would you get these papers?'⁵³ The RCD took advantage of this situation and its ability to solve problems and pull strings that were not available to others. It became a network of clienteles deployed to realise the interests of party members. The party leadership was also able to take advantage of the party's intercession with the bureaucracy. Ministers were able to utilise information and influence to ensure that their business contacts had insider details on government contracts, which allowed them to receive profitable kickbacks.⁵⁴ Membership of the RCD brought together a diverse range of actors who often had competing interests such as trade unionists, business owners, rural landowners, the urban and rural poor, and, civil servants and gave each a stake in the Ben Ali regime (Zartman, 1991: 26; King, 2003: 90-91; King, 2009: 173-174). This system also bound the party to the regime because, as Amine Ghali explains, it inhibited reform from within:

It's a well-structured network. Bribes, embezzlement, clientelism . . . Party members get their percentage, their commissions, and this keeps them invested in the system. So, when someone is appointed governor or given access to an economic opportunity it's not because of their merit. It's because of their links to the corrupt higher-ups in the regime . . . You cannot be within this system and be clean and you surely cannot be within it and to try to compete and improve it from within . . . And this is how the system is maintained. People knew at some point, probably the late 1990s, that in order to get something you had to be in the system . . . And once you were in the system you couldn't escape it. Even if you only took advantage of the system once and aren't currently benefitting from it, you can't

⁵² Interview with Selim Ben Yedder.

⁵³ Interview with Anis Samali.

⁵⁴ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'Corruption in Tunisia Part II: The Anatomy of Exploitation', June 29 2006, 06TUNIS1630. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06TUNIS1630_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

then say you're against corruption because you've already taken advantage of the system. This is how the system gets bigger and bigger from the grassroots level upwards.⁵⁵

Nor did the RCD explicitly demand anything in return for its facilitating role. Nonetheless, members were aware of the consequences that arose for not toeing the party line. The RCD's electoral machine dwarfed its competition and was better equipped to mobilise the vote in comparison to the opposition. The party used this to its advantage and because voting was not secret the RCD-dominated bureaucracy was able to punish members who voted against the party through denying them civil service jobs or access to essential services (Angrist, 1999: 95). The existence of RCD cells in public sector firms' also meant that workers risked losing their jobs if they were to vote against the party. The consequences of disloyalty saw many party members actively support the RCD; they participated in public meetings and were present on elections days to mobilise the party vote (Hibou, 2011: 89).

The perceived strengths of the RCD's distribution network masked weaknesses that were present in the system. First, economic liberalisation saw the state divest itself from a number of economic activities via privatisation. This severed a number of ties that bound the RCD to the bureaucracy (Murphy, 1999: 232). With these ties severed the party lost its ability to exert influence and distribute patronage as public services became privatised (Hibou, 2006: 196). This is an interesting point when we take into consideration that for the years between 2005 and 2010 the Tunisian public sector accounted for approximately 25 percent of the country's economic output, as detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Tunisia, Public Expenditure (as % of GDP) 2005-2010⁵⁶

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tunisia	26.15	25.85	26.17	27.32	27.88	27.80

Interestingly, Table 4.1 indicates that public sector output in the economy increased slightly between 2005 and 2010. This gives rise to the implication that the RCD was denied access to material resources not because of the anticipated effects of economic liberalisation but rather political machinations. The state did not exit the economy as a consequence of economic liberalisation but changed its priorities

⁵⁵ Interview with Amine Ghali.

⁵⁶ See, The World Bank. World Development Indicators, Expense (% of GDP). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.XPN.TOTL.GD.ZS> [Accessed September 15 2015]

regarding redistribution. This carries over to the second point that the benefits of economic liberalisation proved elusive to many. Well-connected businessmen that were part of or close to Ben Ali's extended family benefitted disproportionately from the privatisation of the public sector to the detriment of those small and medium-sized businesses that were courted to join the RCD when the regime was in its nascent stages (Angrist, 2012: 551-552). Over time, this led the small and medium-sized business sector to view the economy as being in thrall to the president's extended family and big business (Cammett, 2007: 125-126). In effect, the state was employed for the benefit of those in The Family, which will be detailed in the following sub-section.

4.4.2 The Family: Tunisia Incorporated

Concurrent with the liberalisation of the Tunisian economy, was the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. Between 1987 and 1994, the government focused on forty-five small and mostly unprofitable businesses in the service sector, rigid conditions were set for these sales that allowed the regime to escape the political costs associated with privatisation (Murphy, 2013: 46). The privatisation programme appeared to be slowing down in 1994, but under pressure from the IFIs (International Financial Institutions - the World Bank and IMF) Tunisia expanded its scope to include more profitable state-owned enterprises and reform of the stock market (Murphy, 1999: 141-144). From the late 1990s onward, the programme accelerated and the sale or partial sale of state-owned enterprises increased. Strategic economic sectors, such as telecommunications, transport, and banking were also opened up to the market. These actions 'signalled a clear commitment to private ownership as a more efficient and dynamic method of generating growth and jobs' (Alexander, 2010: 81). As of January 2010, 219 enterprises had entered the privatisation programme and had raised \$4.45 billion for the government over twenty years (Amara, 2010). In assessing Tunisia's privatisation programme, Murphy (2013: 46) makes the interesting point that '[T]he income from sales was not as high as might have been expected, but the firms sold in the latest spree seemed reassuringly secure and profitable after privatization'.

When we take into account, the main beneficiaries of Tunisia's privatisation programme, we can understand why the receipts generated by this process were not as high as anticipated. This was because state assets were sold outright to members of The Family and their close friends, usually without a genuinely competitive bidding process. These actions help us understand why the state accrued so little in return for the privatisation of its assets. According to Hibou, (2006: 197) the Tunisian privatisation

programme was relatively underdeveloped and hardly compared to other countries that had undergone the same process, as concessions to private individuals and companies were much less widespread. That those close to Ben Ali were beneficiaries of Tunisia's privatisation process was a reflection of the regime's desire to keep control of the economy, despite liberalising it. Indeed, this was a manifestation of the Tunisian state's long history of interventionism in the affairs of its people (see Hibou, 2006; 2011). Hence, the Family's expropriation of the privatisation process was beneficial to both themselves and the regime as a whole. While state enterprises were nominally privatised, much to the approval of the IFIs, the economy was to a large extent controlled by private individuals who had the ability to pull, or at the very least influence, the strings of the state itself. The Family viewed the economy as their private domain, one that would not be shared with others as Anis Samali outlines:

It's a cake that they need to share. They are a family with a cake (the Tunisian economy) that they must share but with nobody from outside of the Family. They'll agree that I won't take your part and you won't take mine, and, you can take your part and I can take mine. That's how it works. The Tunisian people are the eggs in this cake, they're essential to making it but the only way to get access to it is to be part of the Family.⁵⁷

The Family came to dominate the privatisation process in a number of ways. Members of the Family partnered with international investors to buy block shares in state companies while in other cases members of the Family facilitated purchases and concessions for international partners in return for either cash or a stake in the business (Murphy, 2013: 46). One of Ben Ali's sons-in-law, Marouane Mabrouk, acquired a stake in Tunisia's Banque de Sud before its privatisation and subsequently sold it at a substantial profit. Mabrouk also purchased another company, La Société Le Moteur, at a discounted price. This purchase allowed him to control all Mercedes and Fiat distribution within the country.⁵⁸ Other purchases included La Céramique and the National Society for Raising Chickens by another son-in-law, Slim Zarrouk and the transfer of significant parts of Tunisair to brother-in-law Belhassen Trabelsi. Belhassen Trabelsi also bought the state-owned company that held the licences for the distribution of Ford, Rover, Jaguar and Hyundai vehicles, and grew a tourism empire through purchasing privatised hotels (Murphy, 2013: 47). Privatised land also interested the Family. The Family bought cheap agricultural land from the state at a discounted price and then obtained permits to alter the usage to real estate and dramatically inflate its

⁵⁷ Interview with Anis Samali.

⁵⁸ *Corruption in Tunisia*.

value. Belhassen Trabelsi even leased land back to the state at advantageous rates (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 76). The Family also used their access to land to become important actors in the tourism sector (Di Peri, 2015). The Family's co-optation of the privatisation process was such that they came to dominate whole economic geographies. The Trabelsi family dominated the economy of the Greater Tunis area, while Ben Ali's family interests were spread further south along the coastal plains.

The capital for these purchases came from hijacking the management of parts of the banking sector and subverting funds from state agencies. Belhassen Trabelsi placed allies on the board of the Banque de Tunisie, which allowed the Family to take out a range of non-performing loans.⁵⁹ The Family also raided a number of state agencies for capital, including the *Fonds de solidarité nationale* (FSN – National Solidarity Fund). The FSN (known as *Caisse 2626* from the postcode which people were encouraged to send donations) was created in 1992 to safeguard the gains of economic liberalisation and guard the population against its side effects (Tsourapas, 2013: 28). It aimed to eliminate poverty in economically problematic areas and this would be achieved through donations both from citizens and private business, which were typically coerced (King, 2009: 179). The FSN became known as Ben Ali's 'black cash box' and Tunisians joked that the fund was nicknamed the 2627, as solidarity funds were used to finance the activities of Ben Ali and the Family (Khiari and Lamoum, 2002; Hibou, 2011: 94). The Family also hid the scale of their holdings in an opaque network of partnerships and front companies. They further used illegal means to transfer much of their wealth outside of Tunisia and invested it in Argentina, France, Switzerland, the UAE, and elsewhere (Murphy, 2013: 49).

The Family also extended their interests into other areas where profitable licences could be attained including the media. Liberalisation of the media was nominally intended to give the impression that the Tunisian political system was willing to entertain alternative voices and perspectives (see Haugbølle and Cavatorta, 2012). However, media liberalisation also afforded the Family an opportunity to further expend their interests. As the *Instance Nationale pour la Réforme de l'Information et de la Communication* (INRIC – The National Authority to Reform Information and Communication) makes clear, Ben Ali era private media were dominated by those close to the President. Sakhr El-Materi established *Zitouna FM*, a private radio station that focused on religious content, in 2010. Interestingly, El-Materi did not have to pay the required fees for a privately operated radio station to the National Broadcasting

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Corporation (INRIC, 2012: 109). Ben Ali's daughter, Cyrine, also operated a private radio station, *Shems FM*, while the son of his personal physician, Mourad Gueddish, was the owner of *Radio Express FM*. Tunisia's first private television channel, *Hannibal TV*, was owned by Arabi Nasra, who is related by marriage to Leila Trabelsi (INRIC, 2012: 112). Being related to Leila Trabelsi was not wholly beneficial for Nasra's business interests, as he became embroiled in conflict with the media interests of Belhassen Trabelsi (Haugbølle and Cavatorta, 2012: 103). Like the privatisation process, the Family's foray into the media sector was about control as INRIC (2012: 116) states:

[A]ll radio and television permits granted by the previous regime were to the benefit of Ben Ali's family and those close to him, and this was in order to be able to control all the content of broadcasting media outlets.

Nor were the Family's interests limited to newly liberalised state assets. If a business interested a member of the Family, it would soon find itself either under their control or shut down. Achraf Aouadi explains:

They may see a small restaurant or small bar and if they think it is lucrative enough they will want to take it over. They'll raise enough capital to get fifty-one percent of the business or they will use the state against you. The police, the tax services, they will use everybody to bring you down. Those who didn't accept the Family's overtures lost everything. This goes from the macro-level of banks and big companies to the micro-level of a small restaurant. They had snitches everywhere, who would report back to them and inform them about the successful businesses they've seen. Then the Family will move in as they have the medium of the state at their disposal.⁶⁰

The Family's domination of the Tunisian was well known and they had made significant inroads into the country's private sector. Indeed, the US embassy remarked that '[s]eemingly half of the Tunisian business community can claim a Ben Ali connection through marriage, and many of those relations are reported to have made the most of their lineage'.⁶¹ However, as was also noted by the US embassy much of the wealth accrued by the Family was obtained through corrupt dealings and the embassy suspected that this corruption would have consequences for the regime.⁶² These consequences will be fully discussed in Chapter 5 but it should be noted that the

⁶⁰ Interview with Achraf Aouadi.

⁶¹ *Corruption in Tunisia*.

⁶² *Ibid.* The consequences of corruption will be discussed in Chapter 5.

voracious economic appetites of the Family contributed to the rise of the anti-regime sentiment that manifested itself during the Tunisian uprising.

4.4.3 The MOI: Privileges and Impunity

The nature of the material resources provided to the MOI is difficult to assess owing to the paucity of information available about the institution in the public domain. However, the available evidence utilised in this study indicates that the MOI was well rewarded for its loyalty to Ben Ali. While the strength of the MOI's forces had been estimated to be 145,000 prior to the uprising, Hanlon (2012: 6) argues that the real figure numbered between 40,000 and 80,000. Although exact figures are not available it is readily accepted that the MOI's forces outnumbered those of the military. Despite the lack of data detailing the government expenditure made available to the MOI, the benefits the institution received can be detailed. It did not participate in the privatisation bonanza that defined The Family's economic interests, outside of physical intimidation.⁶³ Rather, the MOI, as an institution, was well provided for, although there were disparities in the resources afforded to its component parts. The Presidential Guard were the prime beneficiaries of Ben Ali's largesse, as the ICG (2011a: 11) makes clear:

The Presidential Guard was the only elite group in the security forces that the president trusted. The guard was limited to 5,000 competitively selected individuals, who enjoyed excellent benefits vis-à-vis other security services, especially in term of salaries . . . Above all, the confidence that the president placed in the Presidential Guard was a source of humiliation for the other security services. These services were in effect banned from deployment in the neighbourhoods of the Ben Ali and Trabelsi families (Carthage, La Marsa, La Goulette, and in the vicinity of the airport) . . . According to a former Ben Ali adviser, "The other security services hated the Presidential Guard, which was always considered superior to them".

Despite the esteem in which Ben Ali held the Presidential Guard, both materially and politically, the other agencies of the Interior Ministry also had their material interests looked after. These interests were realised through low-level graft and corruption within the police force and the judiciary as recounted by Amine Ghali:

[T]hey were covered in their search for extra money. No president would accept having his judges as corrupt but because these judges are supporting political repression and all the wrongdoings they get the benefits of corruption: cover-ups and improvements in their careers whenever they are needed . . . And the police also get their share of benefits: money, prestige and immunity. This is very important. Immunity became a belief in the security sector because for a time no

⁶³ Interview with Selim Ben Yedder.

one dared question the police. They were a part of this win-win exchange with the regime.⁶⁴

When the average wages of a police officer during Ben Ali's rule are considered it becomes increasingly apparent that corruption was a deliberate policy on the President's part (Ben Youssef, 2011: 99-100). In 2010, the average monthly salary of a police officer was \$230; this was less than the average monthly wage of a bus driver and only half that of a lower-level bank employee (Hlaoui, 2010). Despite this, being a police officer was a relatively sought after career because it offered abundant opportunities to earn supplementary income through bribes and other corrupt practices. These practices took various forms and ranged from petty theft to large-scale corruption within the different sectors of the MOI. In the traffic police one could extract bribes from unlicensed street vendors or offer traffic offenders the opportunity to pay individual officers directly in lieu of a more costly fine (Lutterbuck, 2015: 825). Because of these opportunities for graft a career in the traffic police was one of more sought after appointments amongst those seeking to join the MOI as it all but guaranteed a supplementary wage.

The upper echelons of the MOI also displayed an equal capacity for large-scale corruption. Leading members of the Tunisian construction sector established direct links with high-level officials in the Ministry who, in return for bribes, ensured that their business interests were not subject to state interference (Lutterbuck, 2015: 825). Furthermore, these state officials also used their influence to harass their benefactor's competitors. Because of this, several senior officials in the ministry were alleged to have amassed considerable fortunes by virtue of their influential connections with business magnates.⁶⁵ One of the most prominent examples of a businessman possessing such ties to the MOI is Kamel Eltaeif, a construction magnate from Ben Ali's hometown of Hamman Sousse. During Ben Ali's initial years in the presidency Eltaeif was a key ally and although he did not hold a formal position in government or the RCD many considered him a trusted confidant of the President until the early 1990s (Dahmani, 2013). The patronage network Eltaeif established ran throughout the state but was particularly strong within the MOI and granted him direct access to high-level security officials and enabled him to possess de facto control over certain police units, including the political police, which also reported directly to him as well as Ben Ali

⁶⁴ Interview with Amine Ghali.

⁶⁵ See, 'Quand les parasites font un état dans une dictature policière corrompue'. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/badr-haroun/ne-lisez-pas-cet-article-ça-fait-mal-au-coeur-quand-les-parasites-font-un-état-d/168739229847902/> [Accessed 25 April 2016].

(Manai, 1995, Puchot, 2012; Riahi, 2012). Eltaeif's relationship with Ben Ali deteriorated from 1992 onwards because the former objected to the President's marriage to Leila Trabelsi (Lutterbuck, 2015: 829 n.30).

Like RCD membership these benefits bound the MOI to Ben Ali. As Achraf Aouadi points out Ben Ali linked his interests with those of the MOI, which made the privileges and immunity from prosecution important in the MOI's continued support for Ben Ali:

He (Ben Ali) linked his interests with his employees' interests. He linked the corruption within the police with his existence. The immunity afforded to the police, they always managed to have it, effectively allowed Ben Ali to cover for them. He linked his own existence with them and their interests, effectively making his existence the police's main interest.⁶⁶

This corruption and the previously described nepotistic recruitment and advancement practices within the MOI have a centralising effect that not only established ties of loyalty and 'indebtedness' towards Ben Ali but also created possibilities of punishment in the event of disloyal behaviour (Lutterbuck, 2015: 824). In her analysis of Tunisia Hibou (2011: 152) argues that the regime's tolerance and corruption was part of a deliberate strategy that allowed the regime to manipulate and instrumentalise members of the MOI. This took the form of positive incentives such as bribes or preferential treatment as well as negative inducements in that Ben Ali could potentially punish corrupt officials for disloyalty because they had broken the law after all. Thus, membership of the MOI, whilst encouraging corruption and nepotism, made one more vulnerable to presidential whims and Ben Ali did, on occasion, charge ministry officials with corruption or similar charges because they had fallen out with the President for one reason or another. The fall of Nabil Abid aptly demonstrates this. A former head of the Directorate of State Security (the 'political police') and close confidant of Ben Ali, Nabil was instrumental in repressing the Islamist movement in the 1990s. However, he incurred the President's wrath at a 2004 RCD congress when he publicly insulted Leila Trabelsi when she delivered a speech in support of her husband's renewed candidacy for the presidency (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 50). As punishment for this, Ben Ali imprisoned Nabil on corruption charges relating to the Djerba terrorist attack of 2002. Although subsequently rehabilitated Nabil's incarceration made waves throughout Tunisia's political classes because it demonstrated that even the apparently

⁶⁶ Interview with Achraf Aouadi.

‘untouchable’ cadres of the MOI could be struck at a moment’s notice by the President’s wrath (Lutterbuck, 2015: 826).

4.4.4 The Military

The material resources made available to the military also speak to the institution’s isolation within the ruling coalition. Compared to its neighbours in North Africa, the Tunisian military was under-resourced and it did not possess the extensive private sector interests of its Algerian and Egyptian counterparts (Gaub, 2014: 26-27). Nor did its officers enjoy the social privileges afforded to their contemporaries throughout the MENA. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (2012: 351-352) the Tunisian military consisted of a 27,000 strong army, of which 20,000 were conscripts; a navy of 4,800; and an air forces of 4,000. Numerically, the military paled in comparison to the MOI, which had between 40,000 and 80,000 personnel. The budgetary resources for the military were also low in comparison to the rest of the region and Tunisia ranked 109th in the world in terms of the percent of GDP devoted to defence (Brooks, 2013: 210). While the monetary resources devoted to the military increased, there was a decline in military expenditure as both a percentage of GDP and overall government expenditure, as Table 4.2 makes clear.

Table 4.2 Military Expenditure in Tunisia, 1990-2010⁶⁷

	Military Expenditure in \$m	Military Expenditure as % of GDP	Military Expenditure as % of Government Spending
1990	347	2.01	6.62
1991	355	2.00	6.80
1992	356	1.87	6.75
1993	371	1.89	6.64
1994	384	1.90	6.79
1995	390	1.90	6.70
1996	449	2.02	7.29
1997	443	1.72	6.87
1998	452	1.67	6.74
1999	447	1.55	6.24
2000	467	1.54	6.19

⁶⁷ For Military Expenditure in \$m see The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database 1988-2014. Available at: http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database [Accessed November 14 2014]; For Military Expenditure as % of GDP see The World Bank World Development Indicators, Military Expenditure (% of GDP). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS> [Accessed November 14 2014]; For Military Expenditure as % of Government Spending see The World Bank World Development Indicators, Military Expenditure (% of central government expenditure). Available at: [Accessed November 14 2014]

	Military Expenditure in \$m	Military Expenditure as % of GDP	Military Expenditure as % of Government Spending
2001	486	1.52	6.13
2002	481	1.49	5.81
2003	500	1.48	5.85
2004	510	1.42	5.53
2005	548	1.45	5.55
2006	571	1.44	5.59
2007	525	1.26	4.82
2008	567	1.29	4.72
2009	586	1.30	4.66
2010	602	1.28	4.63

As a result of declining government expenditure, much of the military's French and American equipment is out-dated, if not already obsolete (Brooks, 2013: 210). The military's relationship with the United States is of particular importance. While this relationship is limited in scope, the two countries have a long history of inter-military relations. Both participate in annual meetings of a Joint Military commission and are involved in regular training exercises. More importantly, from a Tunisian perspective, are the benefits the military accrues from both Foreign Military Financing and International Military and Education and Training, which amounted to approximately \$17 million and \$1.7 million respectively in 2011 (Arieff, 2011: 21). While this military assistance is nominally small, it is provided in the context of a military deprived of resources and reliant on limited funds to maintain its aging equipment. The distribution of material resources further underscores the opinion Ben Ali held of both the military compared to the MOI. The military was denied the opportunity to realise its interests materially because of the low government expenditure it was subject to. The MOI on the other hand was allowed to realise its material interests through graft and corruption, which was undertaken with the President's blessing.

The distribution of material patronage within Ben Ali's ruling coalition further demonstrates the dominance of the personalist cadre. The Family were able to co-opt the privatisation process to line their own pockets while the MOI was the beneficiary of institutional and extra-institutional privileges. In contrast, the RCD's ability to distribute patronage of its members declined as economic liberalisation saw the state's role in the economy reduced. This saw the party's ties with the bureaucracy severed and it lessened its ability to provide its members with material benefits via the distribution of opportunities. The military, too, saw the distribution of material patronage damage its ability to realise its interests, as it was unable to mount a credible national defence without the assistance of obsolete American and French technology.

4.5 Conclusion: Erosion from Within

The years prior to the Tunisian uprising had seen the foundations of Ben Ali's ruling coalition erode considerably. This erosion was the unintended consequence of the Ben Ali's decision to favour the interests of the personalist cadre over that of the military and single-party cadre, the notable exception of the RCD technocrats aside. The primary reasons behind this erosion were the President's interests in economic liberalisation and the maintenance of internal security. The former saw a schism created within the RCD, as Ben Ali promoted the interests of those technocrats who were advocates of his economic liberalisation agenda. This weakened the party's leadership and neutered its representation in the Chamber of Deputies, as both were fearful of the consequences of opposing the President. Economic liberalisation also weakened the RCD as the party's ties with the bureaucracy were severed. This weakness was compounded by the Family's co-optation of the country's privatisation programme, which saw them come to dominate whole sectors of the economy. Their access to the economy was the result of the direct influence members of this group could bring to bear on Ben Ali and the alliances Leila Trabelsi cemented, via arranged marriages, with the Tunisian business community.

Ben Ali came to favour the MOI because both shared a similar political outlook regarding internal security. He gave the ministry carte blanche to undertake its mission and it was given the necessary funds and personnel. While it was not party to the benefits of economic liberalisation, the ministry's personnel were allowed to practice rent seeking within Tunisian society. The military, on the other hand, were politically and economically isolated. Its duties saw it removed from Tunis, the country's political centre, and exiled to the Tunisian interior. Its access to material resources was gradually dwindling and it came to rely on obsolete equipment. Nonetheless, this isolation was beneficial to the military institution, as it was able to form an identity and political outlook independent of the Ben Ali regime's political machinations.

These developments made the regime susceptible to mass uprisings; if they were to occur, the single-party and military cadres had no interest in standing with Ben Ali. As the narrative presented here indicates, both cadres did not have their interests realised within the ruling coalition. The possibility thus existed that, if a mass uprising were to occur, it was entirely possible that both cadres would reconsider their membership of the ruling coalition.

Chapter 5 – Exogenous Interest Realisation within the Tunisian Ruling Coalition

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how exogenous factors affected interest realisation within Ben Ali's ruling coalition before and during the occurrence of the Tunisian uprising. Specifically, it takes into account the popular legitimacy and international support afforded to the ruling coalition and how these variables affected their actions. As Chapter 4 discussed, Ben Ali's ruling coalition had eroded internally. The rise of the personalist cadre, ably supported by technocrats in the RCD, had seen the military and majority of the single-party cadres cut isolated political figures. Despite their isolation within the ruling coalition, neither the military nor single-party cadres had voluntarily withdrawn. The possibility nonetheless remained that, if factors exogenous to the ruling coalition were to change, both would consider voluntary withdrawal.

This chapter will examine that possibility and finds that the erosion of the Ben Ali regime's popular legitimacy was an important factor in shaping interest realisation within the ruling coalition. The discourse surrounding Tunisia's economic miracle did not match the reality for the population, rather it masked increasing poverty and the corrupt activities of The Family. The chapter will also find that the provision of international support, particularly from France, the EU, and the United States, did not have a meaningful impact on the occurrence of authoritarian breakdown in Tunisia. The chapter will then conclude with an assessment of the evidence gathered with regard to the two exogenous variables at play before considering its implications for the theoretical framework in conjunction with the evidence gathered in Chapter 4.

5.2 Popular Legitimation: The Myth of Tunisia's Economic Miracle

The monopolisation of power within the palace not only saw the ruling coalition gradually eroded from within but the regime become disassociated from the Tunisian people. Tunisia's embrace of economic liberalisation may have seen an overall improvement in the country's macroeconomic performance but it masked a deepening socioeconomic crisis, which brought increasing poverty, youth unemployment, and regional inequality (see Sfeir, 2006). This was in stark contrast to the conspicuous consumption of The Family and contributed to a sense of anger and unfairness that

resonated with many Tunisians. As discussed in Chapter 4, Ben Ali came to power convinced of the wisdom of economic liberalisation and Tunisia's structural adjustment was undertaken with the aim of transforming Tunisia into an East Asian or Chinese developmental state power, which delivered improved living standards and welfare under the leadership of a single-party (King, 2009: 181). This process was implemented through five-yearly development plans that sought to achieve macroeconomic stability and public sector reform before introducing privatisation, stock market liberalisation, and the encouragement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (see Murphy, 1999: 103-163). Top-down management and marginal tolerance of resistance allowed the regime to push these reforms through and by 1996 the Tunisian economy had stabilised and public finances were balanced. Nonetheless, structural change was slower than anticipated as the public sector continued to dominate the economy. Subsequent development plans therefore sought to deepen economic reforms (Murphy, 2013: 2014: 37), and, as Tunisia entered the twenty-first century, it appeared that the regime's economic policies had borne fruit.

The effects of the regime's policies were clear to see. Between 1989 and 2009, economic growth averaged five percent per annum and there was an accompanying growth in per capita incomes that amounted to a 37.6 percent increase between 2000 and 2005 (The World Bank, 2009). Official poverty levels had declined over the same period from 4.2 percent of the population to 3.8, although it was noted that the regime's threshold for poverty indicated only the essentials needed for physical survival and that a higher standard of poverty line would have set the rate at 7 percent. Nevertheless, fiscal policy was rated as good and effective, as fiscal deficits and public debt had fallen. Overall, Tunisia was seen as having 'made remarkable progress on equitable growth, fighting poverty, and achieving good social indicators' (The World Bank, 2009: 1). What's more, as Table 5.1 indicates, the Tunisian economy was well placed to continue its strong performance into the second decade of the twenty-first century as GDP growth between 2005 and 2010 averaged 4.54 percent per year during a time when the global economy experienced significant difficulties.

Table 5.1 Tunisia and MENA Region: Annual GDP Growth (%) 2005-2010⁶⁸

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tunisia	3.81	5.65	6.22	4.73	3.6	3.24
MENA Region	5.8	6.84	5.75	5.34	1.69	4.88

The IMF echoed these assessments, praising Tunisia for achieving strong growth while preserving macroeconomic stability. Nevertheless, the Fund was not blind to problematic elements of the Tunisian economy and warned that the country could not sufficiently absorb the large number of new entrants into the job market despite impressive growth rates (IMF, 2007). It also highlighted the concerns that demographic changes would put on the country's social welfare system and recommended moving away from subsidies to more targeted assistance and that the country's reliance on Europe for FDI made it vulnerable to the continent's difficulties (IMF, 2010). Despite the praise lavished on Tunisia, the World Bank (2000: 10) had also expressed concern, stating that Tunisia's highly centralised decision-making process was 'overly controlling and close-knit' and that curtailed political participation gave rise to 'worrisome', albeit 'minor' perceptions of corruption. In any case, both IFIs continued to express their support for Tunisia's economic reform programme. This support gave rise to a portrayal of the economy that served to obscure the imbalances and distortions present below the surface (Murphy, 2013: 40). A number of internal tensions that were only acknowledged in the wake of the uprising were masked according to Amna Guallali

Tunisia was portrayed as a very middle-class country with a large middle-class and a quite prosperous country. All this turned out to be a veil and when the regime collapsed we all realised that this was not the reality, instead we realised that Tunisia is a very polarised society with inner tensions.⁶⁹

This portrayal of the economy obscured the real effects that economic liberalisation had on Tunisian citizens, and how this affected the regime's legitimacy in the citizenry's eyes in three areas: poverty, youth unemployment, and corruption.

⁶⁸ The World Bank World Development Indicators, GDP growth (annual %). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG> [Accessed June 20 2015]

⁶⁹ Personal Interview with Amna Guallali, Human Rights Watch Tunisia, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

5.2.1 Poverty

Poverty reduction was touted as one of the major successes of Ben Ali's economic reform programme. However, a World Food Programme (WFP) report issued in the wake of the uprising concluded that the available statistics on poverty, provided by the regime, had underestimated its scale. The IFIs were reliant on figures the Tunisian government provided, which had used dubious criteria to determine what constituted a reasonable poverty line. When set at TD400 per year only 3.8 percent of the population were counted as poor but increasing the rate to TD585 saw the number of poor jump to 11.5 percent (Labidi and Sacco, 2011: 7). Furthermore, the WFP found significant disparities between, and within, the country's regions, with the rural southwest being the most vulnerable. At the lower rate of poverty, the WFP estimate that poor households would be spending up to 50.4 percent of their income on food (Labidi and Sacco, 2011: 8). Between 2000 and 2011, food prices throughout the country increased due to global demand; oil and fats quadrupled; cereals and sugars tripled; and dairy and meat prices doubled (Murphy, 2013: 42). This situation was compounded by the government's decision to deregulate food prices, which was implemented in an effort to get people to self-target when it came to subsidies. By maintaining subsidies for those foods that were a staple of the poor, the government hoped to discourage wealthier citizens from using subsidies. However, the increase in food saw many increasingly turn to subsidised foods, thus raising the subsidy bill, which rose from 4.1 percent of government expenditures in 2002 to 11.6 percent by 2009 (Albers and Peeters, 2011). The increase in food prices was part of a wider trend in Tunisia, which saw inflation rise between 2005 and 2010, as shown in Table 5.2. Tunisia outstripped the regional average for inflation in the two years prior to the uprising.

Table 5.2 Tunisia and MENA Region: Inflation in Consumer Prices (%) 2005-2010⁷⁰

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tunisia	2.01	4.49	3.41	4.92	3.52	4.41
MENA Region	3.10	3.48	4.16	11.27	2.92	3.91

During this time, Tunisians were also vulnerable to rising energy costs. While domestic prices were regulated through a subsidy regime, the government ultimately had to introduce a price adjustment mechanism that saw domestic energy prices rise from 2008 onwards. Fuel subsidies amounted to 1.9 percent of GDP in 2009 having

⁷⁰ The World Bank World Development Indicators, Inflation, Consumer prices (annual %). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG> [Accessed June 20 2015]

been negligible five years before (Murphy, 2012: 42). With the government resorting to fiscal stimulus to offset the difficulties of the global financial crisis, there was an unsurprising rise in inflation. This rise occurred even as the ability of Tunisians to pay higher prices was eroded.

Given their focus on macroeconomic indicators, both IFIs focused on the need to manage the implications of increased subsidy bills. Although both reasserted the need to protect the poorest in society, they were equally adamant that the government ‘firmly control current expenditure, including subsidies, to make as much room as possible for public investment, which they see as most effective for supporting current and future growth’ (IMF, 2010). As one critical observer of the process noted, the IMF was recommending cuts in food and fuel subsidies, and a weakening of the social security net for an ostensibly middle-class population that was nonetheless ‘just hanging on to the edge, hardly able to make it from day to day’ (Pilant, 2010). With the margin for slipping into poverty so small, both IFIs became unwittingly complicit in the hollowing out of the middle class (Hanieh, 2015).

5.2.2 The Unemployment Crisis

Between 2002 and 2005 the Tunisian economy created approximately 70,000 jobs per year, which contributed to cutting one percentage point off of the national unemployment rate annually (Alexander, 2010: 85). Nevertheless, the country’s unemployment rate persistently lingered at around 13 percent between 2005 and 2010 (see Table 5.3). Both the World Bank and IMF highlighted the scale of Tunisia’s unemployment problem, but their reliance on statistics the government provided led both to underestimate the scale of the problem (Murphy, 2013: 43). The World Bank (2009: 9) deemed the creation of high-skilled jobs a priority for Tunisia’s export-oriented economic model that had so far largely generated low-skilled jobs. This was despite the presence of a highly educated labour force, which lacked the necessary knowledge-intensive skills a globally competitive economy requires.

Table 5.3 Tunisia and MENA Region: Unemployment (%) 2005-2010⁷¹

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tunisia Unemployment (as % of labour force)	14.2	12.5	12.4	12.4	13.3	13
Tunisia Unemployment (as % of labour force aged 15- 24)	30.5	27.5	28.6	28.3	30.5	29.4
MENA Unemployment (as % of labour force)	11.84	10.99	10.38	9.97	10.14	10.43
MENA Unemployment (as % of labour force aged 15- 24)	27.53	26.36	24.92	24.63	24.60	25.84

Unemployment disproportionately affected Tunisia's youth, particularly graduates, and for those aged between 15 and 24 it averaged approximately 29 percent between 2005 and 2010. The public sector saw reduced opportunities for graduates, as it was in the midst of an accelerating privatisation programme. Furthermore, as Chapter 4 made clear, entry into the public sector tended to be limited to those who had connections to the regime. Regional disparities further exacerbated the problem of unemployment. While unemployment averaged 13 percent at the national level, it was at least twice that in Gafsa, the southwest's capital. In Moulès, Mdhilla and Erdayf, the main towns in the Gafsa Mining Basin Area, unemployment in 2007 officially stood at 38.5 percent, 28.4 percent and 26.7 percent, respectively (Gobe, 2011: 5). This unemployment was largely due to the contraction of the Gafsa Phosphate Company workforce, as it underwent modernisation and restructuring. What new jobs were created tended to be heavily concentrated in the coastal cities leaving Tunisia's rural and inland regions lagging behind in the distribution of benefits.

The reasons behind the economy's failure to create new jobs are complicated, but there are two explanations that shed light on the issue. The first explanation lies in the higher education policies the Tunisian state adopted (Mabrouk, 2011: 628). The state had abandoned the process of selectivity, making higher education more accessible at a time when demographic growth generated larger demand – a problem expected to ease after 2012 as population growth began to decline. The higher education system was also

⁷¹ The World Bank World Development indicators, Unemployment, total (% of total labour force). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> [Accessed June 20 2015]

designed to encourage two-thirds of students towards literature and the human sciences, regardless of what their future employment opportunities would be. As Murphy (2013: 44) makes clear, this gave rise to a direct correlation between higher levels of educational attainment and unemployment as Tunisia's labour force suffered from a dearth of suitable technical, engineering and business-skilled labour. These deficiencies were well known and documented in both the Arab Human Development Report (2009) and the World Bank's (2008) own MENA development report. The second explanation for Tunisia's persistent unemployment crisis lies within the regime itself and specifically speaks to corruption.

5.2.3 Corruption

Tunisia's unemployment crisis was also rooted in low-private sector growth. While the private sector was growing and accounted for between 70 and 90 percent of the MENA's GDP it still fell 'well short of transforming MENA countries into diversified, highly performing economies' (Belhassine et al., 2009: 4). While the private sector was growing, it was not doing so fast enough to meet the demand for jobs. The World Bank explicitly identified corruption as an impediment to private-sector growth, citing the lack of transparency, discretionary capacities, and rent-seeking activities of public officials as having eroded the relationship between the public and private sectors, which was described as mutual distrust (Behassine et al., 2009: 3). Selim Ben Yedder agrees with this assessment, stating that 'over the last ten years [of the Ben Ali regime] the private sector was under the thumb of the regime'.⁷² The World Bank (2009: 4) also noted that corruption constrained economic growth in Tunisia:

[T]here exists a business environment in most countries, including Tunisia, that is perceived to be based on privilege and unequal application of the rules of the game and has resulted in less competition. In Tunisia, this environment has constrained the creation of jobs and is the likely reason why private domestic investment has remained intractably low.

Ben Yedder agrees with this sentiment and argued that corruption had become symptomatic of the wider Tunisian business community not just Ben Ali and those around him:

Corruption was cultural; it worked like that. Ben Ali was a product of this culture and even with him gone it's not any different. He was not the only problem when it

⁷² Personal Interview with Selim Ben Yedder, CEO of Cynapsys Tunisia, IT Company, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

came to corruption. It's the mindset of the people; getting baksheesh for something; policemen getting bribes not to write speeding tickets or giving you a fine; it started with that and got bigger and bigger. Ben Ali was a product of this culture; the problem is the Tunisian mindset, and some people going about their business in a fair way felt uncomfortable because it was an unfair atmosphere.⁷³

The impact of corruption upon the Tunisian economy was profound. Leaked US diplomatic cables supported Ben Yedder's earlier contention that corruption had trickled down through the economy and into everyday life.⁷⁴ Indeed, one of the principle grievances that led to the Gafsa protests in 2008 was the belief that the few jobs made available at the time were distributed according to connections and bribes (Chouikha, 2009). Corruption also affected the economy itself. A report by Global Financial Integrity released in January 2011 suggested that 'the amount of illegal money lost from Tunisia due to corruption, bribery, kickbacks, trade mispricing, and criminal activity between 2000 and 2008 was, on average, over \$1 billion a year' (The Economist, 2011). Not only were resources taken from the economy but the trust of the private sector in the rule of law and the state's regulatory capabilities was also eroded, which deterred domestic investment in particular (Murphy, 2013: 50). Certain international investors had few qualms about dealing with the Family in order to capture Tunisian markets and often partnered with them through crafting favourable agreements.⁷⁵ Corruption also had a regional bias as the Family confined their activities to certain parts of Tunisia. The Trabelsi family confined their activities to the Greater Tunis area, while the extended Ben Ali family operated along Tunisia's coast.⁷⁶ This further exacerbated regional imbalances within Tunisia as the Family's economic interests also provided jobs for many in Tunisia.⁷⁷

Despite the centrality of corruption to low private sector growth, neither IFI made meaningful reference to the need to tackle corruption in Tunisia. The World Bank (2009: 23) makes a brief statement, indicating that that 'the role of the state needs to become more selective and much lighter with a smoother and more equal implementation of policies', and, it further acknowledges that there is a need to 'see the Government encourage a more effective participatory dialogue and implicate it in aspects of the decentralization process'. Nonetheless, nowhere in the document is

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'Corruption in Tunisia: What's Yours is Mine', June 23 2008, 08TUNIS679. Available at: <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/06/08TUNIS679.html> [Accessed March 2 2015].

⁷⁵ Interview with Selim Ben Yedder.

⁷⁶ *Corruption in Tunisia*.

⁷⁷ Interview with Selim Ben Yedder.

reference made to any form of programme or conditionality that could address this most fundamental cause of insufficient economic growth and its consequent structural unemployment (Murphy, 2013: 45).

5.2.4 The Tunisian Economic Miracle: The Lost Legitimacy of the Ben Ali Regime

The picture presented by the Ben Ali regime of an efficient and formalised economy was a fiction that masked a high degree of output alienation and a lack of descriptive representation within Tunisia. To a large extent, it is difficult to disagree with the argument that Ben Ali's economic policies saw Tunisia's position improve as the 1990s saw the country experience real and dynamic growth (see Sfeir, 2006). There are some in Tunisia who recognised this and credit the regime with an improvement in the country's infrastructure⁷⁸ and a rise in living standards compared with the rest of the MENA.⁷⁹ However, increasing poverty, unemployment, and corruption undermined these achievements.

The pretence of economic success was maintained through manipulating statistics that 'developed the fiction of the . . . regime as model student' of economic reform (Hibou et al, 2011: 12). Put simply, the regime fudged their numbers and provided unreliable statistics (Cavatorta and Haugbølle, 2012: 184). This data was uncritically accepted by the IFIs, who, when crosschecking their data with Tunisian authorities, undertook limited engagements with society. Typically, these engagements were with those individuals who were either deeply embedded in the ruling coalition or had been politically 'captured'; which made speaking out against the regime or criticising it unlikely (Murphy, 2013: 51). The manipulation of poverty statistics underscores the scale of this deception. A reassessment of the country 3.8 percent poverty rate found that it stood at 10 percent nationally, and at 30 percent in the country's interior (Hibou et al., 2011: 14).

The manipulation of statistics appears to have factored into how Tunisians perceived the regime's performance. Table 5.4 details Tunisia's World Governance Indicators (WGI), which purportedly denoted a government performing relatively well. Between 2005 and 2010 a majority of Tunisians perceived that the government had convincingly undertaken its duties as it scored above the 50th percentile in Control of Corruption, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality and the Rule of Law. In

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Personal Interview with Youssef Cherif, Political Analyst, The Cherif Consultancy Company, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

2010, on the eve of the Arab uprisings, Tunisia outperformed the regional average on all four of these indicators.

Table 5.4 Tunisia: World Governance Indicators 2005-2010⁸⁰

Indicators	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	MENA Region 2010*
Control of Corruption	55	57	56	53	56	55	44
Government Effectiveness	66	72	69	66	66	63	48
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	48	54	50	49	47	44	32
Regulatory Quality	52	55	55	55	53	53	44
Rule of Law	56	58	58	58	61	60	45
Voice and Accountability	21	13	10	11	10	10	18

*Average score of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, The Palestinian Territories (the West Bank and Gaza), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

Tunisia's WGI scores also reveal a significant lack of descriptive representation. When we take into account Tunisia's Voice and Accountability score for the period between 2005 and 2010 its average is 12.5 percent. In 2010 this score stood at 10 percent, eight percent below the regional average. These scores indicate that the Tunisian people perceived that their voices could not be heard nor was their government held accountable. This finding echoes the sentiment many expressed about the regime; that poverty, unemployment and corruption gave rise to output alienation and denied descriptive representation. The journalist, Kamel Labidi, argues that these conditions created an informal constituency, especially amongst Tunisia's youth, that did not see the regime as legitimate. It emerged in the country's interior regions where the impact of economic liberalisation was felt most acutely:

The Tunisian people recognised they were in an unfair situation and young people were frustrated so much. They could not get a job; they could not earn an income. They saw other youngsters in their area easily get a job because they had well-connected relatives. And then there were the stories about corruption in the regime spreading throughout the country. Young people really had nothing; if you graduated from university and didn't find a job after two, three, four years you would become disheartened and would not hesitate to leave. You would take the

⁸⁰ The World Bank World Governance Indicators. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> [Accessed June 20 2015]

risk to leave the country on a small boat and reach the Italian coast; or be influenced by a partisan or religious group; or to wait for the first demonstrations to emerge and join them. And historically it's been the south of the country where most of the protests or uprisings started in the country's history . . . And of course as far as development goes the coastal regions are better served than the interior; if you were living in a city near the Algerian border there was a feeling of dispossession, of frustration. And people had nothing to lose by protesting. By favouring the northeast over the country's other regions Ben Ali created a constituency opposed to him.⁸¹

Amine Ghali supports this argument, further asserting that the lack of opportunity led many to become disaffected with the regime. He also agrees that regional disparities contributed to the uprising's beginnings in the interior:

People were tired of not seeing any opportunity for their future. This is what brought them to the street; people did not go to the street calling for elections, they did not go to the street calling for a free press, they went to the street calling for opportunities. They wanted economic opportunities and an improvement in regional conditions. The uprising began in these marginalised regions, and while the problems that brought about the uprisings were throughout Tunisia, it was much more pronounced in the regions where it began; Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, Gafsa, Erdayf. These are all the regions where it started because of the pronounced economic failures of the system.⁸²

What's more, Ghali asserts that the regime contributed to its loss of descriptive representation in the regions through neglecting them. If the regime demonstrated an interest in regional development, through improved social services and employment opportunities, tensions could have been potentially diffused. And all of this could have occurred without damaging Tunis' role as the centre of the economy:

Some of the marginalised regions did not ask for much. They did not want to challenge Tunis as the centre of the economy. Rather, they were asking for better health and education structures. They wanted running water, they might have water that only runs two or three times a week. If you were to open one factory a year in the regions it would have calmed the situation. This is very important; if the regime were to have given a positive perception of development without actually doing anything significant they would have calmed the situation.⁸³

Employment opportunities, like social services, were often non-existent in the regions and poverty rates were also high. Initially, the government sought to help these regions and between 1995 and 1998 the *Caisse 2626* implemented a number of development

⁸¹ Personal Interview with Kamel Labidi, Journalist and Chairman of the Commission for Information and Communication Reform, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

⁸² Personal Interview with Amine Ghali, Program Director, The Kawabiki Transition Centre, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

⁸³ Ibid.

projects in the poorer regions around Gafsa (Cavatorta and Haugbølle, 2012: 185). However, no further projects were launched in the region after 2000 because the funds in the *Caisse* were diverted to sustain the Family's economic activities (see Tsourapas, 2013).

The regime's policies gradually saw a decline in descriptive representation and the growth of output alienation as the Tunisian people became disconnected from a portrayal of the country to which they could not aspire, and where any challenge to this established myth was suppressed (Cavatorta and Haugbølle, 2012: 182-183). This disconnect was illustrated by the regime's suppression of information regarding the Gafsa riots in 2008. As Amna Guallali notes:

The problem was that there was such a disconnect between how the regime and its supporters portrayed Tunisia and the reality that people faced every day. The regime and its supporters portrayed Tunisia as a prosperous country that enjoyed quite a good standard of living. This reality was not possible for most of the people in Tunisia because they didn't have the ways or the means to realise it. The regime was cut off from the population. The country's poorer areas were cut off from the coastal areas. The media were spreading this false and rosy image of this beautiful society but their reality was totally different from everyone else's reality. There was a veil between what happened in the regime's reality and what was going on in the inland regions. There was no debate about what was going on because the media absolutely did not want to, in an effort to maintain this fake imagery of the Tunisian economy, talk about it . . . There were several events that confirmed this like the 2008 uprising in Gafsa. This uprising was very important; it was one of the biggest social movements in Tunisia but there was a total block on the information coming from the region to the mainstream media. Those journalists that were trying to get the word out, saying that a ferocious and bloody repression had been levelled against the people there, they were under siege for months and some were imprisoned for trying to speak out. But the mainstream media never talked about and this growing disconnect between the people and the regime became important.⁸⁴

According to Achraf Aouadi, the Gafsa riots marked the emergence of a constituency that sought to challenge the regime. At that time, the regime's suppression of the riots stopped this challenge from gaining any momentum. This changed in 2010, as the entirety of the country's interior mobilised against the regime:

The uprising's origins go back to the regions. I believe that the real revolution happened in 2008 with Gafsa. The regime played that one smart at the time. They censored Facebook for a couple of months and YouTube for three years. Ben Ali managed to isolate the area so that Tunisians themselves didn't know what was happening . . . The regions were the drivers of the uprising. It started in Sidi

⁸⁴ Interview with Amna Guallali.

Bouazid but Kasserine was what made everything possible . . . Once the uprising began in Kasserine it spread to other areas throughout the country.⁸⁵

The imposition of economic liberalisation and its attendant fallout saw the regime lose legitimacy in the eyes of the Tunisian people; this loss of legitimacy was largely self-inflicted. As Anis Samali notes:

There were several problems we were facing at the time; the disparities between the coastal regions and the interior; the high rate of unemployment; the lack of freedom of expression; and, the resections on involvement in politics. There were other problems too. The price of fuel and food was high. Also, corruption, it was a very, very big problem. There were lots of things that made Tunisians decided they had enough.⁸⁶

The legitimacy of the Ben Ali regime had eroded throughout the 2000s, as it suffered a rise in output alienation and a loss of descriptive representation. This loss of legitimacy was largely self-inflicted because the regime's economic policies were co-opted by the ruling coalition's personalist cadre, irrespective of the costs for Tunisian society. This loss of legitimacy saw the emergence of a constituency opposed to the regime and one that mobilised to challenge it in the wake of Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation. As popular mobilisation exploded across Tunisia, it affected those in the ruling coalition in differing ways.

The reaction of the personalist cadre was to protect itself. The Family's reaction to these protests was largely demonstrated in the three speeches Ben Ali gave during the course of the uprising. His first two speeches were largely defiant and he blamed the machinations of external forces for the uprising. He also pledged to address the grievances underpinning the protests and vowed to find solutions to Tunisia's unemployment problem and raise incomes (Mirak-Weissbach, 2012: 78-79). These promises rang hollow because one of the reasons behind Tunisia's veiled socioeconomic crisis was corruption associated with The Family. These responses nevertheless indicate personalist attitudes towards regime change in their refusal to countenance it. Ben Ali's third speech adopted a different tone, as it offered, not only political reform, but also a promise on the part of the President to stand down at the next election in 2014. According to Guallali, these concessions reflected an awareness on Ben Ali's part that popular mobilisation had weakened his grip on power and were an

⁸⁵ Personal Interview with Achraf Aouadi, Chair and Founder of I Watch, Tunisian Transparency and Anti-Corruption NGO, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

⁸⁶ Personal Interview with Anis Samali, Project Chief Mourakiboun, Tunisian Election Monitoring NGO, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

attempt on his part to manage the situation.⁸⁷ Ben Choudra (2011: 59) supports this assertion and argues that The Family, who hired thugs to attack those demonstrating, undermined these efforts, as they would not sacrifice themselves to save the regime.

The MOI adopted a repressive stance but its forces were ineffective in containing the spread of protests throughout Tunisia. The initial protests in Sidi Bouzid were small and it was conceivable that they could have been contained (Brooks, 2013: 218). Aouadi supports this assertion noting that ‘Ben Ali nearly succeeded in stopping the uprising in Sidi Bouzid but when the uprising broke out in Kasserine he needed to divide his forces’.⁸⁸ This diversion of forces was the beginning of a process that saw protests emerge throughout Tunisia’s interior and stretch the deployment capacity of the MOI.⁸⁹ The ineffectiveness of the MOI was not only the consequence of the large numbers of protestors but also training and management inside the institution, which was ill-equipped to manage large-scale protests in a peaceful manner (Brooks, 2013: 218). Rather than nullify the protest movement, the MOI’s repressive countermeasures had the unintended consequence of fuelling further anti-regime mobilisation that contributed to the overwhelming of ministry (ICG, 2011a: 3). Again, the MOI’s actions were consistent with the literature’s expectations as a component of the personalist cadre refused to willingly favour regime change.

The advent of protests saw the RCD disintegrate. Despite its loss of prestige within the ruling coalition, the party was still a willing supporter of Ben Ali. Nonetheless, the scale of popular mobilisation saw many in the party reconsider their position in the ruling coalition. Reformists saw the uprising as an opportunity to negotiate with the protestors and bring about a process of political reform but the personalist cadre, who refused to recognise the gravity of the situation, stymied their efforts.⁹⁰ Nor was the RCD able to mobilise local party cells for counter-demonstrations. The regime’s loss of legitimacy saw local party cells abandon ship during the uprising beginning in Sidi Bouzid:

Members of the RCD were among the protestors, even though Sidi Bouzid was an RCD stronghold . . . When orders were given to mid-level party officials to mobilise their men, the situation was difficult because much of their rank and file were sympathising with the demands of the protestors. Many members of the RCD were opposed to power that was based on the party but was wielded by families and the clans around them (ICG, 2011: 9).

⁸⁷ Interview with Amna Guallali.

⁸⁸ Interview with Achref Aouadi.

⁸⁹ Interview with Amine Ghali.

⁹⁰ Interview with Youssef Cherif.

As a vehicle for party mobilisation, the party was gradually unable to offer material advantages to its members in the interior. This evidence helps to explain the passivity of the party's local cells during the uprisings as the party's rank-and-file's sympathy with the protest movement indicated that they too had called the legitimacy of the regime into question. The RCD's actions were consistent with the literature's expectation. The party initially sought to co-opt the protest movement via negotiation but the personalist cadre scuppered these efforts. The party's disintegration was, to a large extent, brought about by popular mobilisation, which offered an opportunity for potential interest realisation outside of Ben Ali's ruling coalition.

The regime's loss of legitimacy also saw the military cadre withdraw from the ruling coalition. When the uprising began the military was deployed to the country's interior and stood by while the MOI's forces used live ammunition against the protest movement. While some in the military reportedly attempted to intervene, the military cadre as a whole remained sitting on the fence (Brooks, 2013: 215). As an institution, the military had drawn a line at using force against those demonstrating. This was not the first time that the military had found itself in this position, as it had been similarly deployed and stood by during the Gafsa riots of 2008. Why then was 2011 different to 2008? As Chapter 4 argued, the nature of civil-military relations in Tunisia saw the military cadre see the military's interest in propagating the Ben Ali regime decline (Brooks, 2013: 216). Additionally, there may have been benefits for the military cadre in seeing the President exit power. It was, however, the regime's loss of legitimacy that ultimately led the military to exit the ruling coalition. The severity of the repression required to disperse the protest movement was such that the military cadre's engagement would not only engender a loss of prestige and social esteem for the military but it would also provoke an irreconcilable split in the institution. According to Anis Samali, the military was presented with two options: civil war or remove Ben Ali.⁹¹ Achraf Aouadi supports this argument, making the point that, if the military were to engage the protest movement, Tunisia would have entered a 'Syria scenario'.⁹² Accordingly, the interests of the military, particularly the prevention of a split within the institution and the occurrence of civil war, were best realised by disobeying Ben Ali's orders to use live ammunition. The magnitude of the uprising was critical in this regard. By the time the military had been deployed to Tunis, the uprising had grown from being

⁹¹ Interview with Anis Samali.

⁹² Interview with Achraf Aouadi.

a localised protest in Tunisia's interior to a cross-class movement that took in the wealthy coastal regions and the capital, the magnitude of which had seen the MOI unable to repress it.

The actions of the ruling coalition's elite cadres reflect the framework's assumptions when the loss of popular legitimation is taken into consideration. The personalist cadre refused to favour change and was forced to exit power, the single-party cadre initially sought to co-opt the opposition but came to favour regime change when it saw its interests were threatened, and the military cadre favoured exiting the ruling coalition in order to protect its institutional integrity.

5.3 International Support

The key determinant shaping the international support afforded Tunisia has been the country's location. The country is overshadowed by its much larger neighbours; Algeria to the west, and Libya to the east, while on the northern shore of the Mediterranean lies the economic might of the EU. Because of this, ideology or grand gestures did not shape Tunisian foreign policy; rather, it was pragmatic accommodation that realised the limitations of the country's resources and location (Murphy, 2014: 234). This pragmatic accommodation has seen Tunisia adhere to a foreign policy that favours the interests and outlooks of Western powers. Indeed, Bourguiba had explicitly aligned Tunisia with the West during the Cold War, claiming that the former belonged in the latter's camp (Ben Rejeb, 2013: 83). Domestic factors and Tunisia's colonial history may also have shaped Bourguiba's foreign policy outlook to an extent. As discussed in Chapter 4, the marginalisation of the Tunisian military saw Bourguiba pursue a number of security pacts with France and the United States in order to ward off potential threats from either Algeria or Libya (Faria, 1996). In addition, French desire to articulate a defined foreign policy role in the MENA saw the country invested in its former colony, where it privileged narrow definitions of the national interest (Kallander, 2013).

Foreign policy under Ben Ali hewed closely to that established by his predecessor and was guided by the need for regional security and the desire to modernise Tunisia through economic liberalisation (Entelis, 2011: 529). Ben Ali also sought to link his domestic ambitions with foreign policy opportunities (Murphy, 2014: 240-241). Having tightened his grip over domestic developments, Ben Ali strengthened his external relations with the West around a securitised agenda that prioritised stemming the influence of Islamist-inspired terrorism. He also positioned his economic reform

programme as being compatible with the objectives of European expansion and the global economic model espoused by the United States and the IFIs, as detailed in the previous section and Chapter 4. The security and economic frameworks were deeply intertwined; Tunisia had become the moderate, stable and cooperative role model of a globalised state in the Arab region in the opinion of its Western allies. This portrayal was beneficial for the regime; it was the recipient of aid and was shown a blind eye concerning the country's political deficits.

The ties that developed between the Ben Ali regime and the international system, primarily France, the EU, and the United States, were those of high linkage and high leverage. Tunisia's relationship with France was primarily geopolitical but there was also a significant economic dimension to this relationship. Tunisia's close ties with France also paved the way for the latter to establish close ties with the EU, Tunisia's closest trading partner (Powel, 2009: 65). Tunisia's relationship with the States was conducted through the lens of securitisation, initially through the prism of the Cold War under Bourguiba and evolving to accommodate the Global War on Terror (GWOT) under Ben Ali. In theory, the international community could exert sufficient pressure, particularly in economic terms, on Tunisia to undergo political reform but Ben Ali successfully warded off these calls as Cherif recounts:

He was quite arrogant in dealing with the West because he knew they needed him. He also felt able to resist some pressure because his economic policies were widely accepted and lauded abroad . . . At the end of the day he was proved right; they accepted his conditions and they never arrested anyone from his family whether it was his brother [Moncef Ben Ali] who was a mafia leader in the early 90s or his wife's nephew [Imed Trabelsi] in the 2000s who was a thug and a thief. They never arrested these guys while they were travelling around; they were allowed to travel freely and without any disturbance. He had two assets he could bring into play. One was the security role he played and the second was the economic reforms he carried out that went down well in the international community.⁹³

5.3.1 Tunisia and France: Opportunistic International Support

Since Tunisia's independence, France has maintained a privileged position in its former colony's affairs, being an international advocate and one of Tunisia's largest trading partners (Kallander, 2013: 103). This relationship privileged security and economic concerns over political reform. The relationship's basis was the French fear of theocratic government following the Iranian revolution in 1979. The Algerian civil war amplified these concerns, as French media repeated the established mantra that the *Front Islamique de Salut* (FIS – The Islamic Salvation Front), Algeria's largest Islamist

⁹³ Interview with Youssef Cherif

party, were a terrorist group responsible for the assassination of civilians, thus contributing to a simplification of the Algerian conflict as one between a secular modern state and religious fanatics. The Algerian conflict provided Ben Ali with a pretext to repress Tunisia's Islamist opposition and, accordingly, position himself as an ally to the West (see Pratt, 2007: 100-103). Ben Ali considered the elimination of Islamism to be part of a broader regional and international struggle from which he hoped to garner international support. Ben Ali employed this notion of struggle to chastise his erstwhile allies in the West by personally reminding them that their inactions contributed to terrorism's rise:

If there are still a few fundamentalists aboard, that is primarily a problem for the countries that continue to give them asylum despite the evidence that they are continuing their terrorist activities, from the countries that house them and against their own homelands. They are a source of inconvenience and concern above all for their hosts, a situation which will, you may be sure, worsen day by day. It is sufficient to look at what is happening around you, in Europe and elsewhere (Geyer, 1998: 5).

In the French Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua, Ben Ali found an ally who viewed exiled members of Tunisian (and Algerian) Islamist groups as a threat to French security. In 1993, Pasqua attempted to deport the Ennahda member, Salah Karakr, despite the latter having obtained political refugee status and ten-year residency upon his arrival in Paris. When these efforts failed, Pasqua had him placed under house arrest, despite not being accused or convicted of any crimes in France (Beau and Tuquoi, 1999). Pasqua also permitted the Ben Ali regime to carry out surveillance activities in Paris via an RCD office that masqueraded as Tunisian cultural centre (Ryan, 2011). Pasqua's collaboration with the regime was also personal in nature. When French financial authorities requested to interview Pasqua in 2002, the latter departed for an extended vacation in Tunisia that lasted until 2007, where he stayed in a villa belonging to Youssef Zarrouk, a close friend of Ben Ali's son-in-law Slim Chiboub (Beau and Muller, 2011).

Pasqua's relationship with the Ben Ali regime was largely reflective of the French establishment's relationship with the country. During Jacques Chirac's presidency (1995-2007), the French establishment held a largely favourable view of the Ben Ali regime. During a visit to Tunisia, Chirac voiced his approval of the MOI's repressive tactics, particularly with regard to religious extremism. He referenced the numerous conversations he held with Ben Ali that revealed their similar positions with regards to 'preventing the increase in religious fundamentalism'. Chirac referenced these priorities

in explaining his decisions to overlook Ben Ali's authoritarian tendencies, framing the visit to Tunisia as an opportunity to reinforce a joint commitment to fighting Islamic fundamentalism.⁹⁴ Tunisia's embrace of economic liberalisation was also praised with Chirac claiming that Ben Ali had set the country on the path to modernisation.⁹⁵ This positive image of the Tunisian economy endured in France into the late 2000s, such that then-IMF President Dominique Strauss-Kahn maintained that the 'assessment of the IMF regarding Tunisian politics is very positive', and that its economy 'constituted a 'good model' for other developing nations to follow (Grosjean, 2008). While this narrative may have been with odds with what was actually happening in Tunisia, as section 5.2 argues, it was a significant factor in legitimising the Ben Ali regime. This was because the real economic improvement that occurred in the 1990s was attributed as being a necessary factor in preventing Islamist groups from recruiting amongst the poor and unemployed (Gobe, 2003).

Nevertheless, France's support of Tunisia was contingent upon French interests in the MENA and with the Algerian conflict winding down in 1997 there was increasing discussion of Tunisia's human rights situation. Chirac touched upon this issue and ventured modest critiques of Tunisia, while attempting to maintain an accord between the two countries that reinforced their political and economic partnership.⁹⁶ These concerns quickly receded into the background with the occurrence of the September 11th terrorist attacks. These attacks, not only allowed Ben Ali to position himself as an ally to the United States, but also allowed him to further burnish his reputation in France and quieten any discussion about his human rights record. When Chirac visited Tunisia in the aftermath of September 11th, any concerns he had raised over human rights in Tunisia quickly disappeared. He responded evasively when directly questioned about the issue. Ben Ali was, in Chirac's estimation, 'a man of peace' and what mattered was

⁹⁴ 'Visite en Tunisie: Discours du Président de al République, M. Jacques Chirac, devant l'Assemblée Nationale tunisienne', October 6, 1995. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e025758.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

⁹⁵ 'Visite en Tunisie: Allocution prononcée par le Président de al République M. Jacques Chirac, lors du diner d'état par le Président de al République tunisienne, M. Zine El Abdine Ben Ali, au Palais de Carthage', October 5, 1995. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e025767.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

⁹⁶ 'Toast du Président de al République, M. Jacques Chirac, lors du diner d'état offert en l'honneur du Président de al République tunisienne, M. Zine El Abdine Ben Ali', October 20, 1997. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e022197.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

the Tunisian ‘rejection of intolerance and religious fundamentalism’ and ‘its exemplary participation in the struggle against terrorism.’⁹⁷

Chirac’s return to Tunisia two years later saw him describe Franco-Tunisian relations as ‘excellent’ and Tunisia’s economic situation as ‘especially brilliant’ for a developing nation. Chirac denied that there human rights issues in Tunisia and claimed that that ‘the primary human right is the right to eat, to get healthcare, [and] to have a shelter’, suggesting that ‘from this perspective, it must be recognised that Tunisia is very far ahead of many, many countries’.⁹⁸ He further insisted that in Tunisia ‘the creation of wealth, economic growth, the distribution of wealth, occurred in a way that meets all the exigencies of human rights’. These statements underscored the irony of the relationship between the two countries as at the time of Chirac’s visit the Tunisian human rights activist Radhia Nasraoui was on hunger strike. The political relevance of this was dismissed by Chirac, who stated: ‘There are also people in France who are on hunger strikes, have gone on hunger strikes, or probably will in the future, one day or another, for one reason or another’.⁹⁹ This dismissive attitude of the human rights situation in Tunisia indicates a reliance on Ben Ali’s cooperation, which merited turning a blind eye toward his authoritarian tendencies. While willing to support gentle references to the rule of law, support EU resolutions and champion human rights in Tunisia Chirac was not willing to destabilise the relationship between the two countries (Kallander, 2013: 113). With Tunisia, the routine harassment of those who practiced their religion or expressed their political views through Islam played second fiddle to France’s geostrategic interests.

Nicolas Sarkozy, Chirac’s successor, shared similar priorities regarding Tunisia. Within two months of becoming President in 2007, he travelled to Tunisia to promote a new iteration of Franco-Tunisian ties. During the visit, he stressed the importance of Franco-Tunisian relations and boasted of the ‘very strong friendship’ between the two countries.¹⁰⁰ On a return visit in 2008, Sarkozy told *Al-Chourouk* that the second visit signalled his ‘respect and support for President Ben Ali’. He also noted that French

⁹⁷ ‘Visite en Tunisie: Conférence de presse du Président de la République, M. Jacques Chirac’, December 1, 2001. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e013912.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

⁹⁸ ‘Visite d’état en Tunisie: Allocution du Président de la République, M. Jacques Chirac, à l’occasion du dîner d’état offert en son honneur par le Président de la République tunisienne, M. Zine El Abdine Ben Ali’, December 3, 2003. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e010181.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Déplacement au Maghreb, entretien du Président de la République, M. Nicolas Sarkozy, accordée au quotidien tunisien “As Sabah”’, July 10, 2007. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e002524.pdf> [Accessed March 30 2015]

businesses were relocating or expanding in Tunisia at the rate of one every five days.¹⁰¹ This, however, masked the fact that lucrative French businesses only arrived in Tunisia with the collaboration of the Family. For example, Imed Trabelsi owned the home-improvement store Bricorma, and Halima Ben Ali was the Tunisian intermediary for Peugeot (Beau and Muller, 2011). Cyrine Ben Ali entered into a partnership with the French telecoms provider Orange,¹⁰² and this partnership saw the two established Planet Tunisia, the country's largest Internet provider (Murphy, 2013: 48). These actions favoured the interests of the regime's personalist cadre all while simultaneously negatively affecting the Tunisian economy.

Political reform was not a priority for Sarkozy either. While extolling Tunisia's engagement in 'promoting human rights' so that the 'scope of freedoms is expanding', he accepted Ben Ali's assessment that democratisation could only be achieved at a slow pace, quoting Bourguiba as saying that modest reforms were preferable to impossible miracles.¹⁰³ During a talk at Tunisia's National Institute of Applied Sciences and technology, he repeated the idea that education and development were the keys to fighting 'barbarity' and 'fundamentalism'. In this respect, Tunisia offered a successful case modernisation within the Arab-Muslim world, ebbing an example 'for all people who are threatened by fundamentalism'. If Tunisians could succeed at westernising, this might mean that the 'the war of civilisations and the clash of religions' could be circumvented. Sarkozy further reiterated:

If you fail, then those caricatures and stereotypes of Islam and the Arab world will be true, and no one can prevent the mortal confrontation between the East and the West. If you fail, then the clash of civilisations and the war of religions will be inevitable.¹⁰⁴

Sarkozy's analysis of the Franco-Tunisian relationship focused upon the East-West binary, insisting that, for Tunisia to embrace democracy, it must exclude Islam. With

¹⁰¹ 'Visite d'état en Tunisie: Entretien du Président de la République, M. Nicolas Sarkozy, avec le quotidien tunisien, "Ach-Chorouk"', April 27, 2008. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e000886.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

¹⁰² Interview with Selim Ben Yedder.

¹⁰³ 'Visite d'état en Tunisie: allocution du Président de la République, M. Nicolas Sarkozy, lors du diner d'état offert par le Président de la République tunisienne, M. Zine El Abdine Ben Ali', April 28, 2008. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e000883.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

¹⁰⁴ 'Visite d'état en Tunisie: discours du Président de la République, M. Nicolas Sarkozy devant les étudiants de l'Institut National des Sciences Appliquées et de Technologie', April 30, 2008. Available at: [http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-
php/cadcg.php?CMD=CHERCHE&MODELE=vues/mae_internet_recherche_avancee/home.html&
vue=mae_internet_recherche_avancee&query=1&SQL=select%20ft_cid%20from%20epi_doc%20w
here%20FT_ANY_TEXT_COLUMN%20contains%20%27tunisie%27%20and%20mae_etat=%27publi
e%27%20order%20by%20DOC_DAT_EDIT%20desc](http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-
php/cadcg.php?CMD=CHERCHE&MODELE=vues/mae_internet_recherche_avancee/home.html&
vue=mae_internet_recherche_avancee&query=1&SQL=select%20ft_cid%20from%20epi_doc%20w
here%20FT_ANY_TEXT_COLUMN%20contains%20%27tunisie%27%20and%20mae_etat=%27publi
e%27%20order%20by%20DOC_DAT_EDIT%20desc) [Accessed 30 March 2015]

religion positioned as a threat to Tunisia's modernisation, he placed an existential significance on Tunisia's international role to explain why the French president considered himself 'in the camp of the friends of Tunisia'.¹⁰⁵

These interests shaped French reactions to the Tunisian uprising. As the protest movement escalated in Tunisia the French establishment demonstrated its willingness to stand behind the Ben Ali regime despite its well-established faults. The Culture Minister, Frédéric Mitterrand was scornful of those describing Tunisia as a dictatorship, dismissing those claims as 'entirely exaggerated' (Libération, 2011). More tellingly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Michèle Alliot-Marie attempted to minimise the impact of regime-led violence against those protesting and defended the Tunisian regime's imperative to maintain order, and even offered 'the knowledge and experience of [French] security forces towards these ends'.¹⁰⁶ It subsequently came to light that Alliot-Marie's support for the Tunisian regime and her relations with prominent economic actors close to the Tunisian regime went beyond her the exigencies of her official role. *Le canard enchainé* detailed how the Tunisian tycoon, Aziz Miled, had escorted Alliot-Marie and her family around the country on his private jet during a late December visit as protests spread throughout the interior (Beau and Muller, 2011).

Through privileging narrow definitions of national security and domestic interests, both Chirac and Sarkozy disavowed political reform, respect for human rights, and the importance of the rule of law. Even when extensive reports detailing the practice of torture, the lack of an independent judiciary, and the silencing of dissenting voices were published by French human rights groups and circulated in French, they did little more than temporarily strain the relationship between France and Tunisia (Kallander, 2013: 119). While irksome, the increasingly vocal objections of scholars, journalists, and activists did not weaken official relations or alter the pace of ministerial exchanges, nor were they backed by political pressure or economic sanctions, despite the considerable leverage France could exercise as Tunisia's main trading partner. As Alliot-Marie's predecessor, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner stated rather bluntly, human rights were a concern, but not a priority:

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ 'Violences en Tunisie et en Algérie. Réponses di Ministre d'État, Ministres des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes. Michelle Alliot-Marie, a des Questions d'actualité a 'Assemblée Nationale', January 11, 2011. Available at: http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/cadcgp.php?CMD=CHERCHE&MODELE=vues/mae_internet_recherche_avancee/home.html&vue=mae_internet_recherche_avancee&query=1&SQL=select%20ft_cid%20from%20epi_doc%20where%20FT_ANY_TEXT_COLUMN%20contains%20%27tunisie%27%20and%20mae_etat=%27publie%27%20order%20by%20DOC_DAT_EDIT%20desc [Accessed 30 March 2015]

It is true that there are human rights violations . . . It is also true that we are more attentive due to the high economic and social status of Tunisia, and because its commitment to women's rights and secularism is unique within the region. But a minister for foreign affairs, I repeat, cannot only be a human rights advocate.¹⁰⁷

French support of Ben Ali was opportunistic and subordinated to shifting perceptions of domestic priorities, and was generally defined at the highest level of the French establishment. Particularly evident during Ben Ali's presidency was his willingness to accommodate Western economic interests and contributions to patrolling international borders that routinely trumped concerns over the local ramifications of his decisions or the methods utilised to carry them out.

5.3.2 Tunisia and the EU: The Primacy of Stability (1)

France's close relationship with Tunisia saw it take a leadership role in focusing EU attention on the southern Mediterranean through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) (Wood, 1998). The 1995 Barcelona Accords codified the EMP, a series of bilateral agreements between the EU and southern Mediterranean states to establish a free-trade zone, which reflected the Union's desire to emphasise socioeconomic issues rather than hard security issues (Behrendt and Hanelt, 2000). Tunisia subsequently signed an association agreement with the EU in 1995, which would see a progressive abandoning of protective tariffs on goods originating within the EU. Tunisia would receive compensation for its loss of state revenue through technology transfers, job creation, foreign direct investment and aid programmes that would support indigenous industry in order to compete against European firms. Reality did not match practice however. The Tunisian state controlled access to compensation and this involved a long application process, which often awarded individuals connected to the regime, such as Aziz Miled, a wealthy businessman involved in tourism, banking and the import-export sector (Cassarino, 1999: 69). The association agreement had the effect of creating close ties between the regime and large entrepreneurs, which blurred the lined between the public and private sectors. Rather than neatly unfolding economic liberalisation, the EU saw its funds reinforce the predominance of the RCD, facilitate state interference in the Tunisian economy, and benefit large businesses and multinationals (Hibou, 2006; 194; Powel and Sadiki, 2010: 64-67).

¹⁰⁷ 'Entretien du ministre des affaires étrangères et européennes, Bernard Kouchner, avec l'hebdomadaire *Jeune Afrique*', March 22, 2009. Available at: <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/EPI00038505.pdf> [Accessed 30 March 2015]

The association agreement also included clauses whereby the allocation of funds for Tunisia deepened upon the country's respect for human rights, thus granting the EU strong leverage over Tunisia. However, even when aid to Tunisia was reduced by 13.5 percent in 2004, for punitive reasons, it continued to receive more aid per capita than any other partner (Holden, 2008: 238). Ben Ali was not criticised nor was political reform addressed (Wood, 2002; Powell and Sadiki, 2014). Discussing the establishment of a joint defence programme among different national militaries in her then capacity as Minister of Defence, Alliot-Marie reduced the human rights situation in Tunisia to that of 'an image problem'. She summarised the EU stance that 'certain restriction on freedom have to be considered from the perspective of their relevance for the war on terrorism', thus relegating human rights to a subordinate role with regards to the matter of security.¹⁰⁸

By 2003, the limitations of the Barcelona Accords became apparent (Hollis, 2005). Rather than create an integrated region around the Mediterranean, a hub-and-spokes arrangement emerged in which the EU connected to the states of the southern Mediterranean through separate bilateral links (Xenakis and Chrysochoou, 2001). The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) replaced the EMP, which subsumed much of the latter's objectives. However, the ENP differed in two important ways (Holden, 2009: 23-24). First, it sought to encourage political reform through positive conditionality, which saw political and economic reforms rewarded with greater access to EU markets and programmes. Second, the ENP abandoned the regional approach of the EMP and instead sought to focus on bilateral relations with the countries of the southern Mediterranean.

Tunisia was a beneficiary of the ENP, and its access to EU markets saw the union become its largest trading partner, 74 percent of all Tunisian exports and 72 percent of its imports come from the EU (Powel and Sadiki, 2010: 48). There was nonetheless a disparity in the economic relationship between the two, as EU trade with Tunisia represents 0.6 percent of the union's imports and 0.7 percent of its exports. This disparity in economic power provides the EU with, potentially, a considerable leverage over Tunisia (Powel, 2009: 65). However, the EU made little effort to leverage the Ben Ali regime, reasoning that development would dissuade potential terrorists and reduce emigration to Europe. Indeed, Chirac made this reasoning explicitly clear in 1997, noting that the Tunisian regime's commitment to economic reforms had weakened

¹⁰⁸ Déplacement en Tunisie: Conférence du presse du Ministre de la Défense, Mme Michèle Alliot-Marie, June 2, 2006. <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-doc/e004814.pdf> [Accessed March 30 2015]

fundamentalism because ‘when the standard of living improves, when unemployment, poverty, and marginality are on the decline, the temptation towards violence also disappears’.¹⁰⁹ There were few structural mechanisms to encourage political reform and the EU prioritised stability to stave off the potentially negative consequences that may have resulted from regime change. Though Tunisia’s EU accords included a clause ensuring respect for human rights, it was not enforced, ‘not least because of French reluctance to engage in activities which Paris believed might endanger regional stability’ (Joffé, 2008: 156). This was especially so after the European Council formulated a plan of action against international terrorism in September 2001, whose emphasis on a common security agenda marginalised the liberal and humanitarian components of the Euro-Mediterranean discourse. As critics have caustically pointed out, these accords constitute a softer approach to EU interests in limiting illegal migration, as they are geared ‘to stabilize the sending countries and pacify Europe’s own xenophobic reaction to the arrivals’ (Feldman, 2011).

Despite the potential economic leverage the EU could bring to bear in Tunisia, if it so chose, the union continued to work with the Ben Ali regime for two reasons. First, unlike its neighbours, Tunisia had generally maintained a low profile. It avoided the domestic violence that characterised Algeria and did not seek to challenge the international community in the manner that Libya did (Powel, 2009: 66). Tunisia’s relatively benign political situation under Ben Ali consequently made the EU reluctant to upset the political status quo and bring about potential instability in North Africa (Gillespie, 2006). And second, the EU’s limited ability to employ its leverage reflects the fact that the EU is composed of individual member states, some of which possess strategic and economic interests in North Africa, that political reform might negatively affect (see Daguzan 2008; Amirah-Fernández, 2008). The EU’s support for the Ben Ali regime reflected the union’s desire for stability in North Africa, as it sought to focus on socioeconomic issues that might prevent the rise of fundamentalism or large-scale migration to Europe.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Toast du Président de la République’, October 20, 1997. Available at: http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/cadcgp.php?CMD=CHERCHE&MODELE=vues/mae_internet_recherche_avancee/home.html&vue=mae_internet_recherche_avancee&query=1&SQL=select%20ft_cid%20from%20epi_doc%20where%20FT_ANY_TEXT_COLUMN%20contains%20%27tunisie%27%20and%20mae_etat=%27publie%27%20order%20by%20DOC_DAT_EDIT%20desc [Accessed 30 March 2015]

5.3.3 Tunisia and the United States: The Stability Syndrome

United States support for Tunisia was predicated upon the desire to maintain a regional order in the MENA aligned with US interests (Aburish, 1997; Mockli and Mauer, 2011). The United States interest in Tunisia was strictly geopolitical, as it had minimal commercial interests in the country, although successive administrations prized the consistent alignment of Tunisia with strategic US interests both in the MENA and further afield (Ben Rejeb, 2013: 81). The post-Cold War period saw the United States and Tunisia begin collaborating against the rise of radical Islam, which had emerged as the West's primary concern with the fall of communism. The United States had an ally in Ben Ali who had already proven his anti-Islamist bona fides through the legal and extra-legal measures he had employed against Ennahda during the 1990s (Garon, 2003: 31-33), was useful to their strategic objectives in the region. Ben Ali used the spectre of Islamism, and the events in neighbouring Algeria, to cement his personal authority over Tunisia. Some in Tunisia acquiesced to Ben Ali's offer of stability, as it was the lesser of two evils at the time (Zartman, 1998: 1-5). The United States looked favourably upon Ben Ali's monopolisation of power as it prioritised a stable Tunisia, rather than the convoluted state of affairs opening up the system had brought about in Algeria (Zoubir, 2008: 286).

Tunisia's offering of itself as a reliable ally saw it recoup \$349 million worth of military aid during Ben Ali's presidency (Gamage, 2011: 2). It also received \$660 of foreign military financing for the Tunisian military, which allowed for participation in military cooperation programmes and joint exercises (US Embassy in Tunis, 2012). Tunisia also partnered with the United States in the latter's Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative, participating in joint military exercises such as Operation Flintlock in 2005 (Henry, 2008: 296). The United States also supported Tunisia outside of non-security areas and the latter received economic assistance once it rose above thresholds that permitted foreign aid (Murphy, 2012: 244).

In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, Tunisia became a willing US ally in the GWOT and an associate of NATO's counterterrorism surveillance operations in the Mediterranean (Arieff, 2011). The Chamber of Deputies passed a sweeping anti-terrorism law modelled on the United States' PATRIOT ACT, which the United States welcomed as 'a comprehensive law to support the international effort to combat terrorism' (US Department of State, 2004). The law was mainly utilised to submit Tunisia society to a regimen of fear and autocracy under Ben Ali rather than combat terrorism however. In a number of reports commissioned by human rights

groups and journalist's organisations, the regime became synonymous with a police state that permitted large-scale human rights abuse, systematic violation of freedoms, and the censure of the press (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2006; Amnesty International, 2008). Less publicly, the MOI worked with the CIA in facilitating the latter's extraordinary rendition programme. Hundreds of workers within the security services were also trained by the United States in a range of anti-terrorism measures (Murphy, 2014: 244). The intelligence sharing relationship between the two was also close, if not closer than the military one.

Despite strong security cooperation, the United States did not ignore the excesses of the Ben Ali regime. However, this criticism was routinely mild and tempered with praise and appreciation for Tunisia's moderation and accomplishments regarding women's rights and economic growth. President Bush lightly rebuked Ben Ali during a 2004 visit to Washington about Tunisia's press situation (Human Rights Watch, 2004; Africa focus Bulletin, 2004). Having said that, the rebuke did not lead to any pressure on Ben Ali to reform the Tunisian press, but it did serve to remind of the opportunistic and expendable nature of the relationship between the two states.

The actions of Leila Trabelsi strained this relationship when a diplomatic dispute arose over a school in Tunis. Private education in Tunisia catered to the needs of approximately 70,000 students and Trabelsi saw this as a lucrative market. In 2007, she opened the International School of Carthage, a for-profit educational institution built on government land sold to Trabelsi for the sum of TD1. Ben Ali supported the school's establishment and provided government investment worth TD1.8 million, a quarter of the school's required financing or enough money to fund the construction of sixty extra classrooms in a country that needed them (Beau and Graciet, 2009: 100).

Seeking a return on her investment, Trabelsi sought to remove her main competitor, the American Cooperative School in Tunis (ACST), by threatening it with a tax bill that could have potentially seen it close. The ACST student body included children from over 67 countries, including the children of those in diplomatic missions, multilateral organisations, and multinationals based in Tunis.¹¹⁰ The US embassy in Tunis was informed that International School of Carthage was behind the tax authorities' actions against the ACST. An Egyptian-American businessman, Waleed Abu Shaker, informed the embassy of a meeting he had with highly placed Tunisians who told him of plans to bring the full weight of the government against the ACST.

¹¹⁰ Cable Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'The American School Faces Tax Crisis, Status Questions', 13 March 2009, 09TUNIS149. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09TUNIS149_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

This move was taken in order to get the children of African Development Bank officials, who constituted 40 percent of the ACST's student body, to leave the school and attend the International School of Carthage instead.¹¹¹ Trabelsi had previous experience in this area, having forced a private French school to close in order to poach its students.¹¹² The issue over the school's taxation was ultimately resolved in a meeting between Ben Ali and the US Ambassador Godec in which Ben Ali expressed regret that a 'minor' issue had led to a diplomatic issue between the two countries.¹¹³ In recounting this incident Achraf Aouadi notes that the interests of Leila Trabelsi damaged Tunisia's relationship with the United States, as there was a cooling of relations:

We have the American School in Tunis, just opposite the American embassy. It's a very prestigious school and many expatriates send their children there. And it's the same for wealthy Tunisians. When Leila started her own school one of the main competitors was the American School. So the regime sent tax inspectors to the school to intimidate them and in retaliation the US Department of State closed their diplomatic school in Tunis. Every American diplomat that's deployed in the MENA region will spend time here studying Arabic . . . Let's just say that over the last few years the relationship between the US and Ben Ali wasn't the best.¹¹⁴

Despite its resolution of the ACST issue the relationship between Tunisia and the United States cooled. Leaked diplomatic cables show the extent of this coolness as the US embassy had become notably critical of the regime and had expressed concern about the country's future. A year after his cable that eviscerated the corrupt activities of The Family, the, then, Ambassador, Godec, painted an alarming picture of political developments in Tunisia. He described the Ben Ali regime as a sclerotic and troubled police state that had become a liability to the United States: 'Tunisia is in trouble, and our relations are too'.¹¹⁵ He intimated that the end of the regime was approaching but did not predict that a popular uprising would lead to regime change. Moreover, the fact that Tunisia wasn't as strategically important to the United States as other Arab states in

¹¹¹ Cable Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'American School in Tunis: Update and Request for Demarche', April 2 2009, 09TUNIS203. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09TUNIS203_a.html

¹¹² Cable, Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'The Png'ing of Suha Arafat: Many Rumours, Few Facts', November 16 2007, 07TUNIS1489. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TUNIS1489_a.html [Accessed March 2 2015]

¹¹³ Cable Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'Ambassador's Farewell Call on President Ben Ali', July 28 2009, 09TUNIS523. Available at: <https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/07/09TUNIS523.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]

¹¹⁴ Interview with Achraf Aouadi

¹¹⁵ Cable Embassy Tunis to Secretary of State, 'Tunisia: What Should We Do?', July 17 2009, 09TUNIS492. Available at: <https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/07/09TUNIS492.html> [Accessed March 2 2015]

North Africa, particularly Egypt, contributed to the cooling of relations between the two as Aouadi makes clear:

The United States isn't as invested in Tunisia as France is. When you're taking North Africa into consideration the US will always value Egypt. It's Israel's neighbour; it's Gaza's neighbour; it's got the Suez Canal; and, one of the largest militaries in the region. When you consider Tunisia, you don't have to worry about Israel or keep the military happy. We didn't sign up to Camp David treaty. So it's entirely understandable that the United States prioritises Egypt over Tunisia. Strategically, they're more important in the region.¹¹⁶

Despite Godec's warnings about political developments in Tunisia, the uprising came as a surprise to the United States. While protests and repression mounted quickly throughout Tunisia in December 2010 and January 2011, the United States and Europe observed a heavy silence (Le Monde, 2011). Coverage of the uprising was minimal in mainstream American media and government responses were prudent. The day before Ben Ali's exit, the political scientist, Marc Lynch (2011), opined on the invisibility of Tunisia in the major US newspapers:

Tunisia has erupted as the story of the year for Arab reformers . . . but the *Washington Post's* op-ed page has been strikingly silent about the Tunisian protests. Thus far, a month into the massive demonstrations rocking Tunisia, the *Washington Post* editorial page has published exactly zero editorials about Tunisia.

In the aftermath of Ben Ali's departure, Yvonne Ridley (2011) accused the White House of 'a show of cowardice'. While peaceful demonstrators were being gunned down, she wrote that '[n]ot one word of condemnation, not one word of criticism, not one word urging restraint came from Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton as live ammunition was fired into the crowds of unarmed men, women, and children in recent weeks'. The Obama administration, like its counterparts in France, was slow to side with the protestors and Obama's formal statement in support of the revolution did not come until after Ben Ali's departure. The Congressional Research Service admitted to this delayed reaction while attempting to gloss over it: 'US criticism of the [Tunisian] government's response to the December-January demonstrations, although initially muted, mounted as the protests grew' (Arieff, 2011: 6). The attitude of the United States to the Tunisian uprising underscores that domestic events in Tunisia had international reverberations. For this reason, the United States had structured its relations with Tunisia around autocracy in order to realise its geostrategic interests and objectives.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Achraf Aouadi

Despite its high linkage and high leverage, the Ben Ali regime was afforded considerable international support from France, the EU, and the United States. This allowed the Ben Ali regime to disregard external calls to implement meaningful political reform, although it also presupposes that criticisms of the regime were voiced in order for this to come about. Moreover, it appears that international support was beneficial to component parts of the ruling coalition. The regime's position as an ally of the West in combating terrorism afforded Ben Ali an international legitimacy, the benefits of which spread to components of the ruling coalition. The regime's relationship with France afforded The Family, and those close to the regime, lucrative business opportunities. This relationship also afforded the regime with international legitimacy and French reticence to comment on the human rights situation in Tunisia provided an effective cover for the MOI to undertake their work. Tunisia's relationship with the United States was largely similar. The Ben Ali regime positioned itself as a reliable ally in the GWOT and only received light rebukes vis-à-vis political reform. Again, component parts of the ruling coalition benefitted from US support as both the MOI and military were beneficiaries of training from the CIA and United States military respectively. Tunisia's relationship with the EU appears to be the outlier in this regard. There were strong links between the EU and Tunisia, particularly in terms of trade, and the ENP provided an opportunity for the union to influence political developments in Tunisia. However, this did not happen, as the EU favoured stability in its relations with Tunisia, and, the competing interests of its member states further limited the EU's ability to influence the Ben Ali regime. Taking the above into account, it emerges that Tunisia was the beneficiary of significant international support, however, this support was negligible in shaping the outcome of the Tunisian uprising. With the exception of Alliot-Marie's comments to the French Assembly, there were no significant external interventions, as Europe and the United States maintained a silence. Rather, domestic factors shaped interest realisation, as the only actor that possessed the ability to influence the regime change, the EU, was unable to do so and this speaks more to the union's ability to speak with a single voice when it comes to foreign policy rather than the Ben Ali regime's ability to resist pressure.

5.4 Conclusion: The Impact of Exogenous Factors

Chapter 4's analysis of endogenous variables made clear that Ben Ali's ruling coalition was eroding internally, as the interests of the personalist cadre were prioritised above those in the single-party and military cadres. The personalist cadre shared an

ideological congruence with the President and was the primary beneficiary of material patronage. Contrary to this were the depoliticised RCD and the isolated military. The former was cognisant of its declining relevancy within the ruling coalition but deemed it prudent to remain within this body in order to access what benefits it could. The latter had become isolated and had consequently formed an institutional worldview that was independent of and distinct from Ben Ali's. Nonetheless, an analysis of these variables reveals that endogenous factors are insufficient for members of the ruling coalition to countenance regime change. Despite being open to the possibility of regime change, it appears that ruling coalition members require exogenous factors to act as a type of external catalyst for them to formally exit the ruling coalition. Thus, we must consider the effects of both exogenous variables.

The Ben Ali regime's loss of legitimacy was the result of economic mismanagement that gave rise to increasing poverty, unemployment and corruption, all with the intent of furthering the material interests of The Family. This mismanagement gave rise to a sense of unfairness that was generated by the confluence of these factors and gave rise to a constituency that saw the Ben Ali regime illegitimate. When this constituency mobilised in Sidi Bouzid in December 2010 and spread throughout the country, it affected the country's elite in different ways. The Family and the MOI viewed this movement as a threat that was to be quickly dismissed. However, the strength of the demonstrations arrayed against the regime saw the MOI overwhelmed and Ben Ali reluctantly acknowledge their claims in the days prior to this departure. The regime's loss of legitimacy resonated with the single-party and military cadres in different ways. Rather than mobilise to support the regime local RCD members instead sided with the protest movement as they had their interests denied within the ruling coalition. While the military did not throw its lot in with the protest movement its refusal to engage the protest movement was an indication that the military feared for its institutional integrity if it was to actively engage the public.

The second exogenous variable, international support, indicates that authoritarian breakdown in Tunisia was largely a domestic affair. The disintegration of the RCD and the military's refusal to repress the protest movement occurred far more briskly than the foreign policy shifts of Tunisia's international backers. Rather than leading events, the international community followed them. The United States issued a statement on January 14th, which in a rather anodyne fashion called on 'all parties to maintain calm and avoid violence' and 'on the Tunisian government to respect human rights, and to hold free and fair elections in the near future that reflect the true will and

aspirations of the Tunisian people' (The White House, 2011). The French on the other hand had offered Ben Ali assistance two days prior. Taking the actions of the United States and France into account indicates that the provision of international support was not critical in bringing about the occurrence of authoritarian breakdown. It appears to be the case that, where pro-Western autocracies were threatened by popular uprisings, the United States, and by extension its Western allies, adopted a wait-and-see approach in order to remain relevant in the post-uprising period, which thus ensured that domestic elites remained the swingmen of regime change (Brownlee et al., 2015: 70). What emerges when we consider the two exogenous variables is that domestic developments shaped interest realisation within the ruling coalition.

Thus, when elite interests in the context of authoritarian breakdown are taken into account, the following can be stated with regard to the hypotheses put forth in Chapter 3. First, the evidence in Chapters 4 and 5 confirms the hypothesis that the military cadre will voluntarily exit the ruling coalition when their interests are not realised. Politically and materially isolated, the military saw the Ben Ali regime's loss of legitimacy as an opportunity to exit the ruling coalition and realise their interests independently of the regime. Second, the evidence also confirms the hypothesis that the single-party cadre will exit the ruling coalition only when exogenous factors compel it to do so. The RCD was largely depoliticised and its ability to distribute patronage was limited due to the liberalisation of the Tunisian economy and the state's exit from it. Despite this, the party was willing to support Ben Ali until the Tunisian uprising indicated the extent of the regime's illegitimacy, which saw the RCD disintegrate and its members join protests against the regime. And third, the evidence confirms the hypothesis that the personalist cadre will refuse to willingly countenance regime change. The Family and the MOI were the prime beneficiaries of Ben Ali's monopolisation of power and they undergirded his control of Tunisia. Furthermore, using the occurrence of the uprisings, it was these two groups that refused to favour regime change or enter a dialogue with the protest movement. Both were forced from power when the MOI was overwhelmed and unable to protect The Family. These findings have implications for both the theoretical framework and the country under examination, but also for the literature on authoritarian resilience, as well. In light of the results gleaned from the second case study, these findings will be discussed in the concluding chapter regarding the lessons the research has to offer.

Chapter 6 – Endogenous Interest Realisation within the Egyptian Ruling Coalition: A Fragmented Regime

This chapter examines the endogenous realisation of elite interests within the ruling coalition of Hosni Mubarak, the President of Egypt between 1981 and 2011. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Egyptian politics was on the cusp of great change (Osman, 2010). Mubarak's advancing age and recurrent health problems had seen the question of succession openly discussed and a number of actors openly positioned themselves as potential successors (Brownlee, 2008; Masoud, 2011; Cook, 2012). However, Mubarak was unwilling to hand over the reins of power. Despite Mubarak's stance, the question of succession affected interest realisation within the ruling coalition, which fragmented during Mubarak's final decade in power. The chapter proceeds as follows. It will offer a narrative overview of the Egyptian uprising, before outlining the components of Mubarak's ruling coalition. The endogenous realisation of elite interests within the ruling coalition will then be analysed, specifically elite perceptions and political ties, and the distribution of material patronage. The conclusion will be a brief summary of how the endogenous realisation of elite interests affected dynamics within the ruling coalition. Chapter 7, which incorporates the two exogenous variables, will supplement these remarks.

6.1 The Egyptian Uprising

The background to the Egyptian uprising bears many similarities to events in Tunisia. Egypt suffered from three decades of authoritarian rule under Mubarak, who presided over a lifeless political system where corruption, cronyism, and repression were everyday occurrences (ICG, 2011b: i). This political listlessness was further exacerbated by an economic situation that saw Egypt's poor suffer from declining wages and rising prices while the marriage of business and political interests prospered within the ruling coalition (Soliman, 2012: 58-60). Nor was the formal political system in a position to address these demands: Mubarak's ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) did not want to surrender its privileged position and those in the opposition who could have provided alternatives were either co-opted or repressed into accepting that Egypt was not yet 'ripe' for change (Albrecht, 2005: 384). Despite the closing off of the formal political system there had been localised protests against the regime since the early 2000s, as activist groups and the labour movement challenged its economic

policies through online activism and strikes (Beinin, 2012; Bishara, 2012; Shehata, 2012).

While the background to the uprising was certainly clear, it was events in late 2010 and early 2011 that convinced many of the need to take action. The fraudulent parliamentary elections of November 2010 saw the NDP returned with a massive majority. This, coupled with the increasingly likely prospect that Mubarak's younger son Gamal would succeed to the presidency (Sadiki, 2010), convinced many of the need to take extra-institutional action against the regime (ICG, 2011b: i). What's more, the contagion effect (Whitehead, 2001), arising from the toppling of Ben Ali in Tunisia, convinced many that this action could succeed.

The Egyptian uprising began on January 25th, National Police Day, following calls for a mass protest organised on Facebook. The protests mainly took place in Cairo and demonstrators complicated police efforts to control them through announcing and quickly changing protest locations via social media. Although the protests were intended to be symbolic, four demands were put to the regime: the resignation of the interior minister Habib Al-Adli, the introduction of a fair minimum wage, the end of emergency law, and a two-term limit on the presidency (ICG, 2011b: 3). While centred on Cairo, the protest movement also mobilised in Alexandria, Aswan, Mansura, the Sinai, and Suez.

The events of January 25th resonated with many Egyptians and a second round of protests was called for on the 28th. The 28th saw thousands brave police repression to converge upon Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo, which became the symbolic centre of the uprising (Aziz, 2011: 234-235). Mubarak appeared on state television on January 29th to address the country. He announced the dismissal of the cabinet and the speeding up of reforms designed to help the poor and encourage democracy (Shaffer, 2011). Omar Suleiman, the head of the Egyptian General Intelligence Services (EGIS), was also sworn in as Vice-President. That night marked the most significant development of the uprising. Mubarak's concessions mattered little to the protest movement, as protesters had achieved a significant victory of their own in routing the police forces stationed in Tahrir Square. As the police withdrew, tanks rolled into Cairo, and Egypt's other cities, making the military the country's effective authority (ICG, 2011b: 5). The military received a hero's welcome by those protesting, a consequence of its absence from day-to-day politics (Cook, 2007: 76-77), despite its ambiguous motivations.

The evening of February 2nd saw regime-hired thugs (*baltagiyya*) push their way into Tahrir Square and attack anti-Mubarak protestors on horseback and camelback

(Fathi, 2012). The protestors withstood this attack, known as the ‘Battle of the Camel’, throughout the night. The morning of February 3rd saw both sides separated by the military, which then proceeded to deny pro-Mubarak elements entry to the square. In the aftermath of the Camel Battle, the regime and its opponents settled into an uneasy *détente*, with momentum regularly swinging back and forth between the two sides. Suleiman attempted to negotiate an end to the protests, with selected interlocutors drawn from those protesting in Tahrir Square, but these efforts were rebuffed (Shehata, 2011: 30), and undermined by those in the regime who did not support these actions (Hope, 2012).

Mubarak made what was to be his final speech on February 10th. The speech contained indications that he was losing his grip on power, as he announced the transfer of some powers to the vice-presidency (The Washington Post, 2011). That day also saw the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) convene, a body which had only been previously gathered in Egypt’s two wars with Israel (ICG, 2011b: 13-14). The SCAF was nominally chaired by the President but in this instance was not. It issued a communiqué endorsing the demands of the Egyptian people (The New York Times, 2011a). The nature of this communiqué was ambiguous; it could have meant the military was working to implement Mubarak’s reforms or that it was promising the President’s imminent removal. It nevertheless must be acknowledged that the military was now the arbiter of Mubarak’s fate.

The chants at the enormous demonstrations on February 11th called on the military to end the protests, much like their Tunisian counterparts had. What exactly transpired over those final days – within the military, within the ruling coalition, and, between the military and the president – remains unclear. The evening of February 11 saw Suleiman issue a brief statement in which he announced that Mubarak had stepped down from the office of the president and charged the SCAF to administer the affairs of the country (The New York Times, 2011b).

How the choices of those in Mubarak’s ruling coalition affected the course of events remains to be explained. The narrative points to the importance of elite actors and there are a number of factors to bear in mind when taking the interests the ruling coalition into account. First, the Egyptian uprising was a popular revolt, but its *dénouement* was brought about by the military cadre’s withdrawal from the ruling coalition. This juxtaposition of popular uprising and military withdrawal from the ruling coalition sheds light on the nature of the regime change that took place in Egypt. In an effort to safeguard their institutional interests, the military cadre effected an

authoritarian transformation. Although Mubarak had vacated the presidency and the NDP's leadership had been displaced, other pillars of the regime remained in place, notably the military cadre and the routed security forces (ICG, 2013: 9). Thus, Mubarak had exited the political arena, but component parts of his ruling coalition had not. Those that remained had sacrificed elements of the ruling coalition in order to safeguard their interests that would allow elements of the former regime to endure. Ultimately, despite holding pluralistic elections, the military cadre controlled the scope of political activity in post-Mubarak Egypt (Brownlee et al., 2015: 104-125).

Second, the military played a central and decisive role during the uprising, albeit one with ambivalent motivations. General Adel Soliman (Ret.) notes that the military was torn between its loyalty to Mubarak and its duty to the nation as 'The military were loyal to Mubarak . . . but at the same time they would not support a regime that harmed its own people'.¹¹⁷ The military was torn between protecting the privileges granted to it at Mubarak's discretion and the potential for igniting civil conflict if it were to engage the protest movement. However, at some point, the military cadre concluded that it could best reconcile its interests by taking control of the situation in Egypt.

Third, at the core of the Egyptian uprising lay the country's socioeconomic crisis. Unemployment, rising poverty, and the concentration of wealth brought many out to protest, as did the unbridled use of repression and the presumed succession of Gamal Mubarak. What is absent from this discussion is how socioeconomic conditions affected the interests of those within the ruling coalition.

And fourth, the West never expected, or hoped for, regime change in Egypt. More importantly, while Western actors had more to say on events in Egypt than in the Tunisian case, they still engaged in a rhetorical catch-up for the most part (ICG, 2011b: 26-27). Nevertheless, as Chapter 7 will make clear, the interests of external powers, particularly the United States, shaped how members of the ruling coalition perceived their interests. As this chapter and the next will make clear, intra-regime dynamics contributed to the occurrence of authoritarian transformation in Egypt. In order to better understand these dynamics, the following section details Mubarak's ruling coalition and how it evolved over time.

¹¹⁷ Personal Interview with General Adel Soliman, (Ret.), Director of the Strategic Dialogue Forum, Cairo, February 10, 2014.

6.2 The Ruling Coalition and Political Life in Mubarak's Egypt

The Egyptian political system concentrates power in the executive branch (Lesch, 2008). The President is invested with the power to appoint and dismiss cabinet members, dissolve the parliament, veto legislation and bypass parliament by putting issues to vote in public referenda. The power of appointment extends beyond cabinet to include governors, mayors, one third of the (the Consultative Assembly, the upper house of parliament), and ten members of the People's Assembly (the lower house). Despite the significant power invested in the presidency, Mubarak did not rule alone and instead relied on a large elite to shape decision-making and ensure political survival (Abdelnasser, 2004: 199). Mubarak lacked the charismatic styles of his predecessors, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Anwar Sadat (see Lacouture, 1970: 124; Chapin Metz, 1990), and instead managed his ruling coalition in low-key and business-like fashion. This method of managing the ruling coalition benefitted Mubarak, as it did not generate strong emotions to oust him (Tripp, 1989). What's more, he sought to build crosscutting loyalties within the ruling coalition that sought to 'create a web of support for the regime in general, rather than him in particular' (Altermann, 2000: 113).

Egypt's ruling coalition comprised military, single-party and personalist cadres. The regime has been closely tied to the military since its inception. Nasser was a military officer himself (Rogan, 2009: 282-285), and was initially reliant on the officer corps to implement his agenda. As Abdalla (1988: 1454) notes, '[o]fficers occupied senior positions in the bureaucracy and the public sector economy' (Abdalla, 1988: 1454). Defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war saw the military's role in the political sphere gradually decline and it evolved to become a semi-autonomous institution within Egyptian society. Fears that the military cadre would escape the regime's control have been assuaged by the former's willingness to accept a subordinate political role. The military's acceptance of this role is the consequence of excellent funding; it is the recipient of significant US aid and an important actor within the Egyptian economy. Per Svulik's criteria (2012: 32-33), the degree of military involvement in the ruling coalition was personal in nature. It did not involve itself in the day-to-day business of government but protected its political and economic institutional interests.

The single-party cadre was found in the NDP, which was formed by Sadat as a successor to Nasser's Arab Socialist Union (Deeb, 2011: 405). The NDP dominated Egypt's official political space and controlled three quarters of parliament throughout Mubarak's presidency. The notable exceptions were 1995 and 2010 when it controlled 94 and 97 per cent of parliamentary seats respectively (Lesch, 2012: 18). The regime

used the provision of bureaucratic jobs to give party members a continued stake in the regime's survival (Altermann, 2000: 112-113), jobs which were particularly important given Egypt's high levels of chronic unemployment. Since the end of the 1970s, opposition groups have also been represented in parliament. However, their presence was limited and reached its lowest ebb in 2010 when opposition forces represented only three per cent of seats in 2010, and their ability to challenge the regime and articulate alternatives has also been called into question (see Albrecht, 2013).

The regime's personalist cadre is comprised of two distinct groups. The first is the Policies Secretariat, a body with the NDP formed with the intent of advancing the interests of Gamal Mubarak and those associated with him (Cook, 2012: 171).¹¹⁸ The second element within this cadre is the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the various security forces housed within it, which maintained the regime through repression and aggressive law enforcement (Altermann, 2000: 110-111).

Presiding over the ruling coalition was Mubarak, who possessed a sharp sense of survival. Mubarak's uppermost concern was the maintenance and perpetuation of his authoritarian regime and he achieved this for thirty years by keeping the vital levers of state within the presidency. Mubarak's monopolisation of power was borne of his belief, according to former NDP member and academic Gehad Auda, that no other individual or institution within the regime could manage the responsibilities he managed on a daily basis: 'He wasn't arrogant as such but he didn't think the power that was vested in him could be controlled by anyone else'.¹¹⁹ Joshua Stacher (2012: 83) asserts to the contrary that Mubarak's monopolisation of power was undertaken with the intent to stop individuals and institutions becoming a threat to his rule. He did this by annexing their functions and subsuming it into the presidency, therefore making them subservient to him. This monopolisation of power defined Mubarak's thirty years in power but his last decade marked a change in this approach, as will be made clear later in this section.

In contrast to his predecessors, Mubarak was directly involved in managing the affairs of state. Nevertheless, this approach was not all-inclusive. Mubarak was selective in choosing the duties he sought to manage and he favoured security and foreign policy issues over those that involved domestic policymaking, as Auda makes clear:

¹¹⁸ Gamal Mubarak will be referred to as Gamal from here on in to avoid any confusion with his father, except where directly cited.

¹¹⁹ Personal Interview with Professor Gehad Auda, Professor of Political Science at the British University in Egypt and former NDP member, Cairo, February 11 2014.

He was a national security man. His main interest was national security. He hated domestic policymaking and social policy. Any policy discussion that had the word social in it, he lacked interest. I wouldn't say he lacked compassion for those that needed help in this area . . . but he felt he was best placed in providing for the country's national security.

For Mubarak, no issue took precedence over regime security. He emphasised this at the opening of the new parliamentary term in 2007 when he stated that:

Egypt's national security is my first responsibility. It is the defence of Egypt's land and sovereignty and the independence of its will and preservation of its stability and the security of its citizens.¹²⁰

Regime security became synonymous with Egypt's national interest for Mubarak as one could be substituted for another. The extent to which regime security was Mubarak's primary concern could be seen in the fact that although he presided over significant social and demographic change during his thirty years in power, he did little to solve the problems brought about by these changes (see René Larémont, 2014, El-Din Shahin, 2014: 55-59). It was rather the case that Mubarak's preoccupation with regime security may have actually exacerbated these problems. In an attempt to control Egypt's political situation following Sadat's assassination in 1981 Mubarak placed the country under a state of emergency that remained in effect until his deposition. While these laws allowed the regime to combat militant Islamists, they were also invoked to harass opposition parties and youth movements that sought democratic reform as well as social and economic changes (Kandil, 2012a: 199).

Mubarak's preoccupation with regime security had consequences for those in the ruling coalition as he divided the Egyptian political system into two distinct spheres. Kazziha (2013: 40) termed these two spheres the hard sector, which consisted of the security establishment (the military, the MOI, the foreign ministry and the intelligence services), and the soft sector, the country's political and economic spheres overseen by the NDP. The hard sector consisted of several organisations linked directly to the office of the President, from whom they derived their authority and mandate. The primary organisation in this sector was the Egyptian military. Although under the formal command of the Minister of Defence, Mubarak was the ultimate arbiter of power within the military. He exercised his full prerogative in staffing the military cadre; he frequently rotated officers and personally approved all promotions over the rank of

¹²⁰ See, 'Egyptian president gives speech at opening of new parliamentary term', *BBC Worldwide Monitoring Service*, November 14th, 2007, LexisNexis.

corporal (Droz-Vincent, 1999: 18). Additionally, all senior officers reported directly to Mubarak without going through the military hierarchy. Adel Soliman makes clear that ‘Mubarak ruled the armed forces . . . It was our job to follow orders. And, it was Mubarak who determined our orders not the Minister of Defence’.¹²¹ The military’s retreat from a direct political role to a personal one in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war saw few officers gain public prominence, which permitted the military cadre to focus its attention on the development of the military institution (Cook, 2007: 77).

The second organisation Mubarak actively controlled was the MOI and its various security forces. Similar to his command of the military, Mubarak kept significant command posts in the MOI directly linked to the presidency and occasionally chaired meetings of the Highest Council of the Police Forces (Kazziha, 2013: 41). Mubarak also held his Interior Ministers to the highest standards and dismissed them for the slightest failure, in ensuring the security of the regime. The average tenure for an Interior Minister under Mubarak was approximately three years; the notable exception was Habib al-Adly who occupied the post for 14 years until 2011 (Kandil, 2012a: 198). The hard sector also encompassed the foreign ministry and the country’s intelligence sector. Foreign policy decisions were directly under Mubarak’s purview (Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014: 83). Egypt’s intelligence community also fell under Mubarak’s direct supervision; the country’s preeminent intelligence organisation, the EGIS, headed by Omar Suleiman, answered directly to him (Sirrs, 2010: 173).

For the first two decades of his time in power, Mubarak also managed the soft sector, Egypt’s political and economic spheres. He was the chairman of the NDP and used this position to monitor the interests of the party’s membership via three key lieutenants, Safwat Sherif (Information Minister, 1983-2004, and NDP Secretary-General, 2002-2011), Youssef Wali (Agriculture Minister, 1982-2004, and NDP Secretary-General, 1984-2002), and Kamal al-Shazli (Parliamentary Affairs Minister, 1984-2005) (Stacher, 2012: 98). Despite his aversions to domestic policy, Mubarak was also heavily involved in formulating economic policy and often supervised meetings of the cabinet regarding economic affairs (Kazziha, 2013: 41). On occasion, Mubarak also directly intervened in economy affairs and personally allotted projects and state assets to favoured Egyptian and Arab investors. The tripartite alliance between the military, personalist and single-party cadres remained balanced for first two decades of Mubarak’s rule, as each component knew its place within the ruling coalition and its duties in society. As Adel Soliman recounts:

¹²¹ Interview with Adel Soliman.

The NDP implemented Mubarak's policy, which was their job. It was the Interior Ministry's job to police the streets. That was their job and where they needed to be. The military were assigned to their bases. They were the harshest tools available to Mubarak and they were kept aside only to be called upon when needed.¹²²

Mubarak's last decade in power marked a profound change in this approach. The managed entry of the President's son Gamal into public life provided Mubarak with an opportunity to divest himself of his responsibilities in the soft sector. A pattern gradually formed which saw father and son engaged in a division of labour. The former controlled the security sector and foreign policy while the latter tasked with the management of the economy, the NDP and the cabinet, with the exception of the Foreign, Interior, Defence and Military Industries Ministries (Kazziha, 2013: 42). Gamal, with the help of an entourage drawn from the business community, academia and the state co-opted the NDP's structures (see Al-Din Arafat, 2011). Lacking his father's military background and stature as a war hero (Cook, 2012: 156-157), the NDP served as the only vehicle from which Gamal could acquire the prestige and clout required to succeed to the presidency.¹²³ As was the case during Mubarak's first two decades in power, this division of labour saw all component parts of the regime operate within strictly circumscribed spheres of influence as made clear by the US embassy:

Defense Minister Tantawi keeps the armed forces appearing reasonably sharp and the officers satisfied with their perks and privileges . . . EGIS [Intelligence] Chief Omar Soliman [*sic*] and Interior Minister el-Adly keep the domestic beasts at bay, and Mubarak is not one to lose sleep over their tactics. Gamal Mubarak [Hosni's son and reputed heir] and a handful of economic ministers have input on economic and trade matters, but Mubarak will likely resist further economic reform if he views it as potentially harmful to public order and stability.¹²⁴

Nor was this division of labour a strictly political phenomenon. Both were rooted in the Egyptian economy and significantly affected the lives of all Egyptians. Accordingly, the management of each sector carried a large responsibility. Mubarak not only oversaw security and foreign policy but a sizable portion of the economy that attached to the military's interests (Albrecht and Bishara, 2011: 14). Gamal's purview also had far-reaching repercussions as he sought to fully liberalise the Egyptian

¹²² Ibid.

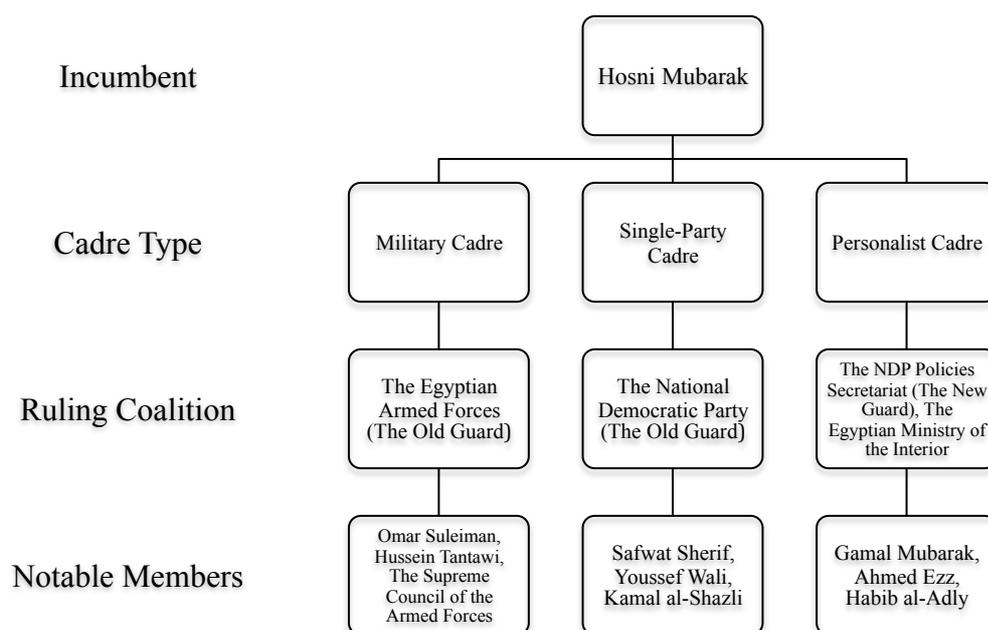
¹²³ President Mubarak served in the 1973 October War as commander of the Egyptian Air Force (see Cook, 2012: 157).

¹²⁴ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, 'Scenesetter: President Mubarak's Visit to Washington', May 19 2009, 09CAIRO874. Available at: <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/05/09CAIRO874.html> [Accessed December 30 2014]

economy (see Soliman, 2011). Most importantly were the consequences this division of labour had for dynamics within the ruling coalition, as it marked the start of a process that ultimately destabilised the regime.

The dynamics underpinning the ruling coalition were largely reflective of Egypt’s prevailing political climate (Abdelnasser, 2004: 131). During Mubarak’s last decade, the question of who would succeed to the presidency had dominated the political agenda. This question had arisen because of the uncertainty surrounding the issue; also, the 2000s had seen a notable decline in Mubarak’s health. Coupled with the lack of a Vice-President who could succeed to the presidency, the issue had contributed to intense competition within the ruling coalition (Lampridi-Kemoua and Azaola, 2013: 139). This competition saw the ruling coalition coalesce into two competing blocs, popularly known as the ‘New Guard’ and the ‘Old Guard’. The New Guard was institutionalised in the PS. The objective of the PS was threefold. First, it was to transform the NDP from a state-sponsored party presided over by old party barons to one run by technocrats. Second, it sought to fully liberalise the Egyptian economy via structural reform (El-Ghobashy, 2003). The third and most important goal was to provide an institutional framework from which Gamal could succeed his father as President. The New Guard also found further support in the MOI, which had developed close links with the PS. Figure 6.1 details the organisation of the Egyptian ruling coalition prior to the uprising.

Figure 6.1 The Egyptian Ruling Coalition



The Old Guard resisted Mubarak's attempts to hand the presidency over to his son. The Old Guard comprised veteran members of the NDP and the senior officers of the military cadre and was headed by Omar Suleiman, the EGIS director and a former general within the military (Sirrs, 2010: 170). Suleiman was Mubarak's right-hand man and worked to preserve the military cadre's influence within the political sphere (Springborg and Sfakianakis, 2001: 58). The Old Guard were opposed to a potential Gamal succession for two reasons. First, his interest in economic liberalisation could potentially damage their economic interests. And, second, the Old Guard questioned Gamal's ability to be President (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 193-196).

Despite the tension that had emerged between the New Guard and the Old Guard, neither group had succeeded in displacing the other from the ruling coalition. Mubarak's division of labour had seen him divest operational control of the soft sector to Gamal but it was still under the former's supervision. This division created, what Kazziha (2013: 43) has termed, an 'administrative schizophrenia' within the ruling coalition, as, despite their opposition to one another, neither the Old Guard or the New Guard could escape Mubarak's tutelage. Thus, on the eve of the uprising the main challenge faced by the Egyptian ruling coalition was the possibility of internal fragmentation because of the tension that had developed between the New Guard and the Old Guard, a tension that manifested itself in competition over the state's resources (Lampridi-Kemou and Azaola, 2013: 144) and questions over Gamal's suitability as President (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 193-196).

6.3 Elites Perceptions and Interpersonal Ties: The Succession Question and the Decline of the Generals

The tripartite alliances that undergirded the Egyptian ruling coalition underwent a power shift at the start of the twenty-first century that benefitted the interests of the personalist cadre. This was the consequence of two parallel developments. First, the deliberate entry of Gamal into the ruling coalition saw the influence of the NDP Old Guard gradually decline as the New Guard associated with the President's son gradually co-opted the party's leadership. Second, the increasing importance Mubarak attached to the MOI underscored the political impotence of the military cadre.

6.3.1 The Single-Party Cadre: The NDP and the Primacy of Stability

The NDP was the organiser of the regime's social bases during Mubarak's first two decades in power. The party membership subscribed to a wide array of political

viewpoints according to Gehad Auda, which ranged from Islamism to Nasserism.¹²⁵ The demands of the party membership at this time were quite simple. In return for supporting the regime, those in rural Egypt wished to be left alone, while those in the country's urban area wished sought to move up the employment ladder (Kandil, 2012a: 200). Consequently, the NDP was more a 'grouping of individuals willing to be linked to the state in order to get privileges from it than a group really founded on clear principles and a clearly defined ideology' (Collombier, 2007: 97). The party was a forum that allowed its disparate membership to come together to realise their interests and resolve potential conflicts without destabilising the ruling coalition (Brownlee, 2007). Party membership was thus a means to an end. Auda contends that this time marked the first phase of the NDP's history under Mubarak, during which the party leadership upheld the importance of regime maintenance:

This phase was championed by the likes of Safwat Sherif and Kamal al-Shazli. It was very traditional and ordered. It was all about preservation. It was about preserving our status as the dominant party in Egypt. There were parameters and orders to party membership. We weren't allowed [to] undertake any activities that would destabilise our hold on power.¹²⁶

The NDP was not ideologically driven. Its members simply sought to realise their interests. The party leadership was similar, for the most part, but had developed an ideological flexibility supportive of regime maintenance. To be exact, party leadership favoured whatever ideological outlook Mubarak favoured:

The NDP did not have a fixed ideology. It would constantly change for the needs of the regime. Whatever ideology Mubarak favoured became the NDP's ideology . . . And because the NDP was so long-lived, after it all it started with Sadat, the party has gone through a number of ideologies. Did Sadat's cabinets adopt the same policies as Mubarak's cabinets? No, they did not. They embraced change to stay in power. The NDP is simply a party that's sole purpose is to stay in power; it doesn't have a specific policy framework or guiding vision.¹²⁷

The NDP's ideologically malleability allowed it to respond and adapt to whatever political climate it found itself in. This greatly benefitted Mubarak who was able to promote those who best served regime stability when they were needed:

Mubarak decided the rules of the game when it came to party appointments and the winner depended on the merits of the case in front of him. What do I mean by that?

¹²⁵ Interview with Gehad Auda.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Personal Interview with Hateem Zayed, Researcher at the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights, Cairo, February 11 2014.

Well, people came into the party from a variety of backgrounds and their backgrounds reflected their expertise. For example, if national security was an issue Mubarak would look to someone with an expertise in that area. Their expertise in that area would carry a lot of weight and they would be listened to while they were needed. The same went for other policy areas.¹²⁸

That party-members were elevated to the leadership based on what best served regime stability reflected a concern with political need and a candidate's capacity to support the regime rather than ideological congruence (Abdelnasser, 2004: 131-132). The party's leadership at this time was drawn from the state sector. These individuals had entered politics after time in the military, the security services or government ministries (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 38), and consequently had developed a range of expertise beneficial to Mubarak. Youssef Wali's rise is typical of this phenomenon. Wali rose from the position of bureaucrat in the Ministry of Agriculture to that of Minister of Agriculture and NDP Secretary-General. Wali's promotion occurred, not only because of his agricultural expertise, but also because of his close ties to wealthy businessmen with agricultural interests, who constituted a potent wing within the NDP (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 25).

Although the NDP's ideological malleability provided a measure of regime stability, it also created a depoliticised party that could not sufficiently assert itself against Mubarak when its interests were threatened (Stacher, 2012: 99). First, if the political climate facilitated the promotion of certain individuals it also saw others demoted. The party's leadership positions were nominally decided by internal elections but in actuality, appointments from above and purges played a more decisive role (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 38). As chairman of the NDP, Mubarak had the power to freely dismiss party leaders and co-opt others into their positions. Mubarak's rationale for leadership appointments was pragmatic and reflective of a candidate's ability to help with political need rather than ideological congruency.

Second, the party's ability to shape political decision-making was limited. Although many in the party produced policy documents, Gehad Auda notes that the party's leadership often altered these documents before they were considered by the cabinet.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the party's ability to shape legislation in parliament was limited by the strength of the executive, which was able to push through its policy agenda without parliamentary approval (Blaydes, 2011: 126-127).

¹²⁸ Interview with Gehad Auda.

¹²⁹ Interview with Gehad Auda.

And third, the NDP's ideological malleability saw it unable to distinguish itself from the other component parts of the ruling coalition. This proved damaging to the party during the 2000 parliamentary elections when it saw only 172 of its 444 nominated candidates elected in a managed contest (Stacher, 2012: 100). This prompted the party leadership (Sherif, Wali and al-Shazli) to allow 'NDP Independents' back into the party fold. These independents were party members who were not nominated by internal mechanism that had chosen to run against the leadership's wishes (Brownlee, 2007: 136-137). The party's poor performance gave rise to calls for party reform and restructuring, which provided an opportunity for the newly emergent Gamal and his personalist cadre to enter the ruling coalition. This marked the beginnings of the party's second phase and a renewed interest in policy formulation that was favourable to economic liberalisation.¹³⁰ The NDP was initially highly integrated within Mubarak's ruling coalition but its ideological adaptability had seen it unable to assert itself against the President. More pertinently, the party's electoral performance in 2000 set in motion a series of events that would see the single-party cadre marginalised within the ruling coalition.

6.3.2 The Personalist Cadre (1): The Rise of the NDP New Guard

The aftermath of the 2000 electoral debacle provided an opportunity for the newly emergent Gamal to raise his political profile. Gamal had returned to Cairo in 1995 after working as an investment banker in London and initially focused his attention on youth, technology and development projects after being appointed to the NDP general secretariat by his father. This was in addition to his business activities with his firm, Medinvest Associates, which facilitated his connections with the business community and a number of pro-business academics (Henry and Sringborg, 2010: 169). Gamal's emergence in 2000 gave rise to the idea of an inherited succession in Egypt, although this idea seemed implausible to many; this seemed to be the case when the Old Guard rebuffed Gamal's initial efforts to reform the party (Stacher, 2012: 101).

The NDP's 2002 party conference marked the beginning of the New Guard's capture of the party and the Old Guard's gradual phasing out. The conference saw a number of organisational changes made to the party's structure that provided a framework for Gamal to co-opt the party's leadership. Internal elections saw a number of businessmen allied to Gamal elected to the party's general secretariat and the six thousand delegates at the conference vote decisively in favour of his platform, which

¹³⁰ Ibid.

emphasised technocratic reform and economic liberalisation (Brownlee, 2007: 147). The most important change to the party's structure saw the creation of the Policies Secretariat (PS). The PS was chaired by Gamal and its membership was drawn from members of the New Guard who had close ties to the Mubarak family (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 34). The secretariat's nine members were committed to economic liberalisation, and the benefits they could extract from the process:

They used their position to enrich themselves and would preach about the benefits of higher growth. At the same time that they were using their position [within the PS] to enrich themselves . . . [t]hey were presiding over a healthcare and education crisis. This didn't matter to them however; they lived in their world and didn't see how others lived.¹³¹

Mona El-Ghobashy (2005) agrees with this sentiment and further notes that the changes the PS implemented did not signal an opening up of this system:

The younger representatives of Egypt's ruling class may be technologically savvy, US-educated, and American-accented, and properly deferential to private sector dominance and the 'laws of the market,' but when it comes to institutionalizing binding consultation of citizens or protecting citizens from arbitrary state power, their silence is palpable. Egypt's circulation of elites portends an economic transformation – but not a political one.

The backgrounds of the PS's membership further reflected Gamal's favourable view of economic liberalisation and its members were not simply 'yes men'. Each was 'accomplished in their own right', and had either established themselves in academia, the public sector, or the private sector (Cook, 2012: 171). The members of the PS were known for their pro-business stance and close ties to Gamal Mubarak, as Table 6.1 details.

Table 6.1 The NDP Policies Secretariat, 2002-2011¹³²

PS Member	Title	Notes
Gamal Mubarak	Secretary-General for Policies Secretariat	Businessman and President's Son.
Ahmed Ezz	Secretary-General for Membership and Policies Secretariat Member	Owner of Ezz Steel, Egypt's largest steel company, and member of People's Assembly. Close friend of Gamal Mubarak.
Dr. Hatem al-Karawashi	Member	Economic Advisor to the

¹³¹ Personal Interview with Nateem Yasser, Researcher at The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Cairo, February 11 2014.

¹³² From Al-Din Arafat (2011: 206-208).

PS Member	Title	Notes
Hossam Badrawi	Member	Prime Minister. Secretary for Public Business Sector.
Dr. Aliah al-Mahdi	Member	University Professor.
Dr. Lobnah 'Abd al-Latif	Member	University Professor.
Mohmed Kamal	Secretary for Training and Political Indoctrination and Policies Secretariat Member	University Professor and close friend of Gamal Mubarak. Educated at Johns Hopkins University. Gamal's political <i>consigliere</i> .
Mahmoud Mohi al-Din	Member	Minister of Investment (2004-2010) and member of NDP general-Secretariat. Close friend of Gamal Mubarak. Joined the World Bank as Managing Director in 2010.
Youssef Boutros Ghali	Member	Minister of Finance (2004-2011) and member of NDP General-Secretariat. Close friend of Gamal Mubarak.
Mohamed Mahmoud al-Dakrouri	Member	Legal Advisor to President Mubarak and NDP Secretary for Legal Affairs. He replaced al-Karawashi as a member in 2006.
Hassen al-Syyiad 'Abd Alah	Member	He replaced Dr. Lobnah 'Abd al-Latif in 2006.

The creation of the PS institutionalised a power base from which Gamal and those around him could realise their political and economic interests. The establishment of the PS was, according to Hatem Zayed, the beginning of a process that sought to transform the NDP into a vehicle designed to support a potential Gamal succession to the presidency.¹³³ Leaked US diplomatic cables also support this contention. The, then, Ambassador Ricciardonne wrote:

With no military background to draw on as his power base (the army being the traditional source of Egypt's presidents), Gamal appears to be increasingly turning to the NDP machinery . . . as the legitimizing vehicle for his presidential aspirations.¹³⁴

The conference also saw the Old Guard increasingly marginalised at the expense of the ascendant New Guard (Stacher, 2012: 102-103). Kamal al-Shazli's control of party membership was split with Ahmed Ezz, an ally of Gamal, while his control of the

¹³³ Interview with Hatem Zayed.

¹³⁴ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, '*Gamal Mubarak: Concentrating on Ruling Party as his Vehicle to the Presidency*', October 18 2007, 07CAIRO3080_a. Available at: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07CAIRO3080_a.html [Accessed November 3 2014]

party's budget was now shared with another member of the New Guard, Zakaraya Azmi, Mubarak's Chief of Staff. Safwat Sherif was promoted to the position of NDP Secretary-General at the expense of the demoted Youssef Wali, who was permitted to remain as Agriculture Minister. Compounding their marginalisation were the attacks the Old Guard suffered prior to the conference when members of their patronage networks were indicted on corruption charges. These arrests were undertaken in order to damage the reputations of the Old Guard according to Schemm (2002). The question of who authorised the indictments was never successfully answered although it was suspected that Mubarak gave his tacit approval as Khalil (2002) asserts that '[a]ll three have been affected in recent months by corruption charges against close associates – fuelling speculation that the trio was being softened up to ease the ascension of new blood to the party's leadership'. The 2002 NDP marked the start of a process that served to ease out the party's Old Guard in favour of the New Guard (Brownlee, 2008: 46), which saw the interests of the personalist cadre privileged over those in the single-party cadre.

Although weakened, the Old Guard nevertheless sought to check the New Guard's ascent by withholding advice and support when it came to public policy. Hossam Badrawi, a member of the PS, advocated the privatisation of the Egyptian healthcare system. While this idea was plausible, given the healthcare system's sorry state, it was also unpopular in a country with poor infrastructure and gross inequality. The Old Guard were aware of this and rather than advise Badrawi to present his ideas in more acceptable terms, they simply let him present his ideas to the public, which turned public opinion against the idea (Stacher, 2012: 104). In spite of this, the Old Guard's ability to check the New Guard's ascent was limited. Cognisant of their reliance on Mubarak, the Old Guard refused to attack Gamal personally, which left them vulnerable to attacks from the New Guard (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 58). Moreover, much of the New Guard's opposition was 'just political theatre' according to Wael Nawara.¹³⁵ Stacher's (2012: 104) research suggests the same and he quotes Wali's nephew, who noticed a highly predictable pattern in the interactions between the Old Guard and the New Guard:

During meetings when Gamal suggests a measure such as repealing state-security courts, most of the top elites explained that his proposals were not practical during discussion but when Gamal persisted and the committee voted, everyone is in favour. Not a single Gamal-introduced initiative has been rejected by the higher party members.

¹³⁵ Personal Interview with Wael Nawara, journalist at Al-Monitor and co-founder of the Al-Dostour Party and National Association for Change. Cairo, February 10, 2014.

The rise of the New Guard afforded Mubarak the opportunity to divest himself of his duties in the soft sector, which became the New Guard's preserve. While initially sceptical of economic liberalisation Mubarak had come to embrace it during his last decade in power. In a Labour Day speech, Mubarak extolled the virtues of economic liberalisation and privatisation because it proved successful in those developing countries Egypt wished to emulate (King, 2009: 122). There was also an element of political pragmatism in the speech because Mubarak acknowledged that global economic trends favoured economic liberalisation, which made debating the issue somewhat moot if Egypt hoped to attract private investment and create jobs. Mubarak's change in attitude also signalled his backing for the New Guard, which was formally codified during a cabinet reshuffle in 2004. The cabinet reshuffle demonstrated the influence the New Guard had accrued within the ruling coalition as it contained a number of Gamal's allies. The newly appointed Prime Minister, Ahmed Nazif, was Gamal's choice (el-Din, 2011) and two members of the PS were both promoted to full cabinet rank; Youssef Boutros Ghali became Minister for Finance and Mahmoud Mohi al-Din became Minister for Investment. While they were the only high profile members of the PS to be named to the cabinet, other members of the New Guard also assumed cabinet posts (Stacher, 2012: 105). The strongest indication of the New Guard's strength was Sherif and Wali's dismissal from the cabinet. Although he was not named to the cabinet, Gamal's position as de facto head of the soft sector saw him given the power to summon all cabinet ministers involved in domestic policymaking, including the Prime Minister, to testify before the PS and be held accountable for their actions (al-Sayyid, 2013: 21).

There were further changes to the NDP's structures in 2007. A Higher Committee was created within the party from which its next presidential candidate would be chosen. Gamal was amongst this committee's membership as were other members of the New Guard. This change coincided with a change to the Egyptian constitution that mandated presidential candidates be a member of that party's higher committee for at least a year.¹³⁶ The summer of 2007 saw Gamal's public profile increase. He married the daughter of one of Egypt's wealthiest businessmen (Brownlee, 2008: 50) and started to take his father's place at key meetings as Mubarak began to suffer health problems. This marked the beginning of a media campaign designed to gain tacit support for succession. The Egyptian academic Galal Amin (2013: 72) sums up media campaign

¹³⁶ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, *'The National Democratic Party's General Conference: Much Ado About Not Much'*, November 8 2007, 07CAIRO3228_a. Available at: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07CAIRO3228_a.html [Accessed November 3 2014]

neatly by stating that every day of the last five years of the Mubarak regime saw ‘a new report, a new photograph, or a new visit that could only be intended to make it easier for the president’s son to take the place of his father’. The US embassy also noted that there was a growing consensus within Egypt that Gamal was poised to succeed his father:

There is an increased grudging acceptance about the ‘inevitability’ of his succeeding his father, both among Cairo’s political cognoscenti, as well as from the proverbial ‘man on the street’. Contacts who two years ago were telling us Gamal is ‘not the right guy’ are now opining, ‘he is not the right guy, but there is nothing we can do about it’.¹³⁷

Despite Gamal’s position as heir apparent, Mubarak was wary of the backlash a succession would engender. He categorically ruled out the idea of a succession stating that: ‘We [Egypt] are not a monarchy. We are the Republic of Egypt . . . We are not Syria and Gamal Mubarak will not be the next president of Egypt’ (Remnick, 2004). Nonetheless, the available evidence indicates Gamal was poised to succeed his father despite the lack of consensus on the issue within the ruling coalition. According to Yasser:

There wasn’t a consensus on Gamal Mubarak within the regime. The Old Guard, the Generals and the established NDP leadership such as Safwat Sherif, they were not entirely supportive of him. But Gamal also had allies in the New Guard; those people who supported him and shared his vision of neoliberalism.¹³⁸

While there was an apparent lack of consensus on a potential Gamal succession, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that moves were made to strengthen his position within the Egyptian system. These moves were part of a regional trend that saw fathers position their sons as presidential successors (see Sadiki, 2010). These measures included establishing a political platform and public profile for Gamal that would allow him to establish himself with the Egyptian people.

The New Guard were nevertheless highly integrated within the ruling coalition. This was made possible by Mubarak’s delegation of domestic policymaking to Gamal. These ties were initially facilitated by the fact that Gamal was the President’s son but the former’s co-optation of the NDP’s leadership structures cemented his position. The New Guard further exhibited a high degree of homogeneity with Mubarak who had come to embrace economic liberalisation. The New Guard were bound to Mubarak’s fortunes because of their ties to Gamal, which permitted them to enter the ruling

¹³⁷ See, *Gamal Mubarak: Concentrating on Ruling Party*.

¹³⁸ Interview with Nateem Yasser.

coalition. Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind the New Guard did display a mix of technical knowledge and professional experience that were beneficial to the realisation of their economic interests.

6.3.3 The Personalist Cadre (2): The Ministry of the Interior

Under Mubarak, the MOI's primary mission was the preservation of the regime rather than the protection and provision of security for Egyptian citizens (Brumberg and Sallam, 2012: 7). Much like its Tunisian counterpart, there is a lot of ambiguity regarding the inner workings of Egypt's MOI and knowledge of its internal workings, organisation and leadership are limited (Tadros, 2011: 81). The evidence presented here relies mainly on secondary data and, similar to the discussion of the Tunisian MOI, does not presume to offer a fully formed picture of the MOI's organisational structure or institutional behaviour. However, the available evidence indicates the MOI's willingness to use repressive measures to protect the Mubarak regime, which shows its personalist tendencies.

The ministry's forces were centred in two distinct institutions, the Central Security Forces (CSF) and the State Security Investigations Services (SSIS) (Kandil, 2011: 33). The CSF was a paramilitary police force tasked with maintaining order and protecting strategic sites such as ministries, parliament and foreign embassies. The CSF were also responsible for riot control and counterterrorism, activities that were more often than not directed against opponents of the regime. The regime's opponents were not only deemed to be those politically opposed to the regime but ordinary citizens who were arbitrarily arrested under the guise of crime prevention (Brumberg and Sallam, 2012: 7). Police violence became endemic under the CSF and Amnesty International (2010) noted that 'torture and other ill-treatment of detainees was systematic in police stations'. Such was the scale of police violence the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (2009) reported that between December 1993 and 2008 there were 460 reported torture cases in Egypt, of which 167 resulted in death. The torture applied by the CSF was an effective method of maintaining political acquiescence such that many detainees confessed to crimes they did not commit. Indeed, it was often reported that those accused of murder often confessed in order to avoid torture only to discover that the alleged 'victim' was still alive (Kandil, 2012a: 196).

If the CSF was the boot of the MOI, the SSIS was its head. The SSIS had evolved to become a parallel state within Egypt according to some (Tadros, 2011: 80). Its primary mission was the preservation of the Mubarak regime, which it undertook

through a combination of repression and intelligence gathering. The SSIS governed the activities of all non-governmental organisations operating in Egypt's political and civil arenas and acquired a political supremacy over all other branches of the state. The SSIS reported directly to Mubarak and, with the exception of the Ministry of Defence, scrutinised and gathered information on cabinet members, government ministries, members of parliament, the police forces, local and municipal government, and members of editorial boards (Kandil, 2012a: 197). The main targets of the SSIS were Egypt's Islamist movements, both violent and non-violent, but those targeted expanded to include any dissenting voices, regardless of their political ideology (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

Given the qualitative differences in their mission, the CSF and SSIS relied on different recruitment patterns. The CSF primarily relied on conscripts that provided an inexpensive source of repression. However, recruitment standards improved in the wake of CSF riots in 1986.¹³⁹ The Islamist insurgency that began in Upper Egypt in the 1990s not only saw an improvement in the CSF's budgetary resources but its political prestige (Soliman, 2011: 65). The CSF became Mubarak's symbolic shield against terrorism and Mubarak's speeches at the time referenced the heroic sacrifices made by the CSF (Brand, 2014: 104-105), while simultaneously turning a blind eye to the human rights abuses committed by the institution at this time (Kepel, 2008a: 294). The SSIS on the other hand had stringent recruitment criteria. Those who joined tended to be from Egypt's well-to-do classes and were often highly educated, holding Masters degrees and above (Tadros, 2012: 64). The regime supplemented their education with further training in Europe and the United States. They were also better remunerated than their colleagues in the CSF. The background of those in the SSIS fostered an institutional culture that incentivised and rewarded loyalty to the regime, as promotion became linked with the identification, subversion and elimination of threats to the regime.

The MOI was bound to the fortunes of the regime in two distinct ways. First, the country's emergency laws that sanctioned the ministry's actions made it unaccountable to the Egyptian public (Kandil, 2012a: 199). Second, despite the MOI recruiting from a diverse array of social backgrounds to staff the CSF and SSIS both shared a common trait: their dependence on Mubarak to realise their interests. While the MOI had autonomy in determining the scope of its activities, i.e. it could set the parameters of how it could accomplish its mission, as an institution it was bound to the political

¹³⁹ The forces of the CSF rioted in 1986 because of low pay, low living standards and years of abuse at the hands of senior officers. Approximately 17,000 conscripts rioted on February 25th before the military restored order (see Kandil, 2012a: 178-179).

interests of the Mubarak regime. The MOI was nothing more than the repressive arm of the political apparatus according to Hatem Zayed:

The Ministry of the Interior falls directly under the authority of the cabinet so they're bound to follow whoever is in charge of the cabinet. While this should be the Prime Minister it was Mubarak in reality. The Ministry just followed his orders. This was different to the military, which had an institutional framework that defined its mission. The Interior Ministry on the other hand was just a political tool.¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, Mubarak and the MOI were ideological bedfellows, as the former came to share the Ministry's worldview regarding domestic security. Although Nasser and Sadat, who was assassinated by elements of the military (Sirrs, 2010: 144), considered domestic security important neither had demonstrated 'Mubarak's passion for security. Springborg (1989: 27) writes that Mubarak's passion for security '[was] obtrusive, [and] possibly obsessive'. His security strategy was also unorthodox. Rather than target specific groups, society, in its entirety, was targeted and kept off balance through a dizzying pattern of detention, release and rendition. The security services struck randomly and without explanation. Mubarak's preoccupation with his own safety did not consider the effects it had on others. Reflecting on his time in Cairo, Springborg (1989: 27) recalls:

[t]he sprawling security net that spreads out from his [Mubarak's] Heliopolis villa . . . far exceeds any previous efforts to protect presidents. His phalanx of bodyguards is truly formidable . . . The conveniences and liberties of normal citizens are, in comparison to presidential security precautions, of no concern. Whole city quarters are blocked off in advance of presidential movements.

Mubarak's view of regime security aligned with that of the MOI, which employed uninhibited repression against those it deemed a threat to the regime. Accordingly, the political fortunes of the MOI rose, and fell, with those of the regime's political actors as it was highly integrated within the ruling coalition. The MOI's fortunes depended on retaining Mubarak's favour but the Ministry had also forged closer ties with the PS. The MOI effectively positioned itself, with Mubarak's blessing, as a bulwark against the military's opposition to Gamal's presumed succession (Frisch, 2013: 183), as the MOI had cultivated ties with the PS through Interior Minister al-Adly (Omar, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Hatem Zayed.

6.3.4 The Military Cadre: The Impotency of the Generals

The nature of the military cadre's involvement in political life changed over time in Egypt. Military involvement under Nasser was corporate in nature; officers occupied a number of senior government posts and managed public-sector enterprises (Brumberg and Sallam, 2012: 3). Defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War saw the military cadre withdraw from day-to-day government and embrace professionalization with the intent to improve combat performance (Kandil, 2012a: 189). This cadre's withdrawal from political life was accelerated under Sadat who declared that the 1973 October War would be Egypt's last. The military cadre's involvement within the ruling coalition became personal in nature as Sadat expanded its primary mission of national defence to include supporting economic development, which continued under Mubarak (Kechichian and Nazimek, 1997). To facilitate this mission, Sadat established The National Services Projects Organisation (NSPO), with the intent of making the military self-sufficient (Kandil, 2011: 30). The establishment of the NSPO saw the military cadre establish an economic empire. Despite being provided with many privileges, the military encountered a number of issues that belied its ability to realise its interests particularly when we accept the premise that:

The end for which a soldier is recruited, clothed, armed and trained, the whole object of his sleeping, eating, drinking and marching is simply that he should fight (Howard, 1983: 36).

The military's ability to realise its interests, and, in particular, to provide for national defence, was hampered by its poor calibre of recruits and political interference in the formulation of strategic doctrine.

The Egyptian military is largely conscript-based and its reliance on conscripts had seen it suffer from 'serious manpower quality, readiness and sustainability problems' under Mubarak (Cordesman, 2006: 159). Because of the military's limited mandate the problem of conscript quality was not an urgent issue. The quality of military conscripts had predated Mubarak and the issue was only addressed seriously during the October War when the military was allowed to enlist university graduates (Kandil, 2012b: 185). The War's conclusion saw the majority of the country's 1.2 million battle-tested conscripts demobilised. The regime ignored the role that university graduates played in improving the military's performance and the conscription formula was revised so that university graduates would serve less than a year leaving the military burdened with illiterate conscripts once again (Barnet, 1992).

This decision had a number of complications for the military's ability to realise its interests. First, conscripts were only perceived to be able to handle menial duties so received almost no training, which in turn affected the military's ability to absorb advanced training and weaponry (Cordesman, 2006: 159). Second, Egypt's poor education system saw the innovative and technical skills of conscripts deteriorate (De Atkine, 1999: 15). And third, this affected the problem of specialisation. An effective military requires qualified technicians but the regime's provision of free university education dissuaded many Egyptians from taking up vocational education (De Atkine, 1999: 15). The regime's suspicion of political and security studies – reflected by the limited provision of fully-fledged political science programs – further deprived the military of the services of 'defence intellectuals', who in an open society would defend military interests and contribute to the formulation of strategic doctrine. As Kandil (2012a: 192) puts it:

[T]he corruption and incompetence of the regime produced a dysfunctional education system that could hardly provide the military with the required man power, and its authoritarian bias against allowing educated citizens to receive adequate military training (lest they turn against the government) or specialize in subjects related to military strategy forestalled the upgrading of the army.

The military's general command struggled for the right to offer special rewards to persuade qualified conscripts to re-enlist. The regime nonetheless turned this down on the pretext that no national emergency existed to justify increased military spending (Barnet, 1992: 143-144). Recruiters expressed such frustration at their inability to attract members of the urban elite that the military recruiters went abroad to attract members of Egypt's expatriate community, because the 'local educational system was not yielding the quality of soldiers the armed forces thought necessary', but to no avail (Frisch, 2001: 5-6). The social situation created by the regime led to the unsettling fact that a considerable part of the military's order of battle was now composed of 'relatively low-grade and poorly-equipped units, many of which would require substantial fill-in with reservists – almost all of which would require several months of training to be effective'. The Egyptian armed forces thus became static, assuming the status of a 'garrison army' (Cordesman, 2006: 162).

The military also had to contend with interference in its formulation of strategic doctrine, as Mubarak marginalised those officers who employed innovative strategies and were popular inside and outside of the military (Kandil, 2012b: 186). This marginalisation occurred in two ways. First, Mubarak directly approved all promotions

over the rank of corporal (Droz-Vincent, 1999: 18), which allowed him to manage officer rotation so that officers displaying innovative tendencies were rotated throughout the military cadre until their retirement. Second, Mubarak put in place a rigid war doctrine overseen by a few trusted generals. This over-centralised command-and-control structure led to the ‘total stultification of the initiative of junior officers – precisely the cadre on whose wits mobile warfare depends’ (Insight Team, 1974: 341; Boyne, 2002: 185). US officers in the region also observed that ‘a sergeant first class in the U.S. Army has as much authority as a colonel in an Arab army’ (1999: 17). The Egyptian military was certainly aware of its pervasive weaknesses. Its chief military historians reviewed the army’s battle performance and concluded that the military ‘was poor at executing operations that relied on offensive manoeuvre, despite its inherent advantages on the battlefield’ (Brooks, 2008: 130-131; Hammad, 2002). And, the officer corps was also aware that noteworthy performance and popularity amongst the troops jeopardised their careers. The officer corps opined that the lack of charismatic leadership in the military contributed to its impotency:

Since Abu Ghazallah, a senior AUC political science professor noted, the regime has not allowed any charismatic figures to reach senior ranks. ‘(Defence Minister) Tantawi looks like a bureaucrat’ he joked. The AUC professor described the mid-level officer corps as generally disgruntled, and said that one can hear mid-level officers at MOD clubs around Cairo openly expressing disdain for Tantawi. These officers refer to Tantawi as ‘Mubarak’s poodle’, he said, and complain that ‘this incompetent Defence Minister’ who reached his position only because of unwavering loyalty to Mubarak is running the military into the ground’.¹⁴¹

Mubarak would not restore charismatic leadership to the military, who relied on the MOI to monitor officers who ‘stood out’ and ensure their exit from the military (Kandil, 2012b: 187). This gave rise to the to the joke that during the last two decades of Mubarak’s presidency ‘the most popular military officer . . . in Egypt [was] Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken’ (Shatz, 2010: 6).

The military had also become isolated within the ruling coalition. Mubarak did not have much in common with the officers who comprised the SCAF during his final decade in power. With the exception of Defence Minister Tantawi, the majority of the officers in the SCAF were approximately twenty years younger than Mubarak. Nor had they fought a war, unlike Mubarak and Tantawi, who were part of the ‘October Generation’ and served in the 1973 war against Israel (Albrecht, 2015: 44). This

¹⁴¹ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, ‘*Academics See Military in Decline, But Retaining String Influence*’, September 23, 2008, 08CAIRO2091_a. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08CAIRO2091_a.html [Accessed 4 November 2014]

political isolation was compounded by Mubarak's regular rotation of officers, which prevented him from forming or maintaining personal bonds. Similar to his father Gamal had not made an effort to cultivate relations with the officer corps or designate a future role for them if he was to succeed his father. Despite being isolated, the military was still loyal to Mubarak because of his military service but this loyalty did not extend to the next generation of the Mubarak family according to Nawara:

The military had respect for Mubarak himself. He was their commander-in-chief and he fought in the 1973 war, and, he had had a legitimate mandate from the people from some time. As for Gamal, the way him and his friends paraded themselves was embarrassing to everyone in Egypt. Most Egyptians felt distaste for him and the military was the same. I think most people in the military were asking, 'Who is this guy? Why should we support him?'¹⁴²

The military's distaste for Gamal was also a result of different social backgrounds. The majority of the officer corps was recruited from among society's lower middle class while Gamal, and the PS by extension, were the *nouveau riche* who lived in gated communities that were far removed from the everyday concerns of the Egyptian people (Albrecht, 2015: 48). The presumed succession of Gamal was quite disheartening for the officer corps. The military had taken power in 1952 in the name of the people and it had pursued developmental policies for the benefit of the lower and middle classes but under Mubarak it was called to support a regime that had come to identify itself with crony capitalism (Kandil, 2012a: 188). Gamal's ascent had worried Tantawi and one MP informed the US embassy that:

Tantawi had commented to him in a recent private meeting that, 'he has had it "up to here" with Gamal and his cronies, and the tremendous corruption they are facilitating'. 'Tantawi told me he is having trouble sleeping at night' he continued, 'and that he cannot stand what has happened to the country, and what may yet happen to the country'.¹⁴³

Tantawi's reaction was expected according to Goldstone (2011: 12), who asserted that the military cadre 'fiercely resented Gamal Mubarak . . . [who] preferred to build his influence through business and political cronies rather than through the military, and those connected to him gained huge profits from government monopolies and deals with foreign investors'. Tantawi had also voiced his concerns to Mubarak and argued that it would be unwise to pit the military against the people in order to make them accept an

¹⁴² Interview with Wael Nawara.

¹⁴³ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, 'Prominent Independent MP on Presidential Succession', April 4 2007, 07CAIRO974_a Available at: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07CAIRO974_a.html [Accessed 4 November 2014]

unpopular figure as President (Heikal, 2012: 306). The New Guard paid no heed to Tantawi's concerns and instead sought to remind the Defence Minister that he Mubarak could replace him when he so chose (Heikal, 2012: 305). However, their concerns over succession had led the military cadre to draw up their own list of preferred candidates:

Before Mubarak stepped down there were a number of possible successors the military would have ratified. One of them was Amr Moussa (the former Foreign Minister), another was Ahmed Shafiq (the Minister for Aviation), and there was also Omar Suleiman. These were three faces the military could accept because they had the necessary military background to appease the officers but this was before the uprising however.¹⁴⁴

Of these candidates, Suleiman seemed the most likely competitor to Gamal's aspirations because of his knowledge of Egypt's strategic interests. The military cadre was not highly integrated within the ruling coalition. It was challenged by a well-resourced MOI and its ability to provide for Egypt's national defence was compromised by recruitment issues and political interference. More damaging for the military was the presumed succession of Gamal, a situation the military was opposed to because of the likelihood that it would marginalise their interests further.

6.4 The Distribution of Material Resources in Mubarak's Egypt

Economic policy under Mubarak was about more than economic efficiency and improving growth rates; it was also about choosing between winners and losers (King, 2009: 117). The distribution of material resources within Mubarak's ruling coalition confirms this point as the personalist cadre's increased political prominence saw it amass significant material resources at the expense of the single-party and military cadres. This was the result of two developments. First, the New Guard's control of policymaking allowed its members to co-opt the economic liberalisation process for their own ends. Second, the liberalisation of the economy hurt the interests of the military cadre, despite its institutional privileges. The military's diminishing material position contrasted with that of the MOI, which had parlayed its political prestige into material gains.

Economic liberalisation was a response to the economic crisis that had bedevilled Egypt during the 1980s. The crisis had been characterised by declining oil revenues, reduced income from the Suez Canal, shrinking remittances from Egyptians abroad and a high level of public spending, which amounted to 55 per cent of GDP (Joya, 2011:

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Wael Nawara.

370; Soliman, 2012: 43). While reducing public expenditure provided the regime with a potential exit from its fiscal crisis, it also represented a political tinderbox because a large swathe of the population was dependent on subsidies (Soliman, 2011: 42-44). With little to gain from reducing public expenditure, Egypt's fiscal position worsened and the country had become an international mendicant by 1990 (Lofgren, 1993). The Gulf War proved fortunate for Mubarak. In return for joining the anti-Saddam coalition and implementing a structural adjustment program jointly formulated by the World Bank and the IMF, creditor nations agreed to cancel half of Egypt's foreign debt. Mubarak also leveraged Egypt's strategic position to ensure that the programme was not as stringent as those imposed on other countries, as it did not result in the layoff of public employees or cuts in public subsidies (Soliman, 2012: 45). The implementation of structural reform had not only seen a reduction in inflation and the deficit but an increase in public spending because of increased revenues. In addition to the benefits of participating in the anti-Iraq coalition, the regime reduced the value of the Egyptian pound (Soliman, 2011: 47). This devaluation increased the value of oil exports and Suez Canal fees when exchanged into Egyptian pounds (LE). A general sales tax increase also brought in several additional billion pounds. These sources contributed to increased revenues and a sharp increase in public spending between 1990 and 1992, as Table 6.2 indicates.

Table 6.2 Egypt, Public Expenditure (as % of GDP) 1990-1997¹⁴⁵

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Egypt	24.02	27.62	34.94	31.48	31	28.12	26.94	24.32

Rentier revenues nonetheless declined after 1992 and the effects of structural adjustment became an increasingly common feature of the Egyptian economy, as it was reoriented towards economic liberalisation. Progressive income taxes were cancelled, stocks and bonds were exempt from tax, corporation tax was halved, and more than two hundred state-sector firms were privatised during this time (Marfleet, 2009: 17; el-Naggar, 2009: 38), including the electrical service, waste treatment, and the road and subway systems (Dennis, 2006:58).

¹⁴⁵ See, The World Bank. World Development Indicators, Expense (% of GDP). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.XPN.TOTL.GD.ZS> [Accessed September 15 2015]

6.4.1 The Single-Party Cadre: The Benefits of Office

Despite the lack of meaningful opportunities to shape legislation, membership of the People's Assembly did hold advantages, as winning a parliamentary seat offered a range of opportunities for successful candidates. For example, el-Karanshawy (1997: 9) recounts the story of how an ambitious NDP activist was able to win office and over time become a millionaire businessman. More pertinently, Hinnebusch (1988: 180) finds that a parliamentary seat may be 'seen as a base from which to cultivate strategic connections in the power elite and to build or consolidate roles as brokers and patrons in their constituencies' (1988: 180). As these authors suggest, election to the parliament offers an opportunity to improve one's financial circumstances.

The financial benefits of membership in the People's Assembly arise from the privileged access afforded to MPs. They can forge relationships with high-level bureaucrats and access privileged government information. For example, advanced knowledge of public land sales or state-sector privatisations gave MPs an advantage over others in the private sector, others who may have had an interest in these opportunities (Blaydes, 2011: 128). Typically, MPs use their position to access material patronage in one of three ways (Blaydes, 2011: 128). First, they charge fees for rights and permits that are then sold on to a third party for a profit. Second, MPs typically become partners in business ventures that profit from their privileged access to the state. And third, MPs can use the rights, permits and export subsidies they can access for their personal use or for a business that they wholly own. Access to privileges was not created equally however. The extent to which MPs could benefit depended upon their position in the party hierarchy. While MPs could certainly access material patronage, Wael Nawara claims it was the party leadership, whether the Old Guard or New Guard, who would first benefit before lesser members:

You could obtain special treatments at the state's expense. For instance, you could always obtain a building permit for where you weren't supposed to build. So this corruption, the little favours, would trickle down from the [NDP] leadership. They kept the big projects for themselves. Someone like Ahmed Ezz would keep the privatisation of a steel plant for himself rather than let a lesser party member take it.¹⁴⁶

There were also other benefits to the job. MPs could access bank loans without the need to secure collateral (Blaydes, 2011: 128) and also enjoyed an advantage in securing government contracts. One fortunate MP was tasked with distributing

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Wael Nawara.

apartments in a public-housing project, which provided him with the opportunity to auction off the apartments and accrue a considerable economic dividend, while another was able to further his business interests by evading payment on taxes and customs duties (Singerman, 1995: 257-258). The material interest afforded to the single-party cadre bound its member's interests to the continued maintenance of the regime as the material benefits to which they had accustomed could only be realised through the NDP. Furthermore, the realisation of these interests also saw NDP members take a long-term view when it came to supporting the regime, as progression within the party also meant increased access to material resources, as Zayed notes:

The only way to benefit from the system is to become part of it. So, you join the NDP and start the upward climb. That influenced why people joined the party, they could access benefits through their connection to the state. Those in the party were also able to access benefits through non-corrupt means. Through being part of the NDP they accrued social capital that allowed for future opportunities. So, once you're in the NDP you're going to benefit somehow.¹⁴⁷

For all that, access to parliamentary benefits first required election to the People's Assembly. To accomplish this, the single-party cadre leveraged the state's role in the economy to put in place patronage networks in NDP members' constituencies. During the first twenty years of Mubarak's presidency NDP MPs served as intermediaries between their constituents and the state (Bin Nefisa and Arafat, 2005: 121). Their job was to distribute state money and public services, which took the form of government jobs, infrastructure projects such as building roads and schools. Even NDP stalwarts were not immune to this graft. Kamal al-Shazli's political longevity was not just the result of his close ties to Mubarak but his ability to deliver for his constituents. A newspaper report described some of the keys to his long-term success: 'He (al-Shazli) got my children good jobs and is always there for the people of this district'. As the *Al-Ahram* correspondent reporting on al-Shazli's campaign noted: 'It was a story repeated by a great many voters, who said they supported al-Shazly because of his ability to provide their communities with jobs and other services' (al-Ahram Weekly, 2005).

Nevertheless, the ascent of Gamal and the New Guard saw the benefits accrued to the single-party decline. The liberalisation of the Egyptian economy meant the Egyptian state withdrew from the provision of a range of public services, which impacted the ability of incumbent NDPs to access patronage for their constituents, but aided the rise of businessmen associated with Gamal running for parliament at the expense of single-

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Hatem Zayed.

party cadre incumbents (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 70-71). The New Guard's chosen parliamentary candidates were able to supplant long-tenured single-party cadre MPs because they could privately fund their election campaigns and constituency activities. Egypt's 2005 parliamentary elections were indicative of this development. Press reports suggested that the NDP candidate, Hisham Khalail, spent upwards of LE10 million on his campaign (Blaydes, 2011: 107). And, in the district of Manial, the campaign manager for the candidate, and wealthy hotelier, Shahinaz al-Naggar, disclosed that she personally provided monthly stipends of between LE20 and 50 for 500 families (Blaydes and el-Tarouty, 2008).

There were political reasons for the New Guard's co-optation of the business community: it provided a constituency that was amenable to a potential Gamal presidency as the heir apparent was a successful multibillionaire businessman himself (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 69). Perhaps more importantly, the business community was a willing recipient to the overtures to run for parliament within Gamal's reconfigured NDP because of the 'corruption/immunity' factor. Businessmen ran for parliament in order to acquire immunity that can be parlayed into greater fortunes and/or legal protections. While explicit accusations of corruption were made against numerous NDP members during the Mubarak era, very few were prosecuted because of the potential damage they could inflict on the regime (al-Din Arafat, 2011: 141). The chairman of the People's Assembly Economic Affairs committee, Mustafa Al-Said, admitted as much and that many in the business community joined the NDP because they believed party membership afforded them safe haven for corrupt activities (El-Din, 2006a). Thus, successful businessmen sought seats under the leadership of the New Guard to ensure the continued success of their financial ventures.

The loss of the single-party cadre's political prestige was compounded by its inability to realise its material interests following the emergence of the New Guard. The liberalisation of the Egyptian economy saw the state remove itself from a range of public services that changed the ability of MPs to access the state. With their ability to access state patronage curtailed single-party cadre MPs were gradually replaced by businessmen MPs allied with the New Guard who were able to use their private wealth to finance patronage networks within their constituencies. However, as Table 6.3 indicates, the state's withdrawal of the provision of public services did not see it withdraw from the economy. Indeed, the public sector's economic output is broadly similar to the mid-1990s, when the state actively provided public services.

Table 6.3 Egypt, Public Expenditure (as % of GDP) 2005-2010¹⁴⁸

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Egypt	27.38	32.76	29.33	30.31	30.07	28.86

This gives rise to the implication that the NDP was denied access to material resources, not because of economic liberalisation, but rather due to political machinations. As the next sub-section will indicate the state was still an active player in the Egyptian economy but its economic powers had been shifted to favour the material interests of the New Guard.

6.4.2 The Personalist Cadre (1): The Businessman's Cabinet and the Privatisation-Corruption Nexus

While privatisation was undertaken with the nominal intent of deepening economic liberalisation, it instead opened the door to corruption on a grand scale. Ministers and parliamentarians sold significant portions of the public sector for their own benefit while public investment in agriculture, education, health, and housing was decreased. The government instead advocated investment in export-oriented agriculture, gated communities for the rich, and the establishment of for-profit hospitals and universities (Denis, 2006: 60). A further troubling aspect of the state's privatisation programme was its rationale. The conventional account emphasises that Egypt could no longer cover the losses generated by the state-sector. This is in stark contrast to the reality of the situation according to Kandil. At the onset of structural adjustment, 260 of the 314 state-owned companies were profitable (Kandil, 2012a: 207). Furthermore, the profitable companies, which generated a net annual profit of \$550 million, more than compensated for the fifty-four companies that generated a loss of \$110 million. Privatisation had little to do with improving economic performance. Its sole aim was to turn the state into an active promoter of the interests of a chosen few, according to Mitchell (2002: 282):

The reform program did not remove the state from the market or eliminate profligate public subsidies. Its main impact was to concentrate public funds into different hands, and many fewer. The state turned resources away from agriculture and industry . . . It now subsidized financiers instead of factories, cement kilns instead of bakeries, speculators instead of schools.

¹⁴⁸ See, The World Bank. World Development Indicators, Expense (% of GDP). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.XPN.TOTL.GD.ZS> [Accessed September 15 2015]

Rather than foster structural economic change privatisation policy was utilised by rent-seeking elites within the personalist cadre in the pursuit of material gain. The state was reoriented toward supporting the personalist cadre centred on Gamal. In a similar manner to The Family in Tunisia, the Egyptian privatisation programme saw the emergence of either monopolies or near monopolies in an increasingly liberalised economy (Henry and Springborg, 2010: 164). The New Guard’s co-optation of the NDP’s leadership saw them dominate policymaking and many entered the cabinet formed by Amhed Nazif in 2004. Lauded as ‘modernisers’, those businessmen and technocrats given responsibility for the management of the soft sector claimed they would invigorate Egypt’s economy and reduce the bureaucracy’s stranglehold on economic activity (Lesch, 2012: 20). Despite being couched in the language of economic modernisation, these appointments were an opportunity for members of the New Guard to engage in massive corruption. Wael Nawara also contends that because of their command of specific economic portfolios ministers were able to manage the distribution of resources within specific sectors.¹⁴⁹ And, as Table 6.4 indicates, those appointed to cabinet presided over areas where they previously had established interests.

Table 6.4 The Egyptian Businessmen’s Cabinet¹⁵⁰

Cabinet Member	Cabinet Position	Notes
Ahmed Nazif	Prime Minister	
Youssef Boutros Ghali	Minister for Finance	Member of PS. Economic analyst with IMF between 1981 and 1986. Close friend of Gamal Mubarak.
Rachid Mohamed Rachid	Minister for Economics	Managed Unilever in MENA. Tasked with privatisation. NDP member associated with Gamal Mubarak.
Amhed al-Maghrabi	Minister for Housing	Co-owner of Mansour and Maghrabi Investment and Development (MMID). Close friend of Gamal Mubarak
Muhammad Mansour	Minister for Transport	Cousin of al-Maghrabi. Co-owner of MMID.
Zuhair Garana	Minister for Tourism	Cousin of al-Maghrabi; Owner of Garana Travel, one of Egypt’s largest travel companies.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Wael Nawara.

¹⁵⁰ See, Lesch (2012: 20-21).

Cabinet Member	Cabinet Position	Notes
Amin Abaza	Minister for Agriculture	Founder of Nile Cotton Trade, Egypt's largest cotton trading company. Chair of Egyptian Association of Cotton.
Dr. Hatem al-Gabali	Minister for Health	Businessman in field of medical management. Owned the private Dar al-Fouad hospital.
Sameh Fahmi	Minister for Petroleum	Chairman of the Egyptian Gas Holding Company. President of Gas Exporting Countries Forum. Managed gas sales to Israel and Jordan.
Mahmoud Mohi al-Din	Minister for Investment	Member of PS. Close friend of Gamal Mubarak.

Those holding economic portfolios in cabinet commanded obsequiousness, as they knew they owed their positions to their ties with the Mubarak family, and that these ties allowed them to act with impunity and little regard for public accountability (al-Aswany, 2011: 13-14). The trio of al-Maghrabi, Mansour, and Garna epitomised Egypt's nexus of wealth and corruption (Lesch, 2012: 29). Mansour's brother, Yassin, chaired Egypt's second-largest land-holding company, which was founded by MMID. MMID had a large number of interests including tobacco, computer sales, automobiles and food distribution (Zayed and Hussein, 2011). MMID also held a twenty-five percent stake in Crédit Agricole Bank (CAB), a bank formed after the Egyptian government sold the Egyptian American Bank at a huge loss. The Egyptian American Bank was one of Egypt's four large public-owned banks, which were bedevilled by problems in the 1990s because of nonperforming loans (Kandil, 2012a: 207). MMID's acquisition of its stake in CAB is quite controversial because its sale only occurred within a week of al-Maghrabi and Mansour's promotion to cabinet with the two paying LE45 per bank share despite their price rising to LE65.5 when it was first traded on the Egyptian stock exchange (Elassar, 2010: 96). The bank's privatisation led to a loss of LE300 million for the Egyptian state and the accusation that MMID had acquired its stake through insider trading. The loss surrounding the sale of the bank was, according to the economic analyst Ahmad el-Sayyed el-Naggar, the representation of the 'unholy marriage between the state and business' (2009: 46). Al-Maghrabi also used his position as minister for housing to further his own interests. He sold land in New Cairo at below market prices to Akhbar al-Youm Investment Company, which subsequently resold the land to MMID. Transferring the land through another company meant that Maghrabi

had not sold the land to himself, which would have constituted an illegal act (el-Abbas, 2011).

Commanding the cabinet's economic portfolios was not the only area in which the New Guard exercised control over the distribution of economic resources. The New Guard controlled a number of parliamentary committees, the most significant being the Planning and Budget Committee. This committee was chaired by Ahmed Ezz, who came to dominate the Egyptian steel industry by the acquisition of several public sector steel companies in rapid succession. He quickly drained these companies of their assets and absorbed them into his company, Ezz Steel. By 2006, he controlled 70 per cent of Egypt's iron and steel market, which allowed him to control and raise the price of steel, thereby allowing him to manipulate the cost of construction (Vignal and Denis, 2006: 70). He also leveraged his close relationship with Gamal Mubarak in order to access unsecured bank loans and pay off old ones through acquiring new ones (Lesch, 2012: 30). Ezz's economic clout saw his political star rise. In 2005, he became Majority Leader in Parliament and in the words of former Parliamentary Speaker, Fathy Sourur:

Whenever we vote, if Ahmed Ezz raises his hand in approval, the representatives of the majority [party] approve, if he does not raise his hand, they disapprove . . . the [NDP] members believed he had the power to have them nominated [to parliamentary elections] by the party . . . and he had a strong relationship with Gamal Mubarak (Muslim, 2012a).

Ezz also employed his political influence to manage his economic interests. In 2004, the Central Auditing Authority submitted two reports to the Speaker of the Parliament regarding Ezz's monopolistic activities in the steel sector. The reports exposed how Ezz controlled 55.3 per cent of the domestic market and 72.3 per cent of exports of reinforced iron, and 47.9 per cent and 83.2 per cent of exports of flat iron (Hamadah, 2011). The Speaker, Fathy Sourur, admitted that when the government considered antimonopoly legislation that would seize 10 per cent of a violator's profits, Ezz – the head of the Planning and Budget Committee – intervened to cap the fine at LE300 million. Reflecting on the situation Sourur recounted that:

I complained to the president, and told him this cannot pass, and he asked Safwat al-Sharif [NDP secretary-general] to resolve the issue. Al-Sharif came to my office and called in Ezz to relay the president's objections . . . To my astonishment, Ahmed Ezz stuck to his guns . . . and we were forced to compromise . . . At this point, I realized that Ahmed Ezz was stronger [than the president], that he represented a dangerous power [that could] defy the president (Muslim, 2011b).

Ezz's political clout was again demonstrated in a court ruling on the matter that found Ezz Steel not to be a monopolistic actor, rather it was a competitor in a free-market environment. Despite these rulings, Ezz was accused of being the 'consumer's number one enemy' in Egypt, as he believed his influence allowed him to ignore the popular anger directed against him (el-Wardani, 2011).

Corruption was encouraged in the New Guard because it further bound its members to President Mubarak. Hatem Zayed made clear that economic reform was not the intention of forming the Nazif cabinet, rather it was a measure undertaken to sustain the regime through providing the New Guard an opportunity for personal enrichment.¹⁵¹ Seeking to lead by example, the Mubarak family also gained wealth through commissions on business deals, sometimes through legal means but often illegally. One deal under investigation involved Gamal attaining five per cent and Alaa, Gamal's older brother, and oil minister, Sameh Fahmi, 2.5 percent each on the \$1.5 billion deal to sell natural gas to Israel, a deal that was clinched by Hussein Salem's East Mediterranean Gas Company in 2005 (Egypt Independent, 2011b). The Mubarak brothers are also said to have held free or discounted shares in a number of Egypt's largest companies including Marlborough and the Chili's chain of restaurants, owned by Mansour, and Ezz Steel, owned by Ahmed Ezz, both members of the New Guard. Aladdin Elassar notes that the Mubarak brothers often bullied their way into privately owned companies with free shares that reached 50 per cent of capital (2010: 216). Those companies and businessmen who rejected the advances of the Mubarak brothers were harassed, and ultimately forced to oblige through having fabricated charges arrayed against them. The opposition group Kefaya in a report it published on corruption in Egypt stated that the harassment took the form of fabricated charges such as tax evasion, and alleged that further threats took the form of attempted murder (Elaasar, 2010: 217). In stark contrast to the wealth generated by the New Guard, Egypt's policy of economic liberalisation contributed to the impoverishment of the country's urban and rural workforce. This precipitated a socioeconomic crisis, the effects of which will be fully discussed in Chapter 7.

6.4.3 The Personalist Cadre (2): The Improving Fortunes of the MOI

The MOI's budget grew during the 1990s. This increase can be understood in light of the regime's conflict with Islamist militants at the time, which necessitated resources be invested in both recruiting and sufficiently training a growing number of

¹⁵¹ Interview with Hatem Zayed.

troops in the CSF and SSIS (Soliman, 2011: 63). The Ministry's budget soared approximately seven-fold, from \$583 million in the decade before 2002 to \$3.3 billion in 2008, in comparison to the military's, which had only doubled (Frisch, 2013: 183). Spending on the security services also increased from 3.5 percent of GDP to 6 percent in the same period. This increase included wages, which multiplied fourfold in the decade between 1992 and 2002 (Kandil, 2012a: 195). The increase in resources also reflected the reality in which the ruling coalition operated. Resources were required not only to counter the Islamist threat. They were also required to ensure that the MOI could provide a bulwark against the military if the latter actively chose to oppose Gamal's succession (Frisch, 2013: 183).

The MOI's political prominence was not its only source of material patronage; there were also extra-institutional means. Individual officers in the CSF and SSIS were able to supplement their personal incomes through extorting citizens. Bribes were demanded from members of the public in order to acquire information cards or routine documents at police stations. Tourists were also subject to the MOI's rent seeking as police officers took a cut of the money tour guides and merchants made from those visiting Egypt's historical sites (Bradley, 2012: p.150). The activities of the MOI's forces gave rise to a culture of impunity, similar to the one that had emerged in Tunisia, which the regime sanctioned. Hatem Zayed asserts that this tacit consent of the MOI's actions was entirely political, 'the Interior Ministry was largely given autonomy to ensure the maintenance of the regime. As long as the regime was secure its personnel could behave how they wanted'.¹⁵²

Those at the helm of the MOI also saw their material interests improve during Mubarak's presidency. Parliamentary investigations undertaken in the aftermath of the uprising revealed that Interior Minister al-Adly and his immediate family had benefitted from their close ties to the Mubarak regime. The al-Adly family had acquired seven apartments, thirteen construction sites, and a shopping mall in Sharm al-Sheikh. Combined with bank deposits, the wealth accrued by the al-Adly family amounted to LE8 billion (al-Geziry, 2011). The SSIS also laid claim to a plot of military land in the Cairo neighbourhood of Nasr City to establish its new headquarters. In Alexandria, thirty-eight SSIS officers acquired 750,000 square metres of land for LE13 per metre in 2000, when the market price exceeded LE300 per metre (Sabri, 2011). The corrupt activities of the PS and the MOI further set both against regime change. As Chapter 7 will make clear, the economic activities of the PS mobilised large constituency that

¹⁵² Ibid.

were opposed to the regime's economic policies and did not see it as legitimate. This necessitated increased resources for the MOI in order to repress this constituency (Kandil, 2012a: 217-218). Again, the available data on the MOI is limited and cannot offer a fully detailed portrait of the Ministry's fiscal resources. However, the available evidence does indicate that the MOI's allocation of budgetary resources increased over the course of Mubarak's tenure. This seemingly indicates that the MOI was rewarded for its protection of the regime.

6.4.4 The Military Cadre: The Myth of Military Privileges

While economic liberalisation and political considerations had benefitted the personalist cadre, Mubarak was also aware that looking after the military cadre's material interests was essential to regime maintenance. This was despite the distance he had put between himself and the military cadre. Defence expenditure under Mubarak followed a relatively stable pattern giving the impression that the interests of the military were well provided for. This constant level of defence expenditure gave rise to three structural advantages, which worked to bind the military to the regime (Richter, 2007: 184).

First, the equipment and armaments available to the military markedly improved since the signing of the Camp David accords. Moreover, the military's budget became virtually untouchable for both the government and parliament (Frisch, 2001: 97). The peace treaty with Israel has also directly benefitted the military as an institution, which has been the recipient of \$1.3 billion in aid from the United States on an annual basis (Masoud, 2011: 400). Second, the military-economic complex established by Sadat matured rapidly since the 1970s, to the extent that it is an active and important player in the national economy. However, there is no consensus on how much economic activity the military accounts for because of the lack of transparency surrounding its operations. Nonetheless many observers speculate that the military cadre, through its various businesses, accounts for forty per cent of Egypt's economic output (Brumberg and Sallam, 2012: 4).¹⁵³ The Egyptian military is involved in a range of economic activities including arms production, construction, industry, land reclamation and the services sector (Frisch, 2001; 2013; Kunde, 1996; Springborg, 1998; Weiss and Wurzel, 1998; Richards and Waterbury, 2008). Paul Amar (2011) notes that these activities shaped the military cadre

¹⁵³ Ibid.

into an organised group of nationalist businessmen. They are attracted to foreign investment; but their loyalties are economically and symbolically embedded in national territory . . . And it seems that the military, now as 'national capitalists', have seen themselves as the blood rivals of the neoliberal 'crony capitalists' associated with Hosni Mubarak's son Gamal who have privatized anything they can get their hands on.

And third, officers and their affiliates are privileged in a number of material and immaterial ways that are not available to others within the ruling coalition (Frisch, 2013: 183). Officers can purchase real estate at subsidized prices, access domestic and imported goods made available only to military personnel (Weiss and Wurzel, 1998: 192), access improved educational opportunities (Frisch, 2001: 102), and, avail of special health, recreational and retirement facilities (Springborg, 1998: 4). Furthermore, officers are routinely offered lucrative jobs in the public sector upon their retirement from active service (see Bous Nassif, 2013).

When we consider the array of material patronage made available to the military one would assume that the military had little to complain about under Mubarak, at least in material terms. The military had access to advanced weapons and its officers enjoyed privileges that few others in Egypt could attain. Therefore the question arises, what caused the established consensus that military acquiescence had been bought with financial and symbolic rewards to shatter (see Springborg 1989; Sadowski, 1993; Cassandra, 1995; Weiss and Wurzel, 1998, Frisch, 2001, Cook, 2007; Droz-Vincent, 2007; Richards and Waterbury, 2008)?

The answer as to why this consensus was shattered has its origins in Sadat's decision to establish the NSPO and redirect the military toward supporting economic development. The NSPO was the vehicle from which the military would establish its economic empire and it encompassed a range of activities including construction and arms production. The military cadre has been active in the construction sector since Nasser. It was initially involved in infrastructure and housing projects but later expanded to include the tourist sector (Abu Lugjod, 1971: 234). The military also built its own military cities in Cairo's orbit, which numbered thirteen by 1986, each with a population of 150,000 to 250,000 (Mitchell, 2002: 241-242). The military's arms industries saw it produce small weapons and ammunition, mortars, armoured vehicles, and assemble helicopters, and short-range missiles. Halfway into Mubarak's presidency, Egypt's arms industry covered 60 per cent of its needs and the surplus was exported, and purported to be worth roughly \$1 billion annually (Kandil, 2012b: 182). The arms

industry also served to wed the military cadre to Mubarak, as it was kept under the President's control via Article 108 of the constitution, which provided him with the ultimate say over weapons contracts, and Law 146 of 1981 that established his power over arms exports (Sirrs, 2010: 130-131). These economic activities, in addition to the ones described above, allowed the military cadre to provide for the officer corps. Again, the question must be asked, if the military was so well provided for, then why did it decisively abandon Mubarak?

The roots of the military cadre's disenchantment regarding the distribution of material patronage have their origins in a public debate that raged in 1984 over the military's thinking about economic policy. The military's position was underlined by a 1979 decree, which demanded that the military be responsible for attaining self-sufficiency in addition to supporting economic development (Droz-Vincent, 1999: 21). This saw the publication of an article by Major General Ibrahim Shakib (1984), arguing that it was the absence of war that led the army to seek out civilian work for its conscripts, and another by Major General Ahmed Fakhr (1985) explaining that the army couldn't abandon its modestly paid members to the mercy of market forces.¹⁵⁴ Subsequently, the, then, Defence Minister, Abu Ghazzala, emphasised that the conspicuously humble privileges the military's enlisted men received were scarcely enough to afford them a decent life against rising inflation. He further complained at the NDP's 1986 conference that diminishing defence budgets scarcely covered military wages (quoted in Baz, 2007: 64-70). The credibility of these statements was supported by a Central Auditing Authority report that revealed military projects did not create a noteworthy surplus (Farouk, 2008: 288). In the aftermath of Mubarak's ouster, *The Financial Times* also admitted that the military's:

reputed economic 'empire' . . . is considerably more modest in volume than is commonly believed, and has probably shrunk in proportion to a national economy that has grown by more than 3 per cent annually since 2003 . . . [and] although a few generals are rumoured to have become rich, the main purpose [behind the army's economic activity] . . . is to ameliorate the impact of a rapidly privatizing economy on the living standards of officers (Sayigh, 2011).

Further evidence of the military's weak position can be gleaned from the disparities between its shabby discount stores, automobiles, and apartments when compared to those enjoyed by Egypt's upper classes, and the fact that the military has

¹⁵⁴ Ibrahim Shakib, 'Shukran ayyuha al-sada', *al-Ahali*, 7 November 1984; Amhed Fakr, 'al-Fikr al-'askari al-masri wa idarat al-sira': al-ahdaf al-istratijiya li-l'-askariya al-masriya', *al-Jumhuriya*, 20 January 1985.

consistently failed to attract members of this class to join its ranks (Frisch, 2001: 6). While critics rightly point out that the military was the recipient of many privileges, there are two counterpoints to take into consideration. First, these privileges were mainly reserved for the officer corps, not the entirety of the military cadre, which included enlisted men and conscripts. Additionally, many of the benefits to the officer corps could only be realised after retirement (Bou Nasif, 2013). And second, the inflation that resulted from structural adjustment eroded the value of all public incomes. Many in the public sector overcome these difficulties through moonlighting or rent seeking in the bureaucracy - two options not available to officers stuck on meagre wages (Kandil, 2012b: 183).

Despite the concerns raised by the officer corps, the military's economic complex was reduced in 1989 in order to facilitate the privatisation programme that would begin with structural adjustment in 1981. There is little surprise then that the military cadre's leadership became 'largely hostile to economic liberalization and private-sector growth' and were opposed to being ruled by Egypt's embodiment of neoliberal economics, Gamal Mubarak (Anderson, 2011: 4). Economic liberalisation not only hurt the military's material interests but also tarnished its public image. Dekmejian's (1982: 39), writing on the military under Sadat, summarises the position the military cadre found itself in with Gamal's ascent:

[T]he military revolutionaries of July 1952 had taken power in the name of the Egyptian people and pursued social and economic policies which benefitted the lower- and middle-classes from which they had originated. Now the military were being called upon to sustain a regime, which was identified in the popular mind with upper- and upper-middle-class interests (Dekmejian, 1982: 39).

Sustaining the regime placed the military cadre in a difficult position with regard to its material interests. On the one hand, the 'military felt threatened by what might have happened if Gamal Mubarak was to come to power'.¹⁵⁵ But, on the other hand, the military was bound to Mubarak if it wanted to access the privileges to which it had become accustomed. According to Adel Soliman, 'it was Mubarak who gave us our privileges and Mubarak who could choose to take them away', implying that the military's access to material patronage depended upon remaining in the President's good graces.¹⁵⁶ What's more, the claim that military spending remained high under Mubarak masks the fact that, while defence expenditure remained somewhat constant,

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Hatem Zayed

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Adel Soliman

military expenditure as an overall proportion of government spending fell, as shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 Military Expenditure in Egypt, 1990-2010¹⁵⁷

	Military Expenditure in \$bn	Military Expenditure as % of GDP	Military Expenditure as % of Government Spending
1990	2.242	5.25	21.82
1991	1.722	5.18	18.76
1992	1.864	4.76	13.62
1993	2.031	4.50	14.28
1994	2.153	4.35	14.04
1995	2.347	4.05	14.40
1996	2.364	3.38	12.56
1997	2.509	3.47	14.34
1998	2.786	3.35	N/A
1999	2.910	3.29	N/A
2000	3.124	3.40	N/A
2001	2.985	3.38	N/A
2002	2.831	3.51	12.91
2003	2.384	3.48	12.76
2004	2.638	3.02	11.25
2005	2.659	2.85	10.41
2006	2.953	2.74	8.36
2007	3.307	2.80	8.52
2008	3.780	2.29	7.56
2009	4.017	2.13	7.10
2010	4.289	1.99	6.92

In the mid-1970s, the defence budget was as high as 33 per cent of GDP. When Mubarak came to power, this figure had been halved and, during his three decades in the presidency, military expenditures oscillated between \$2.4 billion and \$4.3 billion, regardless of inflation, the increasing cost of technology, or the tenfold increase in Egypt's GDP. As a percentage of GDP, defence expenditures fell considerably from 19.5 per cent in 1980 to 2.2 per cent in 2010, reaching its 'lowest level in the country's modern history' (Wahid, 2009: 137-141). A further interesting point to consider is the military's vaunted \$1.3 billion provided by the United States in the form of military aid, which has depreciated considerably in real terms by over 50 percent since 1979. This is to say nothing of the political constraints this aid imposed, which will be discussed in

¹⁵⁷ For Military Expenditure in \$bn see The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database 1988-2014. Available at: http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database [Accessed November 14 2014]; For Military Expenditure as % of GDP see The World Bank World Development Indicators, Military Expenditure (% of GDP). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS> [Accessed November 14 2014]; For Military Expenditure as % of Government Spending see The World Bank World Development Indicators, Military Expenditure (% of central government expenditure). Available at: [Accessed November 14 2014]

Chapter 7. What the above table indicates is that, although actual spend on the military varied throughout Mubarak's presidency, the resources directed to military had declined throughout his rule both as a proportion of GDP and government expenditure.

Given their weakening foothold in various economic sectors, the military was fearful that the personalist cadre's ascent would damage their interests. Rather than bask in its perceived wealth, the military lived with the fear that merely to 'balance accounts' it might one day be forced to 'slash military salaries severely' (Frisch, 2001: 2), despite undertaking efforts to 'to improve the quality of their work'.¹⁵⁸ These fears were somewhat realised with the PS's control both the political and economic decision-making processes. As neoliberal reforms deepened, the military experienced competition from their neoliberal counterparts who could access global and regional capital (Joya, 2011: 372).

The distribution of material resources within Mubarak's ruling coalition further demonstrated the ascendancy of the personalist cadre. The New Guard used their control of economic policymaking and the liberalisation of the Egyptian economy to realise their material interests, via the co-optation of the privatisation process. Contrary to this, the liberalisation of the economy hampered the ability of the single-party cadre to access patronage because of the state's withdrawal from the economy. This saw the NDP Old Guard unable to finance their local patronage networks, which were eventually taken over by businessman linked to the New Guard. The military, despite its perceived economic clout, was also an institution in material decline. Its share of expenditure was decreasing while that of the MOI was rising, and, as Chapter 7 will make clear, the provision of US aid only contributed to hampering the military's ability to realise its interests. Most importantly, a potential Gamal presidency also threatened military interests, as their economic empire may have been left to the mercies of the market.

6.5 Conclusion: A Fragmented Regime

The deliberate insertion of Gamal into political life had fragmented Mubarak's ruling coalition, which made it vulnerable to splitting, during his last decade in power. This fragmentation was because of the unresolved question of succession, which Mubarak had not definitively settled. The President's actions nonetheless benefitted the personalist cadre's interests. Mubarak had tacitly approved of the New Guard's co-optation of the NDP's leadership structures and had made known his favourable view of

¹⁵⁸ See, *The Military in Decline*.

economic liberalisation. He subsequently delegated control of domestic policymaking to Gamal and the New Guard, which, not only allowed them to implement their neoliberal economic agenda, but plunder the increasingly liberalised Egyptian economy by subverting the privatisation process. The ascent of the New Guard had seen the NDP Old Guard in the single-party cadre gradually marginalised until their effective banishment from political life was codified with the formation of the Nazif cabinet. The Old Guard's marginalisation was further demonstrated by the New Guard's ability to capture their parliamentary seats through their mobilisation of the business community. These businessmen candidates were able to ensure election through financing domestic patronage networks with their own wealth. These patronage networks were previously the domain of the single-party cadre but the liberalisation of the economy had seen their ability to access material patronage via the structures of the state lessened.

The ascent of the personalist cadre was also evident in the hard sector over which Mubarak directly presided. Mubarak gave the MOI free reign to pursue its mission and ensured it was endowed with sufficient funding and training. Two additional reasons contributed to Mubarak's intertwining with the MOI. First, the two shared a similar outlook regarding security and this provided a legal framework, via the country's emergency laws, which allowed the MOI to pursue its mission without consequence. And second, the MOI had moved to support a potential Gamal succession by forging ties with the New Guard. The military, in contrast, had become politically impotent. As an institution, it felt unable to realise its mission of national defence because of the poor quality of its personnel, due to Egypt's education system, political meddling, and its limited strategic doctrine. Within the ruling coalition it had, like the Old Guard, become marginalised. The officer corps was unable to form a lasting bond with Mubarak and had developed a distaste for Gamal. Its secondary goal of supporting economic development was also threatened by the rise of the New Guard, and its diminishing share of the budget was not compensated for by US military, which, as Chapter 7 makes clear, further limited the military's ability to realise its interests.

This fragmentation made the regime vulnerable to a split because of the tensions between the New Guard and the Old Guard, who were not primarily embodied by the military cadre. However, this split did not occur for a number of reasons. First, Gamal's succession was never formalised. And second, while the military was opposed to a Gamal succession, it was not willing to remove itself from Mubarak's tutelage because of a potential succession, as its interests would be further damaged. Thus, the Egyptian ruling coalition was in a permanent state of limbo, as those elements that did not have

their interests realised refused to withdraw. Taking these grievances into account, the possibility exists that, if mass uprisings were to occur in Egypt, it is entirely conceivable that the military and single-party cadre would give serious thought to withdrawing from the ruling coalition.

Chapter 7 – Exogenous Interest Realisation within the Egyptian Ruling Coalition

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how exogenous factors affected interest realisation within Mubarak's ruling coalition. Specifically, it takes into account the popular legitimacy and international support afforded to the ruling coalition and how these variables affected their actions. As Chapter 6 discussed, Mubarak's ruling coalition had splintered into two competing groups: the New Guard and the Old Guard. Developments within the ruling coalition had seen the New Guard, centred on the personalist cadre, become ascendant, while the Old Guard, centred on the military and single-party cadres, gradually diminished in stature. Despite the competition that had developed, the Old Guard could not escape Mubarak's tutelage and exit the ruling coalition. The possibility nonetheless remained that if factors exogenous to the ruling coalition were to change the Old Guard would consider voluntary withdrawal.

This chapter examines that possibility and finds that the erosion of the Mubarak regime's popular legitimacy and the provision of international support were important factors in shaping interest realisation within the ruling coalition. In particular, the chapter will detail how the economic liberalisation policies pursued by the New Guard and the coercive activities of the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) eroded the regime's legitimacy. The chapter will then examine how the provision of international support from the United States affected the behaviour of the military cadre. The chapter will then conclude with an assessment of the evidence gathered, with regard to the two exogenous variables at play before, considering its implication for the theoretical framework in conjunction with the evidence gathered in Chapter 6.

7.2 The Lost Legitimacy of the Mubarak Regime

The legitimacy of the Mubarak regime was built on two distinct themes that originated with Nasser: the provision of material needs and the maintenance of national security. On the economic front, Nasser embarked on a series of five-year economic plans that provided jobs for the Egyptian people (Ayubi, 1995: 205-206). These policies placed the Egyptian state at the heart of the economy and provided for a range of social welfare benefits, such as universal healthcare, universal education, guaranteed

employment, workplace rights, subsidies on essential foods and services, and rent controls, amongst other measures (Abdel-Fadil, 1975, 1980; Ayubi, 1005: 217; Pripstein Posusney, 1997: 47-48, 59-60, 70). These policies not only improved socioeconomic conditions for the majority of the population (Mabro, 1974), they also facilitated their integration into the state and helped the regime consolidate its authority (Pratt, 2007: 42). The Suez Crisis, in which Egypt saw off the combined forces of France, Israel, and the United Kingdom further cemented Nasser's authority (Rogan, 2009: 298-305). This victory allowed Nasser to institute a legitimising discourse, which positioned the regime as the protector of the country's sovereignty from foreign aggression (Brand, 2015: 47).

The ascent of the personalist cadre during Mubarak's final decade in power not only split the ruling coalition; it also eroded the legitimacy established since Nasser's time. The New Guard's embrace of economic liberalisation may have seen impressive growth rates but it also gave rise to a deepening socioeconomic crisis that saw the Egyptian economy become two distinct spheres: one catering to the New Guard and the other inhabited by the Egyptian people, burdened by socioeconomic crisis (Kandil, 2012c: 210). The repressive activities of the MOI further undermined the regime's legitimacy. The Ministry's commitment to internal security was such that it repressed those it was ostensibly charged with protecting.

7.2.1 Economic Rhetoric and Reality

The regime's management of the economy saw it lose considerable legitimacy during Mubarak's final decade in power. This loss of legitimacy stemmed back to the actions of Mubarak's predecessor Anwar Sadat, who, in 1974, began the process of liberalising the Egyptian economy via the Open Door Economic policy or *Infitah* (Cook, 2012: 137-138). *Infitah's* policies were designed to attract capital from the newly rich Gulf oil states, promote Western investment in Egyptian industry through joint ventures, promote private sector exports, and improve productivity and competitiveness within the public sector (Richards and Waterbury, 2008). *Infitah* saw high economic growth between 1974 and 1981 that averaged between 6 and 8 percent. However, there was a net loss of jobs (Farah, 2013: 52). The number of projects that fell under *Infitah's* purview from 1974 to 1990 employed less than 1.5 percent of the workforce at this time (Esfahani, 1993). Unemployment also rose, with the advent of the Open Door policy, as it jumped from 2 percent in 1960 to 11 percent in 1986 (el-Ehwany and Nassar, 2011). Wage levels also declined during this time from US\$70 per

worker in 1980 to US\$11 in 1991, which led to a marked reduction in the cost of labour (Farah, 2009: 41). Finally, *Infitah* led to an increase in Egypt's foreign debt, which ballooned from \$5 billion to \$30 billion between 1970 and 1981 and placed a heavy burden on the Egyptian economy (Amin, 2011: 57).

When Mubarak succeeded Sadat, he implemented an economic policy that made the state central to the economy. As noted in Chapter 6 the regime used the revenues accrued from foreign aid, remittances and the Suez Canal to finance a high level of public spending. With the collapse of oil prices in 1986, and the attendant loss in revenue, the regime was set on a course that saw it enter a structural adjustment programme under the auspices of the World Bank and IMF in 1991. Mubarak, however, leveraged Egypt's position to avoid some of the more stringent elements of structural adjustment, and, through an increase in revenues and manipulation of the Egyptian pound, the regime was able to finance a high level of public spending that ensured public acquiescence (Soliman, 2011: 47). Egypt fully embraced structural adjustment following a decline in revenues in the mid-1990s and the formation of the Nazif cabinet accelerated its pace through various measures (Farah, 2013: 54). The rate of privatisation increased, the Egyptian pound was floated, and income taxes and customs duties were reduced. The implementation of these measures saw strong growth in the years between 2005 and 2010.

Table 7.1 Egypt and MENA Region: Annual GDP Growth (%) 2005-2010¹⁵⁹

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Egypt	4.47	6.84	7.08	7.15	4.68	5.13
MENA Region	5.8	6.84	5.75	5.34	1.69	4.88

Nevertheless, the strength of the country's economic growth masked a number of problems. First, while the Egyptian people heard celebratory statements lauding economic growth, the standard of living for the majority of the population progressively worsened (Abd al-Aziz, 2011: 89). Income per capita dropped 7 percent between 2000 and 2006, and the WB reported that 47 percent of Egyptians were making less than \$2 a day (Wahid, 2009: 134-142). The rise in consumer prices compounded this drop in income, as detailed in Table 7.2.

¹⁵⁹ The World Bank World Development Indicators, GDP growth (annual %). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG> [Accessed June 20 2015]

Table 7.2 Egypt and MENA Region: Inflation in Consumer Prices (%) 2005-2010¹⁶⁰

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Egypt	4.86	7.64	9.31	18.31	11.76	11.26
MENA Region	3.10	3.48	4.16	11.27	2.92	3.91

Second, Egypt experienced an employment crisis, which saw approximately one quarter of the total workforce unemployed and another three million workers forced to join the underground economy (Shatz, 2010: 6). Unemployment was highly concentrated amongst Egypt's youth, particularly those aged between 15 and 24, as shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Egypt and MENA Region: Unemployment (%) 2005-2010¹⁶¹

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Egypt Unemployment (as % of labour force)	11.2	10.6	8.9	8.7	9.4	9
Egypt Unemployment (as % of labour force aged 15-24)	33.7	31.4	26.1	25.8	27	26.3
MENA Unemployment (as % of labour force)	11.84	10.99	10.38	9.97	10.14	10.43
MENA Unemployment (as % of labour force aged 15-24)	27.53	26.36	24.92	24.63	24.60	25.84

The rise in unemployment for those aged between 15 and 24 was the consequence of high birth rates in the 1980s and 1990s (Larémont, 2014: 17). During the 2000s, the labour market absorbed 850,000 new entrants per annum, 75 percent of which would have to wait five years to find their first job (Bishara, 2012: 108). Economic liberalisation also affected the employment crisis. Under Nasser, university graduates had guaranteed employment in the state bureaucracy upon completion of their studies, which served the two-fold purpose of employing the country's youth and binding their interests to that of the regime (Bronsveld, 1981; Birdsall and O'Connell, 1999).

¹⁶⁰ The World Bank World Development Indicators, Inflation, Consumer prices (annual %). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG> [Accessed June 20 2015]

¹⁶¹ The World Bank World Development indicators, Unemployment, total (% of total labour force). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> [Accessed June 20 2015]

However, the privatisation of state services had seen this practice gradually abandoned in the Mubarak years (Lampridi-Kemou and Azaola, 2013: 127).

The regime was aware of the consequences of economic liberalisation and sought to maintain a veneer of economic populism. The regime established the Egyptian Social Fund, which, with the assistance of the WB, sought to create employment and a social safety net (Yamine, 1996). Coerced charity also performed a similar function. Mubarak pressured those who benefitted from economic liberalisation to support state programmes, such as his school-building initiative. This cajoling carried the implied threat that the rich should remember who it was that allowed them to accrue their wealth in the first place and who take it from them and deny them future opportunities (Owen, 2001: 245-246). The regime also looked after those workers who had lost their jobs to privatisation through a number of different financial compensation projects (King, 2009: 98). These projects included early retirement programmes for workers in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) funded by foreign donors and the proceeds generated by privatisation. Workers were offered up-front cash payments based upon their anticipated salary losses as well as a monthly stipend (Pripstein Posusney, 1999). There were critics of this programme who complained that these pensions were less than half of what workers would have received if these companies remained in the state's control, while alternative job opportunities were non-existent (Pripstein Posusney, 1999). Workers nonetheless accepted the terms put to them out of fear that they would not receive any compensation at all otherwise. Mubarak implicitly acknowledged the difficulties that economic liberalisation posed for the Egyptian people. He asserted that he was committed to protecting the gains made by workers and he further pledged that the state would expand its social security system to include more families and raise the state pension (al-Ahram, 2006).

The regime was aware of the consequences of economic liberalisation and much of the National Democratic Party's (NDP) 2007 party conference extolled the party's commitment to social justice. The US embassy's account of the conference makes this clear but also stressed that the rhetoric espoused at the conference was simply that:

[A] major focus of the conference was 'social justice'. In President Mubarak's November 3 speech opening the conference, he underlined that the NDP is committed to 'providing an umbrella of social protection to poor and limited income citizens – it is an essential pillar of our general policy'. In Gamal Mubarak's speech on the same day, he emphasized the NDP's focus on housing, water, and sewage services for the poor, noting, 'The party stresses its commitment to social development, highlighting the principles of social justice . . . Solving the problems average Egyptian families face is our party's top priority. The NDP is

working at the local level to benefit poor villages and the families of the hard-working people of Egypt'. NDP SYG [Secretary-General] Sherif also told the delegates that, 'the ruling party strongly believes its success in the next few years will depend largely on its ability to relieve citizens of the economic hardships they currently face'. Clearly feeling somewhat burned by recent criticisms that Egypt's poor have not yet felt the benefits of the country's economic progress, Gamal and various economic ministers were keen to stress their attention to the country's more needy citizens . . . A 77-page report titled 'Services and Social Justice' was circulated to conference delegates, detailing NDP poverty-fighting recommendations . . . Saieed El Alfy, an NDP Higher Committee member, told econoff that the biggest outcome of the conference was the NDP's change in rhetoric: 'The rhetoric now acknowledges the concerns of the average Egyptian, and admits the existence of many social problems, something that the NDP has not done in the past'.¹⁶²

Rhetoric, however, did not match reality given when one considers the rise in consumer prices and persistently high unemployment. The Egyptian people themselves saw that the regime's rhetoric was meaningless, as they not only saw their aspirations crushed but watched helplessly as Egypt's upper class sent its children to private international schools, received treatment in highly equipped hospitals and resided in lavish compounds cut off from the rest of the population (Amin, 2011: 73-77). Furthermore, economic liberalisation contributed to the impoverishment of the country's urban and rural workforce. Nader Fergany, the lead author of the Arab Human Development Report, wrote that, in Egypt, 'one per cent controls almost all the wealth of the country' (quoted in Marfleet, 2009: 18). This concentration of wealth undercut the regime's legitimacy in the public eye. Rabie writes that:

[t]he obvious coupling of wealth and power authority hurt the party's image as the guardian of public welfare. Egyptians saw rich businessmen within the NDP receiving unfair advantages from their close associations with the party, including market monopolies and tax exemptions for their projects (Allen, 2008).

Nor was there cooperation between the two spheres of the Egyptian economy. Instead, the bifurcation between the two deepened. The regime's economic policies saw many grow disaffected with the political process as a whole. According to Wael Nawara, the roots of this disaffection lay in the pressure Egyptians felt to participate in the economy despite not lacking the means to do so:

The pressure was coming from different levels. On one level, having money and large-scale projects pumped into the economy saw prices rise [and this] negatively affected people who lived on inflexible incomes. People who were on fixed incomes, pensioners, state employees, teachers and so on; a lot of these people had

¹⁶² Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, 'The National Democratic Party's General Conference: Much Ado About Not Much', November 8 2007, 07CAIRO3228_a. Available at: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07CAIRO3228_a.html [Accessed November 3 2014]

inflexible incomes and they couldn't, there was no way for them, to improve their income. You'd start to see people working two jobs, three jobs, you know, a university graduate working at something in the morning and then in the afternoon maybe driving a taxi in order to make ends meet. So one hand, the flow of money did not trickle down the whole economy, it did not trickle down to the whole population, and a lot of people, like maybe seven/eight/ ten million people with their families, so that's almost like between half and two thirds of the population were on somehow inflexible, rigid incomes. Price rises and inflation affected them, [where] maybe before they were making ends meet with difficulty now they couldn't. The second part was psychological factors, seeing this exaggerated show of wealth was, you know, buildings for example, people buying multimillion dollar villas in New Cairo or the North Coast and just people becoming really, in a way, showing all this sort of wealth, was also adding to the kind of psychological suffering of people. So not only, were they poor, people were wasting money on things that they didn't really need. People were feeling a pressure, on the one hand there's inflation, on the other hand there was the pressure of what was happening in society and many new things were coming out for consumption, like new mobile phones and people had to buy these things because otherwise you would be out of sync [and] I think that this led Egyptians to lose faith in, so many of them, for a long time in the political process.¹⁶³

Taking Mubarak's economic policies into account, it becomes apparent that the economic legitimacy the Egyptian regime had established since Nasser's time had been significantly eroded. Rather than experience the benefits of a market economy, the Egyptian people saw deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and the marginalisation of the most vulnerable in society. Moreover, the actions of those within the regime contributed to the erosion of its legitimacy, as their flaunting of their ill-gotten wealth bred resentment within the Egyptian public.

7.2.2 The Narrative of National Security

As discussed in Chapter 6, Mubarak equated national security with the realisation of Egypt's national interest, and this became a defining theme of his presidency. Mubarak acknowledged this during a speech in 2006 in which he stated that 'what will not change is the commitment to maintain Egypt's security and stability and to preserve its sovereignty and independence of its national will' (Brand, 2014: 110). While the origins of this narrative traced back to Nasser, it had evolved over time. Where Nasser's references to national security had defined Egypt through an anti-Imperialist foreign policy (Hourani, 2002: 368), Mubarak, instead, referenced internal threats, particularly militant Islam. This change in discourse was the product of two distinct developments. The first was the assassination of Anwar Sadat, which brought Mubarak to power. Sadat

¹⁶³ Personal Interview with Wael Nawara, journalist at Al-Monitor and co-founder of the Al-Dostour Party and National Association for Change. Cairo, February 10, 2014.

was assassinated by members of the extremist organisation al-Jihad within the military, who were opposed to Egypt's peace treaty with Israel (Cook, 2007: 77; Kandil, 2012a: 171-174). Fearing internal rather than external threats, the ever-cautious Mubarak placed Egypt under a state of emergency following Sadat's assassination. Mubarak never repealed this state of emergency that allowed Egyptian authorities to refer civilians to military tribunals, detain suspects indefinitely and without due process, conduct searches without warrants, and prohibit gatherings of five or more persons (Cook, 2012: 171; el-Ghobashy, 2012: 127). Second, Gamaa Islamiyya (the Islamic Group) conducted an insurgency against the regime throughout the 1990s. This insurgency consisted of an assassination campaign targeted at regime officials, the harassment of the Coptic community and attacking foreign tourists (Kepel, 2008a; Sirrs, 2010). By the end of the 1990s, the MOI's draconian methods had put an end to the insurgency around Cairo, although it continued to linger in the south and the Sinai. Despite the insurgency's effective cessation, the effects of repression remained in place as the powers afforded to the MOI saw Egypt experience a substantial degree of de-liberalisation (Brand, 2014: 105).

The MOI, empowered by their role in combating Gamaa Islamiyya, exploited their position. Its members increasingly harassed people on the streets, and, demanded bribes or free food from vendors and business owners. Members of the CSF also randomly arrested members of the public in order to meet a quota system and then leave them in jail for two to three nights before releasing them (Bradley, 2012: 120). Those who came to the police to get identity cards or other routine documents were hounded for bribes or arrested, as those who could not pay the requested bribes risked 'disappearing' for a few days (Lesch, 2012: 19-20). Those who protested against this were subject to crueller treatment. The case of Amhed Abdeen Said is a case in point (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Said had his mobile phone confiscated by police and was told it would be returned to him upon exiting the café he was in at the time. Upon exiting the café, Said asked for his phone back and in response was arrested. Taken to a nearby police station, he was beaten with sticks and subject to electric shocks. In other cases, the CSF routinely picked up day labourers and took them to police stations where they would be coerced into 'selecting' the crime for which they would be charged (Steavenson, 2011). In their assessment of Egypt's police stations, Amnesty International (2010) concluded that 'torture was systematic in police stations . . . and for the most part, committed with impunity'. The government's own human rights body, the National Council on Human Rights, expressed in its first report in 2004, a deep

concern about the ‘blatant’ torture that had occurred under the interior ministry’s auspices (HRW, 2011: 34).

The behaviour of the MOI’s regular forces trickled down to thugs, known as *baltagiyya*, employed by the regime to harass its opponents. The *baltagiyya* were tasked with intimidating voters during elections and helping the MOI stuff ballot boxes to ensure regime-backed candidates emerged victorious.¹⁶⁴ State Security and Investigation Services (SSIS) officers trained these thugs before turning them over to the Central Security Forces (CSF) (Kandil, 2011: 33). During elections, the *baltagiyya* would instigate brawls outside polling stations, giving the police the pretext to arrest opposition representatives and suspend the voting process; also, they would further assault opposition activists in order to force them to stay away. In return for their loyalty to the regime, the ministry’s hired thugs gained the leeway to harass members of the public and opposition in the hope of extorting them (Amin, 2013: 202-203). Omar (2011) writes that ‘[t]he secret business relationship between the thugs and the State Security officers . . . provided the former with protection on the streets, thus transforming them into unleashed and undeterred monsters’. Mubarak’s final decade in power saw those thugs employed by the MOI harass wealthy-looking citizens for money, molest women on crowded streets and terrorise shopkeepers and small-business owners. Rather unsurprisingly, the US State Department’s 2006 Human Rights report on Egypt noted that ‘culture of impunity’ had spread throughout the security sector and Egypt’s citizens had become fair game for extortion (US Department of State, 2006a).

The actions of the MOI irrecoverably altered the relationship between the regime and the Egyptian people. Rather than protecting the Egyptian people, the MOI became a force from which the people needed protection. As one observer said about his time in Cairo, ‘[t]he average Egyptian can be dragged into a police station and tortured simply because a police officer doesn’t like his face’ (Shatz, 2010: 88). The violence employed by the MOI became endemic to the point that it was a standard behaviour to be ‘applied automatically without effort or reflection, something that does not require full consciousness or focus or planning, violence had become second nature’ (Amin, 2013: 75). The regime thus abandoned the pretence that the rule of law existed. This pattern is similar to the one that contributed to the regime’s loss of legitimacy in economic matters. Again, rhetoric did not match reality as those charged with protecting the Egyptian people were those who preyed on them. This loss of legitimacy became clear

¹⁶⁴ Personal Interview with Nateem Yasser, Researcher at The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Cairo, February 11 2014.

when Egyptian people began to share their experiences of mistreatment at the hands of the MOI according to Nateem Yasser:

While I think the whole idea of the ‘Facebook Revolution’ is overstated, people did share their experiences with one another over the last ten years. There’s a large young population and we used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs to discuss politics . . . People used this as a forum to talk about the treatment they received at the hands of the police. Some would talk about how they were tortured and others spoke about being asked for bribes . . . This all came together to create a group opposed to the regime.¹⁶⁵

Dina Shehata (2012: 112) corroborates this by noting that many opposition activists opposed to torture took their criticism of the regime online in order to both express their disenchantment with the regime and avoid reprisals. They also relied on audio-visual media including photographs and videos to drive home the regime’s illegitimacy, as many blogs became sites for posting footage of torture and various human rights violations. The declining legitimacy of the regime’s security discourse was evident during the uprising itself, as one of the consistent demands set out by the protestors was the removal of Interior Minister al-Adly.

7.2.3 The Lost legitimacy of the Mubarak Regime and the Egyptian Uprising

The Mubarak regime’s actions undermined its popular legitimacy. Despite attempts to maintain some form of eudemonic legitimacy through a veneer of populism and a rhetoric that championed social justice, economic liberalisation and the activities of the MOI saw a high degree of output alienation and a lack of descriptive representation emerge. The rhetoric of social justice rang hollow when those who claimed to safeguard the interests of the Egyptian people oversaw a political system that that saw them line their own pockets. Furthermore, those charged with protecting the Egyptian people, the MOI, were those the people needed protecting from. This gave rise to disenchantment with the Mubarak regime, which had failed to deliver a level of general -well-being for the majority of the population while allowing a substantial minority to prosper considerably, and in the case of Gamal potentially capture the presidency. In the years before the uprising, some noted that these actions carried consequences for the regime’s legitimacy. For example, Springborg (2009: 17) wrote that:

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Legitimacy is palpably eroding in Mubarak's Egypt. The regime has not bothered to develop and propagate a coherent and justificatory ideology. Its flagrant manipulation of the Constitution and outright violation of laws have undermined any claim to structural-legal legitimacy. The steady deterioration of public services has corroded legitimacy based on performance.

That the Mubarak regime privileged the interests of a few over the majority factored into how Egyptians perceived the regime's performance. Table 7.4 details Egypt's World Governance Indicator (WGI) scores, which, by and large, indicated a government that did not have the majority's interests at heart. Between 2005 and 2010, the majority of Egyptians perceived that the regime was not wholly capable of improving their well being or representing their interests. Control of Corruption, Government Effectiveness, and, Political Stability and Absence of Violence all scored below the 50th percentile. All three indicators were also below the regional average in 2010 on the eve of the uprising. Perhaps most significantly, the Egyptian people did not perceive that the regime had their best interests at heart, as Egypt's Voice and Accountability score steadily declined between 2005 and 2010. This gave rise to the perception that there was a high degree of output alienation and a lack of descriptive representation at work in Egypt, which was particularity manifest in the economic sphere.

Table 7.4 Egypt: World Governance Indicators 2005-2010¹⁶⁶

Indicators	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	MENA Region 2010*
Control of Corruption	38	29	29	27	41	34	44
Government Effectiveness	41	37	44	44	47	43	48
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	26	21	26	28	26	19	32
Regulatory Quality	40	37	43	49	47	47	44
Rule of Law	54	50	50	53	54	51	45
Voice and Accountability	22	16	17	15	15	14	18

*Average score of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, The Palestinian Territories (the West Bank and Gaza), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen

¹⁶⁶ The World Bank World Governance Indicators. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> [Accessed June 20 2015]

While the regime's rhetoric may have equated neoliberal economic policies with the betterment of the population, the manipulation of these policies contributed to serving only the interests of those in the personalist cadre, specifically the New Guard. For Egyptians on the outside looking in, there was a psychological break with the regime. That Egyptians suffered from output alienation and a lack of descriptive representation can be demonstrated in the regime's attitude to housing policy argues Hatem Zayed:

[M]any of the socioeconomic policies that entailed economic growth before 2011 were initially intended for people of lower socioeconomic class and they ended up then going to those who are rich. So . . . if you look at the housing policies in Egypt for instance, we find that all of the new cities that are currently filled with villas and compounds and gated communities [were initially designed] to offer alternative housing for those who are currently living in slum areas within greater Cairo. So, when you see that this area, let's say New Cairo, this area was built for middle and low-income families and then . . . it started being sold off to the ultra-elite with prices just as low as they would have been had they gone to the poor, they're equally subsidised. [Giving] a hypothetical number, let's say something's real value is LE10, they used to get it for LE2, because they benefitted from the subsidy that was going to go to the poor. And then they would build investments on it and sell it for the LE10. The poor could see this; they could that the policies that were targeted for me were going to him despite the fact that he doesn't need it. This was very evident in the last few years of Mubarak's rule, more so than before . . . Income gaps were increasing and housing is an excellent example of this because before people would be living in more or less similar neighbourhoods or in neighbourhoods that were geographically proximate to one another. They feel like they are living the same life, so if I'm living in Mohandiseen and there is a poor area in Mohandiseen and a rich neighbourhood right next to it, it's ok because I feel like we are together. But once you go out to the gated communities, people are going there, they're working there, they see these people living in villas and know that this area isn't for them.¹⁶⁷

The psychological break between the regime and those it governed contributed to a growing sense of anger amongst the Egyptian people that was aimed at Gamal and the New Guard according to Nateem Yasser. This anger was not just borne of a decline in socioeconomic conditions but a refusal by the regime, and those who supported it, to acknowledge Egypt's socioeconomic ills:

[There] was the famous ad in *al-Ahram*: 'Only two million pounds for a building'. It manifests [the regime's thinking] as an example. It was basically a minority that were living very luxuriously and they could see that economic growth was happening but in terms of the distribution of wealth and corruption, it made things worse for most Egyptians . . . [The unfairness of the situation] was even worse I think, healthcare was getting worse, education was getting worse, add to that the police brutality, which was especially worse at the police stations in underprivileged areas. It was a situation that could lead to an explosion at any point

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Hatem Zayed

. . . You could see how the other people live and see that this [Egypt's socioeconomic situation] is definitely not acceptable.¹⁶⁸

The regime's loss of legitimacy, the consequence of economic policies that benefitted a few at the expense of the majority and the repressive activities of the MOI, saw the Egyptian people demand change. The anger that arose from the regime's loss of legitimacy was directed towards the personalist cadre, as it was the actions of the New Guard and the MOI that brought the people to the street. As Wael Nawara contends:

People were unhappy and they wanted to make a change . . . People did not want to see power bequeathed to another generation of corrupt politicians. They did not want Gamal and his friends to run the country for their own benefit. Others wanted al-Adly, the Interior Minister, gone because of the repressive actions he oversaw . . . Whatever it was that brought people out, the common thing was that people wanted to change and once we were in the street a collective mind started to form . . . And this mind settled on the consensus that Mubarak had to go.

With the explosion of popular protest across Egypt, the ruling coalition's cadres reacted in different ways.

The reaction of the personalist cadre was to protect itself. While the speeches Mubarak gave to the Egyptian people offered some concessions, including the dismissal of the cabinet, the promise of reforms and the appointment of a Vice-President (Shaffer, 2011; The Washington Post, 2011), they obscured the efforts the New Guard undertook to obstruct the President's admittedly limited reforms. As Bradley Hope (2012) recounts, Gamal refused to acknowledge the scale of the protests arrayed against the regime or fully brief his father of the situation in Egypt. Furthermore, Gamal worked to block the efforts Mubarak had made to negotiate an end to the protests through the work of newly appointed NDP Secretary-General, PS member, Hossam Badrawi. According to Wael Nawara, Gamal's refusal to favour an amicable end to the protest movement eventually turned the military cadre against the regime:

Mubarak was more inclined to listen [to the protest movement] but I think it was the people around him like Gamal [that] wanted to fight to the end and when the military realised that, they came out with communiqué number two and basically ditched Mubarak.

These responses nonetheless indicate personalist attitudes towards regime change in their refusal to countenance it. Mubarak's offer of concessions demonstrated an awareness on his part that his position was in jeopardy according to Yasser: '[W]e knew

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Nateem Yasser.

there was a chance we could get rid of him and he knew it too. That's why he made the offer to get rid of the cabinet and whatever but it wasn't enough'.¹⁶⁹

Before the first protests emerged on January 25th the MOI had already been actively working to prevent the occurrence of regime change in Egypt by rounding up activists who had been inspired to engage in acts of self-immolation following events in Tunisia (el-Menawy, 2012: 47). When the protest movement mobilised on January 25th, the MOI employed repressive methods in an attempt to stymie their progress through Egypt's cities. The MOI beat up protestors and detained some for days (Aziz, 2012: 233-236), while the CSF forces centred on Tahrir Square used tear gas in an effort to force people to abandon the square and regroup (el-Ghobashy, 2011). The MOI's initial success in repressing the protest movement was short-lived and the scale of the protests that emerged on January 28th overwhelmed the ministry's ability to control it. As el-Ghobashy (2011) it:

At 5pm on the afternoon of January 28, when reports started rolling in of police stations burning down, one after another, al-Adly capitulated and ordered the removal of his forces from the streets. It was a sight unseen in modern Egyptian police rule – the one and only time that Egypt's [disparate] protest subcultures were able to defeat the coercive apparatus that had existed to keep them apart.

Such was the scale of the MOI's rout, the military cadre was ordered into downtown Cairo in an attempt to protect the regime and strategically significant areas (el-Menawy, 2012: 114). Although the MOI's forces were overwhelmed, their actions were consistent with the framework's prediction that the personalist cadre would refuse to favour regime change.

The advent of protests saw the NDP disintegrate. Despite its loss of prestige, the party was still a willing supporter of Mubarak. More importantly, members of the party Old Guard were part of Mubarak's inner circle when it came to designing a response to the protests. The former Information Minister Safwat Sherif was part of this group and was responsible for briefing the press. Sherif assumed this role because he was not as provocative a public figure as the New Guard, but his briefings indicated a refusal on the part of the NDP's leadership, both the Old Guard and New Guard, to willingly favour regime change. The NDP according to Sherif was *Al-Tawd al-Shamikh*, an immovable mountain (el-Menawy, 2012: 92). The NDP also organised counter-demonstrations but were hampered in two ways (ICG, 2011: b). First, the party's headquarters in downtown Cairo were set ablaze by the protest movement, which

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Nateem Yasser.

affected the party's ability to organise an effective response. Second, *baltagiyya* on horseback co-opted the NDP's counter-demonstrations in Tahrir Square on February 2nd. This incident, known as the Camel Battle, was a significant milestone in eroding the regime's legitimacy as it came after Mubarak's initial offer of concessions had stalled the protest's momentum (Fathi, 2012). The regime's loss of legitimacy saw the immovable mountain begin to crumble as NDP members, like their RCD counterparts in Tunisia, joined the protest movement. As Gehad Auda recounts:

A lot of the people in the square [Tahrir Square] were members of the NDP. They had actively been brought into the party but they did not necessarily believe in the values and norms of the modern [New Guard-led] NDP. They were card-carrying members of the party but they gave up their memberships during the uprising because it wasn't their party anymore.¹⁷⁰

Sherif's immovable mountain had begun to crumble at its foundation. As a vehicle for party mobilisation, the NDP was gradually unable to offer material advantages to those members not associated with the New Guard. This helps explain why those party members outside the New Guard had also called the legitimacy of the regime into question. The NDP's actions were consistent with the framework's expectations. The party initially sought to co-opt the protest movement via negotiation but the personalist cadre scuppered these efforts. Popular mobilisation contributed to the party's disintegration because it offered an opportunity for potential interest realisation outside of Mubarak's ruling coalition.

The regime's loss of legitimacy eventually culminated in the military cadre withdrawing from the ruling coalition and issuing its two communiqués, which supported the legitimate demands of those protesting. However, the military's stance throughout the uprisings appeared ambiguous, as it adopted a wait-and-see approach that saw it initially react to events. The military's deployment at the outset of the uprising illustrated the ambiguous nature of its stance, states the political scientist Mustapha Kamal al-Sayyid. Rather than deploy infantry that would be effective in Cairo's dense urban spaces the military deployed its armoured divisions, which were wholly impractical.¹⁷¹ Wael Nawara supports this contention and further argued that the deployments of armoured divisions were of a greater danger to the military in

¹⁷⁰ Personal Interview with Professor Gehad Auda, Professor of Political Science at the British University in Egypt and former NDP member, Cairo, February 11 2014.

¹⁷¹ Author's meeting with Professor Mustapha Kamal al-Sayyid, Executive Director PID Egypt, Cairo February 13 2014

downtown Cairo being nothing but a ‘death-trap for the soldier inside’.¹⁷² The military cadre was sympathetic to Mubarak’s position at the outset of the uprising, which accounted for its initially ambiguity,¹⁷³ but this changed in the aftermath of the Camel Battle, according to Nateem Yasser:

Mubarak’s second speech had won him some ground with the people. There were some people who were sympathetic to him and willing to seek a solution with the regime. But then came the Camel Battle, when the regime sent thugs to attack us. This made it clear to us that he had to go. People had sympathised with him after the speech but they took it back after this.¹⁷⁴

The loss of legitimacy that Mubarak had garnered with the Camel Battle indicated to the military cadre that remaining part of the ruling coalition would force it to compromise its institutional interests. Moreover, the military cadre had come to the realisation that remaining in the ruling coalition could potentially harm its long-term interests. If Gamal were to succeed to the presidency, the military cadre would have to defend a President deemed illegitimate by those he represented. Nawara argues that this shaped the military cadre's thinking because the military's support for the President was conditional on the incumbent possessing the popular mandate:

I think that the military was against Gamal Mubarak and . . . that they thought he would not be able to attain legitimacy and so [they would] have to fight the people . . . It doesn’t matter if you have neoliberal policies . . . the trouble is that this guy [Gamal] wouldn’t be stable . . . and [the military] would have to go into the street and that would be a losing battle. The second thing was that the way Gamal Mubarak and his friends were parading themselves was really humiliating to everybody, including the military. Average Egyptians felt a lot of distaste to this parading and the military asked ‘Who is this guy? Why should we protect him?’, and every Egyptian thought the same. I don’t think that the military was much different, except that maybe they had respect for Mubarak himself. He was a commander in the army, he fought in 1973, and he had a legitimate mandate from the people for some time. So this was the only reason why the military, would hesitate to actually, you know, although they had many opportunities to ditch him. And they didn’t even ditch him at the beginning of the revolution. It took a few days until they actually came to the conclusion that [keeping Mubarak in power] was not going to work out. And then they started issuing their communiqués . . . [T]he military stood by for a few days to evaluate the situation, but once they realised that by supporting Mubarak they would be, you know, confronting the people, they just ditched him. They said ‘OK, sir, you have to go. We tried. But you know we don’t think you can make it’. And they came making their communiqué number 1 and communiqué number 2 . . . saying we side with the people’s demands and we recognise the legitimacy of the people’s demands and if you had that kind of background, you start understanding how they think. They’re

¹⁷² Interview with Wael Nawara.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Nateem Yasser.

obedient to the commander-in-chief as long as he's got the popular mandate; if he loses the popular mandate then they change heart.¹⁷⁵

The military's exit from the ruling coalition was not only the consequence of the regime's lost legitimacy. It also reflected the military's fear for its institutional integrity if it were to engage the protest movement. However, the military's withdrawal from the ruling coalition did not see it withdraw from political life. According to Adel Soliman, the military's withdrawal from the ruling coalition was undertaken in order to protect Egypt from the political currents the uprising had unleashed:

SCAF only wanted to protect the regime. The army had a long term plan, they were afraid for power . . . [T]hey were afraid of the Muslim Brotherhood who came to the streets and gained a lot of popularity. And the army wanted to stop them from moving forward . . . The military intervened not to order the Egyptian revolution but to kill it . . . Mubarak's exit, of all the things he did, gave power to the SCAF to keep the regime alive and to let it continue.¹⁷⁶

That Mubarak withdrew from power and placed Egypt in hands of the military cadre was reflective of the task ahead according to Gehad Auda. The military cadre were best placed to administer a post-Mubarak Egypt:

Mubarak was very calculated in how he let power go . . . he thought Egypt's political situation would spiral out of control if he were to remain in power . . . [H]e recognised that he should go and made plans to transfer the running of the country to the SCAF . . . You have to understand that only the SCAF, only the SCAF, you cannot transfer power to some wishy-washy leftist or wishy-washy civilians . . . being in power brings its own imperatives and calculations and he could only have transferred power to the SCAF because they were the only institution capable of wielding it.¹⁷⁷

The actions of the ruling coalition's elite cadres reflect the framework's assumptions when the loss of popular legitimation is taken into consideration. The personalist cadre refused to favour change and was forced to exit power, the single-party cadre initially sought to co-opt the opposition but exited the ruling coalition when it saw its interests were threatened, and, the military cadre withdrew from the ruling coalition in order to protect its institutional integrity. Further confirming the framework's assumptions were the actions of the military cadre. With the institutional integrity of the military cadre threatened, it sought to seize power rather than withdraw from political life and oversaw an authoritarian transformation, which exhibited a

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Wael Nawara

¹⁷⁶ Personal Interview with General Adel Soliman, (Ret.), Director of the Strategic Dialogue Forum, Cairo, February 10, 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Gehad Auda

degree of procedural continuity with what went before. However, the military cadre did not assume a direct political role, as the SCAF appointed successive technocratic governments to administer the affairs of state until elections were held (Roll, 2015: 5). Key portfolios – including Foreign Affairs, Interior and Justice – remained in the hands of those loyal to the military cadre, while Tantawi remained as Defence Minister (Springborg, 2011: 430). Furthermore, SCAF left the management of the Egyptian state to the Mubarak-era bureaucracy.

The SCAF sought to limit the scope of change in Egypt moved to put in place a system that would simultaneously meet popular demands for regime change, and, protect the military cadre's interests and the basic characteristics of the Egyptian state (Frisch, 2013: 189). To protect its interests the SCAF issued a constitutional declaration that made the military leadership the prime decision maker and manager of the transformation process (Roll, 2015: 5). Furthermore, this declaration gave SCAF the last word over the beginning of the constitutional process after the election of a new parliament, which effectively placed the SCAF above civilian oversight. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) supported these actions because they saw the military cadre as their natural partner at this time as both groups sought to demobilise popular protests (Alexander, 2011). The MB also allied with the military because they wanted to quickly proceed with parliamentary elections, which would enable them to take control of the levers of state (Brownlee et al., 2015: 104-106). This was in marked contrast to Egypt's youth protestors and secular opposition, who desired to eradicate all elements of the Mubarak regime and create a new constitution before proceeding with parliamentary elections. The SCAF favoured the MB's position regarding parliamentary elections because it would despite opposition energies that could potentially threaten their interests (Frisch, 2013: 189). Early parliamentary elections would also allow SCAF to weaken the parliament before presidential elections, thus placing the military leadership in a position to negotiate between the two branches of government in a manner beneficial to its interests.

In spring 2011, the SCAF and the MB established an informal alliance. In return for accepting the transitional roadmap drawn up the military leadership, the MB would mobilise its membership to support it. The alliance was initially beneficial for both sides. The SCAF tempered the country's revolutionary political dynamics and controlled the pace of transformation with the support of the MB. In return, the MB positioned itself to capitalise on its organisational strength in the country's parliamentary and presidential elections. In Egypt's first free and fair parliamentary

elections, held between November 2011 and January 2012, the MB's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), captured 42 percent of seats (Brownlee et al., 2012: 113-114). The aftermath of the parliamentary elections revealed the limitations of this alliance however. Because of the constitutional declaration parliament's legislative competencies remained limited, the MD found itself unable to shape the transformation process because of the military's de facto control (Roll, 2015: 6). The alliance became further complicated when Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court announced on June 14th 2012, two days before the runoff vote in Egypt's first free and fair presidential election, that the law regulating the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary elections was unconstitutional. The timing and speeding of this ruling enable the SCAF to dissolve parliament and reassert its authority before a President could be elected to pass a constitutional addendum that suborned the military to civilian authority (Brown, 2012). The military cadre saw this as a necessary measure to protect their interests should Mohammad Morsi, the FJP's candidate, win the presidential runoff, which occurred when Morsi beat the former NDP Prime Minister, Ahmed Shafiq.

Despite the constitutional amendments SCAF had put in place, the newly elected President Morsi took a number of steps to redress the balance in the MB's relationship with the SCAF. In August 2012, Morsi announced the dismissal of Tantawi and Chief of Staff Sami Annan following the killing of sixteen soldiers by militants in Northern Sinai (Roll, 2015: 8). Succeeding Tantawi as Defence Minister was military intelligence head General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. Morsi's dismissal of Tantawi and Annan did not ruffle feathers in the SCAF or see the military suborn itself to civilian leadership. The dismissal of Tantawi and Annan appeared to be an act taken by both the MB and SCAF to promote a younger generation of officers within the military cadre and both Tantawi and Annan were decorated by Morsi and retained as presidential advisors (Achcar, 2013: 272-274). That September Morsi unilaterally moved against SCAF and dismissed General Farid al-Tuhami, the head of the *Raqaba* (the Administrative Control Agency), Egypt's anti-corruption agency. In actuality, the *Raqaba* managed the state's elite during the Mubarak era and was said to have assembled dossiers about important members of the bureaucracy, the business community and politicians that could be used at the President's discretion to punish opponents and keep regime supporters in line (Sayigh, 2012: 12). Morsi removed al-Tuhami without consulting the SCAF but avoided a confrontation by appointing another military officer, General Mohammad Haiba, to lead the agency. Nevertheless, this action damaged Morsi's relationship with the military cadre (Roll, 2015: 9).

Despite these dismissals, the SCAF openly avoided confrontation with Morsi because the President undertook a number of actions that served to undermine his position. First, Morsi issued a presidential decree in November 2012 in which he sought to place the executive above the law, albeit temporarily, and neuter the judiciary's role in the constitution-drafting process (Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kirkpatrick and el-Sheikh, 2013). This saw nearly all non-Islamist parties and several opposition groups mobilise to protest against Morsi's decision. Second, Morsi undertook a number of policy decisions that set him on a collision course with the SCAF. He implemented a parallel foreign policy independent of SCAF and the Foreign Ministry, which angered SCAF,¹⁷⁸ and, he sought to impose civilian control on the military by placing a number of MB delegates on the National Defence Council, a proposal that was outright rejected by the SCAF (Roll, 2015: 10).

Morsi's actions created distrust in the alliance between the MB and SCAF, and this tension was compounded by duelling protests between Islamists and secular opposition groups over Morsi's usurpation of the constitution-drafting process. These protests took on an added dimension in March 2013 when citizens began to circulate petitions calling on the military to remove Morsi and assume power. The following month, a group called Tammarod began a nationwide signature drive, calling on citizens to withdraw support for Morsi and to gather for a mass protest at the presidential palace on June 30 (Brownlee et al., 2015: 124). A week before the protests, Defence Minister Sisi declared that the military would intervene to prevent a civil war and called on all political forces to reach an agreement. Sisi's desire to prevent a civil war had the military's interests in mind as a potential civil war may have irrecoverably damaged the institution given the differing viewpoints the military leadership and lower-ranked officers had (Frisch, 2013: 192-195). The one week ultimatum to resolve the situation was also implemented to see if Morsi retained the popular mandate according to Nawara:

He [Morsi] was given an ultimatum just like Mubarak. He was told you have a week to sort things out and if you don't the military will take over . . . As with Mubarak, the military are obedient to the commander-in-chief provided he has the popular mandate; if he loses the popular mandate they will not support him . . . In fact with Morsi the last people to jump off the ship were the military. Sisi came out many times saying 'We will not intervene'. People were asking Sisi to intervene in November 2012 after Morsi issued his constitutional decree. And there were people who continued to ask him [Sisi] to do so.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Hatem Zayed.

Sisi announced on July 3rd that Morsi had been removed from office because he had ‘failed to meet and conform to the demands of the people’ and was replaced by the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Adly Mansour, on an interim basis (Brownlee et al., 2015: 125). The conclusion of Morsi’s brief presidency was similar to Mubarak’s; the military removed the incumbent once it had become apparent he had lost the popular mandate. Furthermore, the military again took direct control because it feared for its institutional integrity and both findings were again consistent with the framework’s assumptions. Within a year of Morsi’s ouster SCAF had restored authoritarianism in Egypt, albeit a transformed system headed by the military cadre and the newly elected President Sisi. This system, according to Soliman, firmly places power within the SCAF, as the President is now reliant on the military leadership for their position:

We have a new system controlled by the army. Since Nasser came to power, the President was the person who decided which person succeeds them. Now we have a change in the situation: it’s the army who selects the President and guides the regime. The SCAF nominated Sisi to run for the presidency and he won’t be able to remove them. We will not have a President who will appoint the SCAF, we’ll now have a SCAF who’ll appoint the President.

7.3 International Support

In contrast to Tunisia, whose location and size saw it pursue a pragmatic foreign policy, Egypt saw its location and status as the weightiest Arab state as a base from which to seek regional leadership. As Egypt gradually achieved independence throughout the twentieth century, it was drawn into competition for regional leadership. Under Nasser, Egypt sought to check the influence of pro-Western forces in the MENA, as it saw the Arab world as its natural sphere of influence (Dawisha, 1976: 78). Israel, situated on the country’s eastern border in the Sinai region and blocking its accesses to the eastern reaches of the MENA, was perceived as a threat and obstacle to the country’s ambitions. However, Nasser’s pursuit of regional leadership invited a reaction and defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War saw a contraction in Egypt’s leadership ambitions (Hinnebusch and Shama, 2014: 76). Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat, used the pretence of the 1973 October War with Israel to firmly ally Egypt with the United States and reassert the country’s leadership role (see Brownlee, 2012: 16-37). Allying with the United States saw Egypt sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1978, the Camp David accords. The signing of this peace treaty was a double-edged sword for Egypt. It saw the country welcomed into the United States’ fold, and the access to preferential aid arrangements that this entailed, but its regional leadership ambitions were dented as Egypt was shunned in the Arab world. It was only under Mubarak that Egypt was able

to come out of the cold but by this time it found itself just one of many actors in an increasingly multi-polar MENA presided over by the United States (Halliday, 2005: 138-143).

Despite its reduced leadership role, Egypt's alliance with the United States saw it make notable contributions towards shaping international politics in the MENA (Gerges, 2012: 161-162). It was one of the chief mediators in helping secure the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994. The Mubarak regime also aided Washington's interests by counterbalancing with Jordan and the Gulf Monarchies against Iran, Iraq and Syria, as well as Hamas and Hezbollah, the so-called 'resistance front' (Hinnebusch, 2014: 65-66). In what was termed a 'new Arab Cold War' the resistance front sought to destabilise Washington's interests in the region (Valbjørn and Bank, 2012). Mubarak was also a reliable ally in other ways. He secured safe passage for the West's oil supplies through the Suez Canal (Durac, 2009: 82) and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), which saw Egypt used as a site for the rendition and torture of terror suspects (Gardner, 2011: 166-169). And, while Egypt was not a supporter of the US-led invasion of Iraq it nevertheless allowed US forces and materials to pass through the Suez Canal en route to the front lines (Khalil, 2003).

The relationship Egypt established with the United States was mutually beneficial but power resided firmly with the latter. Egypt's strategic importance to the United States rested on three pillars. First, Cairo's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process rapidly evolved into a role marked by the frequency with which Egypt successfully mediated issues between the Arab states and Israel (MacLeod, 2006). Second, the United States was willing to avail itself of Egypt's practical services in the intelligence sphere and Omar Suleiman's Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS) was of significant importance during the GWOT (Sirrs, 2010: 175-197). Third, the aid Egypt received indicated its importance to the United States (Tschirgi, 2013: 234). Since 1979, Egypt has been the largest recipient of US aid apart from Israel. On average Egypt has received \$2 billion in aid from the United States on an annual basis including military aid, which has totalled \$1.3 billion a year on average since 1987 (Sharp, 2010: 4; Sharp, 2014). Although this aid was undoubtedly symbolic, it also limited the ability of the Egyptian military cadre to realise its interests. The relationship between the United States and Egypt was primarily geopolitical in nature and privileged the former's strategic interests, which saw Egypt receive generous levels of aid in return. Thus, there was weak external pressure for the Mubarak regime to engage in meaningful political reform efforts. This was despite the United States strong support for democracy

promotion during the first decade of the twenty-first century, which in actuality was subordinate to its strategic interests (Durac, 2009: 88). Indeed, Calabrese (2005: 61) argues that the United States had no interest in promoting political reform in Egypt. This was significant to Mubarak, as he had become increasingly reliant on the United States during his last decade in power. Fawaz Gerges (2012: 162) writes that:

In his regime's last decade, as Mubarak's legitimation crisis deepened at home, his dependence on the United States increased considerably, and he laboured hard to be more useful to his superpower patron. Mubarak squeezed Hamas by helping Israel tighten the siege of the Gaza Strip and spearheaded the Sunni-dominated front against Iran. Whatever Washington desired, Mubarak obligingly provided. In the view of the Egyptians, the Mubarak regime acted as a contractor for the United States and Israel.

Accordingly, the ties that developed between Egypt and United States were those of low linkage and high leverage. This was the consequence of a relationship that was primarily based on geopolitics, which saw little in the way of strong links develop between the two countries with the notable exception of the business community (Kandil, 2012c: 205, 209; Lampridi-Kemou and Azaola, 2013: 130) However, the United States was in a position to exercise strong leverage over Egypt through the generous levels of aid, particularly with regard to the military cadre, and political support it provided to the Mubarak regime through turning a blind eye to its authoritarian behaviour. As a 'contractor', the United States' international support for the Mubarak regime rested on the latter's ability to contribute to the former's strategic interests. As long as the Mubarak regime assisted in the realisation of US interests, it would continue to get international support. There are two examples that indicate the primacy of US interests in the support it afforded Egypt. First, there was its stance regarding the succession question. Second, there was the nature of the aid it gifted the military cadre.

Egypt also developed close ties with its primary trading partner, the European Union. Although Egypt's relationship with the EU did not exhibit similar political ties as its relationship with the United States, the EU was a willing and supportive partner of the Mubarak regime. The EU wholly supported the Mubarak regime's mediation efforts between Israel and Palestine as well its efforts in mediating between the two rival Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas (Pace, 2012: 50). However the EU's relationship with Egypt has been characterised to a large extent by the former's inherent preference for stability in the southern Mediterranean.

The EU's relationship with Egypt primarily focused on security and stability in the short term but since the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 the EU cautiously attempted to promote human rights and democracy in Egypt through establishing political dialogues with and providing funding for NGOs co-opted by the Mubarak regime (Pace, 2012: 51). However, the EU's ability to influence political reform has been blighted by a number of factors (Pace, 2012: 52-53). First, the EU's does not wish to accelerate political reforms lest it unleash dynamics it cannot manage. Second, there are the interests and relations of individual EU member states that may be damaged by political reform. Third, there is also institutional incoherence within the EU to take into account as the Commission and the Parliament have openly disagreed on the reform process in Egypt.

Despite its inability to implement political reform in Egypt the EU does possess potentially powerful leverage over Egypt in the economic realm. Following the September 11th attacks the EU intensified its cooperation with Egypt in their proclaimed fight against terrorism as well in their combined efforts to provide for a secure southern Mediterranean, manage migration flows and deepen trade relations between the two. At this time talk of political reform quietened and the EU's principal leverage, financial assistance packages, was mainly distributed toward programmes that dealt with economic issues, immigration, security cooperation and combating terrorism (Pace, 2012: 53). The launching of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which sought to deepen relations between the EU and Egypt, placed trade at the heart of the relationship between the two in Europe's attempt to secure its southern borders:

Egypt continues to pursue its dynamic foreign policy aimed at strengthening its relations with its international partners in particular the EU, its commitment to further integration with the global economy, and its efforts to further political and economic development and modernization. Thus, a major opportunity has evolved for Egypt and the EU to further develop their strategic partnership through an increasingly close and enhanced relationship. This will involve a significant degree of economic integration and deepening of political, cultural and social cooperation, aiming to promote peace, stability, security, growth, development, and prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region as well as modernization of the Egyptian economy and society (European Commission, 2010).

The EU's commitment to deepening economic ties with Egypt theoretically granted it significant leverage over the Mubarak regime and ties between the EU and Egypt could be best described as low linkage and high leverage. Furthermore, the EU based its relationship on Egypt on deepening economic ties with Egypt and securing the southern Mediterranean. This granted the EU significant ability to manage the

behaviour of the Mubarak regime, which would allow the former to hypothetically reward the latter with financial assistance packages when it supported European interests. Similarly to the Tunisia, the EU did not act on its significant leverage that again reflected its preference for stability and lack of institutional cohesion.

7.3.1 The United States and the Succession Question: The Son and the Spy

As Chapter 6 discussed, the question of presidential succession had been largely unresolved at the domestic level. This saw both the New Guard and the Old Guard make efforts to press their claims in Washington. Given its strategic interests in the region, the position of the United States was a key factor in answering the succession question. However, as this section will detail, the preferences of those in the US foreign establishment were not unanimous, which further complicated an already difficult situation. Despite the lack of consensus on a preferred successor, the United States was aware that the succession had become a defining theme of Mubarak's final decade in power:

The issue of presidential succession is the hottest single issue on Egypt's domestic political scene. Both Gamal and his father have repeatedly denied that there is any plan for a 'succession scenario'. More important than such words, many Egyptians tell us, are the actions of Gamal, his father, and others, which appear to be setting the stage for the young Mubarak's rise to power.¹⁷⁹

As the previous chapter made clear a number of political changes had occurred, particularly the reconfirmation of the NDP's structures, which appeared to have created a possible roadmap for Gamal and his New Guard to capture the presidency. The 'others' referred to in this cable were suspected to be senior officials in the George W. Bush administration (Brownlee, 2012: 107). These rumours were given credence in May 2006 when a journalist noted Gamal entering the White House. The presidential scion was allegedly on a private visit to the United States to renew his pilot's licence when he simply decided to meet with top administration officials. This surreptitious visit included meetings with Dick Cheney, Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor, Stephen Hadley, and, President Bush himself in an unscheduled drop-by (Baker, 2006). The Egyptian media speculated the purpose of this visit was to gain approval for a Gamal succession, and there were reports from Cairo and Washington that a deal approving the succession was reached during Rice's visit to

¹⁷⁹ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, 'Actions Louder Than Words: Gamal Mubarak and the Presidency, April 3 2006, 06CAIRO2010. Available at: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/04/06CAIRO2010.html> [Accessed November 24 2014]

Cairo that same month (El-Din, 2006c). This deal would see the United States approve of Gamal's succession in exchange for him maintaining the foreign policy established by his father.

The economic liberalisation policies pursued by the New Guard also found favour in the United States' business community. The New Guard's close contacts with US investors, as well as those from Europe, China and the Gulf (Amar, 2011) saw foreign investment treble in Egypt between 2004 and 2007 (Amin, 2009: 93). Through their business activities, the New Guard ensured that Western support for the Mubarak regime would continue to be forthcoming, which was reflective of a long-term trend in the region that saw authoritarianism supported if market reforms were embraced (see Achcar, 2013: 57-96), despite Egypt, like the broader MENA, being officially pressured by the United States to undergo political reform by the United States at the time (see Sayyid, 2007). The New Guard played a bridging role that allowed the Mubarak regime to ward off calls to implement political reform and this was a role in which they excelled. The New Guard accompanied Mubarak on his visits to the United States, becoming a mobile business lobby of sorts, and saw their weight enhanced in 2004 following the United States' decision to allocate USAID funds directly to the private sector rather than through Egypt's state institutions (Kandil, 2012c: 209).

Although positioned as heir apparent, there were members of the US foreign policy establishment that questioned whether Gamal was the ideal candidate to guarantee Egypt's foreign policy alignment after his father left office. As one member of the National Security Council made clear to Brownlee (212: 108):

It's the path of least resistance but over time, that's not necessarily going to be reliable for our security interests . . . especially . . . [with] a real murkiness around the question of his successor. It is probably going to be Gamal but who knows?

If Gamal struggled to establish authority in Egypt, a dynastic succession could potentially have the effect of damaging US interests in the region rather than realising them. Again, the United States was well aware of this and its embassy in Cairo noted that:

[W]hoever ends up as Egypt's next president likely will be politically weaker than Mubarak. Furthermore, the new president will likely adopt an anti-American tone in his initial public rhetoric, in an effort to prove his nationalist bona fides to the

Egyptian street, and may possibly extend an olive branch to the Muslim Brotherhood as did previous Egyptian presidents at the beginning of their terms.¹⁸⁰

Elliot Abrams, a former Bush administration official, reasoned that an electorally weak president, such as Gamal, might seek legitimacy through ‘anti-Americanism’ and ‘a kind of populism that appeals to the street by distancing them from us and even from Israel and from the peace treaty’ (Brownlee, 2012: 108).

The concerns over a potential Gamal presidency shed new light on US efforts to promote political reform in Egypt, despite its commitment to supporting the Mubarak regime. At the beginning of Bush’s second term the United States increasingly engaged Mubarak on the issue of political reform. In February 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cancelled a planned visit to Egypt in apparent displeasure at the regime’s treatment of Ayman Nour (Kessler, 2005). Nour was a persistent critic of the Mubarak regime and a member of the People’s Assembly who had challenged Mubarak in the 2005 presidential election. The regime arrested Nour in January 2005 on trumped-up charges and became the victim of a regime-sanctioned smear campaign (Cook, 2012: 194). Rice visited Cairo in June of that year calling for an engagement with civil society and free and fair elections (US Department of State, 2005). Rice called for the Egypt to be a leader on the MENA’s path to democracy on a return visit in October 2006 (US Department of State, 2006b). Rice did not maintain her robust position and in 2007, a different tone emerged in her policy statements. Visiting Cairo in January that year Rice expressed her appreciation for the Mubarak regime’s support for the United States in the region while neglecting to discuss political reform (Slackman, 2007). What saw the United States change its stance were a series of events in the region that underlined the importance of having allies in positions of power throughout the region. Hamas’ electoral victory in the Gaza Strip contradicted an assumption that given democratic conditions, ‘the citizens of the Arab world will bring to power parliamentary majorities or presidents that will please the West’ (Kopstein, 2006: 89). Indeed, Brownlee (2012: 96) argues that the rationale for promoting political reform was not an idealistic attempt at democracy promotion. Rather, it was an effort undertaken to ‘anchor Egypt’s alignment before Hosni Mubarak passed away’ and allow moderate voices to emerge that would serve as both a tonic to authoritarianism and the Muslim Brotherhood while simultaneously being open to working with the United States.

¹⁸⁰ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, ‘*Presidential Succession in Egypt*’, May 14 2007, 07CAIRO1417. Available at: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/05/07CAIRO1417.html> [Accessed November 24 2014]

The United States concerns over Gamal's potential succession and inability to find a successor from outside of the regime saw it consider another regime insider, Omar Suleiman, director of the EGIS. As part of his brief Suleiman controlled key foreign policy portfolios including Sudan and Palestine in addition to his liaising with the United States in their effort to combat terrorism (Sirrs, 2010: 183). His worldview was ideologically congruent with the United States, which emphasised stability above all else (Weaver, 2003: 91-92). This worldview aligned with US interests in the region, particularly with regard to the peace process and terrorism. Suleiman's command of his brief led many within the United States foreign policy establishment to consider him as the only viable alternative as a successor to Gamal.¹⁸¹ A cable from May 2006 underlined the importance of Suleiman to the United States noting that '[o]ur intelligence collaboration with Omar Suleiman is now probably the most successful element of the [U.S.-Egyptian] relationship'.¹⁸² Suleiman's military background, intelligence work and policy experience a reliable ally as a potential president in comparison to the inexperienced Gamal. Suleiman had proven himself as a guarantor of US interests, working to weaken Hamas and free the captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Further burnishing his pro-US credentials Suleiman noted in an October 2006 meeting with diplomats that, with regard to Hamas' electoral victory in Gaza, '[t]he most important thing to remember is that the Hamas government must not be allowed to succeed. It has to fall' (Ravid, 2006).

Like the New Guard, Suleiman also travelled to Washington to press his claim. In October 2007, he travelled to the United States under the official pretext of holding talks with regard to security at the Gaza border. According to a number of observers, the ostensible reason for this visit was to normalise relations between Egypt and the United States after the withdrawal of \$200 million in military aid in retaliation for failing to control weapons trafficking and the harassment of Ayman Nour (Lampridi-Kemou and Azaola, 2013: 139). However, this trip also sought to secure support from the United States in his leadership struggle against the New Guard. In addition, Suleiman had made clear to US officials that he 'detest[ed]' the notion of becoming President.¹⁸³ However, like the remainder of the Old Guard, Suleiman did not realistically attempt to shackle Gamal's ambitions. Furthermore, a consensus had emerged within US circles that the military would likely support Gamal if it could

¹⁸¹ See, *Actions Louder than Words*.

¹⁸² Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, 'Scenesetter for Deputy Secretary Zoellick's Visit to Egypt', May 16 2006, 06CAIRO2933. Available at: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/05/06CAIRO2933.html> [Accessed November 24 2014]

¹⁸³ See, *Presidential Succession in Egypt*.

access additional sources of patronage¹⁸⁴ and that the military cadre would only break from the regime if a crisis was to occur, which, at the time, seemed unlikely (Brownlee, 2012: 138). The attitude of the United States towards the succession question indicates the primacy it placed on its strategic interests in its relationship with Egypt. Even though there was tacit support for a Gamal succession, questions over his ability to realise US interests presented an opportunity for Omar Suleiman to press home his claims.

7.3.2 The Geopolitical Limitations of Military Aid

The military aid supplied to Egypt created the perception that the interests of the military cadre were sufficiently realised. However, this did not take into account that Egypt's primary military supplier had also committed to keeping it militarily inferior to Israel. The former Defence Minister, Abu Ghazzala, admitted, in a 1997 interview, that this fact disturbed the officer corps (Baz, 2007: 207). The commitment to keeping Egypt militarily inferior to Israel was not secret, and several figures in the US foreign policy establishment, including Henry Kissinger (1994: 737) and Robert Komer (2009: 30), acknowledged this fact. For example, the number of F-16 fighters the United States supplied to Egypt was less than two-thirds of those supplied to Israel (Kandil, 2012b: 188). On top of that, Egyptian requests for particular weapons systems were denied because of Israeli objections: the Clinton administration provided the UAE with access to Advanced Medium-range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) but denied them to Egypt. This commitment has given rise to a situation where Egypt and Israel can access much of the same weaponry but the latter's cache is not only quantitatively and qualitatively superior but further supplemented by an advanced indigenous arms industry and US determination to maintain a 'technology gap' in Israel's favour (Frisch, 2001: 3-5).

In those instances, where the military cadre sought to access ultramodern equipment elsewhere, driven by its 'expressed dissatisfaction with the pace of weapons supplies from the United States and its desire to avoid excessive dependence on a single supplier', the United States was quick to veto these pursuits (Eytan, Heller and Levran, 1985: 87). The United States blocked an Egyptian deal with Russia to upgrade its air defence systems with S-300 anti-tactical ballistic missiles that were particularly effective in countering Israeli cruise missiles (Kandil, 2012a: 186). Not until 2003 was Egypt permitted to use US funds to refurbish some of its obsolete Soviet-era missile

¹⁸⁴ Cable, Embassy Cairo to Secretary of State, '*Academics See Military in Decline, But Retaining String Influence*', September 23, 2008, 08CAIRO2091_a. Available at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08CAIRO2091_a.html [Accessed 4 November 2014]

technology. The United States' missile policy towards Egypt saw 'serious limitations' imposed on the latter, particularly with regard to its ability to face a potential Israeli strike (Cordesmann, 2006: 175-177). An Israeli report had reached this same conclusion in the 1980s and stated that Egypt's reliance on the United States caused it to 'fall behind Israel and other Arab states in the Middle East arms race' (Eytan, Heller and Tamari, 1984: 89).

Military aid also affected the military cadre in more subtle ways. The aid provided to Egypt assigned priority to the air force and the navy (which received 80 percent of the annual grant), as well as the armoured corps to a lesser extent (Eytan, Gazit and Gilbo, 1993: 136-142). This was to the detriment of the artillery and air defence corps, which had proved crucial to Egypt during its 1967 and 1973 wars. Kandil (2012b: 189) asserts that the United States purposefully distributed aid in this manner. The air defence and artillery corps had proven essential to Egypt's defence and deterrence of Israel while the air force and navy were two technologically intensive branches in which Egypt lacked the competency to outperform Israel. It appeared that Defence Minister Tantawi was aware of this trend as he was rumoured to have resisted the United States' attempts to restructure the military cadre (Essam al-Din, 2011: 1). For their part, the United States was also frustrated with Tantawi in this regard as it decried the Defence Minister's obsession with state-on-state warfare that prevented the Egyptian military from restructuring to face the challenges that arose in the post-Cold War period (Brownlee, 2012: 98). Moreover, US military aid had proven overly expensive. It cost Egypt \$1.7 billion worth of Russian weapons to fight the Suez War, the Yemen War, the Six-Day War, the War of Attrition, and the October War during its two-decade relationship with the Soviet Union. During the first five years of its relationship with the United States, Egypt accrued \$6.6 billion of debt, even though it had never gone to war or had intended to (Handoussa, 1990: 114).

The military cadre's reliance on their erstwhile allies was not only worrisome because of the technology gap but because of the United States proclivity to share intelligence on the Egyptian military with their Israeli counterparts (Springborg, 1989: 95). This worry is understandable in light of the fact that Egypt still classifies Israel as a threat and positions the majority of its forces between Cairo and the Suez Canal. Effectively, 'almost all of Egypt's capabilities, equipment, and deployment of forces are concentrated on one front to engage one force only: the Israeli Defence Forces' (Frisch, 2001: 6). As Cordesman notes: 'In spite of Egypt's firm commitment to peace, it cannot ignore the risk of some unexpected political crisis or strategic shift that could again

make Israel a threat. It must maintain a suitable deterrent and defence capability to deal with the risk of some unlikely breakdown in the peace with Israel' (2006: 200).

The issue of Israel aside, the military cadre also recognised that its alliance with the United States prevented it from projecting regional power in any direction. The United States defended its interests in the MENA, and, despite Egypt's participation in the Gulf War, it was not permitted to play a more active role in Gulf security via the ill-fated Damascus Declaration (Frisch, 2001: 6). To add insult to injury for the military cadre, the United States described the performance of Egypt's two divisions during the Gulf War as 'middling' (Eytan, Gazit and Gilbo, 1993: 143). Norvell De Atkine, a US Colonel who supervised the training of Egyptian troops at the time also described their capabilities as 'mediocre' (1999: 13). It was clear that after years of training and upgrading at the hands of the United States, the interests of the military cadre had not been realised.

The provision of military aid further illuminated the leverage the United States exercised over the military cadre. While the provision of military aid weakened the ability of the military cadre to realise its interests, it could still not extract itself from its dependency on the United States. As Adel Soliman makes clear, to cut itself off from the United States would be detrimental to the military cadre's already reduced abilities:

America has an important role in providing the Egyptian army with their most important weapons, the Egyptian army was built on American weapons . . . and of course, America has an important role that can make the Egyptian army weak or lose its power. So, America can affect the situation of the Egyptian army . . . [The military] can't go without America. Mubarak can't bring them weapons or the necessary things for the army.¹⁸⁵

The military cadre's reliance on US aid indicates the high level of leverage the United States could bring to bear on Egypt. While US aid contributed to weakening the military cadre, it also saw the latter unable to withdraw from the ruling coalition. This underscored the degree to which the military cadre was dependent on the United States. This dependency, even though the military cadre did not welcome it, saw it look to the United States to shape elements of its thinking during the uprising.

7.3.3 The Egyptian Uprising: The United States' Dilemma

The relationship between Egypt and the United States was predicated on the realisation of the latter's strategic interests. Accordingly, the United States was wary of

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Adel Soliman

any changes within the Egyptian ruling coalition that could potentially destabilise its interests in the MENA. This thinking, and the leverage it exercised over the military cadre, informed the United States' actions during the Egyptian uprising, an occurrence that was neither expected nor desired. That the uprising was not expected is evident when one considers the initial reactions of the Obama administration. On the second day of the protests, on January 26th, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said that the Mubarak regime should 'demonstrate its responsiveness to the people' and recognise their 'universal rights' (Bingham, 2011). Vice president Joe Biden insisted that Mubarak needed to 'move in the direction' of being responsive 'to some . . . of the needs of the people out there'. Realpolitik informed Biden's answer to the question of whether it was time for Mubarak to exit:

Mubarak has been an ally of ours in a number of things. And he's been very responsible on, relative to geopolitical protest in the region, the Middle East peace process; the actions Egypt has taken relative to normalizing relationships – with Israel . . . I would not refer to him as a dictator (Murphy, 2011).

Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton both issued appeals for restraint and called on all Egyptians to avoid resorting to violence. 'What we should continue to do' stated Biden 'is to encourage reasonable accommodation and discussion' to peacefully resolve the claims made 'by those who have taken to the street'. Biden further stated that those who 'are legitimate should be responded to because the economic well-being and the stability of Egypt rests upon the middle class buying into the future of Egypt' (Murphy, 2011). One commentator referring to Biden's statements wondered whether those protesting in Egypt thought any of their demands were illegitimate (Murphy, 2011).

The initial reaction of the United States to the uprising was the issuing of anodyne statements such as the above, as the Obama administration found itself in a quandary (Gardner, 2011: 186). On the one hand it did not want to intervene in the uprising and be blamed for propping up a regime that its people had deemed illegitimate; on the other hand, it did not want to be responsible for deserting a government that had been a 'cornerstone' of US policy in the MENA. In the first case, there was the risk of losing influence with a new generation of leaders in Egypt. In the second, there was a fear of regional chaos and alienating other powerful allies, especially those in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen - countries that offered oil, opposition to al-Qaeda, and a valuable naval base in the Bahraini case. Israel also feared what would happen to the 1978 treaty if Mubarak were to be ousted, and had taken to lobbying the United States to continue supporting Mubarak in order to preserve regional stability (Yossef, 2013: 213).

Secretary Clinton brushed off suggestions Washington might cut off military aid, and instead praised the Egyptian army for employing restraint in ‘trying to differentiate between peaceful protestors – who we support – and potential looters and the criminal elements who are a danger to the Egyptian people’ (Dolak, 2011). It was something of an equivocal statement reflecting a conviction that the United States had the right to pass judgement on the worthiness of contending forces.

Upon Mubarak’s announcement that he would resign the presidency in September 2011, Obama spoke to Mubarak and relayed the conversation to the media: ‘He [Mubarak] recognizes that the status quo is not sustainable and that a change must take place’ (Robinson, 2011). While Mubarak had declared his plan to exit the following September, it was reported on February 4th that the Obama administration had refused to cut military aid to Egypt and was ‘instead working behind the scenes with the commanders of the country’s armed forces to oust President Mubarak’ (MacAskill, 2011). Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, recognised that the Egyptian military was certainly ‘a significant investment, but it’s an investment that had paid off for a long time’ (Gienger, 2011). That the United States was working with the military cadre to remove Mubarak represented pragmatism on the former’s part according to Yasser:

Of course, it was pragmatic [the United States’ stance during the uprising] . . . Hillary Clinton issued a press statement on January 25th that contradicted with what was said two or three days later when events got more heated up . . . in the early days there was some kind of contradiction in the press releases from the US administration . . . I believe that the US has their interests at their core but they are more opportunists than conspirators. It makes sense for them, after the beginning [of the uprising] it was not all clear. They saw that there was a huge movement and mobilisation on the streets that you wouldn’t want to lose your credibility and influence with afterwards. Egypt is an important strategic ally and if this movement moves away from the US it wouldn’t be good news for them at all.¹⁸⁶

It was the Camel Battle and its aftermath that signalled to the United States that the Mubarak regime had lost all credibility with the Egyptian people, ‘which made it clear that he should leave’.¹⁸⁷ Wael Nawara recounts:

Obama had to shift positions and he came out quite strongly after a few days. In all fairness I think that the United States and SCAF, they were both reactive, I think the decisive factor was how the people felt . . . and the biggest force was the crowd

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Nateem Yasser

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

feeling. This people movement was so strong, that it actually, as Obama put it, bent the arc of history but it also bent the will of the Americans.¹⁸⁸

The military's actions in the wake of the Camel Battle were not only a reflection of the regime's lost legitimacy but the leverage that the United States could exercise. Despite its limits, aid from the United States provided the only avenue from which the military cadre could access advanced weaponry. Thus, it was in the military cadre's interest to ally with the United States and call on Mubarak to go. The military cadre could preserve its limited capabilities and the United States had in place a partner reliant who was reliant on them to realise their interests. As Adel Soliman notes:

Mubarak may be the man who protects the military but at this moment the military made a decisive decision to let Mubarak stand down because it wanted to remain in the United States' graces.¹⁸⁹

The United States' embrace of the military cadre was not only borne out of the leverage it held over the institution but its strategic interests. Mubarak's management of the hard sector and interest in national security shaped his thinking during the uprising according to Gehad Auda:

He didn't commit to anything until he was fully aware of the consequences. He never thought he'd lose power, not because he was arrogant but because he didn't think anyone else could control Egypt like he did . . . He let power go in a calculated way when he saw that SCAF had come out against him . . . You have to understand that he let SCAF take control from him because nobody else could keep order in Egypt. For all the incoherence over his last five years in Egypt the SCAF was disciplined. Other parts of the regime weren't.¹⁹⁰

This was in marked contrast to the New Guard, whose management of the economy had contributed to the regime's loss of legitimacy. The management of Egypt's respective domestic and foreign policy spheres led the United States to support the military cadre, as it was best positioned to realise US interests in the region now that Mubarak's legitimacy had been called into question:

Of course, the United States had a bet on Mubarak first. They thought he was going to make it [through the uprising] but once it became clear that he was sinking they said 'OK. Goodbye'. They would then come out with statements that would condemn Mubarak and condemn the violence to shore up their support with the people . . . And it suited them [the United States] to work with the military because the military were the best institution to guarantee their interests.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Wael Nawara

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Adel Soliman.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Gehad Auda

¹⁹¹ Interview with Hatem Zayed

The United States strategic interests in the MENA dictated its actions during the Egyptian uprising. Initially, the United States sought to support its long-time contractor Mubarak but moved against him when it became apparent that his legitimacy as president had all but eroded. Its move to support the military cadre was borne of self-interest as Egypt's Old Guard were committed to realising US interests because it benefitted their own domestic interests.

Egypt's high leverage and low linkage saw it afforded considerable international support from the United States, in return for supporting the latter's interests in the region. This allowed the Mubarak regime to ward off calls for external reform, which were mostly for public consumption in the United States. Furthermore, international support was beneficial to component parts of the regime. The New Guard could access global capital and the United States did not actively impede Gamal's presumed succession despite its concerns over his abilities. The military cadre received significant US aid, which made it highly vulnerable to US leverage and curtailed its ability to project its strength. While the military cadre was unhappy with this situation, it also realised the weakness of its position in this regard. Taking the above into account, it emerges that Egypt was the beneficiary of international support, which was important in shaping the outcome of the uprising. The United States' reliance on Egypt to realise its interests in the region saw it exercise leverage over the military cadre, the one institution dependent on it and best placed to realise its interests.

7.3.4 Egypt and the EU: The Primacy of Stability (2)

While Egypt's relationship with the United States was its most important international partnership, it also developed ties with its neighbour to the north, the EU. The EU primarily engaged with Egypt through the mechanisms of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which sought to create a region of 'peace, stability and prosperity' (Junemann, 2004: 4). Similar to Tunisia, Egypt's engagement with the EMP was through a series of bilateral agreements that sought to emphasise socioeconomic issues rather than security (Behrendt and Hanelt, 2000). Indeed, the EU's engagements with Egypt focused on support for civil society, economic liberalisation and 'good governance', in the belief that it would contribute to, and sustain, pressures supportive of political reform (Gillespie and Youngs, 2002: 12). However, the EU's financial and political commitment to this ideal during Mubarak's time in power was much weaker than that of the United States. For instance, Youngs

(2004) notes that the EU gave Egypt over 20 times more money for the preservation of historical sites than it did for democracy building. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two was that of low linkage and high leverage, a consequence of imbalanced trade relationship between the two. The EU not only accounted for 32.2 percent of Egypt's imports but 29.5 percent of its exports making it the country's largest trading partner (European Commission, 2014). In contrast, Egypt was not an important trading partner for the EU as it only accounted for 0.5 percent of the bloc's imports and 1 percent of its exports. In theory, this trade imbalance granted the EU significant means to affect political developments in Egypt via economic policies. The re-orientation of the EMP with the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003 did not substantially alter the basis of the established relationship between the two (Pace, 2012: 53).

The basis of the union's relationship with Egypt is the EU-Egypt Association Agreement, which has been in force since 2004. The agreement emphasises the importance of observing human rights, democratic principles and economic freedom, and, encouraging political and economic development via regional cooperation (European Union, 2004). At the political level emphasis is placed on peace, security and cooperation to provide for a stable Mediterranean (Durac, 2009: 81). Nevertheless, the EU possessed a limited ability to influence political developments in Mubarak's Egypt. First, political reform required the mutual consent of the Egyptian government, which essentially saw it become regime-led. This allowed the regime to stave off calls for political reform, which it argued would violate its sovereignty (Durac, 2009: 85-86). External funding for political reform also posed significant questions for opposition movements who feared a reliance on external financing would limit the scope of their agency (Pratt, 2007: 148-149). Second, the EU favoured stability over political reform and tended to look the other way on those occasions when human rights abuses occurred (Youngs, 2001: 18). Where conditionality was enacted, it was 'oriented overwhelmingly to economic, not political, criteria'. Those countries pursuing economic liberalisation, despite their poor records on political reform, of which Egypt was one, received generous foreign aid packages (Youngs, 2001: 37). With the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean the EU attempted to revive its relationship with Egypt. Egypt was accorded a prominent role within this organisation as Mubarak held the co-presidency with Nicolas Sarkozy of France. The project again emphasised economic development in the southern Mediterranean as a pre-emptive

effort to manage migration flows and secure stability in and around Europe while neglecting issues of political reform (Pace, 2012: 54-55).

The most obvious explanation for the EU's failure to bring its economic leverage to bear in Egypt is that its primary concerns are economic reform, trade harmonisation, migration, energy security and terrorism, all of which trump the commitment to democracy and human rights (Kopstein, 2006: 92). However, the EU's institutional makeup itself also must also part of the blame for its failure to influence the Mubarak regime. First, there is a lack of coherence and agreement within the EU's institutions and between its member states (Olsen, 2000: 143) and the problem of this lack of coherence is such that '[n]obody in Brussels or national capitals was aware of the extent of the EU's overall democracy assistance effort' (Youngs, 2001). Second, it is also clear that the EU possess few policy instruments to deal with states that cannot apply for membership (Gillespie and Youngs, 2002: 199; Kopstein, 2006: 92). While the potential reward of future membership had proved to be a highly effective negotiating tool for the EU in its dealing with accession states this has no discernible effect on those states which have no prospect of membership, even in the long-term. Both political interests and institutional design contributed to the EU's inability to bring its leverage to bear in Egypt. That being so the EU's interest in economic liberalisation and trade harmonisation did provide an opportunity for those in the personalist cadre to realise their interests through establishing relationships with the European business community, most notably Gamal and the New Guard (Elaasar, 2010: 216-218).

When the Egyptian uprising began, the EU did not play a particularly notable part in shaping its outcome despite the potential leverage it could bring to bear on the situation. For the most part Europe largely echoed the pronouncements of the United States, the most important external actor involved in Egypt at the time (ICG, 2011b: 26). The EU's innate preference for stability, as well as the competing foreign policy interests of member states, framed its initial reaction to the Arab uprisings in Tunisia and prevented it from implementing a common policy (Behr, 2012: 78-79). The ineffectiveness of events in Tunisia prompted a rethinking on the part of EU and its member states that became evident during the Egyptian uprising. Although the EU largely repeated the United States' position, it did condemn the violence in Egypt and side with protest movement far more swiftly (European Union, 2011a). Furthermore, the European also displayed less ambiguity in its calls than the United States when it called for an orderly transition and free and fair elections on January 31st (European

Union, 2011b). Despite these actions, the EU did not actively shape the decisionmaking of those in the ruling coalition.

Rather, the EU's relationship with Egypt was similar to its relationship with Tunisia. Despite the potential economic leverage the EU could have brought to bear against the Mubarak regime the Union instead worked with Mubarak for two reasons. First, the desire for stability saw it privilege economic concerns over political ones, which also mitigated the latter's potential to upset the status quo and unloose political instability in North Africa (Gillespie, 2006). Second, the EU's inability to effectively deploy its leverage reflects the fact that the EU is comprised of individual states and the task of coordinating their different positions is problematic at the best of times (Hollis, 2012: 90). The conduct of foreign policy in North Africa only deepens these complications when one bears in mind that certain EU member states possess strategic interests in North Africa that political reform might adversely affect (see Daguzan, 2008; Amirah-Fernández, 2008). Thus, the EU's support for Ben Ali reflected not only its preference for stability in North Africa but the union's deeper lack of institutional coherence within and between its constituent institutions and member states.

7.4 Conclusion: The Impact of Exogenous Factors

Chapter 6's analysis of the endogenous variables made clear that Mubarak's ruling coalition was internally fragmented as the interests of the personalist cadre were prioritised over those of the single-party and military cadres. The personalist cadre shared an ideological congruence with Mubarak and was the primary beneficiary of beneficiaries of material patronage. In opposition to this were a depoliticised single-party, the NDP, which had seen its leadership co-opted by the personalist New Guard, and, an ineffective military cadre. The former was aware of its declining relevance thanks to the New Guard's co-optation of its structures while the military cadre's opposition to Mubarak's political and economic agenda had seen it isolated within the ruling coalition. While the endogenous variables saw the military cadre favour regime change, these were still insignificant for it to voluntarily exit the ruling coalition. Despite being open to the possibility of regime change, it appeared that the military cadre required external stimuli to exit it. Thus, the effects of the exogenous variables merit consideration.

The Mubarak regime's loss of legitimacy was a consequence of economic mismanagement and the repressive behaviour of the MOI. Economic mismanagement saw a decline in living standards, high unemployment and corruption, the consequence

of policies designed to favour the interests of the New Guard. The MOI's behaviour compounded the situation as the Ministry preyed on those it was charged to protect. The confluence of these factors saw mass disaffection emerge in Egypt, as the population perceived the Mubarak regime did not prioritise their interests. When the Egyptian people mobilised to challenge the regime it affected the ruling coalition in different ways. The New Guard and the MOI saw the protest movement as an irritant. However, the strength of the demonstrations soon overwhelmed the MOI and forced Mubarak into making a number of reluctant concessions. The regime's loss of legitimacy resonated with the single-party cadre and a number of NDP members took to Tahrir Square to join the protests. While the military did not formally throw its lot in with the protest movement, it feared the spectre of civil war and the damage to its institutional integrity if it was to engage them.

The second endogenous variable, international support, was critical in shaping the authoritarian transformation that occurred in Egypt. The leverage the United States held over the military cadre allowed it to influence the latter's decisions as the uprising unfolded in Egypt. While initially reluctant to call on Mubarak to go, once it became apparent that Mubarak had lost legitimacy in the public's eyes, the United States allied itself with the military cadre to remove Mubarak. The United States and the military cadre allied with one another for two reasons. First, the United States partnered with the military cadre because it viewed the military as the best-placed institution to guarantee its strategic interests in the region. And second, the military's reliance on US military aid, despite its noted limitations, was vital to the realisation of the military's interests. In summary, domestic and internal developments external to the ruling coalition shaped interest realisation in the ruling coalition. In contrast, the EU did not employ leverage against the Mubarak regime. This was not because of the Mubarak regime's ability to resist, but rather a reflection of the EU's preference for stability in North Africa and its lack of institutional coherence within and between the union's institutions and member states.

Thus, when elite interests in the context of authoritarian transformation are into account the following can be stated with regard to the hypotheses put forth in Chapter 3. First, the evidence of Chapters 6 and 7 confirm the hypotheses that the military cadre will voluntarily exit the ruling coalition when its interests are not realised. Politically and economically isolated the military cadre saw Mubarak's loss of legitimacy and the provision of support from the United States as an opportunity to exit the ruling coalition and directly assume power. These actions are entirely consistent with the hypotheses put

forth in Chapter 3, which argued that threats to its institutional integrity and the potential occurrence of civil war would see the military cadre directly assume power at the expense of the remainder of the ruling coalition. This came to pass in Egypt when the military cadre, through the SCAF, directly assumed power and sought to shape political life in post-Mubarak Egypt (Brownlee et al., 2015: 104-109). This was markedly different to the actions of the Tunisian military, which indicates that the nature of military involvement in the ruling coalition and the provision of international support may have contributed to shaping the outcome in Egypt. Second, the evidence also confirms the hypothesis that the single-party cadre will exit the ruling coalition only when exogenous factors compel it to do so. The NDP was largely depoliticised and its ability to distribute patronage was limited due to the liberalisation of the Egyptian economy and the state's exit from it. Despite this, the party was willing to support Mubarak until the Egyptian uprising indicated the extent of the regime's illegitimacy, which saw the NDP disintegrate and some of its members join the demonstrations against the regime. Third, the evidence confirms the hypothesis that the personalist cadre will refuse to willingly countenance regime change. The New Guard and the MOI were the prime beneficiaries of Mubarak's rule and they undergirded his control of Egypt. Furthermore, during the uprisings these two groups refused to favour regime change or enter a dialogue with the protest movement. Both were forced from power when the MOI was overwhelmed and the military cadre mobilised against Mubarak. These findings have implications, not only for both the theoretical framework and the country under examination, but also for the literature on authoritarian resilience as well. In light of the results gleaned from the second case study, these findings will be discussed in the concluding chapter regarding the lessons the research has to offer.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This chapter reiterates the main argument and then summarises the main findings of the two case studies. It then discusses the implications for the authoritarian resilience literature. Finally, the chapter considers avenues for future research.

8.1 Explaining Regime Change in the Middle East and North Africa: The Necessity of the Elite Dimension

In light of the Arab uprisings, the scholarly community revived debates about how to best explain political change in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Pace and Cavatorta, 2012; Howard and Walters, 2014). Although this debate has not definitively concluded (see Valbjørn, 2012; Cavatorta, 2015), scholars employed either structural or mobilisation-based explanations to explain regime change, which, as Chapter 1 found, lacked explanatory power. More importantly, the focus on these approaches neglected the elite dimension. The exclusion of elite factors is understandable because the causal relationship between elite factors and regime change remains under-researched in the MENA for two reasons. First, the literature does not sufficiently address the institutional makeup of the region's autocracies, and second, the positive observation of the dependent variable, which tended towards authoritarian maintenance, determined case selection (Albrecht, 2015: 40). Thus, interesting questions remained unanswered regarding the efficacy of those variables employed to explain regime change.

The research question of this thesis was why authoritarian elites withdrew their support for the incumbent during the uprisings. The thesis designed a theoretical framework that incorporated the institutional makeup of those elite cadres around the incumbent in the MENA's presidential republics. These elite cadres, military, single-party, and personalist, each have different interests and preferences toward regime change. The framework incorporated the interests of each cadre, which allowed us to determine their preferences toward regime change. Analysis of regime change took place at the level of the ruling coalition, in contrast to other institutional studies of regime change that took place at the level of the 'regime'. The premise underpinning the framework sees the incumbent dole out benefits to the ruling coalition in return for their support. This gives rise to the research's central hypothesis: elite cadres will withdraw their support for the incumbent during uprisings when their interests are not realised. Although the hypothesis appears simple very few have analysed it in detail to see how

interest realisation affects regime change and, as previously mentioned, none have done it at the level of the ruling coalition.

Four explanatory variables were synthesised from authoritarian resilience literature, two endogenous to the ruling coalition, and two exogenous. To avoid potential tautologies, the two endogenous variables were tested first, and prior to the Arab uprisings. The two exogenous variables were then tested both before and during the uprisings. The central contention of this thesis was simple: whether or not elite cadres had their interests realised and whether it shaped their preferences towards regime change. Where interests were realised, regime change was not favoured. Where interests were not realised, elite cadres favoured regime change.

8.2 The Findings

The argument, hypothesis and framework were applied to Tunisia and Egypt, two MENA countries that experienced regime change during popular uprisings. The nature of regime change differed. Tunisia experienced authoritarian breakdown, while Egypt experienced authoritarian transformation. The two shared a number of characteristics. The political systems in both had become increasingly personalised and shared similar preferences regarding domestic and foreign policy. These shared characteristics saw the explanatory variables held constant across the two cases, which provided the research with greater analytical leverage.

Regime change was the dependent variable. Previous empirical studies within the authoritarian resilience literature utilised authoritarian maintenance as the dependent variable, which limited our ability to account for the importance of strategies designed to retain elite support. Utilising regime change widened the scope of the literature. Furthermore, the framework provided a clear set of empirically testable expectations regarding the relationship between interest realisation and regime change.

The findings of this research appear to confirm the central argument – that members of the ruling coalition will withdraw their support for the incumbent during the occurrence of uprisings if their interests are not realised. Although this finding appears straightforward, it is dependent on a particular configuration of endogenous and exogenous variables. In Tunisia, the privileging of the personalist cadre saw the regime erode from within as the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD) became depoliticised and the military isolated. The regime's loss of legitimacy, the consequence of economic liberalisation, manifested during the Tunisian uprising and saw the RCD and the military withdraw from the ruling coalition. With the exception of Michèle

Alliot-Marie's ill-timed comments, the international community reacted to events in Tunisia rather than influence them.

Egypt under Mubarak largely followed the same pattern of events. The prioritising of the personalist cadre's interests saw the regime split as the National Democratic Party (NDP) became irrelevant and the military marginalised. The NDP and the military withdrew from the ruling coalition during the Egyptian uprising because of the regime's loss of legitimacy. In addition, the United States leveraged the military cadre to shape an outcome amenable to its strategic interests. Authoritarian transformation was not immediately apparent in Egypt, as the military cadre pledged to exit the political scene upon the formation of a new civilian government. However, it gradually emerged that the military cadre was influencing political developments in Egypt, despite the election of Muhammad Morsi as President in 2012. Confirmation that the military cadre sought to shape political developments came in June 2013 when it deposed Morsi following weeks of protest against the latter's rule. Holding the effects of the explanatory variables constant gives rise to a number of findings that merit discussion. These findings first explain why regime change occurred in Tunisia and Egypt, and second, explain the divergence in outcome between authoritarian breakdown and authoritarian transformation.

First, the increased prominence of the personalist cadre destabilised both ruling coalitions. The increased personalisation of the Ben Ali regime meant the RCD was unable to affect decision-making, the notable exception being the party's technocrats. Increased personalisation also privileged the Ministry of Interior (MOI) at the expense of the military. The MOI received the training and support required to provide for regime security, while security pacts with France and the United States undermined the military's ability to provide for national defence. The same pattern was at play in Egypt. Gamal's New Guard co-opted the leadership structures of the NDP and, with Mubarak's blessing, assumed responsibility for domestic policymaking. Mubarak also favoured his MOI. The emergency law provided a legal framework for its repressive activities, further aided by increased funding and highly educated recruits. Although charged with providing for national defence, the military's ability to do so was limited by political interference, poor calibre recruits, and a declining budget.

Second, elite perceptions and interpersonal ties shaped interest realisation within the ruling coalition. To be exact, it favoured the interests of those who possessed the qualities to implement the incumbent's agenda or those ideologically congruent with him. The RCD technocrats exemplify the need for those possessing the qualities to

implement the incumbent's agenda while The Family represent those who support it because it allows their interests to be realised. The Egyptian military's position represents a contrast to this. Its gradual marginalisation within the ruling coalition was the result of its opposition to Mubarak's political agenda. Furthermore, the thesis found that social background or the generation into which one was born affected interest realisation. Many in the Tunisian bourgeoisie considered the Trabelsi family low class, yet they commanded significant political and economic power. In addition, Hussein Tantawi who, alongside Mubarak, was the ruling coalition's only veteran of the October War headed the marginalised Egyptian military cadre. Accordingly, expertise and ideological congruence mattered in realising interests within the ruling coalition, further revealing pragmatism on the part of the incumbent in staffing their ruling coalitions.

Third, the distribution of material patronage also affected interest realisation and underlined the unintended consequences of economic liberalisation. Economic liberalisation saw macroeconomic improvements in both countries but also the destabilisation of their ruling coalitions. The Family co-opted Tunisia's privatisation process and acquired a number of business and media interests. The New Guard did the same in Egypt and used their control of economic policymaking to place themselves and their allies at the head of a number of sectoral monopolies. Despite enriching the personalist cadre economic liberalisation damaged the interests of the single-party cadre. With the state withdrawing from the economy, both the RCD and the NDP saw their ability to distribute patronage curtailed. Economic liberalisation was also of concern to the Egyptian military cadre, who feared that the New Guard would target their economic interests.

Fourth, economic liberalisation undermined the legitimacy of both regimes. It caused a socioeconomic crisis characterised by rising poverty and unemployment in both states. Furthermore, the few benefits arising from economic liberalisation were accrued by those in the personalist cadre in dubious circumstances. Both regimes attempted to offset the costs of economic liberalisation through populist measures but their efficacy was questionable. Socioeconomic crisis and the wealth corruptly accrued by the personalist cadre saw mass disaffection in both Tunisia and Egypt as the population perceived that neither regime had their interests at heart. When uprisings emerged in both states because of lost legitimacy their ruling coalitions acted in similar manners. The personalist cadre refused to countenance regime change. The RCD and NDP attempted to negotiate an end to the respective protests. These efforts were

unsuccessful and both parties withdrew from the ruling coalition. Finally, the military cadre withdrew from the ruling coalition when they refused to engage the protestors.

Fifth, the provision of international support contributes to explaining the divergence in outcome between Tunisia and Egypt. Both were the beneficiaries of Western support and it appeared that both were susceptible to external influences. However, as Chapter 5 notes, the EU never used its leverage with Tunisia, an occurrence that spoke more to the EU's inability to speak with one voice rather than Ben Ali's ability to ward off all calls for political reform. This pattern continued during the uprising, in which external actors reacted to events rather than shaping them. Egypt's strategic relationship with the United States saw it exercise considerable influence in domestic affairs, particularly in the activities of the military cadre. Such was the leverage that the United States could bring to bear against the military cadre, it could bring about a change of regime amenable to its interests during the uprising. This finding indicates that the stronger a country's ties to the international system, the stronger the influence of external actors over regime change. There are limits to this finding. First, the inferences drawn from two cases are limited. And second, there is the question of timing. The Tunisian uprising took the international community by surprise but the Egyptian uprising occurred in the wake of events in Tunisia. Consequently, the international community, the United States especially, was alert to the potential consequences of regime change in Egypt. The provision of international support also reveals an interesting insight into the European Union's ability to exercise foreign policy. In theory, the EU possesses the political and economic means to significantly influence domestic developments in states if it chose to. However, an analysis of Tunisia and Egypt indicate that while the EU certainly possesses the means to exercise significant leverage it lacks the will to do so. The lack of will on the EU's part is the consequence of two factors. First, the EU favours stability in its relationship with North Africa, which may be generalisable to other authoritarian contexts, and second, the lack of institutional cohesion between and within the EU's institutions and member states also stifles its ability to assert its influence in authoritarian states.

Finally, the degree of military involvement in the ruling coalition also contributed to explaining the divergence in outcome. Svobik (2012: 32-33) distinguishes between four types of military involvement in the ruling coalition: none, indirect, corporate, and personal. The Tunisian military cadre had no direct involvement in the ruling coalition. Accordingly, it had developed its own identity distinct of the Ben Ali regime and the political intrigues of the ruling coalition. Following Ben Ali's ouster, it allowed the

transition process to proceed because it had no interests that required protection. In contrast, the Egyptian military cadre was personally involved in the ruling coalition. Despite its pervasive weakness, the military cadre worked to preserve the armed forces' institutional integrity, and, when threatened during the Egyptian uprisings, the armed forces supplanted Mubarak. These interests did not disappear following Mubarak's deposition and it worked to protect them during Morsi's short presidency. It stands to reason that the degree of the military cadre's involvement in the ruling coalition shapes its attitude towards regime change. A military cadre with no direct involvement in the ruling coalition may prefer regime change as it has an identity and interests independent of the incumbent regime while a military cadre with a personal involvement in the ruling coalition may prefer authoritarian transformation to better protect its institutional interests. There are limits to this finding too. The study draws on two distinct forms of military involvement. For the argument to be generalised, case studies, involving indirect and corporate military involvement, require analysis.

From the study of these two cases, the withdrawal of the military and single-party cadre can be explained by the increasing personalisation of both regimes and the unintended consequences of economic liberalisation, which affected, not just the relationship between the regime and society, but the realisation of interests within both ruling coalitions. These developments affected interest realisation, which came to favour the personalist cadre. Where the two cases diverged regarding outcome can be explained by the nature of the international support afforded to both states and the degree of the military's involvement in the ruling coalition.

8.3 The Implications for the Authoritarian Resilience Literature

This thesis has important implications for the authoritarian resilience literature, notwithstanding the hazards of generalising from two cases. First, unintended consequences require incorporation into the literature's discussion of political and economic reconfigurations. The thesis found that one of the primary reasons for the desalination of both the Tunisian and Egyptian ruling coalitions was the unintended consequences of economic reform (Haugbølle and Cavatorta, 2012). Liberalisation of the economy benefitted the interests of the personalist cadre but damaged the interests of the single-party cadre, and potentially the military cadre in the Egyptian case. Thus, when we consider political and economic reforms in the MENA we should analyse, not only those who benefit, but the potential effects reform will have on the interests of those who are not the targets of these reforms.

Second, the findings of this thesis support the argument that structural grievances contributed to regime change in the MENA (Springborg, 2011; Achcar, 2013). However, the thesis stands by its findings in Chapter 1 - that there is no direct causal relationship between structural conditions and regime change. Rather, structural conditions saw the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes both suffer a loss of legitimacy, which affected the interest realisation of the military and single-party cadres and saw them withdraw from the ruling coalition. Thus, economic liberalisation contributed to regime change in the MENA by altering the incentive structures of the ruling coalition's members. This supports Tsourapas's (2013) contention that we should examine the effects of structural conditions when it comes to analysing political developments rather than rely on statistical indicators.

Third, the thesis argued that the institutional makeup of the MENA's states affected how those in the ruling coalition perceive the costs and benefits of regime change. In both cases the personalist cadre refused to countenance regime change, the single-party favoured regime change because of exogenous factors, the incumbent regime's loss of legitimacy, and the military cadre was predisposed to regime change once the appropriate opportunity emerged. Rather than constrain agency, the institutional configuration, in which elites operated, defined their interests, which allowed us to understand how they perceived the regime change process. The framework incorporated the distinct interests of each elite cadre and allowed the thesis to decipher the mechanisms that enabled elite interests to be realised within the MENA's presidential republics.

Fourth, regime change in the MENA provided an opportunity to test the efficacy of the methods designed to retain elite support in the region. The findings show that a specific configuration of explanatory variables shape interest realisation. First, members of the ruling coalition had to possess the required skills to implement the incumbent's agenda and/or display support for it. Second, those members displaying these qualities could access material patronage that further bound them to the incumbent. Where interests were realised at this stage elites did not favour regime change. If interests were not realised, elites would favour regime change if the regime lost legitimacy. These three variables worked in sequence to shape elite preferences towards regime change. International support also influenced members of the ruling coalition but this depended on the nature of the ties established with international actors.

What does this mean for the authoritarian resilience literature? There are three points to draw from this discussion. First, it is crucial we take the institutional makeup

of the MENA's ruling coalitions into account. The three distinct interests analysed in this thesis indicate that the region's elite perceives the costs and benefits of regime change differently. Furthermore, these distinct interests mandate that we analyse authoritarian systems at the level of the ruling coalition not that of the 'regime'. Second, the efficacy of those methods designed to realise elite interests depend upon a specific configuration of explanatory variables to be effective. Finally, the findings also have implications for the MENA at this particular historical juncture. The actions of those in the ruling coalition, and how the realisation of their interests shaped regime change may allow us to explain the diverging outcomes experienced by those regimes that faced popular uprisings.

This thesis also has implications for the comparative literature. Although situated within the authoritarian resilience literature and utilising synthesised independent variables from this literature, the thesis considers itself part of the comparative tradition and draws upon that literature to develop its theoretical framework. Accordingly, the implications within this work affect not just the authoritarian resilience literature but also comparative politics. As Chapter 2 made clear, the strategies employed by incumbent elites in the MENA and detailed in the authoritarian resilience literature also found favour with autocrats beyond the MENA, thus indicating that the authoritarian resilience literature displayed potential for testing further afield. Furthermore, Chapter 2 also noted that scholars working within the comparative literature utilised institutional perspectives that considered elite interests to explain political outcomes (Jones Luong, 2000). Coupled with Chapter 3's declaration that the elite cadres under examination constitute ideal types that outline distinct institutional elite preferences, not the preferences of individual actors, this study possess the ability to travel beyond the MENA and to authoritarian contexts elsewhere.

8.4 Future Research

This research could serve as a starting point for further work. With appropriate changes, this research can be replicated in other small-n comparative case studies in the MENA, or with the incorporation of the appropriate context, authoritarian states outside the region. It could also apply to the study of those elite cadres under examination in this thesis in different policy areas in MENA states. More in-depth comparative case studies of this sort in other policy areas, in the MENA and further afield, could elucidate how elite cadres influence policy outcomes. While the analytic narratives employed in this study allow us to trace interest realisation and the attitude of actors toward regime

change in the MENA's ruling coalitions, there are caveats in generalising the argument. They relate to the institutional makeup of the region's ruling coalitions and the degree of military involvement in the ruling coalition and the question of factionalism.

First, as the findings presented earlier in this chapter indicate, the extent of military involvement in the ruling coalition, as well as interest realisation, shaped the military cadre's preference toward regime change. As previously demonstrated, the degree of involvement on the part of the Tunisian and Egyptian military cadres shaped their attitudes towards not only regime change but also the nature of regime change. The degree of military involvement in the ruling coalition requires theoretical incorporation to generalise the argument.

Second, the choice of Tunisia and Egypt as the two case studies underscores the extent to which factionalism, in the form of tribalism, kinship-based politics, patrimonialism and ethno-sectarianism, affect the makeup of the region's ruling coalitions (Brynen et al., 2012: 108). The Syrian ruling coalition draws from the Alawite community, a minority sect within Islam, and the Sunni Muslim community (see Álvarez-Ossorio and Gutiérrez de Terán, 2013). The ruling coalitions in Qadhafi's Libya and Saleh's Yemen, on the other hand, were built on the incumbent's extended tribal network (Owen, 2012: 94-110). Because their close ties to the incumbent are either familial or ethnic, these bonds would appear to be personalist in nature. This raises an interesting question about interest realisation. If these seemingly personalist appointments became part of the single-party or military cadre, would those appointed to lead these institutions by the incumbent see their preferences changed to reflect their new institutional constraints or would they see the military or single-party cadre's interests subsumed by theirs? Again, to generalise the argument, this question requires answering.

Finally, the findings could also act as a building block for scholars specifically interested in the MENA. Five years on from Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation and Ben Ali's departure, we are still feeling the effects of the uprisings. Although regime change was confined to a small number of countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen), there were other significant changes in the region. First, new actors emerged to both lead and challenge the state. In Tunisia, the former oppositionists, Ennahda, Ettakatol, and the Congress for the Republic, controlled the first elected post-Ben Ali government (Brownlee et al., 2015: 139). Previously marginalised groups such as women, organised labour, youth movements and Islamists have also emerged to challenge the state in both physical and online spaces (Bishara, 2012; El-Houdaiby,

2012; Herrera, 2012a; 2012b; Zubaida, 2014). Second, established policy prescriptions were challenged, particularly the wisdom of economic liberalisation (Hanieh, 2015). Third, the EU's inability to influence developments during the Arab uprisings provides us with an opportunity to reconsider the effectiveness of the union's foreign policy in the MENA (Perthes, 2011; Hollis, 2012). And fourth, the region's balance of power firmly shifted in favour of the Gulf States (Kamrava, 2011). Part of the key to explaining and understanding these changes may lie in the findings presented in this research. Naturally, the changes wrought by the Arab uprisings cannot be explained by incorporating elite interests only. However, future research, whether qualitative or quantitative, needs to include the institutional interests of the region's elite cadres as an explanatory variable.

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Appendix: List of Interviewees

Personal Interview with General Adel Soliman, (Ret.), Director of the Strategic Dialogue Forum, Cairo, February 10, 2014.

Personal Interview with Wael Nawara, Journalist at Al-Monitor and Co-founder of the Al-Dostour Party and National Association for Change. Cairo, February 10, 2014.

Personal Interview with Hateem Zayed, Researcher at the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights, Cairo, February 11 2014.

Personal Interview with Nateem Yasser, Researcher at The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Cairo, February 11 2014.

Personal Interview with Professor Gehad Auda, Professor of Political Science at the British University in Egypt and former NDP member, Cairo, February 11 2014.

Personal Interview with Achraf Aouadi, Chair and Founder of I Watch, Tunisian Transparency and Anti-Corruption NGO, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

Personal Interview with Anis Samali, Project Chief Mourakiboun, Tunisian Election Monitoring NGO, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

Personal Interview with Selim Ben Yedder, CEO of Cynapsys Tunisia, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

Personal Interview with Youssef Cherif, Political Analyst, The Cherif Consultancy Company, Tunis, January 7, 2015.

Personal Interview with Amine Ghali, Program Director, The Kawabiki Transition Centre, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

Personal Interview with Amna Guallali, Human Rights Watch Tunisia, Tunis, January 8, 2015.

Personal Interview with Kamel Labidi, Journalist and Chairman of the Commission for Information and Communication Reform, Tunis, January 8, 2015.