

# 1 | *New Approaches to Contentious Politics*

The Arab uprisings have demonstrated the importance of analyzing contentious politics in authoritarian regimes through new analytical tools. During the 1990s, Tarrow argued that research into the areas of democratization and social movements rarely intersected.<sup>1</sup> In trying to fill this gap, Donatella della Porta compared the democratization process in Eastern Europe with the events of the Arab Spring by examining “episodes of democratization through the lens of social movement studies.”<sup>2</sup> Political developments and recent literature suggest that democratization is unlikely to develop in Arab countries that have experienced mass contention, with the notable exception of Tunisia.<sup>3</sup> This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for the study of contentious politics in authoritarian regimes.

## **Contentious Politics in the Arab World**

The Arab uprisings, unlike the Eastern European revolutions, have had various outcomes, none of which has been democratization. During the Eastern European revolutions, attempts from above, either from the incumbent authoritarian rulers or from the more moderate members of the authoritarian regime in association with moderates in the

<sup>1</sup> Sydney Tarrow, “Mass Mobilization and Regime Change: Pacts, Reform and Popular Power in Italy (1918–1922) and Spain (1975–1978),” in Richard Gunther, Nikiforos Diamandourous, and Hans Juergen Puhle, *Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 204–230.

<sup>2</sup> Donatella della Porta, *Mobilizing for Democracy: Comparing 1989 and 2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Tunisia is the only country in which free and fair elections have led to the election of a Constitutional Assembly, and free and fair parliamentary elections took place in October 2014. None of the contestants disputed the results, and political parties agreed to start negotiations for a coalition government.

democratic opposition, resulted in an alliance that expedited the transition to democracy.<sup>4</sup>

In the Arab world, however, this was not the case. Youth movements were able to mobilize the masses that had long been excluded from the benefits of the authoritarian regime. But in the existing political structure, there were neither regime moderates nor opposition moderates who could have initiated negotiations leading to an agreed transition. Here it is instructive to consider Michael McFaul's "noncooperative" model of transition in the post-Soviet republics, in which he disputes the emphasis of earlier transitologists on negotiation and compromise and argues that power and ideas lie at the center of analysis in countries that experience regime breakdown. Accordingly, a different set of causal paths from authoritarianism can lead either to democracy or to autocracy. For instance, ten years after the postcommunist transitions, the distribution of power, which favored democrats at the moment of regime breakdown, helped to produce democracies. However, a distribution of power favoring the leaders or the functionaries of the previous authoritarian regime resulted in a transition from one kind of autocracy to another.<sup>5</sup> In Egypt, the military has had the upper hand in the transition process, from the ousting of Mubarak to the ousting of Mursi. The military establishment, which is authoritarian in nature – even more so in the case of Egypt, where it has dominated political life since 1952 – has prevailed as the hegemonic power in the country.

### Why Contentious Politics in Authoritarianism?

The regimes in the Arab world reacted differently from those in Eastern Europe. They either used excessive violence against protestors, developed new cooptation and/or legitimation measures, or resorted to all three authoritarian strategies to reassert their rule, none of which resulted in democratization.<sup>6</sup> Instead, their responses led to civil war

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe," *International Social Science Journal* vol. 43, no. 2 (1991), pp. 269–284.

<sup>5</sup> Michael McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World," *World Politics* vol. 54, no. 2 (2002), pp. 221–244.

<sup>6</sup> Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Arab Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Uprisings," *Comparative Politics* vol. 44, no. 2 (2012), pp. 127–149; Raymond Hinnebusch, "Introduction:

(in Syria, Libya, and, later, Yemen), to regime breakdown of some sort and then autocratization or transition to a hybrid regime (Egypt and Tunisia), or to regime endurance (Bahrain, Jordan, Algeria, and Morocco). In addition, instead of negotiating a transitional pact with the opposition, Arab regimes aligned themselves with counterrevolutionary forces, backed by national and international partners, to stop democratization from taking place.<sup>7</sup>

Thus della Porta's "episodes of democratization" are not applicable to Arab cases, because no democratization process has eventuated. Therefore it is much more useful to analyze authoritarian regime breakdown and resilience – *not democratization* – through the lens of social movement studies. Activism and protests are constructed as a consequence of and in response to authoritarianism, yet their significance lies also in their ability to influence the authoritarian system. Authoritarian regimes present opportunities, obstacles, and threats to the development of movements and their networks, while the movements, in turn, develop threats to the authoritarian regimes. Through their repertoires of contention, social movements influence the authoritarian regime's response, depending on the regime's perception of the threat posed by these mechanisms. The lower the threat, the more cooptation and legitimation measures are adopted; the higher the threat, the more coercion is utilized. These authoritarian measures do not always constitute authoritarian upgrading. Sometimes authoritarian downgrading ensues, especially when a regime uses extreme force against activists and movements without allying these with effective cooptation and legitimation measures.

## Social Movements and Activism

Transformative events are associated with certain important features of social movements, according to della Porta. She defines social movements as "(1) informal networks of individuals and organizations, based on (2) shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize [people] about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various

Understanding the Consequences of the Arab Uprisings – Starting Points and Divergent Trajectories," *Democratization* vol. 22, no. 2 (2015), pp. 205–217.

<sup>7</sup> Joashua Stacher, "Fragmenting States, New Regimes: Militarized State Violence and Transition in the Middle East," *Democratization* vol. 22, no. 2 (2015), pp. 259–275.

forms of protest.”<sup>8</sup> Social movements are characteristically involved in conflict relationships with identified opponents; they are linked by dense informal networks and share a collective identity.<sup>9</sup> In the following discussion, I refer to della Porta’s “individuals” in social movements as “activists.” Activism is a process in which people participate with different degrees of continuity. Many participants engage in activism lifelong, while others participate for short periods. Still others move from one group to another or reengage after a long period of nonparticipation.<sup>10</sup> Many activists follow an episodic trajectory of social and political engagement and might not necessarily participate for life. This intermittent participation is linked to the personal characteristics of the activists, the nature of the organizations to which they belong, and the political context they are in.<sup>11</sup>

## Theories and Contexts

To try to understand activism, how it is influenced by the authoritarian regime, and how it influences these regimes from below, the “mechanisms and processes” approach to contentious politics as developed by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly is relevant, especially when combined with theories of authoritarian resilience. In their seminal work *Dynamics of Contention* (henceforth DOC), they defined the mechanisms of contention as “delimited sorts of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations.”<sup>12</sup> These events are contentious and could lead to rebellions, or to revolutionary acts, that challenge the systems of authority within a given polity.<sup>13</sup> Tarrow further argues that “mechanisms compound into processes, regular combinations and sequences of mechanisms that produce transformations of those elements.”<sup>14</sup> Within this

<sup>8</sup> Della Porta, *Mobilizing for Democracy*, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Catherin Corrigan-Brown, *Patterns of Protest: Trajectories of Participation in Social Movements* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates: Movements and States in Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 23.

framework are various mechanisms and processes, such as the attribution of opportunity or threat, the development of new contentious performances, the construction of new identities, identity shift, and actor constitution.<sup>15</sup> A clearer understanding of causation necessitates a focus on one mechanism or process to see how it functions in different contexts.<sup>16</sup>

### The Framework of Analysis

Taking these ideas into account to examine youth movements in the Arab world in general, and in Egypt in particular, I have chosen three different processes: the context of mobilization, repertoires of collective action, and formal and informal networking.<sup>17</sup> The context of mobilization shows the influence of the authoritarian regime on the rise of youth movements through the development of opportunities for, threats to, and constraints on these movements. The repertoires of collective action show the influence of the authoritarian regime on youth movements' repertoires and also highlight the influence of the movements' repertoires on the regime. This interaction reveals the various strategies of authoritarian upgrading, and sometimes downgrading, enacted by a regime in response to the movements' repertoires. The third process, formal and informal networking, illustrates the influence of an authoritarian regime on the movements' ability to network one with another and how informal rather than formal networks emerge as a result of the regime's tactics.

To understand the influence of these mechanisms and processes on the authoritarian structure, they will be linked to theories of authoritarian resilience, in particular to the three elements of authoritarian survival, cooptation, legitimation, and coercion.<sup>18</sup> First, however, I will define the three main aspects of authoritarian endurance and then

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Pamela Oliver, "Mechanisms of Contention," *Mobilization* vol. 8 (2003), pp. 120–121.

<sup>17</sup> These three mechanisms build on what Beinin and Vairel argue are three important "axes" for analyzing social movements in the Arab world: contexts, networks, and practices. In this book I have focused on repertoires of collective action instead of on practices. This will allow a more detailed analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted by my research team with youth activists about their repertoires of collective action, which mostly depended on protest.

<sup>18</sup> Gerschewski, "Three Pillars of Stability."

discuss the various mechanisms and processes and how they influence and are influenced by authoritarian resilience measures.

## Authoritarian Cooptation Strategies

Cooptation occurs when different sectors of the population are drawn into the regime's sphere by receiving the benefits and perks that it distributes, so that those who might oppose the dictatorship are given a vested interest in maintaining it.<sup>19</sup> It involves a political exchange, whereby the authoritarian leader exchanges rewards with his supporters in a transaction that frequently turns into patronage.<sup>20</sup> These patronage systems enable the dictator to exercise control over those who receive the benefits and thus become included in the political process. The most common cooptation mechanism in authoritarian regimes is through political parties and legislatures, both of which are used as instruments of authoritarian rule.<sup>21</sup>

Boix and Svulik argue that political institutions like the legislature and political parties facilitate the power-sharing process and the survival of authoritarian regimes. These institutions develop a more stable rule in circumstances that are otherwise less.<sup>22</sup> This theory implies that in countries characterized by institutionalized ruling coalitions, the tenure of the leaders is robust and less susceptible to economic problems than in states ruled by dictatorships, which do not tolerate

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "A Dictator's Toolkit: Understanding How Cooptation Affects Repression in Autocracies," *Journal of Peace Research* vol. 51, no. 3 (2014), pp. 332–346; Ronald Wintrobe, *The Political Economy of Dictatorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 40, no. 11 (2007), pp. 1279–1301; Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Cooperation, Cooptation and Rebellion under Dictatorships," *Economics and Politics* vol. 18, no. 1 (2006), pp. 1–26; Beatriz Magaloni, "Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule," *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 41, no. 4–5 (2008), pp. 715–741.

<sup>20</sup> Svulik, *Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup> Andreas Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Carles Boix and Milan W. Svulik, "The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions, Commitment, and Power-Sharing in Dictatorships," *Journal of Politics* vol. 75, no. 2 (2013), pp. 300–316.

such institutions. Elections offer mixed incentives for the opposition to become part of a limited political decision-making process.<sup>23</sup>

Arab regimes have used this institutionalization process in various ways. In Morocco, for instance, King Hassan II reestablished political parties and signed a new constitution following attempted coups against him in 1972. He was able to control his loyal opposition by including them in the political and legislative systems.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, regimes with dominant party systems are particularly robust, because not only do these systems coopt the opposition through the elections for the legislature but the dominant party itself becomes an important instrument in selective cooptation. By strategically coopting certain people who have similar ideological inclinations, the regime is able to marginalize the opposition. In this case, repression takes place against the real opposition, who form a minority.<sup>25</sup> Authoritarian regimes with a dominant party survive two to three times longer than those with multiple parties or no parties at all.<sup>26</sup> According to Jason Brownlee, the ruling parties are able to regulate the power struggles and competition between different elites. Accordingly, successful loyal elites are able to become part of the cabinet, the military, and the police. These parties assure elite contestants that they will always have an opportunity in the future to advance their political agendas.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, the power elite within the ruling party has immense influence over various segments of society. The ruling party becomes the regulator of the disputes that arise between different elite groups in the nation. It is able to find solutions to problems that could otherwise not be managed beyond party ranks. "Thus, beyond managing competition *for* power, parties restrain the conflicts of actors *in* power."<sup>28</sup> The ruling party is able to reinforce and maintain a leadership cadre within its own ranks, and the elites believe that their own survival depends on this power structure, which is able to renew itself.

Dictatorial institutions, such as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico, use the opportunity of contested elections to keep

<sup>23</sup> Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science* vol. 12 (2009), pp. 403–422.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen Lust-Okar, "Divided They Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition," *Comparative Politics* vol. 36, no. 2 (2004), pp. 159–179.

<sup>25</sup> Svobik, *Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, p. 165. <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>27</sup> Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

their regimes in power. Elections for the PRI were used as a way not only to coopt its opposition but to also legitimize its rule among the electorate. Political opposition was the key to this, as the PRI's electoral advantage and winning the legislative contestation consolidated its power in the minds of the electorate.<sup>29</sup>

### Authoritarian Legitimation Strategies

Legitimacy, as defined by Max Weber, is the acceptance of the political authority in a particular country and the will and need to obey its commands. He identified, first of all, traditional legitimacy, where people have faith in the ruling authority, because it has been in place for a long time; second, charismatic authority, where people believe in the charisma of a certain ruler; and third, legal legitimacy, where people believe in the legality of a certain authority.<sup>30</sup> When trying to understand the various aspects of legitimacy in authoritarian contexts, the analysis here does not focus on Weber's normative aspects of legitimacy but rather on the authority of legitimacy. Weber argues that authoritative legitimacy is derived when the commands of certain political actors are binding on others. Hence, stability is achieved when the commands of the political authority are held by the subjects and are binding in the political system.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from Weber's identification of various forms of legitimacy, the concern here is to understand the authority of legitimacy rather than the normative aspects of legitimacy. In authoritarian regimes, this is achieved when the commands of the ruler are accepted and are binding within the polity.<sup>32</sup> Weber's approach to legitimacy was notable for his

<sup>29</sup> Konstantin Ash, "The Election Trap: The Cycle of Post-electoral Repression and Opposition Fragmentation in Lukashenko's Belarus," *Democratization* vol. 22, no. 6 (2015), p. 1033.

<sup>30</sup> Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* vol. 4, no. 1 (1958), pp. 1–11; and Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 1948), pp. 77–128. See also Oliver Schlumberger, "Opening Old Bottles in Search of New Wine: On Nondemocratic Legitimacy in the Middle East," *Middle East Critique* vol. 19, no. 3 (2010), pp. 233–250.

<sup>31</sup> Max Weber, *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society*, translated by Max Rheinstein and Edward Shils (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



insistence on the importance of a “belief” in legitimacy, which changes through time and space. “Legitimacy as an analytical category is thus defined as part of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled and is therefore always influenced by both.”<sup>33</sup>

In authoritarian contexts, this relationship is highly dependent on the regime’s capacity to perform, and to fulfill citizens’ demands for, economic development and also for security in various fields.<sup>34</sup> Seymour Lipset, for instance, relates effectiveness to the legitimacy of a given political system. Effectiveness for him is the extent to which a regime satisfies the expectations of citizens, or the majority of citizens, in addition to the expectations of powerful groups, such as the military, within the system. Legitimacy refers to the capacity of a regime to retain the belief of the wider society that the current political institutions are the most suitable ones for the polity.<sup>35</sup>

An important aspect of legitimation in authoritarian regimes depends on the regime’s ability to perform, for example, its ability to address and fulfill citizens’ demands for social and economic development as well as their demands for order and physical, individual, and social security.<sup>36</sup> In the Arab world, Albrecht and Schlumberger, and later Sedgwick, have identified internal and external legitimacy as interrelated phenomena for the stability of Arab authoritarian regimes. Internal legitimacy is defined within the realm of “output legitimacy,” where the most important aspect is a regime’s economic output and its direct relationship to economic rents.<sup>37</sup> Sedgwick adds the important category of noneconomic legitimacy, which is a regime’s capacity to resolve political problems.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Schlumberger, “Opening Old Bottles,” p. 235.

<sup>34</sup> Gerschewski, “Three Pillars of Authoritarian Rule.”

<sup>35</sup> Seymour Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review* vol. 53, no. 1 (1959), pp. 69–105.

<sup>36</sup> Gerschewski, “Three Pillars of Authoritarian Rule.”

<sup>37</sup> See Holger Albrecht and Oliver Schlumberger, “‘Waiting for Godot’: Regime Change without Democratization in the Middle East,” *International Political Science Review* vol. 25, no. 4 (2004), pp. 371–392; Schlumberger, “Opening Old Bottles”; Holger Albrecht, *Raging against the Machine: Political Opposition under Authoritarianism in Egypt* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013); and Mark Sedgwick, “Measuring Egyptian Regime Legitimacy,” *Middle East Critique* vol. 19, no. 3 (2010), pp. 251–267.

<sup>38</sup> Sedgwick, “Measuring Egyptian Regime Legitimacy,” p. 256.

External legitimacy, on the other hand, is the perception of a certain regime as legitimate by the leading international Western powers and international organizations. This is important, because it undergirds a regime, especially one that suffers from economic problems with revenues and rents.<sup>39</sup> According to Schlumberger, Arab regimes have consistently and to various degrees rested on four main internal legitimating components: religion, tradition, ideology, and the development of welfare benefits to their populations.<sup>40</sup>

### Authoritarian Coercive Strategies

Repression, according to Gerschewski, is “the actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization, within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, for the purpose of imposing a cost on the target as well as deterring specific activities.”<sup>41</sup> In an authoritarian regime that has a dominant party or multiple political parties, the authoritarian leader can liberalize politics and ease the restrictions on censorship. However, such a regime also increases its violations of the physical integrity of certain individuals or opposition groups by means of torture and imprisonment. Through the presence of political parties and a legislature, the dictator is able to coopt his opposition. Nevertheless, opponents to the regime who are not willing to be coopted and who present a direct threat to the dictator’s power are often violently repressed.<sup>42</sup> Eva Bellin argues that “the exceptional will and capacity of the coercive apparatus to repress”<sup>43</sup> in the Middle East is the major reason for the robustness of its authoritarian regimes. Military and security expenditures in this region are among the highest per capita in the world, and the officers of these apparatuses are often deeply entrenched in a variety of profitable enterprises and commercial institutions.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255. <sup>40</sup> Schlumberger, “Opening Old Bottles,” p. 239.

<sup>41</sup> Gerschewski, “Three Pillars of Stability,” p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, “A Dictator’s Toolkit: Understanding How Co-optation Affects Repression in Autocracies,” *Journal of Peace Research*, published online March 20, 2014, online at: <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/03/17/0022343313519808> Retrieved September 22, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring,” *Comparative Politics* vol. 44, no. 2 (2012), pp. 127–149, p. 128.

In Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria in the early 2000s, the “moments of political contestation” identified by Brownlee did not result in the ousting of the dictator but increased the stability of the ruling authoritarian regime. The main explanation, he suggests, is that authoritarian rulers can suppress their opposition through the coercive apparatus.<sup>44</sup> Through building strong coercive organizations, Arab regimes have been able to actively suppress their opposition or foes. Hence, the salient difference between the Arab world and other regions is not the culture of the local population, but the strength of the state’s repressive apparatus.<sup>45</sup>

An important indicator of repression, according to Levitsky and Way, is the size and cohesion of these repressive apparatuses. Sheer numbers of people are obviously important. However, the cohesion of the security apparatus is significant in its own right, as are the authoritarian leader’s strong links with and ability to influence the coercive apparatus.<sup>46</sup> In the Arab context, Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds argue that the structure of the military relations with the regimes in various Arab states determined the outcome of the regime in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. If the autocrat enjoyed loyalty from the army, the officers would prefer to turn against the demonstrators.<sup>47</sup>

A strategy of authoritarian regimes in enforcing repression is the way in which they perceive the threats to their own governance and the protests by various actors. For instance, limited demands for wage increases are less threatening to dictators than challenges to the power structure of the regime itself or demands for political reform.<sup>48</sup> The differences in government reactions to these demonstrations can be explained through Tarrow and Tilly’s understanding of “contained” versus “transgressive” contention. The first is contention that falls within the regime’s tolerated forms of contention, “even if it pushes

<sup>44</sup> Jason Brownlee, “Political Crisis and Restabilization: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia,” in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), pp. 43–62.

<sup>45</sup> Brownlee, “Political Crisis and Restabilization,” p. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Maria Josua and Mirjam Edel, “To Repress or Not to Repress – Survival Strategies in the Arab World,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.806911> Retrieved October 24, 2014.

the limits.” Transgressive contention, however, “crosses institutional boundaries into forbidden or unknown territory. It either violates standard arrangements or adopts previously unknown forms of claim making.”<sup>49</sup> There is thus a dilemma about the use of repression against actors who perform transgressive contention. Will they stop their mobilization against the regime, or will they increase it in response to the use of force? Repression, as the next chapter shows, can turn into a political opportunity for social movements, but it can also become a political threat that leads to their suppression.

### The Context of Mobilization

Within the social movement literature, political opportunity structures are widely used to understand mobilizational contexts. The context in which social movements operate is important for how their particular polity enhances or inhibits their prospects for mobilization, repertoires of contention, and networking.<sup>50</sup> The original analytical approach to this was through the political opportunity structure, a framework widely advanced in social movement theory. The concept of political opportunity was introduced by Eisinger and picked up by Tilly, as a tool to understand the relationship between protest activities and democratic regimes in the USA and UK, respectively.<sup>51</sup> Political opportunities were assessed within four main structurally determined variables: the relative openness or closure of the political system, the stability of elite alignments, the presence of an alliance system between the political elite, and finally, the state capacity and tendency to use coercion.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Charles Tilly and Sydney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2007), p. 60.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Eisinger, “The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American cities,” *American Political Science Review* vol. 81 (1973), pp. 11–28; Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); for a more in-depth analysis of this issue, see David Meyer, “Protest and Political Opportunities.”

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes: Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements” in Doug McAdam et al. (eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–22, p. 10.

Although some important studies have emerged from this approach, it has been much criticized for its structural determinism. Scholars have also rejected many of its basic hypotheses. For instance, Snow et al. concluded that political openings do not affect the extent to which feminist organizations influence decision making in the USA.<sup>53</sup> For non-democratic regimes, Osa and Corduneanu-Huci found that access to the media and social networking sites is more important than political opportunities.<sup>54</sup> By advancing a more processual and relational analysis, Tarrow and Tilly argued that “threats and opportunities co-occur, and most people engaging in contentious politics combine response to threat with seizing opportunities.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the focus should not be limited to the conditions that help or inhibit mobilization but on the processes and mechanisms that underlie mobilization, and on the perceptions of activists of these opportunities and threats.<sup>56</sup>

Tarrow further introduced a “dynamic statism”<sup>57</sup> approach, which allows the researcher to specify certain political opportunities of different actors and to track the changes in the political opportunity over time. He argues that opportunity structures are more open in some political settings than others, since elites within various states are not neutral when dealing with different activists and movements. In addition, movements themselves go through different phases; they might start as peaceful actors, but then they might change and utilize violence. Lastly, he argues that movements develop and fluctuate broadly, in various social sectors and over time and space; they change their mobilization process and repertoires in response to economic and regime changes.<sup>58</sup>

Tarrow’s arguments are illuminating in showing the importance of a dynamic model where both movements and regimes interact and

<sup>53</sup> Sarah Soule, Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Zang Su, “Protest Events: Cause or Consequence of State Action? The U.S. Women’s Movement and Federal Congressional Activities: 1956–1979,” *Mobilization* vol. 4 (1999), pp. 239–256.

<sup>54</sup> Maryjane Osa and Cristina Corduneanu-Huci, “Running Uphill: Political Opportunity in Non-democracies,” *Comparative Sociology* vol. 2, no. 4 (2003), pp. 605–629.

<sup>55</sup> Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, p. 58.

<sup>56</sup> Marco Giugni, “Political Opportunities: From Tilly to Tilly,” *Swiss Political Science Review* vol. 15, no. 2 (2009), pp. 361–368.

<sup>57</sup> Sydney Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates: Movements and States in Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 83.

<sup>58</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates*, pp. 85–87.

influence one another. Nevertheless, his analysis is broad, historical, and mainly focused on contentious politics in the development of early Western democracies. Like the political opportunity hypothesis, it does not provide much insight on the dynamics of contention in authoritarian contexts. The study of social movements in nondemocratic regimes, especially in the Middle East prior to the uprisings, has been scant and has mostly concentrated on Islamist movements, with a few exceptions, such as the scholars who used the political processes model of social movements to study secular movements in Egypt.<sup>59</sup>

### The Context of Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes

The context of mobilization within a regime that effectively coopts its opposition will severely limit political opportunities for establishing youth movements. Cooptation strategies do not constitute direct threats to the movements but are obstacles to their effectiveness and influence on the streets. In such a case, the coopted political opposition downgrades the legitimacy of opposition movements and works with the regime against them. In Russia, for instance, it is argued that the cooptation of opposition elites in the legislature is effective in reducing protest activities by the opposition forces who are associated with these elites.<sup>60</sup> This relationship in the context of mobilization is discussed in Chapter 2.

### Repertoires of Contention

These repertoires refer to the claims that activists make against the regime.<sup>61</sup> All societies display a few well-established claims for collective action and shared interests, from which various actors choose from a range of familiar performances.<sup>62</sup> Repertoires are dependent

<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., Beinin and Vairel, *Social Movements, Mobilization and Contestation*. See also Rabab El-Mahdy, "Enough! Egypt's Quest for Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 42, no. 8 (2009), pp. 1011–1039.

<sup>60</sup> Ora John Rueters and Graeme B. Robertson, "Legislatures, Cooptation, and Social Protest in Putin's Russia," *Working paper*, National Center for Eurasian and East European Research, University of Washington, WA, 2013, online at: [www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2013\\_827-10\\_Reuter.pdf](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2013_827-10_Reuter.pdf) Retrieved June 27, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

on the various identities, social ties, and different organizational forms within the society. During contention, or while watching others contend, activists “learn the interactions that can make a political difference as well as the locally shared meanings of those interactions.”<sup>63</sup> These frames and repertoires can bring about changes in institutions and are also influenced by the institutions. Using Tilly’s perspective on repertoires, Michael Biggs asserts that actors in contentious events are more likely to repeat their previous tactics than to adopt new ones, thus adopting older tactics is far more likely than inventing totally new tactics. This implies that there is a limited set of repertoires and tactics within any given polity and that these evolve over time.<sup>64</sup>

The diffusion of new ideas across a society opens up opportunities to various actors to use the successful tactics and ignore unsuccessful ones. Changes in the repertoires of contention occur incrementally, as activists build on the central forms of repertoires in responding to contentious politics. When new political opportunities or threats arise, activists develop new forms of action and repertoires based on their common history of these.<sup>65</sup>

### Repertoires of Contention in Authoritarian Regimes

Some scholars, like Aristide Zolberg, refer to contention during a society’s social and political transformation as “moments of madness.”<sup>66</sup> These moments, however, are related to the repertoires of contention within societies. They evolve alongside the various cycles of contention, in which certain collective actions diffuse, are tested, and then turn into accepted repertoires.<sup>67</sup> When challenging the authorities through public protests, opposition groups use frames that structure the rationale for collective action.<sup>68</sup> Sydney Tarrow argued in 2012 that the Arab

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Michal Biggs, “How Repertoires Evolve: The Diffusion of Suicide Protest in the Twentieth Century,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* vol. 18, no. 4 (2013), pp. 407–428.

<sup>65</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *The Language of Contention: Revolutions in Words 1688–2012* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Aristide Zolberg, “Moments of Madness,” *Politics and Society* 2 (1972), pp. 183–207.

<sup>67</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates*, p. 133.

<sup>68</sup> See David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,” in Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (eds.), *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation across Cultures* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1988), pp. 197–217. See also Marc

uprisings were examples of the “moment of madness” leading either to violence or to normalization of new repertoires.<sup>69</sup> This requires a broader analysis of contentious repertoires in contemporary authoritarian regimes.

The analysis of activists’ repertoires will advance our knowledge of how youth activists perceive themselves as political actors, what their identities are, and their aspirations within the Egyptian polity. An important innovation during the demonstrations of January 25 against Mubarak and June 30 against Mursi was the language of repertoires.<sup>70</sup> Chapter 3 examines how activists changed their repertoires of contention in response to the regime’s authoritarian strategies<sup>71</sup> and, most importantly, how the regime changed its authoritarian strategies when faced with these repertoires.

During the early 2000s, the regime developed new legitimation measures to deal with the Kifaya youth movement, and it also resorted to excessive violence. Depending on how the regime perceived the threats from the movements, it either developed new “repertoires of suppression”<sup>72</sup> or new cooptation and legitimation strategies.

## Formal and Informal Networks

Networks are built around different relations between social movements and actors, which create a dynamic social structure that is able to bridge the gap between an individual and society at large. Networks are important units of analysis for studying social movement mobilization. The networking among different groups facilitates the participation of different individuals in social movements as well as the brokerage among different activists, and it develops their ability to frame and diffuse their ideas to the rest of society.

Social networks can be defined structurally as networks connecting people with protest opportunities, that is, people who previously had

Steinberg, “The Roar of the Crowd: Repertoires of Discourse and Collective Action among Spitalfields Silk Weavers in Nineteenth-Century London,” in Mark Traugott (ed.), *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 57–88.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144. <sup>70</sup> Tarrow, *Strangers at the Gates*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Beinín and Vairel, *Social Movements*, p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, “Authoritarian Learning and Counterrevolution,” in Marc Lynch (ed.), *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 75–92.



no such connection. Defined culturally, networks shape different identities among activists, making them important actors in forming people's attitudes toward demonstrations.<sup>73</sup> Mische and White assert that networks are developed through narratives of social ties, discourses, and meanings.<sup>74</sup> Individuals interact together, influence, and are influenced by others in how they perceive the world around them.<sup>75</sup> Within networks, identities and frames are "shaped, deployed, and reformulated in conversation, as this unfolds across social movement forums over the course of movement development."<sup>76</sup>

The development of multiple ties among activists is essential for participation in protest activities. Organizational links and strong ties are not in themselves good predictors of participation in protests, but they indicate a robust commitment to an identity of participation, which when reinforced by network ties can predict social activism.<sup>77</sup> Formal networks between different youth activists in Brazil were essential to their ability to mobilize for the impeachment of the then president, Fernando Collor de Mello, in 1992. These youth activists were able to mobilize other youth from different personal, political, and social backgrounds who had no previous experience of political activism. The formal networks in which these youth functioned developed their ability to act as brokers, and enhanced their skills in defining and spreading their beliefs across different networks.<sup>78</sup>

Informal networks have also been tackled in the literature. Tarrow, for instance, argues that personal relationships within networks are an important element in contentious politics, because if an organization is dismantled or banned, interpersonal networks can still survive.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Passy and Monsch, "Do Social Networks Really Matter."

<sup>74</sup> Ann Mische and Harrison White, "Between Conversation and Situation: Public Switching Dynamics across Network Domains," *Social Research* vol. 65 (1998), pp. 695–724.

<sup>75</sup> Anne Mische, "Relational Sociology, Culture and Agency," in John Scott and Peter Carrington (eds.), *Sage Handbook of Social Networks Analysis* (London: Sage, 2011), pp. 80–98.

<sup>76</sup> Ann Mische, "Cross-Talk in Movements: Reconceiving the Culture-Network Link," in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (eds.), *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 258–278.

<sup>77</sup> Passy and Monsch, "Do Social Networks Really Matter," p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Ann Mische, *Partisan Publics: Communication and Contention across Brazilian Activist Networks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>79</sup> Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 123.

Such interpersonal networks also contribute to developing movement identities.

### Networking in Authoritarian Contexts

In authoritarian contexts, social networks are important leverage sites for overcoming the coercive capacity of the state and are central to building the foundation for mobilization against the regime. Using networks, activists are able to develop different tools with which they can overcome obstacles to collective action.<sup>80</sup> These tools vary from channels that circulate and diffuse uncensored information to personal contacts for raising money and sharing the material resources that can mobilize citizens for a particular cause. As a result, networks develop their oppositional identity and new tactics to confront the authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, movements cannot be based on personal networks alone, because without some formal organizational structure, they can wither away.<sup>81</sup>

When trying to understand social movements in the Middle East, Bayat developed a concept of “passive networks.” These are “instantaneous communications between atomized individuals, which are established by tacit recognition of their commonalities directly in public spaces or indirectly through mass media.”<sup>82</sup> In such contexts, the street is a public space that makes formal and informal networking possible. He further contends that the mediation between passive networks and action is created through people’s perception of a common threat. “The very act of demonstration in public means, in a sense, attempting to establish communication with those who are *unknown* to the demonstrators but who might be subject to similar conditions as themselves; the demonstrators hope to activate this passive communication in order to extend collective action.”<sup>83</sup>

In authoritarian regimes, these networks can be better understood through understanding the various strategies utilized by the regime to undermine formal networks and to build informal networks instead.

<sup>80</sup> Maryjane Osa, “Networks in Opposition: Linking Organizations through Activists in the Polish People’s Republic,” in Diani and McAdam, *Social Movements and Networks*, pp. 77–104.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>82</sup> Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People’s Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 16–17.

<sup>83</sup> Bayat, *Life as Politics*, p. 22.

As is shown in Chapter 5, the regime in Egypt used cooptation measures to disempower many youth activists, and excessive violence against activists who were unwilling to be coopted. These two measures contributed to the fragmentation of formal networks and the increase in informal ones.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the relational process between activists and the authoritarian regimes in which they live. It demonstrated that the mobilization and networking strategies of activists are influenced by the authoritarian regime's resilience tactics. It also showed that the regime adapts its authoritarian upgrading tools when faced with the threats posed by the contentious repertoires of activists. Sometimes, however, the regime utilizes unforeseen authoritarian downgrading measures in the wake of contentious repertoires, which precipitates its breakdown, as will be shown in the next chapters.