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Revisiting Democratic Transitions in Times of Crisis



Class, violence and citizenship in the Arab uprisings: assessing deeper forms of transition

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I. Reading the Arab 'transitions' on two levels

It is far from clear whether sound, detailed and comparative literature applying the paradigm of transitology to Arab countries will emerge in the near future because of the widespread tendency to consider Arab politics an outlier or to be so trapped in its particularities that international comparison is impossible. The year 2011 and the wave of Arab uprisings¹ have injected a new life in the field of transition studies. There was a real moment of initial euphoria: the hopes to see age-long autocracies being shelved for good was combined with the possible end of the dominant Orientalist depictions, that is an essentialist and eurocentric way of depicting Arab Middle Eastern societies as culturally hostile to democracy.² A year into the uprisings and the return role played by the military in countries such as Egypt, or Yemen, not to mention the tragic descent of Syria into an all-out civil war, applying the question of transition to the Arab cases was rapidly seen as a *non sequitur* and, thus, enthusiasm subsided. Many, since then, have spoken in hasty and definitive terms of the “failure” of the revolutionary experiment or of democratic transition. Others evoked the transformation of an “Arab spring” into a sour Arab winter. Old Orientalist types of assertions linking, in a simplistic way, the rise of Islamic factions to power to an automatic failure of democratisation have regained territory, obfuscating the deeper and historical origins of violence that have marred so many countries originally shaken by the 2011 popular revolts.

As always with a discussion of “transition”, the risk is to assume a more or less explicit model, combined with the risk of teleological thinking.

Class, violence and citizenship in the Arab uprisings: assessing deeper forms of transition

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After a glorious period of transition studies, ushered in the late 1980s by the field's so-called "green book",³ transitology turned into a number-crunching enterprise in the late 1990s, reinforcing the view that there exists a telos through which processes of economic and political liberalisation could be geared, and whose progress could be measured. It was also often believed that these processes could be engineered and steered through prescriptive policies. Transitology, despite Carothers' classical critique of a teleological fallacy underpinning many studies,⁴ became a cottage industry versed in quantitative methods and prone to speaking the language of policy recommendations. This came, I believe, at the expense of a deeper historical knowledge of the contexts in which transitions could be seen as having appeared. Such type of studies would also overlook subtle, qualitative aspects of politics, which this article would like to address, in particular around new, bottom-up political claims and reformulations for a more egalitarian and just sense of citizenship.⁵ These are issues that often slip under the radar of transition literature, both in general (with a focus on elite-driven pacts) or in the Middle East (with the dominant concern of (semi-)authoritarian resilience).

While contextualised qualitative and historical knowledge is needed to grasp the drive towards democratisation in select Arab countries, any comparative study runs the risk of engaging in simplification. This article thus concentrates mostly on two countries, Egypt and Tunisia, but references in passing will also be made to other countries to illustrate that the tendencies in these two countries can also be identified elsewhere.⁶ This does not mean that definitive claims are made about, say, Tunisian, Yemeni, Egyptian or Bahraini societies and politics being identical, or to essentialise politics or "culture" here or there. But if traces of generalisation remain in these lines, these are the normal epistemological consequence of the "crosscultural cognisance"⁷ inherent in the scholarly research called transition. The fact that scholars can now include in their "transitology dataset" material from the Arab worlds is a rare opportunity for social research. Despite all its problematic limitations, "transitology" can and should be applied to Arab countries.⁸

A couple of transitologist analyses have linked this reading grid with the Arab uprisings. Among them, Ould Mohamedou and Sisk have done an important job by laying the ground for an application of transitology to the political dynamics that followed the 2011 Arab uprisings.⁹ They warn us of the widespread tendency to see transitions as "short-term political developments" or as limited "periods between the fall of the dictator and a free (or merely) trouble-free election".¹⁰ They invite us never to forget that democracy (the direction in which countries with contested autocratic regimes, such as those put under pressure in almost all Arab countries since 2011, have been, at least, originally moving) is a highly contingent and incremental outcome.¹¹ It is therefore illusory to assess in a yes-or-no question whether Arab transitions have been successful or not, or to expect that a revolution leads automatically to democracy. Brumberg offers another welcome contribution to these debates by making transitologists attentive to the interplay of what he calls "protection racket autocracies" and identity conflicts, issues that have plagued postindependence Arab politics.¹²

In this article I would like to take their warnings a step further to argue that the Arab uprisings need not (only) be assessed solely against the backdrop of institutional changes (elections, writing of new constitutions, the emergence of party systems, etc.). Instead we need to consider the revolts as a set of historical events that share, beyond the differences that such disparate countries as Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain or Egypt can offer, a common aspiration towards a renewed and reactivated sense of citizenship from

below, that is, from spontaneous forms of civil society, in conjunction with innervated trade union movements, and the emergence of new informal class coalitions¹³ pushing for more participatory politics.

Elsewhere, I have offered a detailed reading why it was not civil society that we had expected to be active in the streets of Cairo, Tunis or Sanaa.¹⁴ Years of “civil society promotion” since the 1990s had done some harm (in terms of mass mobilisation) because of the trends towards professionalisation witnessed in this sector, with some Arab NGOs becoming isolated and more interested in their own institutional survival than in constantly expanding or renewing their links with local constituencies.¹⁵ Some NGOs might have played a role in the revolts of 2011, but the vast strength of these popular revolts stemmed from a powerful sense of convergence of people of different generational and geographic origins, and from various, often unstructured groups that made demands for immediate changes by erecting symbolic encampments in strategic locations. By being physically *present* and refusing vague promises for *future* changes, they signalled a novelty of these revolts, what I have termed *presentism*, namely the expectation that people could improve their political *present*.¹⁶ This presentist coming together, or intersectionality, of different classes, generations, sexes and/or social groupings, shouldered the complex dynamics that allowed for the toppling of autocratic leaders.

Counterrevolutionary forces have managed to undercut these trends by preventing this intersectionality, and the force of presentism in particular, by returning to the use of violence to justify autocratic forms of power, such as those witnessed in Egypt with the new president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. These are the more recent phases of the revolts: typically the beginning of military confrontation in Syria in the fall 2011 or the collapse of President Hadi’s government in the face of the Houthi campaign in late summer 2014. In these moments, we have seen groups (typically military groups) shut the door on forms of negotiation when threatened by popular revolts and their radical demands. These shared dynamics towards calls for opening (presentism, the call for a more inclusive and just sense of citizenship) and subsequent counterrevolutionary dynamics have led us to consider class convergence but also the place of violence as essential ingredients to understanding *deeper forms of transitions*.

The legacies of the Arab uprisings can be read on two levels, which overlap with two distinct sensitivities or approaches in transition studies. In a deep way, the uprisings have signified a demand for a profound renegotiation of each national social contract, new forms of representation and increased control by the sovereign power of the people over the means of violence. These demands, which give grounding to the first type of “sensitivity” in apprehending “transitions”, were aired in the initial phase of the revolts in all Arab countries, and constituted a remarkable novelty.¹⁷ The second level of reading concentrates on a more formal level of representation (through elections, adoption of new constitutions) and through the sustained existence of formal channels of collective decision-making and the respect for pluralist exchanges. Once these channels of formal negotiations collapsed, it has been tempting for outside observers to say that the “game of transition” was over.

Transitions are not only about these formal institutional changes (the second level). They are also about gradual and imperfect processes through which citizenship, forms of representations and the use of violence have been renegotiated (the first level). I believe that any talk of “Arab transitions” must take this qualitative novelty into consideration. The historical moments that started in

2011 have been about the (re-)affirmation of the sovereign power of the demos to redefine, *radically*, political representation in the Arab worlds.¹⁸ These were such startling innovations that their substance did not go unnoticed in the rest of the world, with many *occupy* or *indignados* movements popping up in the wake of the Arab revolts.

In order to give a “name” to this radical novelty, I propose rethinking the core of the uprisings as an attempt to rethink the notion of *representation*. Representation here will be declined around two subthemes. The first one deals with the issue of social class: have the middle classes, often considered to be “underlying drivers” of political change,¹⁹ played a central role in the unfolding of the Arab transitions? The second dimension of political representation deals with the attempt towards a redomestication of political violence and its reappropriation by the people. How have the revolts confronted the illegitimate use of violence by their own police and military apparatus? How is the notion of violence connected to a struggle to enhance citizenship in the Arab worlds?

This bringing together of class, violence and representation can be easily justified and will appear normal for students of the region. The first gesture of the Arab uprisings was, indeed, to question the modern logics of representation by saying that we, the people, and not the (elected) representatives, are the sovereign power.²⁰ All the Arab revolts expressed the capacity through physical proximity to renegotiate the meaning of citizenship and a new shared sense of political subjectivity which was intimately connected to the control of violence.²¹ Indeed, the Arab Middle East is a region with a long history of violence and military confrontations – many of which have international roots.²² This fact, combined with a longer colonial presence,²³ resulted in an enormous degree of external interference: the so-called peace architecture around Israel, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan generated a cascade of concern for “security” in the region, and the aftermath of the support for the Afghan *mujahideen* in the 1980s is still perceived, with many jihadi groups having returned to their place of origin.

As a result, military encroachments limit the sovereign exercise of politics, and increase the high political profile presented by external rents such as foreign aid, military aid or debt forgiveness. The difficulty is to disentangle the degree to which external factors hinder or shoulder internal process of social and political change. Heydemann and Bermeo both illustrate different consequences of this high degree of military preparedness in the Arab Middle East, but they concur in their conclusions that violence has been mostly in the hands of isolated regime leaders who rarely hesitated to use military violence against their own population to defend their power.²⁴ Such a mixture of external meddling and truncated domestic processes has left traces, I would like to argue, and yielded, up to 2011, an anaemic form of citizenship. The revolts of 2011, and their call for the respect for human dignity and more social justice, gave an impetus to reshuffle class politics and to question the illegitimate use of violence by state authorities and ruling regimes.

II. Representation and the role of class

In general, students of revolutions and democratic transitions all face the thorny question of what specific role class plays in the reshaping of political and social systems at critical junctures. Often

the middle class is seen as a necessary stepping stone on which new alliances – pacts – are forged, and thus becomes an essential “ingredient” for political change.

For the Arab worlds, I think it is misleading to ask this question and to posit a role for a given class within the clear realm of national borders, for at least three reasons.

First, after two decades of neoliberal policies, the very notion of middle class can be called into question, because of processes of internal fragmentation. Some subgroups have benefited from intense liberalisation while others have been marginalised.²⁵ This process is most visible in Egypt, where the emergence of the so-called “business government”, led by Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif from 2004 to 2011, generated a split inside what became a two-speed middle class, one subpart being faster in reaping the benefits of liberalisation than the other, typically civil servants whose status was gradually eroded.²⁶ Second, it is difficult to identify a clear and identical role for the middle class in complex events such as those of the Arab uprisings. Third, the transnational ramifications of class formation are so significant in the Arab Middle East that it becomes impossible to locate or pin down a clear role for the middle class within domestic borders. One is forced instead to adopt a larger, regional and international focus to understand how and which classes are differently involved in these moments of upheaval.

The specificities of Arab political and economic systems force us thus to transcend any narrow methodological nationalism when studying class differentiations.²⁷ I will therefore divide this section into two sets of argument: the first questioning normative expectations around the existence of a “middle class”, and the second pointing to external factors such as rent-seeking behaviour²⁸ and the existence of a transnational bourgeoisie whose span of action and influence is not limited to domestic borders. After a decade or so of muted discussions on class, it is high time to revivify themes of class analyses, which were central in the early work on transition.²⁹ Let us discuss some normative views accompanying discourses on the middle class.

a) Why focusing on ‘the middle class’ is misleading

There are many interpretations of the role class plays in preparing and making revolutions possible. The danger is to selectively examine moments when the middle class appears as a key component in leading political change. One could, however, select other episodes of such rebellions that shed a less favourable light on the middle class. With regard to the Arab uprisings of 2011, some of these analyses force parallels with European history and try to defend the view that the middle class has been a motor of the Arab Spring. If by this we mean to assess whether the middle class was a *trigger* and essential component of the wave of protests, it is hard to argue against such a view. Revolutions have by and large been bourgeois events – and the original moment of the Arab uprisings fits this pattern, with vast sections of the middle class (though not only) in the early months of 2011 taking to the streets for their first time – from Sanaa to Tunis, and from Cairo to Manama, and bandwagoning on activism and grievances relayed originally by lower working classes and/or marginalised groups.³⁰ Indeed, even in Bahrain, where the revolution is usually described in the simplistic terms of a Shiite–Sunni divide, the initial protest included not just the disgruntled local Shiite population, but also segments of the Sunni middle class as well as organ-

ised labour.³¹ Without the support of (at least) portions of the liberal professions and middle class, no revolution is likely to occur – and this has been the case in all Arab countries in 2011, when the tipping points in these protests were reached when richer neighbourhoods or cities threw in their support and joined the bulk of the protest movements.

If, however, we are asking whether the middle class has supported a *continuous effort* towards more social justice and structural change in the pattern of economic and political redistribution, it is obvious that the middle class has not at all been a motor of the Arab uprisings. Two series of episodes can substantiate this claim. On the one hand, a look at the role of lower classes in these revolts shows the complex and overlapping composition of political activism. On the other, events like those in Egypt during the summer of 2013 cast doubt on the automatically positive expectation (in terms of transition and democratisation) that is often attached to the middle class.

In the first series, it is obvious that the marginalised and lower classes are the ones willing to exert political pressure to keep the motor of the Arab uprisings going, so to say. Contrary to studies that look at elite-driven pacts or “transitions”, one needs to shed light on lower-class activism. Examples from different Arab countries can illustrate this.

In Tunisia, youth and marginalised Tunisians were pivotal in contributing to the second phase of protest, after President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country on 14 January 2011. This new wave, called the second Qasbah protests, took place in February and March 2011. These new sit-ins in the old city (*qasbah* in Arabic) and near key ministries maintained pressure on the transitional government and raised public awareness among the population at large on the need to keep the train of reforms moving. It is widely accepted that these manifestations paved the way for a collective agreement and compromises on how the autumn elections would be held.³² Again in 2013, when the Tunisian parliament stalled in delivering a new constitution, an alliance of trade union activists, the national bar association and industrialists forced the ruling troika to step down and hastened the enactment of a new constitution in January 2014.³³

In Yemen, one could see disenfranchised groups in the north such as *akhdam* (lower caste servants) and excluded sectors in the south pushing for the realisation of a similar national dialogue after the departure of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011.³⁴ Similarly, it was youth activists from different social backgrounds who in March 2011 began calling for an end to political divisions in Palestine. At the end of 2011 in Egypt, when it became clear that the police state was still pulling the strings even after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak, the November street battles – such as those of Muhammad Mahmoud street – belonged to the lower segments of Egyptian society, not the twitterati that were so central to the January and February 2011 protests.³⁵ Alliances have surely been formed, but not just between incumbent elites and the middle classes: shared pressures between the lower and middle classes also need to be included in our comparative analyses of the Arab uprisings.³⁶

The second series of episodes that casts a less positive light on the involvement of the middle class stems from the end of President Mohamed Morsi’s power tenure in summer 2013 and post-Rabia al-Adawiyya³⁷ events. Around that time, some argued that both the military and Morsi (with the Muslim Brotherhood-led Freedom and Justice Party) tried to court the middle classes to forge al-

liances.³⁸ But this depiction deprives the middle class of its agency and turns this vast social group into a monolith and a simple passive weight that both sides have tried to pull onto their side of the balance. Let us not forget that some sizable portions of the middle class, in particular its “liberal” segments (precisely the segment that in mainstream democratisation theories is supposed to lead in the undermining of the bases of autocratic systems), took an antiliberal stance in supporting the military crackdown of August 2013. Supporting emergency measures and the massive curtailment of civil rights (freedom of expression, indiscriminate detention of Muslim Brotherhood members, and, since March 2014, the courts issuing a string of collective death sentences), as has been the case in Egypt in the past year, is not likely to hasten reform towards more social justice and democratic transition. To be fair, the same charge of noninclusion can be levelled at the Muslim Brotherhood’s neoliberal middle class, which neither pushed for more economic enfranchisement nor for more social justice while Morsi was in power.

Emerging from these short discussions is the view that middle-class involvement in these uprisings presents a mixed balance sheet, with positive contributions to a revolutionary transformation and democratic transition (by supporting the initial protests) but also negative ones (by refraining to transcend their own interests and to accept to abandon their cosy and good life, to take Lisa Wedeen’s expression explaining the reluctance of the Syrian urban bourgeoisie to embrace calls to topple Bashar al-Assad).³⁹

b) Why the focus on the domestic features of class formation is misleading

Let us now turn to the second part of the argument on class, namely the existence of external factors and the need to avoid the traps of only employing domestic analyses. Of interest here is the existence of variegated forms of external rents⁴⁰ (mostly foreign aid) and the existence of a transnational bourgeoisie in the process of making clearly identifiable social classes. All this contributes to the making of quite a historically unique configuration in the Arab Middle East.

To understand this specificity and avoid essentialist narratives of Middle Eastern exceptionalism, a historical reading of class formation in the region is necessary.⁴¹ A look at the social history of the Arab Middle East demonstrates that the making of the middle class has not been connected with the development of industrial production or to tax enfranchisement, as was the case in Europe. Instead, it has been mostly based on rent economics, where the economic is dependent on nontax revenues, the latest manifestation of which is the rent derived from foreign aid and linked to a lifestyle geared by the spread of microcredit towards individual consumption and with little consideration for questions of long-term sustainability. Wedeen and Ouiassa are thus absolutely correct in maintaining that the Arab middle classes have not been able to develop any meaningful instrument to push for structural changes in the 2011 uprisings, and thus their engagement with these uprisings has been motivated by a worldview that is based on this individualistic lifestyle.⁴² This inertia also explains the resilience of an organised clientele around the ruling classes.⁴³

But one also needs to insist on a recent externalist explanation of the rather superficial involvement of the middle class in the follow-up to the revolts. The focus of many of the approaches in political science and sociology on the subject tends to reinforce a bias towards methodological nationalism –

that is, the a priori selection of variables relating uniquely to internal political or sociological processes. For example, if the bourgeoisie (be it Khosrokhavar's "would-be middle class" or Bayat's "middle class poor")⁴⁴ is described as defective, this is due to the nature of the political system (autocracy), or to internal divisions created by political Islam. In other words, all these accounts privilege internalist processes or domestic understandings of political change. What these explanations fail to recognise is that the process of class formation is connected as much to external as to internal factors. Halperin noted long ago⁴⁵ that the systematic crushing of left-radical groups during the Cold War led to massive out-migration of the middle class, skewing the balance between different classes and thwarting the emergence of vivid class consciousness (a key ingredient of class participation in political processes).

It is here that an analysis of the middle class needs to engage with regional and international influences. If rent-seeking is generally associated with oil, one needs to look not only at the rent provided by international aid (Egypt, Palestine and Jordan have received vast amounts, both from the USA and EU) but also at the increasing flow of Gulf capital into countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Palestine. Hanieh has powerfully demonstrated that the traditional divisions of state versus society – or a vision of class formation limited to national borders – fail to capture the vivid and massive influence that transnational nonstate actors (for example, global capitalist classes)⁴⁶ play in shaping the future of Arab politics.

Instances of such global or regional capitalist groups interfering from afar are many. They can be identified in sectors as diverse as agriculture, industry and financial services. Egyptian agriculture has evolved so dramatically that the period of very small farmers is almost a thing of the past.⁴⁷ Instead we now have large agribusiness concerns whose capital comes from Gulf capitalist groups. Kuwaiti or Saudi capitalist investors, in league with the military, the largest single land developer in Egypt, have shaped the future of agriculture in Egypt. Similar conclusions can be reached in Tunisia. Furthermore, Isaac has identified the interest of the United Arab Emirates, the largest single donor in terms of foreign direct investment, in supporting certain actors in Egypt.⁴⁸ Such transnational capitalist influence helps us better understand the fluctuations in foreign aid towards a country like Egypt that is at the heart of the Arab revolts. The pulling of the plug on the Muslim Brotherhood in the summer of 2013 by some of the capitalist Gulf class can be read as a fear on the part of Saudi or Emirati investors of losing control over their assets and joint investments with the Egyptian military. Hanieh uses a felicitous description for this intermingling of class formation, the high degree of Gulf capitalists' investments in other Arab countries, as "the Gulf bourgeoisie" becoming "an internal bourgeoisie" in Egypt.⁴⁹

We have now a transnational bourgeoisie playing a political (conservative) role that is often not given the attention it deserves. Be it in Palestine with President Mahmoud Abbas and some of his network who made their fortune in the Gulf;⁵⁰ be it in Libya with former interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril whose connections in Kuwait, Lebanon and Qatar helped him become a key figure in the early Libyan transition;⁵¹ or anti-Brotherhood sentiments expressed by the chequebook diplomacy of the Saudi royal family or the United Arab Emirates, one can see that not only do state rents shape and undermine the prospect of more democratic change in the region; but also that a powerful capitalist class, international in its composition and outlook, is failing the genuinely popular aspiration of the Arab uprisings for political change and economic reform in order to preserve its own interests and investments in other countries.

In that sense, questioning the role of an evanescent middle class is misleading. What needs to be assessed is the flow of three different economic rents: oil rent in its different forms, nonoil rent that is transnational (and mostly intra-Arab) and has deep capitalist entanglements in the national economies of countries that are part of the “Arab Spring”, and the bureaucratic degeneration linked to foreign aid. This last aspect can be connected to a critique of institutionalised or NGO-ised civil society, which might be seen as having a detrimental role in terms of class formation. Indeed, NGOs all too often focus solely on their economic and institutional survival, and reproduce a middle class that is disconnected, paradoxically, from the lower classes and popular aspirations they are supposed to help and represent through social work.⁵² This is not to say that civil society organisations did not play a role in maintaining a space for criticism, even in an authoritarian context.⁵³ But part of civil society became entangled in its own transnational sets of consideration (scrambling for funding, international networking, regional visibility, etc.).

Instead, we should look for motors of the Arab uprisings in the less institutionalised type of activism, and in the revolutionary capacity of different groups and classes to come together and to act in an immediate, presentist manner. These processes have been termed “desectorialisation”⁵⁴ or intersectionality.⁵⁵ The latter term allows us to reflect on the relevance of regional and external factors, such as rent and migration, and how these intersect with internal factors to influence the dynamics of various national uprisings. Finally, this term also reminds us that change will only come from the combined efforts of both the lower and middle classes, which are distinct from the interest of the state bourgeoisie and transnational capitalists in maintaining a truncated social contract. Alexander and Bassiouny are correct to underline that the Egyptian military (SCAF) specifically targeted trade unions and worked to stop lower-class mobilisations since these were the groups most vocal in reminding the larger public of the need to enact reforms leading to more just economic redistribution as soon as possible.⁵⁶

To conclude this first qualitative detour on transitions, one should not lose sight of how class struggle and demands have been pivotal in *sustaining* demands for general political change and the emergence of a new political system. These demands have allowed for the expansion of citizenship rights, and have emboldened the people’s immediate participation in the protests. But the ultimate test of citizenship and reformed political representation, as we will now see, lies in the question of violence, its reappropriation and the possibility of it confronting how the past use of violence by state institutions or the ruling regime had become totally illegitimate.

III. Representation as the reappropriation of violence

Like class, the study of the place of violence in transition and democracy is not a simple or linear story. This is true for politics in the whole world, not just in the Arab Middle East. Classical sociology, like that of Norbert Elias, reminds us that lying deep beneath the formal aspect of representation and the creation of political institutions is an issue that has always been at the heart of the modern form of politics, namely the challenge to restrain and channel violence in a constructive and legitimate way.⁵⁷ The Middle East has a more recent history in confronting this challenge, but it has

faced the same hurdles. As seen above, the existence of so many conflicts in the region should not be explained through quasi-racist culturalist accounts of an “Arab mind” that understands only violence.⁵⁸ Rather, one needs to historicise these conflicts, the origin of political violence, and keep the massive external meddling in Arab politics in mind.

It is even more striking to see that all Arab uprisings have tried to question the dominant use of violence. The protesters in 2011 not only confronted their regimes and stated in highly visible and creative ways that their use of violence against their own population was no longer acceptable: they also offered very concrete and constructive alternatives on how to redress the use of violence in a more legitimate and democratic manner. People in 2011 have attempted to take full control of legitimate violence – generating a much deeper form of political transition that is often overlooked. Before looking at this revolutionary moment, let us characterise succinctly how violence had become one of the biggest grievances for Arab citizens.

One can benefit from excellent studies on the functioning of violence in pre-2011 Arab politics. Wedeen concentrates on Syria while Hibou explains the resilience of Ben Ali’s regime in Tunisia.⁵⁹ Both make compelling arguments about the “force of obedience” that these one-party systems (the Ba’ath party in Syria and the RCD in Tunisia) managed to generate, allowing for these regimes to remain in power pretty much unchallenged for many decades. Even if these systems never managed to *convince* their citizens to fully accept the dominant ideology, these systems of repression and control relied on an array of mechanisms and indirect institutions that occupied so much space that no dissidence could emerge: the over-presence of bureaucracy, the spread of private debt and the use of public symbols (statues, posters, etc.) to generate affective commitments to the ruler, all served as mechanisms and expedients to remind citizens that authority was everywhere. Most of the time, the regime did not have to use sheer force to quell dissent, except in rare moments. It could *induce people* to accept the regime’s authority.

In Egypt, the state institutions have used much more violent means to crush opposition groups, in particular the various Islamist factions. Police brutality, torture, death in custody, degrading prison conditions, and daily humiliation on the streets have become so engrained that the Egyptian government came to lose any popular legitimacy it enjoyed. Ismail has documented how in Cairo “arbitrary police actions and use of torture in detention [had become in the 2000s] common occurrences ... Everyday encounters with the state in the urban setting bear the marks of repression and neglect on the part of the authorities and resentment on the part of the citizens.”⁶⁰

The use of violence has become so frequent that people in Egypt think of the state as a very distant entity or set of institutions whose function was solely that of protecting the interests of the Mubarak regime. Through her interviews, Ismail offers a bleak statement on the relation between living together, in the same state, and violence: “The citizens are aware that the state is not legal and that it is repressive but weak. However, fear structures their relations to its agents and their practices.”⁶¹ Elsewhere, people from informal neighbourhoods in Cairo stated that: “there is no state, we are not in a state. This is a group of thieves, a gang. The interior ministry protects the system, the regime ... There is nation, but no state.”⁶²

These three authors help us realise the intimidating power that security bodies (the interior ministry, in charge of the *mukhabarat*, or political police) had until 2011. But the last sentence hints at the belief that a collective fate, that of belonging to the same “nation”, remained nonetheless in the mind of many Arab citizens.

The revolutionary potential – or rather the truly democratic element of transition (the *demos* taking power) – resides in the possibility of stripping the incumbent power of the capacity to appear as the ultimate justification for violence. This would be a return to Weber’s actual definition of the state, namely as the *human community* that holds the legitimate means of violence.⁶³ In countries where these imbalances have been laid bare by the immanent power of the people to resist as a whole, or through the defection of certain armed groups (especially in Tunisia and Yemen), and where representation was organised in a structured way, there has been a demand by the people to renegotiate the source of legitimate violence and to give to the human community the opportunity to become the actor in charge of violence.

The people could have never got their symbolic foot in the door of the management of violence, so to say, without the actual defection of certain groups holding security prerogatives. One can even maintain that a necessary condition for the revolutionary transition in Arab countries characterised by a high degree of militarism and militarisation is the systemic defection of one armed or security group, which in turn, can be seen as a result of a process of questioning the legitimacy of their use of violence. Indeed, the Tunisian army decided on 13 January 2011 not to use violence against its people, leaving Ben Ali with the limited support of his political police, which was an effective tool in repressing long-term dissidence but unable to quell mass protests such as those that erupted in mid-January 2011.⁶⁴ Similarly, in Yemen, the defection in March 2011 of General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar presented a thorn in the side of Saleh’s efforts to maintain power.⁶⁵ In Libya, it is doubtful that without Nato’s air strikes, Qaddafi would have been toppled. This analysis does not represent a justification for military intervention there (or elsewhere), but is an observation that bombings happened and created new situations and dynamics on the ground. The Libyan people used this opportunity to reorganise power at a local level. It has proved a much more daunting task to do the same trick at national level, where the three historic provinces of Libya are engaged in a struggle over the allocation of resources, such as the oil rent.

Does it mean that state-making is done through war-making, as Tilly argued nearly 40 years ago? And that war-making shapes the structures of state revenue?⁶⁶ After all the underreported strikes in Libyan oil fields and refineries, combined with the problem of turning former militia groups from the 2011 civil war into a regular army or state officials, is a classical issue of historical sociology. For months during the summer of 2013, oil refinery workers went on strike to force a more equal redistribution of oil revenue across the various parts of the country. Similarly, former members of irregular armed groups who fought during the 2011 civil war asked to be included in the regular army. If the Libyan elites and parliamentary groups manage to find a compromise over the distribution of resources in 2015, they will have paved the way towards a more meaningful and participatory form of state throughout the country. In other words, they have to enact a more just connection between revenue extraction and the exercise of violence. It has been a long and difficult process in Europe and the turn taken in Libya, Yemen or even Syria since the emergence of the Islamic State group are terrible reminders of this reality.

But there was another significant and more positive break in early 2011. People actively pursued a strategy of questioning, at times even visually, how violence had been used against the people. In Egypt, people organised a media campaign called *al-kadhibun* ("the liars") to confront the lies of the regime.⁶⁷ One key example were the pictures of the death of Khaled Sa'id, a young Alexandrian who was beaten to death by policemen in June 2010 for having posted on the internet proof of the corruption of Egyptian police. The shocking images of his disfigured body circulated widely on a Facebook page called "We are all Khaled Said" and which received hundreds of thousands of "likes", Sa'id later turned into a symbol for the youth who sought revenge on Mubarak and his cronies: for example, a graffito made in February 2011 depicted a frail and tiny Mubarak being held in the arms of a giant and resurrected Sa'id, who had returned to his co-citizens to seek justice for all the violence committed by Mubarak's regime on its own population.

This was a moment where the former guardians were again guarded by the Egyptian people. Thus, rather than the aporia of *quis custodes ispos custodiet?* (who will guard the guardians?), the demos (here made explicit by the use of Sa'id's image as a symbol for the ills and humiliations that Egyptians experienced for years) expressed a clear and potentially revolutionary message: *custodes ipsi custodiantur a populo*, the guardians themselves are now being guarded by the people. The reason why this reversal, albeit short, was possible was not simply because of the sheer number of people flocking to central squares. It was also engendered by the convergence of different groups, social backgrounds, sexes and age groups, which I have termed "intersectionality" above. It was precisely this degree of convergence and impossibility to distinguish which groups were protesting that was unsettling for the regime, for they had no means to drive a wedge between different groups.

Conclusion

This article has argued that radical new paths of doing politics emerged in the Arab worlds with the 2011 uprisings. Studies of "transition" must not only concentrate on formal changes in terms of political representation, parties, elections, or changes in constitutional texts. Historically informed studies of transition in the Arab worlds also need to look at the informal alliances generated in the name of class and at how the issue of violence has been partially reappropriated by protestors. Repression against the most vocal critics of economic inequality has been a privileged way for the military in Egypt to break the revolutionary dynamic. The most revolutionary dimension of these revolts, in terms of offering an alternative foundation for a new social contract and shared sense of citizenship, has evolved around the attempts to reclaim violence in a just and legitimate manner. Legitimate violence can only exist if it is controlled, at least in part, by the sovereign people (democracy is about the power of the demos, tempered by various institutions accounting for each other's actions and functions).

This revolutionary claim on a shared control of violence has raised citizens' expectations very high, a demand that certain regimes managed to deflect into another round of ruthless violence. Syria, Libya and now Yemen have fallen prey to the blindness of certain leaders who are happy to revert to old patterns of war-making to cling to power. In other instances, such as Tunisia, informal coa-

litions have managed to harness these destructive forces and introduce substantial reforms in the field of security. The peculiar history of Egypt, where the military as an institution is entrusted with vast economic power⁶⁸ and given the connections of Gulf investors with the country,⁶⁹ is a reminder that a comparative study of political transition cannot exist without a clear understanding of the economic forces at play and their origins in at least three decades of forced neoliberal policies. Alexander and Bassiouny are right when they state that “military capital as a distinct form of state capital in Egypt is a product of the period of neoliberal reforms” and that the violence expressed by the military in the last three years has specifically targeted trade unions and other actors, often from lower classes, who denounced these economic privileges. To this assessment of who has paid a high price since the counterrevolution, one must also include groups that have directly questioned the unjust and illegitimate use of violence by Arab regimes.

To take a step back from the Arab uprisings and to compare them with other revolutionary moments in the twentieth century, or what Kornetis describes as “contentious politics”,⁷⁰ the material analysed in this article suggests that direct comparisons with 1968 or 1989 events are difficult. For one, the Arab Middle East is a region characterised by a higher degree of open domestic and regional violence than Europe, one of the main geographic focuses of transition studies in the second half of the twentieth century. The concentration of ruthless violence in the hands of socially isolated ruling elites in Syria, Egypt or Yemen has no parallels in European history (the Cold War in Europe, and the shadows of the two superpowers limited the concentration of the means of violence in the hands of national elites). Turning to class politics, while it was possible to identify clear-cut politics in 1968,⁷¹ this became harder after these events. As suggested above, this trend of blurred class lines is also identifiable in Arab politics, with the additional complication of accelerated transnational class formation there. But the main difference between 2011, on the one hand, and 1968 and 1989 moments of “contentious politics”, on the other, is that the prospect for the economic inclusion of or for economic redistribution to large social segments hardly existed in the Arab Middle East of 2011. Hopes of receiving a share of the pie because of a moment of full economic expansion (as was the case in the 1960s), or to become part of a shared (western) European market and community (as was the case for southern, central and eastern European countries after 1989) does not exist at all for Arab countries. There are no large regional or economic incentives towards peaceful and economic integration for Arab countries, which could help shoulder gradual reforms. Revolution, therefore, seems the only way to make demands for disenfranchised and disgruntled Arab populations.

In general, I have argued that the Arab uprisings have had global success because they posited a central link between the failure of formal representation and ongoing economic and social degradation, a condition also found in the USA or in Europe. Formal political representation remains important, especially in the Arab region, which is characterised by a culture of fear, a lack of pluralism and the absence of a political party system. Yet, the overinvestment or overfocus of much of the transitology literature on procedural solutions has proved insufficient for a renewal of social theory informed by Arab events.

Representation has been rethought as a more qualitative process in which the people tried to take control and shape a different course as regards the use of violence and generate a deeper form of political transition. Two ways to make an intelligent use of the revolts as a source for theory-mak-

ing is to assess the qualitative shift of political representation since 2011 and its interlocking with violence. In the name of the revolution, citizens expressed the modern form of reflexive power of the people and of its sovereign power. Such revolutionary aspirations from below were too threatening to be allowed to be implemented. Yet, this alternative path to democratic consolidation deserves our full attention in the future.

NOTES

- * I would like to thank Kostis Kornetis, Damian Mac Con Uladh and the anonymous reviewers for their criticisms and suggestions while revising this article.
- 1 I prefer the phrase Arab uprisings when referring of the events since 2011. The term "Arab Spring" is problematic in many respects: the singular form erases significant differences among the cases and the term "Spring" itself seems to refer for many to European precedents.
- 2 For a critique see, Ilya Harik, "Democracy, 'Arab Exceptionalism,' and Social Science," *Middle East Journal* 60/4 (2006): 664–668.
- 3 Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).
- 4 Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13/2 (2002): 5–21.
- 5 On citizenship as more than formal rights, see Jean Leca, "Questions on Citizenship," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 1992), 17–32, and Engin F. Isin and Bryan S. Turner, "Investing Citizenship: An Agenda for Citizenship Studies," *Citizenship Studies* 11/1 (2007): 5–17.
- 6 This analysis is based on secondary literature as well as the author's research on civil society promotion, observations and interviews with Egyptian, Jordanian, Yemeni and Palestinian actors in the spring 2012 and in 2013.
- 7 Armando Salvatore, "Beyond Orientalism? Max Weber and the Displacements of 'Essentialism' in the Study of Islam," *Arabica* 43/3 (1996): 457.
- 8 I use the term Arab worlds in the plural to underline the variety of historical experiences and trajectories in the region. A considerable amount of research has been done by scholars working on Middle Eastern politics and transitions. These have been mostly framed as a transformation of hybrid regimes, studies in authoritarian learning, and/or controlled evolution from authoritarian to semiauthoritarian regimes. For the most relevant studies, see Oliver Schlumberger, *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, "Authoritarian Learning," in *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Marc Lynch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 75–92; Nathan Brown, *When Victory is not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). See also the series of articles on "Tracking the 'Arab Spring,'" *Journal of Democracy* 24/4 (2013).
- 9 Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou and Timothy Sisk, "Bringing Back Transitoogy: Democratisation in the 21st Century," Working Paper, Geneva Centre for Security Policy Research Series, 13 (2013), accessed 18 May 2015, <http://www.gcsp.ch/content/download/14308/171469/download>. See also Marina Ottaway, "Democratic Transitions and the Problem of Power," Working Paper, Woodrow

Wilson Center. Occasional Paper series, Middle East Program, 2014, accessed 18 May 2015, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/democratic_transitions_and_problem_of_power.pdf.

- 10 Ould Mohamedou and Sisk, "Bringing Back Transitology," 9 and 11.
- 11 Ibid., 14. As Philippe Schmitter repeatedly showed in his work, one needs study democratic *consolidation* rather than expect a neat teleological sequence of democratic transition.
- 12 By that, he does not mean to say that Arab politics can be explained through culturalist arguments (about thick primordial identities trumping other forms of political calculations). Rather, he wants to show how semiauthoritarian regimes can manipulate and exacerbate identity conflicts to undercut opposition efforts (31–32). See Daniel Brumberg, "Theories of Transition," in *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Marc Lynch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 29–52.
- 13 These coalitions vary greatly from country to country. I insist at this stage on the informal nature of these coalitions, that is, temporary alliances made by groups that are not automatically playing on the same turf. For example, the main national trade union in Tunisia, the General Tunisian Union of Workers (UGTT), entered in an alliance with the Union of Industry, Trade and Crafts (UTICA), the Bar Association and the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights to pressure the government in autumn 2013 into stepping down and for the parliament to finalise the draft of the constitution. See Ottaway, "Democratic Transitions." For another example of informal coalitions, in Egypt, see Killian Clarke, "*Aish, hurriyya, karama insaniyya*: Framing and the 2011 Egyptian Uprising," *European Political Science* 12 (2013): 197–214.
- 14 Benoît Challand, "The Counter Power of Civil Society and the Emergence of a New Political Imaginary in the Arab World," *Constellations* 18/3 (2011): 271–283.
- 15 On this, see Sheila Carapico, *Political Aid and Arab Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For an early critique of this trend, see Rema Hammami, "NGOs: The Professionalization of Politics," *Race & Class* 37/2 (1995): 51–63.
- 16 Presentism is therefore understood in a positive light, as a form of "revolutionary momentum" generated by the fact of being there and present *en masse*. It is a revolutionary philosophy and attitude to express an urgent need to act *hic et nunc* in shaping a more just and socially equal political future. See Benoît Challand, "Against the Grain: Locating the Spirit of the Arab Uprisings in Times of Counter-revolution," *Constellations* 20/2 (2013): 169–187.
- 17 This varies from country to country, but roughly one could say that this moment of opening up and calling for substantial democratisation from below lasted from a month (Bahrain) to six to ten months (the tide shifted in Egypt or in Syria in the fall 2011).
- 18 I use the prefix re- (in reaffirmation) to object to the view that 2011 was the *first* manifestation of democratic expectations in the Arab worlds. For a description of earlier calls for popular democratic participation, see Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) and Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Justice Interruptus: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
- 19 To quote from Ould Mohamedou and Sisk, "Bringing Back Transitology," 18: "The advent of the middle class in developing countries has also arguable been an underlying driver of many transitions in the contemporary period."
- 20 The best evidence for the expression of the people's constitutive power resides in the shared motto used more or less in the same vein "The people want the fall of the regime" (in Arabic: *ash-sha'b yourid isqaat al-nizaam*).

- 21 This is close to Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's formulation in *Déclaration: Ceci n'est pas un manifeste* (Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2013), 28.
- 22 On the historical problem of violence, see Ahmit Bozarslan, *Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).
- 23 Some Arab countries achieved independence only in the 1970s (Gulf states), while two large Middle Eastern nations, the Kurds and the Palestinians, have been denied statehood and independence.
- 24 Think of Saddam Hussein, of the many military coups in Turkey, of the more or less overt rule by military men in Egypt, Yemen, Algeria or Syria. See Steven Heydemann, ed., *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1–30. See also Nancy Bermeo, "Democracy Assistance and the Search for Security," in *New Challenges to Democratization*, eds. Peter J. Burnell and Richard Youngs (London: Routledge, 2010), 73–92.
- 25 See Omar Dahi, "The Political Economy of the Egyptian and Arab Revolts," *IDS Bulletin* 43/1 (2012): 49, 51.
- 26 See Samer Soliman, *The Autumn of Dictatorship: Fiscal Crisis and Political Change in Egypt under Mubarak* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).
- 27 For an overview of the historical presence of class politics in the Middle East, see Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockmann, *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
- 28 Rents understood as nontax revenues. These can be foreign aid, oil rents, or, in Egypt, revenues generated by the Suez Canal. See Soliman, *Autumn of Dictatorship*, 3.
- 29 For a short discussion of class analyses in early transition works and in the Arab world, see Brumberg, "Theories of Transition," 32–34.
- 30 The countless number of strikes in Egypt in the five years before 2011 is a reminder of the preparatory work done by trade unions. On this, see Joel Beinin, "The Rise of Egypt's Workers," Paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (June 2012), accessed 18 May 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/06/28/rise-of-egypt-s-workers/>. For a detailed study of the dynamics of the Tunisian protests, from the peripheral city of Sidi Bouzid to the capital Tunis, see Choukri Hmed, "Abeyance Networks, Contingency and Structures: History and Origins of the Tunisian Revolution," *Revue française de science politique* 62/5–6 (2013): 51–63.
- 31 Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 162; Marc Lynch, *The Arab Spring: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2012), 136–137.
- 32 Nouri Gana, "Tunisia," in *Dispatches from the Arab Spring*, eds. Paul Amar and Vijay Prashad (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 18.
- 33 Called the Quartet, this alliance led to the adoption of a roadmap which defined the framework for another phase of "transition". See Ottaway, "Democratic Transitions."
- 34 Tom Finn, "In Revolt: Yemeni 'Untouchables' Hope for Path Out of Misery," Reuters, 7 March 2012, accessed 18 May 2015, <http://reut.rs/Ax5nXw>. Sheila Carapico, "Yemen," in *Dispatches from the Arab Spring*, eds. Paul Amar and Vijay Prashad (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 102–110.
- 35 For the pressure by lower middle classes and by trade unions who called for substantial reforms in Egypt, see Anne Alexander and Mostafa Bassiouny, *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: Workers and the Egyptian Revolution* (London: Zed, 2014). On the Mohammed Mahoud Street battle, see Lucie Ryzova, "The Battle

of Cairo's Muhammad Mahmoud Street: Opinion," *Al Jazeera English*, 29 November 2011, accessed 18 May 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/11/201111288494638419.html>.

- 36 For a general discussion on the role of lower classes in keeping revolutions alive, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013), esp. chaps. 3–4.
- 37 Rabia al-Adawiyya is the name of the square in Cairo where pro-Morsi supporters built an encampment after the massive June 2013 protests that were organised, among others, by the Tamarod ("rebel") movement. The military violently overtook the square in mid-August 2013. A very polarised debate emerged in Egyptian society as to whether the use of extreme violence (there were hundreds of victims) was justified or not.
- 38 Rachid Ouaisa, "Thesis: The Misunderstandings about the Role of the Middle Class," *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* 2 (2014): 12–16.
- 39 Lisa Wedeen, "Ideology and Humor in Dark Times: Notes from Syria," *Critical Inquiry* 39/4 (2013): 841–873.
- 40 Rents, or technically speaking economic rents, are nontax revenues, that is, amounts received for a non-productive activity (for example, renting a house). In the present discussion of external rents, we mean large revenues sent from abroad to an Arab government (overseas development assistance (ODA), or military "aid") or to Arab associations, NGOs or think tanks (ODA or foreign aid). Since these funds are not connected to productive activities (a service from an NGO, or from a given government) and often represent large amounts of money, external rents generate what economists term "rent-seeking" activities (or "vested interest"), namely an attitude to preserve such concentration of economic or financial benefits, which can be detrimental to forms of accountability and transparency. See Aristides Hatzis, "Rent-seeking and Vested Interests," in *Encyclopedia of Political Economy*, ed. Phillip A. O'Hara (London: Routledge, 1999), 974–977. For definitions of foreign, military aid and the impact of rent-seeking, see Benoît Challand, "Revisiting Aid in the Arab Middle East," *Mediterranean Politics* 19/3 (2014): 281–298.
- 41 Rachid Ouaisa, "Blockierte Mittelschichten als Motor der Veränderungen in der arabischen Welt?" in *Arabellions: Zur Vielfalt von Protest und Revolte im Nahen Osten und Nordafrika*, eds. Annette Jünemann and Anja Zorob (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013), 257–277.
- 42 Ibid., 273. See also Wedeen, "Ideology and Humor in Dark Times."
- 43 This takes us back to Brumberg's notion of "protection racket autocracies". See "Theories of Transition."
- 44 Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolutions that Shook the World* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2012), 60–91; Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 44.
- 45 Sandra Halperin, "The Post-Cold War Political Topography of the Middle East: Prospects for Democracy," *Third World Quarterly* 26/7 (2005): 1135–1156.
- 46 I prefer using the plural of "global classes" to show the variety within. Hanieh speaks of them in the singular form. See Adam Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East* (London: Haymarket, 2013).
- 47 See Habib Ayeub and Ray Bush, "Small Farmer Uprisings and Rural Neglect in Egypt and Tunisia," *Middle East Report* 272 (2014): 2–11. See also Dahi, "The Political Economy," 52.
- 48 Sally K. Isaac, "Explaining the Patterns of the Gulf Monarchies' Assistance after the Arab Uprisings," *Mediterranean Politics* 19/3 (2014): 413–430.
- 49 Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt*, 139.

- 50 Mouin Rabbani, "Qatar and the Palestinians," *Jadaliyya*, 1 Dec. 2012, accessed 18 May 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8692/qatar-and-the-palestinians>.
- 51 Vijay Prashad, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2012), 138–140.
- 52 Benoît Challand, *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude* (London: Routledge, 2009), 185–188, 192–198; See also Challand, "The Counter-Power of Civil Society," 275.
- 53 Laryssa Chomiak and John P. Entelis, "Contesting Order in Tunisia: Crafting Political Identity," in *Civil Society Activism under Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta (London: Routledge, 2013), 73–93.
- 54 Laurent Bonnefoy and Marine Piorier, "The Structuration of the Yemeni Revolution: An Attempt at Analysing an Ongoing Process," *Revue française de science politique* 62/5–6 (2012): 895–913.
- 55 Challand, "Against the Grain."
- 56 Alexander and Bassiouny, *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice*.
- 57 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (London: Blackwell, 2000), 187–194 and 257–267. See also Gianfranco Poggi, *The State: its Nature, Development, and Prospects* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 1–68.
- 58 For a famous Orientalist account imputing the high level of violence to a specific "Arab mind", see Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Scribner, 1973).
- 59 For Syria, see Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination. Politics Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999). For Tunisia, see Béatrice Hibou, *The Force of Obedience: The Political Economy of Repression in Tunisia* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), in particular 1–21 and 110–137.
- 60 Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2006), 163.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 166.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 165.
- 63 My emphasis. From this definition the first phrase, "the human community", is often omitted. The "state" thus becomes instead a "structure" or an "organisation" that holds the legitimate means of violence. For the original definition, see Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. Hans Heinrich Gerth and Charles Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).
- 64 Nouredine Jebnoun, "In the Shadow of Power: Civil–military Relations and the Tunisian Popular Uprising," *Journal of North African Studies* 19/3 (2014): 296–316.
- 65 See International Crisis Group, "Yemen's Military-Security Reform: Seeds of New Conflict?" *Middle East Report* 139 (2013): 1–25.
- 66 Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in *The Formation of National States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 8.
- 67 Armando Salvatore, "New Media and Collective Action in the Middle East: Can Sociological Research Help Avoiding Orientalist Traps?," *Sociologica* 3 (2011), accessed 1 Jun. 2015, <http://www.sociologica.mulino.it/journal/issue/index/Issue/Journal:ISSUE:15>.
- 68 See Yezid Sayigh, "Above the State: The Officers' Republic in Egypt," Carnegie Endowment Working Paper, August 2012. For security and transition, see his recent report: "Missed Opportunity: The Politics of Police Reform in Egypt and Tunisia," Carnegie Endowment Working Paper, March 2015.

- 69 Hanieh, *Lineage of Revolts*.
- 70 Kostis Kernetis, "1968, 1989, 2011: Reconsidering Social Movements, 'Moments of Change' and Theoretical Framing Over Time," *Historein* 13 (2013): 57–70.
- 71 Ibid., 58. Kernetis reminds us that 1968 is the beginning of the "new social movements" and that we turned our back on "traditional" models of class struggles from this moment onwards.