CIVIL WAR AFTER THE ARAB SPRING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIBYA, SYRIA, AND YEMEN

By

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Abstract

In the post-cold war period there has been an unprecedented and undeniable drive by countries towards democratization. Nevertheless, civil wars have not stopped and remain the most costly and dangerous threat for much of the world's regions. For this reason, this study focuses on the relationship between institutions, grievances, greed during anti-regime campaigns, political transitions and the onset of civil war. The research is done through the lenses of the variables and mechanisms specified in Mansfield and Snyder's democratization theory, Collier's and Hoeffler's Greed (opportunity model), and Gurr and Cederman's work on the Grievance theory. The applied methods are: the theory-guided process tracing method - TGPT combined with a cross-case comparative case study. Applying those methods, the study takes as units of analysis: Libya, Syria, and Yemen in the context of the Arab Spring's revolutions. First, the study shows that it is possible to formulate a more detailed and accurate explanation of the civil wars through the usage of the three theories' causal mechanisms. Second, the study reveals that the main association between the civil wars and the Arab Spring is achieved through the "demonstration effect" enabled by the technology of social media. Lastly, the study argues that the lack of productive cooperation between intelligence agencies and conflict scholars should be addressed in a way forward which can lead to a higher rate of civil war/armed conflict prevention, through the gradualist approach.

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List of Abbreviations

MENA– the regions of North Africa and the Middle East

TGPT- the theory-guided process tracing method

NTC –Libyan National Transitional Council

NFA - The National Forces Alliance

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NC – Libyan National Council

FSA – Free Syrian Army

GPA - General People's Congress party

JMP – Join Meetings Party

NAVCO 2.0 - Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes Data Project

GCC – Gulf Co-operation Council

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Introduction

The fact that the post-cold war world order is witnessing an unprecedented drive of countries towards democratization is undeniable, nevertheless, the scourge of civil wars[1] has not subsided. Not only that civil wars are continuing to happen, but after the end of the Cold War they have outnumbered interstate wars. Despite the successes of the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991), today there are numerous armed conflicts that have already turned into civil wars or are heading in that direction. The concept of the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992) may turn out to be empirically right, however, the claim that such democratic transitions often become a reality through armed struggle and casualties among the protesters is beginning to be confirmed as well. Existing research focusing on the correlation between democratization processes and the risk of onset of political violence[2] and civil war has made great progress in explaining the micro and macro processes through a mix of quantitative and qualitative studies (Capoccia & Ziblatt, 2010; Howard & Walters, 2011; Weyland, 2012; Beck & Huser, 2012; Brownlee & Masoud, & Reynolds, 2013; Geddes & Wright & Franz, 2014). Likewise, this study is placed in the research tradition focusing on the relationship between grievances, greed, political transitions, and the risk of civil war.

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[1] Definition of civil war: Small and Singer's (1982, p. 210) define a civil war as: a) military action internal to the state in question; b) the active participation of the national government; c) effective resistance by both sides; d) The convention is that the battle deaths should be approximately 1,000. In sum, the combatant sides must be organized explicitly for armed conflict prepared and to defend or engage in such attacks. And second, the group that is starting from a disadvantaged position, should be able to inflict at least 5 % of the fatalities from in the other main group.

[2] Definition of political violence: Political violence is defined as a method by which people attempt to seize political power in the state or change certain policies through the use of forceful means (Mars, 1975).

This research is a comparative case study of Libya, Syria, and Yemen in the context of the Arab Spring's revolutions and it has primary goals. First, to establish the causal mechanisms[3] leading to the failure of the peaceful anti-regime campaigns in the democratization process and the onset of civil war in the three cases in a comparative perspective. Second, to see which theories are consistent with the empirical cases and examine the link between the Arab Spring revolutions and the onset of the civil wars. The used theories are that of Mansfield and Snyder's theory of democratization and civil war, Collier and Hoeffler' greed (opportunity model), and finally Gurr and Cederman's grievances model all of which capture both structural factors and agency. For these reasons sampling on the dependent variable is not an issue, because the study's focus on the interactions between the factors postulated by the theories and how consistent they are with the empirical cases (Collier & Houffler, 2000, p. 23). Meanwhile, the policy implications of the study are strategically important, because, countries in other regions of the world experience democratization or are undertaking pre-democratization reforms without been able to alleviate grievances of certain groups in the population, which set of conditions have been linked to the increased risk of armed conflict and civil war.

In particular, the resistance campaigns[4] in most Arab countries eventually produced different clusters of outcomes. Some made their first steps towards democracy, others went back to authoritarian rule (although reformed), and finally in other countries primarily nonviolent

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[3]Definition of causal mechanism: George and Bennett define causal mechanisms as "ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities" (2005: 137). Causal mechanism are also different from intervening variables, because they isolate the exact relationships between independent variable/s and the dependent variable, which conditions if the same, then should also be observed in other empirical cases (Geddes, 2003, p. 152).

[4] Definition of resistance campaign: The study borrows the definition of a resistance campaign from Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) study, which states that an antigovernment resistance campaign with the aim at changing the regime is constructed from observable, tactics designed to produce a strategic political outcome/goal. The campaign might by violent, nonviolent, or mixed.

campaigns for democratization failed and they find themselves in the middle of civil wars. Despite this process of macro political transition through the whole MENA region the Arab Monarchies together with some of the authoritarian presidential republics so far have successfully avoided regime change, due to their large scale use of repression, cooptation, targeted reforms, and welfare services among their populations. In comparison, Yemen, Syria, and Libya are currently experiencing civil wars, despite the fact that their regimes also employed the same crisis management methods. Thus, the study's research questions are*: a) what are the causal mechanisms?; b) can the roots of the civil wars be traced back to the Arab Spring?* In light of that by answering these questions the study traces how accurately the factors (independent variables) and the mechanisms specified in the democratization theory, greed (opportunity model), and grievances theory explain the outcome of civil war in the three countries.

By empirically examining the cases through process tracing (Van Evera, 1997, p. 31-2; Bennsett, 2008, p. 706; Collier, 2011) the study evaluates to what extent the three theories' variables are consistent with the empirics. Consequently, the study argues that a more detailed and accurate explanation of the civil wars through the usage of the three theories' causal mechanisms can be formulated. The study also finds that the main association between the civil wars and the Arab Spring is achieved solely through the "demonstration effect" facilitated by social media (See: Bellin, 2012). Moreover, the findings from this comparative case study can help transitologists and foreign policy personal to have a more comprehensive view of the independent variables determining the success or failure of the process of democratization (transition) through a direct challenge to authoritarian regimes; thus affecting the outcome with better cooperation and policies to prevent civil wars preferably using the gradualist approach, because it produces more democratic societies in the long turn (Berman, 2007; Carothers,

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2007). Finally, the study points at the need of a variable accounting for the ethnic or tribal structure of the security apparatus in autocracies or anocracies, which can determine the scale of the defection rates in cases of protests or rebellion; currently missing in the relevant datasets like that of NAVCO 2.0 projects, for instance.

In respect, to the structure the study starts with a survey of relevant categories of literature followed by the theoretical party, and methodology. While, the second part looks at the international and domestic context, the events in the three cases in a comparative way, followed by the results and the conclusion.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

Violent political conflict is still one of the dominant problems facing the world community today (Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2001), which in the post-Cold war period are increasingly focused ethno-religious cleavages, in addition to the economic grievances. The goal of the challengers to change the power structure (Needler, 1966; Collier & Hoeffler, 1999). This chapter analyzes three categories of the relevant literature.

1.1. Authoritarian Political Systems

First, there are the Large-N studies incorporating the MENA countries as one of the many regions of the world with authoritarian political systems and higher frequency of conflicts. These studies include research that apply existing models of revolutions and top down reforms to Syria, Libya, and Yemen including the given countries as part of a comparative study of the MENA countries together with other regions from the world. For instance, using a different operationalization the results from Mansfield and Snyder's theory do not show significance in the majority of cases (Bogaards, 2010). This body of literature also analyzes the characteristics of authoritarianism and how the type of party system shapes the odds of successful democratization (Daxecker, 2007; Capoccia & Ziblatt, 2010; Weyland, 2012; Beck & Huser, 2012; Brownlee & Masoud, & Reynolds, 2013; Geddes & Wright & Franz, 2014; Howard & Walters, 2014).

1.2. Democratization and the risk of civil war

The second category of literature relevant to the study focuses on the association between the democratization and the threat of civil war or armed conflict. It is further subdivided on analyses and reports from think tanks, international organizations, and academic articles. Similarly, the game theoretic model postulated by Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) presents the overarching decision making mechanisms of the actors, however, although that the study is based on their analytical framework, in order for the analysis to capture the causal mechanisms and interaction between agency and structure in the three countries during and before the democratization stages it must employ the process tracing method. In particular, some of these studies include the quantitative study of Hadenious and Teorell (2007) which presents evidence that from all types of authoritarian and anocratic regimes the ones with pure-limited multiparty political system have the highest odds (0.52) to transition to a consolidated democracy, which did not happened in Yemen. While other scholar look at the relation between the dependence of oil/gas revenues and political stability like the one conducted by Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds (2013) which clearly confirms that regimes without major oil revenue and non-hereditary succession falls easily. In fact the odds of a military crackdown are found to be negatively correlated with the level of professionalization. Taking this in account several other empirical studies also show that violence during the transition process is negatively correlated with the odds of establishing a consolidated democracy (Geddes & Wright & Frantz, 2014).

Conversely, Snyder (2000) argues that nationalist conflicts and political violence are highly probable to appear, because as Huntington (1968) points out citizens raise their demands during the transition period, thus capitalizing on their newly discovered leverage on state policies. In addition, scholars have established the association between autocratic and anocratic regimes and higher risk of civil war (Gurr, 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Salehyan and Gleditsch,

2006). Following that research tradition Halperin, Siegle, and Weinstein (2005, chap. 4) analyze a twenty five year long period for international and civil war, and find a weak association between democracy and civil conflict. The lack of strong association between democratization and the risk of civil war is also mentioned by Thompson and Tucker (1997), Ward and Gleditsch (1998), Russett and Oneal (2001). Similarly, the positive correlation between democratization and the onset of civil war established by Mansfield and Snyder (2005, 2008), in comparison to the hypotheses of greed or grievances, is not accepted by a substantial part of political science scholarship because as Bogaards (2010) points out with a different operationalization the regression model does not achieve the same level of statistical significance. Likewise, the debate between those supporting sequential (Mansfield & Snyder, 2007) or gradual approaches (Berman, 2007; Carothers, 2007) to democratizing countries are situated in this body of literature, both of which are related to the study's policy recommendation. Conversely, as Vreeland indicates that the data from Polity IV does not show a significant correlation between political institutions and the onset of civil war. However, he finds that with different operationalization civil wars are positively affected by political violence, which is congruent with empirics from the three cases (2008: 416).

1.3. Case studies on Libya, Syria, and Yemen

The last category of literature are case studies concerning the development of society and the regimes in Libya, Syria, and Yemen before the revolutions and the factors leading the opposition to overcome the collective actions problem of sufficient mobilization (Tilly, 1978; Owen, 2014). In line with that Schwedler's (2007) comparative case study exploring the inclusion moderation hypothesis on democratization, and the cooptation of the Islamic parties only demonstrates that such a practice faces mixed success in the different countries. Other case study research that has been conducted on the topic targeting the regime policies

specifically is by Brahimi (2011) who studied the strategy of the Libyan regime under Gaddafi and finds that it was excluding members from tribes outside of the winning coalition, mainly due to the regime's lack of trust in the tribes and cities in the eastern part of the country. Conversely, Gaub (2013) focuses on the strategic game in which the Libyan army units had to choose between the payoffs of supporting the protesters or the regime.

On the other hand, De Châtel (2014) points to the crucial role of the drought 2006–10 that struck north-eastern Syria and climate change, both of which changed the social environment as one of the factors that led to the Syrian uprising. This happened as Chatel argues in the context of economic liberalization, bad resource management, and the effects from the humanitarian crisis of the late 2000s. Similarly, Beck (2014) addresses the role of water resources used as a strategic tool and military assets in the uprising which further worsened the conditions of the already impoverish Sunni communities triggering a movement towards the big cities in the center and west of the country. At the same time, authors like Hogger (2014) look at the relationship between Russian, Iranian foreign policy, and the failure of Syria's new leader to stem the negative effects from the failing agricultural programs and economic reforms much like the cases of Libya and Yemen. Conversely, looking at the institutional capacity of Yemen Sharief's (2008) case study on Yemeni institutions and their working practices demonstrates that there is a lack of transparency, administrative or technical capacity, and control by the central authorities. Additionally, authors like Knights (2013) examine the strategy followed by Yemen's pre-2011 president in order to solve the relationship between the civilian and military institution, which eventually contributes to counter-strategy currently adopted by the tribal army units and politically ambitious generals.

Furthermore, current civil war research is focusing on the equally important connection between the micro - macro level of analysis (Balcells & Justino, 2014). By examine the social mechanisms[5] linking the two levels scholar unavertable have to take into account the greed and grievances theories, and the democratization theory's facilitating conditions. [6] Large-N comparative studies on authoritarian regimes have started to be reevaluated, because of the strong criticism against the field after the Arab Spring revolutions, which were not predicted with a reasonable accuracy. Before and after the Arab Spring 2011 cross-national studies' hypotheses are well tested, however, due to operationalizational designs many of them frequently do not matched the dynamics on the micro level (Sambanis, 2004). As a result, scholars have once again turn their focus on process tracing as the tool to establish how exactly the independent variables interact with their corresponding causal mechanism, and the different outcomes, hence generating explanations capturing the MENA countries' variation. The goal of this study is to help in this quest to establish a more systematic relationship between the micro foundations of each factor, based on the theories, together with its effects on the macro level in shaping the socio-political environment. The practical value of this research is that it contributes to the clarification of the causal paths and causal mechanisms leading to the civil wars and at the same time traces how accurately the three theories' independent variables and proposed causal mechanisms explain the outcomes in the context of the Arab Spring.

Overall, although existing academic literature deals with large-N quantitative and country case studies in the MENA region there have been only a handful of studies specifically focusing on the process of democratic protests comparatively in the three countries. Studies like that by

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[5] Definition of social mechanism: Social mechanism is defined as the recurrent linkage process between a given set of conditions (factors) and a specified outcome – output (Mayntz, 2004).

[6] They include high economic development, well-functioning, legitimate institutions, and actors playing by the rules.

Salam and Kadlec (2012) give detail accounts of the numerous tribes with different political agendas with the militias they bolster and thus preventing the central government of establishing one set of central rules. Recently Mansfield and Snyder (2012) also apply their theory to the countries affected by the Arab Spring, however, they do not go into details to show how exactly the mechanism of too fast democratization in countries that do not possess, some of the "facilitating conditions" enable/constrain the different actors in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Hence, no studies have so far researched the factors and the causal mechanisms associated with the onset of civil war in a detailed comparatively manner in the context of the Arab Spring through the lenses of the three theories. The next chapter therefore presents the three theories used to tackle the research questions.

Chapter 2 Theoretical framework

The research will follow the logic of the comparative case study approach and process tracing in order to establish and organize the variables and causal mechanisms used by the three theories.

2. 1 Institutions and democratization

First, Mansfield and Snyder's (1995, 2005, 2008) theory is centered at the claim that during democratization the given country experiences an increased risk of civil war. The main mechanism is that in the new and more loosened rules of the power game allows the contra-elite/s, ethnic-tribal communities, and the masses to raise new demands, which forces cannot be controlled by the security forces or to be peacefully accommodate through the newly developed democratic institutions. Thus, the authors claim is that if the country lacks the facilitating conditions such as high levels of economic development, strong and impartial state institutions, agreement by the majority of citizens to play by the rules. In essence when citizens are presented with an increased possibility to participate they raise their demands for new policies. If the new civil demands are not or cannot be accommodated the street protests transform the politics in to a zero-sum game. For example, despite elections in Libya and Yemen, non-governmental militias' already controlled whole regions, vital economic resources, used violence, and many did not regarded elections as legitimate. While, the pre-2011 elections in Syria raised problems some to control of the party, because activists and some of the MPs opened space for discussions.

The second variable of the ethnic-sectarian structure of society is closely connected to the institutional one, because the inability of the institutions to accommodate the new civil demands and achieve legitimacy, thus going beyond just holding the monopoly of violence (Mansfield & Snyder, 2012), ultimately leads elites to use ideological rhetoric which can be based on cleavages such as national identity, ethnicity, religious sect, class, economic sector, urban/rural, or foreign enemy. For example, the theory points that the elites prefer ethnic, nationalistic, or sectarian cleavages to be opened, in order to avoid the distributional conflict (Mansfield and Snyder, 2008, p. 2). This is the causal mechanism that guides the independent variable of ethnic sectarian dynamics. Starting with religious sectarian violence involving political Islam is explicitly mentioned as an element in the ethnic and sectarian structure of society starting civil wars during attempts of democratization. The explanation is that the dynamics of religious sectarian violence mobilizes opposing groups against each other (Mansfield & Snyder, 2005; Toft, 2007). In those cases of transition period none of the parties can be sure of the others' outcome preferences, their relative military power, or their electoral power, which aggravated by the weak institutions setting the rules of the game allows the most powerful groups to use them in case the situation turns against their strategic interests. Likewise, ethnic groups try to capitalize on their new opportunities by decreasing of removing the dominant group (Mansfield & Snyder, 2012). Conversely cases in which the elite cannot mobilize the public on identity based groups, due to homogeneity it starts to pursue populist economic policies based on economic inequality, on class, sectorial, and urban/rural which are exploited by the politicians. Such a political situation is frequently mixed with historical legacies of struggles between poor and the rich in combination with ethno-nationalism.

According to the democratization theory characteristics of the political game in the transition period are the use of force, opportunism, intimidation, patronage, and media control by the ruling elite and the challengers alike. Elections or referendums are used by the ruling elite as an instrument of legitimation in front of domestic and foreign groups, and often as an attempt of the old/new ruling groups to re/assert their power. However, the aforementioned strategy leads to an armed conflict, when the election losers do not accept the result (Stedman & Lyons 2004, p. 147-49, 152-57; Lindberg, 2006, p. 15) in the period of an incomplete democratization. Similarly, the prior experience with democracy variable is capturing any previous democratic experiments, which can lead to a higher probability of a successful democratization. Hence, when a political system changes from a close to an open one then we can observe that the intolerance level towards the state's inability to accommodate or provide the public goods demanded increases, because of rising expectation which weak institutions cannot provide. In sum, the independent variables that affect the risk of civil war onset during the transition period based on the theory are (Mansfield & Snyder 2005, 61-62):

1. Strength and impartiality of the political institutions

2. Ethnic/sectarian structure of society

3. Level of economic development

4. Prior experience with democracy

5. Neighbors (democratic or not)

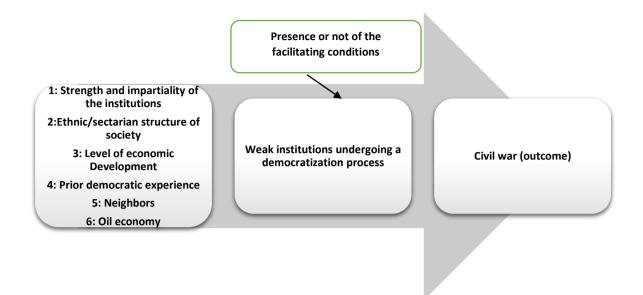6. Economy (oil or commodity dominated)

Figure 1 Graphic representation based on Mansfield and Snyder's democratization and civil war theory

The first cell on the left represents the independent variables that contribute to the production of civil war.

2. 2 Greed (opportunity model)

Collier and Hoeffler's Greed model[7] on the other hand is centered around the mechanism whether a given group has the opportunity to fund and organized a successful rebellion with the potential to maintain and escalate the violence to the level of civil war. The variables in the model are the presence of increased grievances, because of high socio-economic and political inequality, especially based on ethnic lines. The other variables determining the opportunity of rebellion are the presence and ability to use profits from natural resources (primary commodity goods) or "tax" the civilian population to fund the rebel organization, diaspora funds, or acquire the support from a foreign country. According to the theory's logic rebellions may occur when the alternative income of the potential recruits is already low. To measure that the theory uses the mean income per capita and data for boys' secondary schooling attendance rate. A further independent variable is that of military equipment measured as capital necessary for the onset of conflict, however, with the passing of time the skills to organize an armed group may

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[7] In some of their statistical analysis Collier and Hoeffler also mix their opportunity model variables with the grievance theory, but here the study presents the two theories separately for more clarity.

decrease. Related to that is the weak government military and the presence of mountains. The last measure for opportunity group/s level of social cohesion. For instance, the religious, ethnic, or ideological diversity in organizations reduces their capabilities (Easterly & Levine 1997; Alesina & Bagir & Easterly 1999; Collier & Hoeffler, 2001). Because of that many armed groups have been limited in their ability to recruit fighters and their rebellions frequently transforms into a low scale insurgency or criminal gangs. Lastly, the theory independent variables are the following:

1. GDP

2. Level of secondary schooling of boys

3. Population density (including level of urbanization)

4. Social Cohesion (measured by ethnic and religious fractionalization)

5. Primary commodities.

6. Military advantage (measured by mountainous terrain, population dispersion, social fractionalization)

7. Ethnic or religious hatred,

8. Political repression,

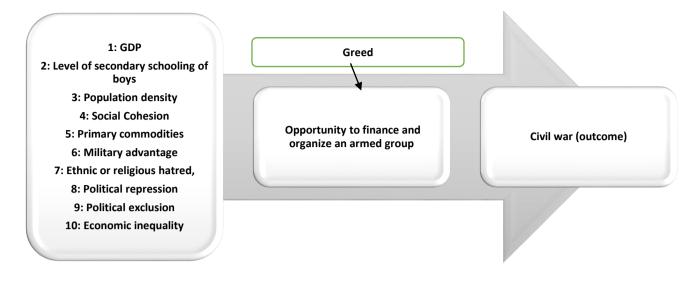9. Political exclusion,

10. Economic inequality

Figure 2 Graphic representation based on Collier and Hoeffler's Greed and Grievances theory.

The first cell (on the left) represents the factors that lower of increase the opportunity costs for a rebellion.

2.3 Grievances

Conversely, Gurr's theory of grievances, including Cederman's work on the same topic focuses on the mechanism of Relative Deprivation as the main determinant of rebellion and the risk of the onset of civil war, which is measured by proxy variables. The concept is that people develop an ambition that quickly goes beyond their individual or social capabilities needed to achieve the desired status quo of welfare, security, or self-actualization, for instance (Gurr, 1970 p. 58). This triggers aggression and often putting blame on others. Hence, the frustration – aggression hypothesis is the main source collective of violence and the longer or more intense the feeling the higher the probability of such a strategy by the actors. The theory dives political violence on three categories: turmoil, conspiracy, and civil war (Gurr, 1970, p. 11). Having said that, the grievance theory does not contradict, but complements explanations such as cognitive dissonance, anomie, and competition with another group resulting in a relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970, p. 41).

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The psychological mechanisms on which the operating concept of relative deprivation is based on are: a) Progressive deprivation, which is observed when people's expectations increase together with capabilities, however, after a certain period capabilities start to fall or progress slowly than the expectations of society; b) Aspirational deprivation is observed when capabilities do not change, but expectation do; c) Decremental deprivation is observed when expectation remain constant, but capabilities decrease (Gurr, 1970). Additionally, Gurr' long time work is complemented by Cederman, who in his empirical work finds a strong evidence in support of grievance hypothesis. To illustrate, he finds that horizontal inequalities induced grievances between ethnic groups are a significant determinant of conflict, especially in cases where there are concentrated in politico-economic discrimination. Similarly, the variable of large ethnic groups that have limited access to state power are more likely to use violence to try to change the status quo. In addition, the demographic variable captures the group's problems connected to high birth rate, limited land, and health (Gurr, 1993, p. 173). While the government's response which largely shapes the rebelling group/s latter resistance strategy is capture by past or present use of repression. The theory also postulates that if the ethnic group have recently lost its dominant position or experienced a relative power lost and at the same time maintains its social cohesion, the interaction between the two factors will increase the risk of onset of violent attacks (Gurr, 1970, p. 28-29; 1993). Lastly, the variable of international diffusion captures the role of state and non-state actors in influencing the opportunity costs via material, financial, and diplomatic support. Hence, the independent variables[8] are:

1. Political and Economic discrimination

2. Demography

3. Relative loss of political power (including autonomy)

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[8] There have been changes through time in the operationalization of the variables. Thus, any misrepresentation of the variables is solely the work of the author of this study.

4. State repression (including past and present)

5. Group cohesion (determining the capabilities of mobilization)

6. International diffusion (including transborder kin support)

Figure 3 Graphic representation based on Gurr and Cederman's work on Grievances theory.

The first cell on the left represents the independent variables that produce the mechanism, which leads to the final outcome.

Additionally, time between conflicts variable is used as a control variable in the statistical models of the theories. It is based on studies that show that the longer the time period from the last civil war or armed violence, the lower the probability of a new conflict (Hegré, 2001). The main logic is that the shorter the period the stronger is the social polarization. In respect, to the second control variable, taking into account the political agendas and stability of neighboring countries the neighbor's variable is congruent with the concept of Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) that spatial clustering of civil wars, especially in the same time period, must be taken into account as a predictor. The empirics confirm this because all three countries border both more powerful and more unstable states. Finally, the theories also use the dummy variable whether the country is an oil economy or not, because based on the resource curse concept its availability facilities' the opportunities of rebellion.

Chapter 3 The Theory-Guided Process-Tracing Method

In order for the study to uncover the links between the variables and capture the variance in the causal mechanisms leading to the civil wars in the three countries, process tracing is used for the relevant data to reconstruct the chain of events and test the three theories. Using the process tracing is especially relevant, because it does not leave the black box unopened concerning explanation of the relationship between the micro and macro level (Hedström & Swedberg 1996, p. 287).

The theory-guided process tracing method - TGPT (Falleti, 2006) in combination with a cross-case comparative case study has been hinted and used by the authors of the three theories, themselves. The reason is that large part of the studies of the association between democratization and the onset of civil war are statistical in nature and littler effort to identify the detailed causal mechanisms implicitly assumed to affect the outcome in the specific cases. Hence, there is a need of more research concentrating on the causal chain: independent variables=> social mechanism => outcome.

The comparability of the factors at work in the three countries-cases is justified, because the cases operating in the same context as well as the fact that their structural conditions and agency are very similar. For example, all three units of analysis have passed through a period of decolonization, modernization through import substitution industrial policies, nation building, and neoliberal economic policies, which allows the use of historical legacies, critical junctures,

and path dependency for the reconstruction of the causal chain of events and the actors' interests.

A frequent problem with reconstructing the causal chain when using process tracing is the question where is the critical juncture that best explain the later path dependency development? Two criteria are most widely used that of Collier (1991) stating that every study using the theory-guided process tracing method should start from accepted critical junctures. A slightly altered concept is offered by Mahoney (2000) who keeps the position that not all critical junctures are contingent events, and the latter are the only type of events which can trigger path-dependent processes in societies. This study faces the same methodological task. As an illustration, is it the independence of Syria after the Second World War or the French imperial policy to pick mainly members of the minority groups, Druze and mainly Alawites, in the future army of modern day Syria the event that has directly contributed to the Alawite's monopoly in the national army, the Libyan regime's deliberate underdevelopment of the Easter region, or the multiple conflicts in Yemen before 2011. Nevertheless, my decision is that the causal reconstruction process should start with a brief description of the years immediately after the 1973 war with Israel, because in this period the first signs of rifts appearing between the Arab countries culminating in the renewed opening of the still ongoing sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims during the Lebanese civil war. Conversely, the end point of the process tracing research is not debated, because the outcome can be establish clearly. Nonetheless, the period from the initial street protests in the beginning of 2011 up to the first large scale armed clashes between the opposition and loyalists is at the center of the study.

Figure 4 Explanatory Framework of the case study.

Source: Mayntz (2004).

Borrowing from Coleman (1986, 1990), Esser (1993, 2002), and Hedström and Swedberg (1996), this model of tracing and isolating causal mechanism in social and political phenomena is at the center of the three case studies' logic. The dominant rationale of the model is the focus on the connection between macro and micro phenomena, going down to individual preferences, and action strategies.

Figure 5 The cases causal chain model

Source: Based on Colleman 1986, 1990; Hedstrom and Swedberg, 1996; and Mayntz, 2004. A, B, C, D represent the necessary factors leading to the onset of popular protests, while CM stands for causal mechanism.

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Typology of mechanisms

- Macro-Micro mechanisms produce action situations (Mayntz, 2004). Tarrow and Tilly (2001) distinguish between environmental mechanisms which produce a change in the natural conditions of life for the given society. For instance, climate change and natural resource depletion.

- Micro-Micro mechanisms generate individual behavior (Mayntz, 2004). These individual behavioral patterns capture the cognitive mechanisms triggering them.

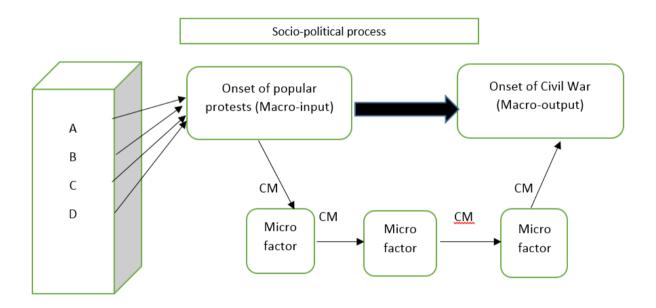- Micro-Macro mechanisms generate macro-phenomena (Mayntz, 2004) defined as "relation mechanism which changes the connections among people, groups, and interpersonal networks" (Tilly, 2001, p. 26).

George and Timothy (1985) define process tracing as a within-case analysis designed to evaluate. Moreover, process-tracing aims to uncover the incentives based on which the actors take decisions, behave and produce given outcomes (George & Timothy, 1985, p. 35; Falleti, 2006). That is why in order to conduct the theory-guided process tracing method the study's is constructed based on the analytical narrative tradition in process tracing. As Aminzade (1993, p. 108) points, any qualitative research has to provide "theoretically explicit narratives that carefully trace and compare the sequences of events constituting the process" that it aim to test, which improves the clarity of the narrative (Vitalis, 2006). Analytical narratives make it possible for the researcher to reconstruct the events shaping the causal chain under investigation. (Aminzade, 1993: 108). The analytic narrative is a combination between rational choice, game theory, and the narrative method as Bates (1998) and the his coauthors' point out: "seek to account for outcomes by identifying and exploring the mechanisms that generate them" (Bates, 1998, p. 12) and "in this book "seek to understand the actors' preferences, their perceptions, their evaluation of alternatives, the information they possess, the expectations they

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form, the strategies they adopt, and the constraints that limit their actions." (Bates, 1998, p. 11). For instance, such mechanisms include "learning", "competition" (Pierson, 2004, p. 40-1, 124-9) "institutional layering", and "institutional conversion," (Thelen, 2004, p. 35-7). Hence, this is the approach which allows the study to reconstruct the causal chain between the variables in the most realistic way possible as Büthe (2002, p. 482) points out.

At the same time, the analytic narrative in combination with the theory-guided process tracing method have limitations. First, when a study incorporates a decade long period during which inevitably there are changes in the variables which affect the causal chain by altering the actors' preferences, available choices, and strategies. Second, the notion of the game theoretic equilibrium has a limited application in the analytic narrative approach, due to the dynamics of the studied phenomena, which in the case of this study is political change. Finally, a further limitation is postulated by Büthe (2002), when he states that TGPT combined with the analytic narrative does not always disprove alternative theories that are also operating with qualitative arguments. While, this may be true, Hall (2003) points that TGPT is probably the best adapted method to capture the complexity of the social world, test theories, disprove alternative theoretical claims, and infer new theories.

In sum, there are several important methodological points concerning the TGPT and its ability to disprove/confirm theories. First, George and Bennett (2005) and Hall (2003), point that TGPT captures all the phenomena most important to qualitative case studies such as multiple causality, feedback loops, path dependencies, tipping points, and complex interaction effects, which are operating in the empirical cases of the study. Second, the application of TGPT helps to test qualitative consistency of theories as well as the generation of new theories specifically focused on the causal mechanisms across cases (Falleti, 2006), which is the focus of the current

study. Third, the TGPT can explain endogenous changes and their effect on the theoretical variables (Falleti, 2006). Fourth, even in case that some of the independent variables are missing or could not trigger the relevant mechanism in theory this is not going to disprove a given theoretical claim. The existence of the condition is the evidence in this test, which is considered as a sufficient to cause the theory specified outcome (Mahoney, 2012, p. 576). The logic is that: independent variables initiate the causal mechanism which produces the outcome. For that reason this study uses multiple examples of the action and constraints of the actors like the presence of weapons smuggling channels or poor youth concentrated urban youth masses, to clearly show the empirical existence of the given conditions, for instance.

The empirical significance of this study comes from the ongoing conflicts in the MENA countries offer a unique chance for researchers to deepen their understanding of the causal mechanisms and factors leading to civil wars in the context of pro-democracy resistance campaigns. By tracing the causal paths this study aims to contribute to the latest research agenda that tries to establish a clear causal relationship between micro and macro levels of analysis in conflict research (Balcells & Justino, 2014) by providing a systematic and comparative causal chain of events leading to the civil wars and the mechanisms at work during the failed transition periods. Because of that, this small-N comparative case study conducted through the use of theory-guided process tracing method further develops the scholarly work to better establish the connections between the macro-micro levels of analysis. Taking into account the big challenge for scholars to relatively well predict such waves of revolutions (Gause, 2011; Goodwin, 2011; Anderson, 2011, 2012) the policy relevance of this research is in its importance to the policy community to better understanding the interaction between the factors and theory-guided causal mechanisms leading to civil wars in periods of political transition. As a result, every new contribution to understanding these causal links in more detail

can later be used to guide policy approaches aimed at fostering democratization in countries without substantially increasing the risk civil war or armed violence during or before the onset of political transition.

Table 1 Theories

Type of Theory	Main explanatory mechanism
Mansfield and Snyder – Democratization – civil war theory	Elections during political transition periods prompt leader to use nationalist/populist rhetoric, while the institutions could no accommodate the rising civil demands, which leads to civil wars
Collier and Hoeffler – Greed (opportunity model)	Grievances can only materialize in to a rebellion if there is an opportunity for organization and finance
Gurr and Cederman – Grievances theory	When the existence of relative deprivation is mixed with ethnic marginalization or relative loss of power in the state institutions this leads to civil war

Chapter 4 Case studies

The critical events that led to the disintegration of the close cooperation, particular between Arab republics began with defeat of the Arab armies in the 1967 and 1973 wars by Israel. The defeat led to a series of coups that brought instability in the MENA countries. Soon the problem of stagnating economies together with the countries' youth bulges, became the dominant issue, because the planned economy was no longer working at sufficient levels. Meanwhile, in the middle of this crisis the Lebanese civil war combined with the Iranian Revolution reignited sectarianism and radical Islam which shifted the countries efforts to their internal security and combating the worsening situation of soil degradation forcing communities to scramble towards the cities. The new geopolitics affected Libya, Syria, and Yemen in two ways. First, the capabilities of Arab Nationalism to legitimate the regimes and mobilize the masses sharply decreased. Second, the influence of liberalism, and especially conservative Islam increased among impoverish urban masses through the latter was much stronger, because of its community level support (Ibrahim, 1993; Owen, 2014).

4.1 The Libyan path to civil war

The existence of greed and grievances in pre-2011 Libya is indicated by the protests in the cities and in the southern region in 2009 due to the effects of stagnating economy, liberalization, discrimination, and years of international sanctions. Thus, between 13 and 16 of January 2011 corruption surrounding housing projects in city of Benghazi protesters occupied state owned houses. Later in January, Gaddafi made a populist speech in which he pointed that young Libyans should take what is theirs. The result was the occupation of housing complexes

on the 27 of January, however, in the coming days the regime tried to divert the protesters' attention by stating that the houses belong to other Libyans and the group that have occupied them should be treated as thieves. Thus, for a few days the regime prevented bigger protests until the news of the fall of the Egyptian president on 11 of February.

Following the arrest of an opposition and human rights activists in Benghazi on 15 of February triggered a new wave of protests organized on the internet by Libyans living abroad. The protests were led by the oppressed families and activists. Gaddafi again called for rallies against the government, which was an attempt to separate himself from the government. For example, the regime first used soft power by offering financial packaged to the protesters (Reuters, 27 January, 2011), however, the protest continued with a military siege that led to the deaths of protesters (ABC news, 24 February, 2011). Furthermore, regime warned tribal leaders to keep their young people away from protests, which was an effort similar to that in Yemen. Meanwhile, identically to the Syrian president the Libyan leader started a tour around the country to show, mobilize support, and supply the loyal tribes with weapons (Middle East/North Africa Report N°107 – 6 June 2011).

Subsequently, later in February, Gaddafi's reformist-son Saif al-Islam stated on national television that a commission will be created to investigate the used violence by the security forces, which will include domestic and foreign human rights organizations. Nevertheless, later that month Saif named the leading protesters criminals, but did not address the regime's use of thugs to intimidate protesters. This led to more radicalization of the average protester and increased the opportunities of radicals to use violence against the security forces and their leverage to influence the direction of the opposition. Next the regime shut down all internet

communications (Wired UK, 22 February, 2011), however, by that time the regime institutions started to crumble first with the security establishment experiencing defections, after the February 22 Tripoli anti-regime demonstrations. The defection rates were slowed in the first months, because of the rotation of the army officers to different regions, thus making them fear for the lives of their families if they defect. The regime implemented crisis management methods such as promising a mixture of populist economic policies, which included salaries and family financial packages, for instance. (Middle East/North Africa Report N°107 – 6 June 2011).

In March 2011 the National Transitional Council (NTC) was created in the rebels' stronghold the eastern city of Benghazi. Similarly, in the first months several players such as an oil company, a religious movement, and three major tribes in the east (BBC News, 21 February, 2011) shifted the power balance towards the rebels. Soon in the beginning of March countries used the situation and recognized the Council. Despite that move, the military balance was still in favor of the regime's paramilitary troops, which led to the decision on 17th of March by United Nations Security Council to authorize a no-fly zone. As a result, a military balance was achieved and later a rebel victory in late October 2011.

After the fall of the last pre-2011 regime stronghold the NTC scheduled elections and soon handed power to the newly elected parliament in Tripoli headed by The National Forces Alliance (NFA) *(Middle East Online, 3 July, 2012)*. The latter is a broad party coalition mainly from liberals and moderate political Islamists *(Libya Herald, 1 July, 2012)*, which had to write and ratify a new constitution (Associated Press, 8 August, 2012). However, the socio-economic grievances remained. For example, a destabilizing factor was the fact that by October 2011

around 40 percent of Libya's was workforce out of work (Middle East/North Africa Report N°115, 14 December 2011, p. 17) leading to a big economic crisis that damaged institutions and increased greed together with grievances. Meanwhile, sectarian tensions had increase in the same pattern as in Yemen and Syria. For instance, there were attacks against Sufi shrines. And second, many Islamists considered the NTC to secular, which coincided with an increase in religious schooling. Some even pointed out that the NTC's "extremist secularist views" are not needed, because they are remnants of the old regime (Middle East/North Africa Report N°115, 14 December 2011, p. 11).

By the same time the growing sectarian confrontation between Islamic groups and the allied with them militias on the one side, and the secular groups and former regime officials, on the other, signaled a change in the game. For instance, the moderate Islamists had to support some of the policies, otherwise, they would have lost some of their social base in case they did not support laws congruent with Sharia. Thus, after the 2012 elections the ruling party coalition was accused by the secular groups that it tries to change the laws to become closer to the Sharia system.

Meanwhile, through the whole transition the pro-rebel army units were not capable to provide security and control the militias (The Guardian, 13 November, 2012), because of their weak state, while the former regime servants, prevented quick reforms. For example, by the winter of 2012 it became evident that the NATO strikes against bases and weapons stockpiles had limited the ability of the army, the police forces, and the some of the more disciplined militias to combat criminal gangs or the power politics of the militias, due to the easy access to weapons which were not guarded (Salem & Kadlic, 2012, p. 94). Furthermore, after the fall of the regime

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many of the militias' interests seldom went beyond the security of towns and cities, because they did not possessed any congruent ideology or ethnicity, which limited their ability to act as an institution. The government also feared the effects of demobilizing the young militia men, because jobs opportunities were absent as well as that they lacked the skills to replace the foreign laborers.

The dynamics of the security sector was such that with the announcement by the NC that public money will be used for salaries and operations of the new security forces the militias started to compete for funds, because the security sector was the second largest employer (Lacher & Cole, 2014). Very similar as in Yemen and Syria tribal, sectarian identities, the pool of young unemployed men, and the chance for higher social status lowered to costs of recruitment, which no longer used the revolutionary rationale as their primary propaganda. There are even evidence that at least in the first stage of the post-revolutionary micro-level recruitment practices Islam was not a primary tool, but the search for employment was (Lacher & Cole, 2014, p. 53). Thus, the militias swell their ranks with new recruits to capture more of the state budget. The NC also tried to present career paths for militia leaders, but it did not work fast enough to create a critical mass of militias that are directly subordinate to the revolutionary government in 2012 (Lacher & Cole, 2014, p. 38). As a result, the attempt to register the militias failed (Lacher & Cole, 2014 p. 11).

On the other hand the police forces lacked the manpower and equipment to control and prevent the crimes committed by some of the militias and released criminals, partly also because the pre-2011 regime neglected the institution (Salem & Kadlic, 2012, p. 29). While the badly damaged infrastructure presented a further obstacle by decreasing the state reach (BBC News

Business, 26 August, 2011). A contributing factor was also the low trust in the NTC, because during the revolution in 2011 it has adopted a strategy of secret recruiting practices in the cities still not under the control of the rebels (Salem & Kadlic, 2012, p. 90). The institutions were also weakened, because the reform in the judicial system was bringing laws close to Sharia, while eliminating the "collaborators" of the former regime combined with no enforcing power. For example, some of the ministers were abducted, which also limited the work of the Fact-Finding and Reconciliation Commission (Middle East/North Africa Report N°140, 17 April 2013). Hence, the continuation of non-judicial settling of scores produce more grievances between groups, resulting in multiple centers of power and radicalization of the families of those killed by militias, without formal trial or investigation.

By mid-2013 the interest of the former security and state administrators that still operated in the institutions was to limit any reforms and prevent more assassinations of their members. They stared to mobilize a coalition against the government when on May 2013 NC passed the Political Isolation Law under strong pressure by the Islamic militias. The law prohibited former regime "collaborates" to participate in the decision making procedures (Lacher & Cole, 2014, p.45).

Likewise, a crucial event in the chain leading to the second civil war was the June 8th 2013 confrontation in the city of Benghazi in which one of the militias opened fire against civilians who confronted it in an attempt to disarm it (Kirkpatrick, 2012, p. 46). Later a number of members of the core rebel forces went and joined the local Islamic militia Ansar al-Sharia and started to push for control of the city (Lacher & Cole, 2014; The New Yorker, February 23, 2015).

Finally, the 2014 election played to destabilizing role and further increased the camps contradictions, because mainly secular candidates (Al Jazeera English, 26 June 2014) were supposed to form the government (BBC, 26 June, 2014). This prompted mainly Islamic militias that felt not represented to take control of Tripoli, for example. However, even before that, a group of army officers started 'Operation Dignity' against the Tripoli-based camp led by General Khalifa Haftar in Tobruk on May 16 2014, with the following agenda. First, protect the lives and social status of those former regime official that defected or staid neutral during the revolution. Second, limit the influence of pro-Islamist groups and their foreign backers. Third, remove the Political Isolation Law and federalize the country, which captured the interests of the non-Arab minorities for greater autonomy (Middle East and North Africa Report N°157, 26 February 2015, p.7). This combined with the election results led to the consolidation of the two camps (Lacher & Cole, 2014, p. 47) and the political transition turned into a civil war.

4.2 The Syrian path to civil war

A persistent discontent in the country can be traced back to the drought triggered humanitarian crisis in the east-central region between 2006 and 2010 (Reuters, 22 March, 2011), which combined with housing shortages and Iraqi-Palestinian immigrants made the situation flammable. As a result, protests were held. But the spark was on March 18th when a parents' protest in the city of Deraa, due to harsh treatment of the young graffiti drawers was put down with force by the security forces, which triggered a bigger mobilization (Harling, 2011) and a few days later the protesters burn down a government building (Holliday, 2011). Immediately the regime's move was to provide the Kurdish minority with full citizenship rights and stopping

short of federalization in order to decrease the possibility of a large number of Kurds joining the rebels to gain control of the region. It is important to note that even before the escalation of protests after March 18th security forces began to arrest male citizens. On the 25 of March the first day of national protests took place and the security forces again crackdown on the protesters. As in Libya and Yemen the data shows that a small number of internet activists helped to organize then spread the information about the protests (Lynch, 2012, p. 182). From then on every subsequent act of police violence started to be met with more force used by the protesters, themselves, which resulted in mass mobilization. The result was that the repression affected more social and family networks, which increased the number of protesters.

Equally important in the end of March for the first time the regime used its militias to clear the west coastal region mainly populated with the ruling Alawite minority ethnic group (Holliday, 2011). For example, in addition to that the pro-regime militias attacked Sunni targets in the mountains in order to deprive the rebels' potential future strategic bases. The recruitment cost were relatively low, because sections of the young rural Alawite population were poor and lacked social status. Thus, the paradox is that the pool of minority fighters were almost in the same socio-economic position as the Sunni impoverish majority in the eastern region and the big cities, both of which fuelled the sectarian divides (Cepoi, 2013).

Still on 29 March 2011 the regime was backed by demonstration and parades culminating in an presidential speech that day in which the president announced that the regime is not ready to back down to pressure and the proposed reforms will be implemented gradually (Harling, 2011). On the next day 30th of March the president accepted the people's grievances and promised to push reforms (Hinnebusch, 2012, p. 105) such as firing corrupt city governors,

releasing political prisoners, cutting taxes, pay rises in the public sector, more media freedom, more employment opportunities (The Guardian, 31 May 2011), the lifting of the state of emergency, allowing teachers to wear hijabs (CNN, 7 April, 2011), giving privileges to tribal and community leaders, stabilizing the prices of food, and reinstating the fuel subsidies. However, the reforms faltered, because of the rising number of killings, which bring the moderate opposition closer to the militants.

Meanwhile, populist propaganda was used as the institutional theory postulates. For example, the president named some protester as "agent provocateurs" and Islamic terrorists (Harling, 2011). Later the regime publically admitted that units of the security forces overstepped their powers in an irresponsible manner (Harling, 2011). However, no real criminal cases started in the months that followed, while the strategy of violent repression continued, further straining the loyal security units to be at several places in a very short time periods. As a consequence, just like in the other two countries the protesters increased the use social media for organization and some even resorted to framing information to inflate the scale of a given protests and cutting of sectarian chanting.

The signal that the demand of a real political competition cannot be met by the regime came with the president's speech on April 16th that acknowledged the problems, but demonstrated that any further protests are not necessary, because the reforms have been started. For instance, the regime even allowed minor demonstrations. Between March and April the president visited communities and organizations in order to access the situation on the ground and rise public trust. The door of sectarian and ethnic conflict was opened by a series of security operations in Sunni majority cities. The first being that in Homs in April where protesters reacted in response

to the presidential speech. Eventually on 20th of April the president made his final public speech

before the onset of the civil war stating the reforms have been made. By that time opposition

and regime hardliners were using even growing force to control the streets in the rebellious city

districts, and road junctures (Harling, 2011), which further undermined the institutions. This

triggered clashes in Damascus on the 22 of April and a systematic security operation in the

following several days, which was further backed by two other major security operations in

different towns.

Although the existence of opposition groups and foreign backed organization there was no

clear opposition in the first few months as in Libya and to lesser extent Yemen, due to several

factors. First, the different city based protest movements were not aware of the relative power

of the different opposition groups or who they are (Lynch, 2012, p. 187). Second, the foreign

based leftist, liberal, or Muslim Brotherhood members disagreed on core issues, because the

liberal-left opposition members distrusted the Islamists. Third, despite the growing potential of

the opposition the regime's social support coming from the urban state employees, religious

minorities, parts of the secular middle class, and the Sunni businessmen did not abounded the

regime, especially after the clear news that the Islamic groups are becoming more powerful,

for example. Finally, the three meetings on 2nd of June, 28th, and 16th of July did not produce

specific plans of action. An additional micro factor for the initial failure to build a unified

opposition against the regime was the fact that foreign players preferred communicating with

know and established activist outside of Syria, however, this approach led to the neglect of the

new protest leaders on the streets, similar to the Yemeni situation, which led to little

cooperation between the planners and the streets.

The next critical event was the armed insurrection that took place in June in Jisr al-Shughour, which in a similar manner signaled the growing armed opposition groups like in Libya and Yemen. For example, those armed insurrections that took place indicated the first large scale armed attack on a military base. These events helped even the reformers in the regime to become more united and determine to use force. Another micro factor was the spillover of weapons and fighters smuggling channels through the border regions, especially the Iraqi channels, which now increased the opportunity of the opposition to start a rebellion by supplying military equipment (Lynch, 2012, p. 22). The operation was immediately followed by the assault on Hama from 31 July to 10 of August during which the business class remained loyal to the regime, while small rate of defection from the army did not affect its fighting ability as severally in comparison to the other two cases, and essentially many middle class citizens, including Sunnis, decided to support the regime, due to fears of chaos if it fails. Therefore, the study takes this pair of events as the critical juncture during the transition period that led to the final polarization, militarization, and radicalization that could not stopped by soft or hard power tools and this path dependency led to the onset of civil war.

It is important to note that the Syrian regime have conducted bad management during the first several protests by the use of force right at the start, which overpowered the reformist group in the regime and the hard-liners' security agenda took over leading to the chain of events. In fact reformers interests' were not against socio-economic reforms demanded by the protesters, but only against the full opening of the political system. However, this demand was not such that can be met even by the reformers. As a result, the tactic of promising reforms, setting the peaceful protesters against the violent ones, and at the same time using force to crush the main movements are similar to that in the Libyan and the Yemeni cases (Lynch, 2012, p. 22). With the news that the popular protests cannot be stopped with repression the countries that

supported the regime declared their support for reforms. As the protests further progressed it became clear that Iran and Hezbollah will continue to help the regime by any means, thus increasing the resilience of the regime supporters. Anti-western populist rhetoric was not affecting the protesters and the regime move to stop all internet communications after the announcement that NATO led coalition will impose a no-fly zone over Libya in mid-2011 and used the minorities' support to prevent serious numerical advantages to be achieved by the rebels and as a tool for legitimacy.

The concept of grievances and their materialization through opportunities is best demonstrated by the Imams whom have strong local and interregional connections emerged as the important leaders in establishing communities with mobilization capacity maintaining the protests at the micro level. For instance, some immigrant districts experienced Islamization and radicalization. In addition, recruitment mechanisms of social status, or pressure, fear of not joining, and better a job. A further micro factor was the former policies of the regime in post-2003 Iraqi transition period when it allegedly supported the Sunni led decade long insurgency. Now this cooperation strategy quickly backfired and these groups now started a fight against the regime, due to sectarian reasons by the infiltration of Islamists. Facing such well develop networks, common tactics of multiple arrests of protests leaders stopped working, not only because of them, but also due to the speed that the street leaders were replaced with others.

Finally, on July 29, defecting officers formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (Landis, 2011). Nonetheless, the low rate of defections compared to Libya and Yemen showed that the business circles remained loyal to the regime, defection from the army did not affect its fighting ability as severally, and essentially many middle class people from the other minorities and the Sunnis decided to support the regime, due to fears of chaos if it collapses. Thus, the study point at

these two events as the critical juncture that produced the polarization, militarization, and radicalization that could not have been stopped by soft or hard power regime polices in order not to lead to the onset of civil war.

4.3 The Yemeni path to civil war

The Yemeni political crisis is directly related to the 2011 revolution and can trace its origins back to the events after the parliamentary elections in April 2003 on which the country's dominant party the GPC (General People's Congress party) again won a majority, and the government started an anti-terrorist operations in the country while at the same time facing a Shia led rebellion in northern mountains (Kronenfeld & Yoel Guzansky, 2014). The anti-terrorist anti-insurgency operations started with help of the USA, which also helped in establishing the broad political coalition called the JMP (Join Meetings Party) in the early 2000s (Durac, 2011, p. 356). The operations only ignited ethnic tensions once more, which already have been high in the country ruled by the only anocratic regime among the three cases analyzed. At the same time, a further factor was that from 2006 onwards south Yemen experienced protests against the reelection of president Saleh, his regime's continuous concentration of power after the 1994 civil war with the south socialist government, rising fuel, and food prices. This situation was to be regularly exploited by the southern civil movements, because after the unification of the country they experience a relative loss of power in the state and grievance due to the political dominance of the more populous north (Durac, 2011). Eventually, despite the nationalist ideology president Saleh's links with the Houthis'[9] social

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[9] The group practices a branch of Shia Islam.

system and beliefs (Foreign Policy Association, 1 June 2015) played a crucial role in forming their camp against the transitional government.

Consequently, the ethnic tensions and grievances reach a critical level and on January of 2011 these protests demanding political transition and better living conditions in the south began to be join by civil groups attacking the corruption level in the state administration and the rising fuel and food prices. The first Arab Spring related protests were led by university students in the capital in January 2011 demanding the president to step down. The JMP adopted a similar tactic to that of the Sunni middle and business class in Syria, by waiting until it became clear that the protests will not stop and in contract to the latter decided to join the protests (Martin, p. 76). Nonetheless, the youth street protesters started frequently to bypass the JMP, because they accused the parties of long run cooperation with the regime. An important difference between Yemen and the two other cases is that the escalation of armed clashes was slower and through a longer time period passed until for the conflict to evolve from localized armed violence to a full scale civil war between the two newly formed camps of former regime supporters and Houthis rebels, against supporters of the transitional president and tribal confederations.

Later in January 2011 protesters clashed with police and the regime started to use more force. The result was similar to that of the Syria and Libyan protests dynamic, because the more repression the security forces used the bigger the protests became. After 27 of January "Day of Rage" street protests it became clear that the anti-regime campaign have reached a critical mass and with the news of the fall of the Tunisian president the protesters pressed their demands for new election, the stepping down of the president, and the removal of his relatives from the

security services, which was a clear evidence of the work of the demonstration effect in the context of the Arab Spring.

Likewise, the Yemeni regime followed a divide and pacify through the use of reforms and cooperation with opposition leaders, targeted use of force by the security personal and reliance on its coup proofing methods, which was a similar approach to that in Syria and the pre-2011 regime in Libya. Populist rhetoric was also used as in Libyan and Syrian blaming the United States and Israel for the conflict. For example, on the 2nd of February president Saleh's promise that he will not seek reelection in 2013 had little to no effect, because of similar broken promise in 2006. As a result, on 3rd of February mass protests were staged against the government in Sana'a (Los Angeles Times, 3 February 2011) and this triggered two of the most powerful tribal confederations to announce their support to the protests which quickly increased the opportunities for rebellion. In March the president was offered a plan for power transition, but he decline to accept it. Thus, by mid-2011 the protests movement became more radicalized including an increasing number of social networks and families.

The next critical event in the deepening political crisis is the March 18th 2011 killing of 51 protesters. This event led to the first official and significant defection by a general and several officers from the army that were not directly family related to the president (Al Jazeera, 5 March 2011), which showed the weak element in the coup proofed armed forces. The state's reach also declined. For example, by that time, six of Yemen's 18 regions/governorates were not firmly in control of the central government (Hindustan Times, 29 March, 2011). As result, on 31st March 2011, AQAP declared an "Islamic Emirate in one of the southern regions (USA Today, 1 April, 2011) directly challenging the government. Following that in April, the

president agreed to a Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) led transfer of power, however, he did not honor the agreement on three occasions. This led the opposition tribes and the JMP to gather armed reinforcements in the capital and again push their demand for the president to step down. The result was intensification of local armed clashes with the pro-regime security forces and the armed opposition.

With the news of the 3rd of June assassination attempt against the president the incentive soldiers and officers to defect further increased. As a consequence, of the absence of the president newly formed 17-member transitional council was established (Al Jazeera, 22 May 2011). While later in mid-November 2011 the arrival of Republican Guard units in the opposition camp, showing that already there are cases of soldier insubordination in units under the direct command by the president's relatives, which led to more frequent armed clashes directly between the pro-regime forces and the opposition generals. The next event that shaped the political game was the attempt by the official opposition and the regime to solidify the existing institutions' legitimacy by conduction elections in 2012 in which the leader of the Islamic party was elected as the new transitional president. However, these noncompetitive elections as Genderman, Gleditsch, and Hug (2013) show only increased the willingness of the large political groups to get involved in violence as a tactic to achieve higher payoffs. For example, this was exactly the case in Yemen, because the agreed terms failed to address the grievances of the urban youth, southern secessionists, and the Houthis rebels' interests. Still an interesting variation between Yemen and the other two cases is the fact that by august 2011 the polarization has not reached such a scale as to prevent joint military operations to effects form the newly started offense by the Al-Qaeda led insurgency in the country capitalizing on the army's preoccupation with the political parties.

Eventually on 23rd of November, president Saleh approved and signed an agreement by the Gulf Cooperation Council which planned the transfer of power to the Vice-President in February 2012, but granting him and his family immunity from prosecution. (Daily Star, 23 November, 2011). The JMP agreed, partially due to their interest not to change the fundaments of the political order but, the street protesters and the Houthis did not.

Hence, after the elections on 21st of February 2012 the new Islamist president, supported by probably the best organized party in the official opposition block (Durac, 2011, p. 344), for a brief period successfully managed to avoid serious armed clashes between the tribal militias, army, and the Islamic organization in the South. The main factor for this temporal and fragile stability was the still ongoing National Dialogue (ND) meetings from December of 2011 and until February of 2013th. However, the tradition of informal political deals, the lack of sufficient experts in election systems, and the incompatible interest between the youth street protesters and the official opposition represented by JMP reduce the effectiveness of the negotiations. There were three factors that led to the failure of the ND framework. First, the public commitment of formal negotiations was not in the best interest of most closely related to the current or former regime tribes, and government officials, because their goal in contrast to the student protesters was to maintain the old power relations as much as possible. Second, the move by the transitional president in December of 2012 to demobilize most of the allied to him army units was detrimental for their coalition's power. Third, by July 2012, the plan remove the relatives of the former president from high ranking administrative and army posts was faltering due to strong resistance and the interests of the official opposition. For example, on 31st of July 2012 the Ministry of Interior was attacked by units of the Republican Guard

commanded by the former president's son. The attack, similar to the Libyan cases of aggression towards state institutions, highlighted the weakness of the state institutions to enforce their own decisions, which only increase the frequency of political violence and the risk of civil war onset (Fox & Hoelscher, 2012) and the southern secessionist movement decided to take action through demonstrations as well, for instance (Kronenfeld & Guzansky, 2014). Additionally, just like in Syria and Libya the proliferation of weapons among tribes and political groups was a substantial factor for the weakness of the institutions and the extremely high costs of containing armed violence.

An illustration how the transitional institution could not accommodate the new civil demands happened in 2014 with the ND decision to press ahead with the federalization of Yemen (Kronenfeld & Guzansky, 2014, p. 81). The factors were the following. First, the assassination of the Houthi representative stopped the negotiations. Second, the Houthis did not supported the model of federalization, because their territory in the Northern Mountains has been included in a province that isolates them from the sea and the oil resources. Third, a number of army units still supporting the former president defected from their new commanders appointed by the transitional government, immediately after the redraw of the Houthis. Fourth, there was a lack of trust by the street in the transition presidency, because it represented the official and largely coopted opposition of the JMP prior to the events in 2011. In contrast, as in Syria and Libya the liberal elements in the ND committees were powerless due insufficient engagement with people on a district level. Soon, the Houthis' armed operation signaled the start of the civil war in the country and the consolidation of the camps. As a result, it can be inferred that the comparatively more opened anocratic Yemeni regime might have postponed the civil war, but it eventually was powerless to stop the fundamentally different interests, non-established institutions, accumulated grievances, and greed among the population.

Chapter 5 Comparative analysis

In this chapter the study presents a comparative analysis of the factors and mechanisms at work in shaping the actors' preferences and strategies leading to the specific outcomes. It follows the structure of Table 2 in Appendix I, which presents a detailed list of the three theories' independent variables, the specific factors in them and how they affect or not the outcome in the three cases of examination.

To start with in a comparative perspective the parliaments in all cases lacked enforcing powers. For example, although, the post-2011 transition period in Libya and Yemen increased the legitimacy and the power of the parliaments, still the informal political alliances, tribes, and the army were the crucial factors the determined the outcome. Syria possessed stronger institutions based to a lesser extent on ethnic-tribal structures, but even there the qualitative difference is not significant to affect the nature of the institution and prevent the leaders to use the nationalist tactic and then the ethnic one. The countries' power bases prior to 2011 were all constructed around the chain of tribes, family, security forces, crony capitalists, parts of the secular middle class, and state employees. However, there is one difference concerning Syria, because its power base relies most heavily, in contrast to the other two countries, on an ethno-religious minority. Nevertheless, after a couple of attempts by challengers against the pre-2011 Libyan leader, he also decreased the winning coalition and relied even more on his family and tribe. As can be inferred from the theories this structure only increased the role of the grievances and greed mechanisms by setting the stage for ethno-religious hatred and lowering the rebels' costs of recruitment. In addition, the grievances were further confounded due to the unrealized pre and post 2011 civil demands for opening of criminal investigations against the

unaccountable security forces (Collier & Hoeffler, 2003, p. 234) and latter militias, which naturally increased the psychological desire for revenge by the victims.

The armies and security forces reacted differently to the protests. For example, the Libyan army was weak and quickly large numbers defected, however, many of the close regime collaborators and tribal-based paramilitary forces remained loyal and used force against the protesters. On the contrary, the Yemeni army' elite divisions, as well the regular units, were commanded by the president's tribal-family circle, but still suffered significant defections. In a similar manner, the Syrian army was commanded by one ethnic group and suffered the lowest rate of defection in comparison to the others, which allowed it to remain the most powerful fighting force in the country until the onset of the civil war. In addition, the pre-2011 army recruitment practices were similarly based on a coup proofing strategy and tribal alliances. For example, Libya gathered the loyal tribesmen in the elite paramilitary units, while in Syria the Alawites had largely the dominant positions in the army. The Yemeni regime recruited on political and tribal grounds as well, while the elite brigades were family commanded and supported by militias.

Likewise, the rebels' recruitment practices followed similar patterns. As an illustration, on a neighborhood level the recruitment mechanism was concentrated in poor city districts (Jutine, 2009) with already high levels of greed and grievances, lowering the opportunity costs and forming the incentives of the population of recruits. Although, that the Yemeni protests were initiated by students the majority of the recruitment procedures were done again mostly in tribal areas and poor city districts as in Syria. In brief, the poorer the household the higher the odds that its members will join armed groups due to social pressure, exposure to violence, social

status, and fear of not joining the armed group, abduction, or in defense of the community (Humphreys & Weinstain, 2008). For example, in all three cases the urban masses in those impoverish districts experienced higher levels of repression, grievances, and low opportunity costs, all of which initiated the aforementioned mechanisms producing mass mobilization and radicalization.

Libya had the most underdeveloped civil society (Akram, 2011, p. 119). In comparison by the time of the first Arab Spring related protests in early 2011 Syria and Yemen already possessed more experience with international and domestic coopted civil organizations. Such strategies were used by all of the regimes, but the most significant cooptation of the moderate Islamic movement was done in Yemen, for example. The level of corruption and the pre-2011 weapons' proliferation strategies were also similar. Furthermore, after the onset of mass protests the regimes initiated a mass arming program of their loyal political, ethnic, and tribal groups. Later, the micro factor here was the lack of protection against raids on the weapon storage facilities during the transition periods, allowed tribal militias, insurgents, and criminal groups to combat the government or their local enemies.

In respect to the question with the state employees the three regimes implemented changes in their administrative staff before 2011 by the same time with the liberalization reforms, however, with the onset of the protests only a small portion of the promised reforms were finished. The exception in the sample is Libya, because there the regime collapsed after the first civil war. But despite this the former state employees remained strong enough to influence the onset of the civil war as in the other two cases, by not allowing their interests to be discarded, keeping their social cohesion, and by helping to start an "anti-Islamic" operation

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with the help of foreign actors. This strategy is very similar to that of their Yemeni counterparts. Conversely, a closely related facet of the institutional variable is the amount of support towards the pre-2011 regime during the mass protests. Libya is the outlier, because the support towards the regime became rapidly very low during the short contentious period until the NATO airstrikes, but this lack of support continued towards the new post-2011 transitional government. In contrast, the Yemeni and Syrian regime's majority of collaborators remained supportive for their presidents.

Following the institutional theory's logic the data shows that the elections negatively affected the Yemeni and Libyan political stability, because the groups that felt underrepresented or excluded by the new governments relied on their weaponry, increased identification on ethnic, religious, or on tribal lines. Such dynamics lowered nationwide social cohesion. Libya had competitive election, but they did not help the transition period as some research indicates (Gederman & Glenditsch & Hug, 2013). In fact the election both in Libya and Yemen just triggered the losers to try to forcefully impose their policies, due to weak institutions. On the other hand Syria held its last elections before the 2011 protests began. Conversely, during the post-2011 transition period in Libya and Yemen the election related instability is clearly observable through the constant tension between militias and parliamentary political parties. Moreover, the mechanism of feeling of political exclusion remained strong even during the transition period among pro-regime groups, but also included new ones, such as those groups and tribes that have extensively benefited and collaborated with the regimes.

The variable of ethnic-sectarian structure is fundamental to the outcome, because in the three countries tribal and religious identities are strong. For instance, Libya faced two such problems.

First, the Islamic opposition against the secular regime and second, the minority regions' new powers in the Eastern and Southern regions of the country. Yemen, also experienced tensions between its secular and religious groups, and the militant Shia minority. Lastly, the data shows that Syria also has the same two problems with secular vs. religious, and ethnic tensions, which quickly started to be used for identification and rationalization of violence and became a significant macro factor for onset of civil war.

Naturally, the variable capturing the relatively low level of development contributed to the final outcome in three ways. First, because the citizens expected that their countries should be better developed taking into account the oil/gas wealth they possess this produced low trust in the institutions, socio-economic grievances, favorable opportunity costs for individuals to participate in a rebellion, and lower state reach as Jakobsen, Soysa, and Jakobsen (2013) point out. Second, the demographic structure' effect is similar, because the three countries possess youth bulges with no indications that job opportunities or social mobility will increase. For example, the operating mechanism here is the higher likelihood of young men to join the anti-regime forces, because large portion of them did not have chances for a stable employment with sufficient salary and status. In addition, this grievance was aggravated by the belief based on past experience that their countries and their own situation probably will not change in the near future significantly (Collier & Sambanis, Vol 1, p. 16) affect their lives. Lastly, the inadequate development of alternatives to the oil/gas sector industries, services, and progressing soil degradation triggering mass internal migration of the rural population by destroying their livelihood towards few urban centers, kept the economies dependent on primary commodities, which shaped the strategic action of the rebels by counting that if they capture the installations they can use them in exchange for financial resources.

In the three units of analysis the economic variable's effect is centered on socio-economic grievances which are the result from stagnating planned economies and the subsequent economic liberalization, both of which decreased the wellbeing of large parts of the working and middle class (Bogaerta, 2013, p. 224). The decreased political power of the two classes, increased influence of the new business class, and the enlarged social base of conservative Islam, was a direct result of the decreasing soft power of Arab nationalism and socialists organizations inability to offer workable alternatives to the market economy. For example, the tensions stemming from the rising food prices as a result of the 2010 Russian forest fires were reminiscent of the 'bread-riots' in the 1980s which were an early expression of discontent from the effects of the first neoliberal policies implemented (Bogaerta, 2013). Hence, the economy variable in all cases contributes to the overall explanation in conjunction with the institutions because there are substantial horizontal inequalities stemming from the unequal distribution of the profits accumulated by the natural resource extraction industries, which have been captured by the regimes, the opening of the economy, and the limited social mobility, which produced a classic distributional conflict (Acemoglu & Robison, 2009). Hence, the result was a higher likelihood of civil war onset as Koubi and Bohmelt (2012) points as well, because economic improvements do not follow the legitimacy rhetoric by the regimes which quickly raises expectation based on the belief that the liberalization reforms will raise prosperity for all. The problem was that the capabilities' to compete on the international markets or manage the new reforms did not grow sufficiently. The third mechanism here is that the reforms decreased the cooptation potential of the regimes, but did not increase the access to state power of certain, tribal, ethnic or regional communities, some of which enjoyed dominance in the state power structure. These three social mechanisms were fundamental for the onset of the protests.

By examining the variable capturing the state of the neighboring countries the study found that its effect on the outcome is not significantly different between the cases. The three countries border instable (Urdal, 2012) and more powerful states which positively affects the odds of domestic conflict (Bosker & Garretson, 2008) by triggering a security dilemma, which divert resources from the civilian economy, thus increasing the socio-economic grievances. Similarly, the associated variable of previous conflict affect the cases, because all had recent conflicts with foreign or domestic actors initiating the work of two mechanisms. First, some groups in the countries have recently lost dominance, access, or relative power in the state triggering grievances and search for opportunities. Second, the returning Jihadists used their training in Afghanistan and Iraq against the security forces and in the meantime helped replenish the armed groups with new military equipment. Nevertheless, the variable's effect is most significant in Yemen, because of its multiple conflicts and flow of arms prior to 2011.

The extent of the influence on the protests dynamics by the diaspora communities is not clear. On the other hand the role of the foreign actors' variable during after the start of the first protests clearly affected the outcome by fact that certain countries directly intervened military, provided military equipment, financial aid, or used diplomatic strategies to block UN led actions. Thus, leaving only the mechanism of international condemnation and economic sanctions to affect the power balance, which cannot make a significant difference as the study by Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) shows.

Thus, despite, the regional considerations the strategy of promising more reforms, setting the peaceful protesters against the violent ones, using force to crush the main movements was applied by the regimes (Lynch, 2012, p. 22). The result was that the repressive powers of the

regimes and their social base were weakened by defections. However, only after the first causalities the "formal" opposition announced their support towards the street protests, when it became clear that the opportunity for mobilization is "good" enough. Later on the foreign players preferred to negotiate with the well know opposition figure, which created resentment between them and the youth street protesters decreasing the opposition's social cohesion.

Moreover, the presence of political repression and exclusion of certain ethnic, religious groups, or regions such as marginalized the Houthis in Yemen, the underdeveloped Eastern cities of Libya, and the poor Sunni-Kurd population in Syria, also played a direct role in the protests and armed rebellion and showed that these factors are key to the causal explanations. The pre-2011 power configuration of the regimes maintained the existence of session movements in all cases, although in Syria they were the weakest. This is because geographical factors like migration of Sunni population towards the central cities, makes any federalization or secession almost impossible. In contrast, Yemen and Libya's ethnic fractionalization allows further federalization and even secession due the concentration of ethnic groups in separate regions of the countries. As a result, Deiwiks, Gederman, and Gleditsch's (2012) claim that underdeveloped and unequal countries with discrimination of some ethnic groups or regions is positively correlated with increased odds of a secessionist movements as well as the fact that it generates ethnic-tribal hatreds is valid. In all three countries the mountains and social fractionalization played a role in the initial strategic considerations before and during the transition periods (Collier & Sambanis, Vol 1, p. 16). However, mountains terrain played the smallest role in Syria in comparison to the border with Iraq, because the regime supporters quickly took control of some of the important high ground. In contrast both in Libya and Yemen rebel groups used effectively mountain bases to launch attacks against strategic targets. Hence, the strategy of exclusion and repression of minorities and certain other groups in the three

countries triggered the mechanism of ethnic-tribal hatred to mobilize the protesters and later armed groups, which were helped by the opportunity to use mountains and a large pool of unemployed young men.

If we address the organizational capacity of the rebellions it becomes clear that the grassroots support of Islamic organizations was as strong as the regime's supporters. Grassroots support coming largely from these portions of society that live in poverty in all three cases and the fact that this segment of the population receives a large amount of services such as basic healthcare, job placement, and transportation from these organizations. The Islamist movements were also more organized compared to the other opposition groups. For example, in Yemen the Islamic party collaborated with the regime and was very closely linked to the winning coalition and as a result the transitional president came from its lines. In Syria the Islamic networks provided a possibility of social mobility and welfare services, where the party could not do so. While in Libya they initially used their local networks and military skills to contribute to the defeat of the regime and later to spread quickly as a community builders and militias enforcing their rules. By comparing the militias, it can be inferred from the data that in Yemen and Libya the role of militias sharply increases after the change of the regimes at the begging of their transition period until the civil war onset (Raleigh, 2014). Although, that in Syria there was no change in power, the role of pro-government militias after the first big security operations was similar to Yemen and Libya.

In summary, the comparative section highlighted the following effects of the variables and the interconnections between them. First, the dominance of informal institutions through the decades stimulated a political culture of low trust toward official institutions, which ruined the

plans of the regimes in the onset of the protests to use nationalism as a force to decrease the intergroup alliance against them, and forced them to place their survival strategy on ethno-sectarian and regime dependent groups. Meanwhile, the years of unaccountable security forces operations led many to radicalism and to seek revenge at any cost.

Second, soon after the first policy related goals of the street protesters evolved in to a maximalist goals demanding regime change the authorities responded with repression which backfired and produced more mobilization. Researchers like Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) show that nonviolent resistance more often leads to defections by the security forces. But this time it did not helped to prevent the outbreak of repression and the later radicalization of the opposition, due to the ethno-tribal structure of the elites and the state security forces.[10]

Third, the analysis showed that the transition institutions in Yemen and Libya did not manage to take control of the situation due to the low legitimacy of the coopted opposition, broken promises of reforms by the regime, pre and post 2011 proliferation of weapons preventing the central state from establishing a monopoly on violence, and the still strong regime collaborators interest to protect their positions, prevent their persecution, or elimination from the decision making structures.

Fourth, the conduct of elections during the transition period, plagued by violence and changing rules, in Yemen and Libya only led to further instability, due to the inability of the new institutions to accommodate the new demands and the power politics of militias. While at the

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[10] Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) also point at that.

same time the creating of all inclusive coalitions was prevented by the political exclusion of much of the groups that remained supportive of the former regimes, which effectively decreased the legitimacy and cooperation levels. Hence, it cannot be said that election cause instability on their own, without taking into account the pre-existing political violence that produces an environment of insecurity.

Fifth, immediately with the onset of the first protests the increased influence of group based identification on ethno-religious grounds became apparent, which development was in conjuncture with the still flaming secular-religious contradictions. While, the recent relative loss of power by some groups only set the stage for revanchist strategies. Both developments are congruent with the grievance theory.

Six, large sections of society in the units of analysis demonstrated clear signs of the mechanism of relative deprivation triggered by the higher expectations and youth bulge with low chances for social mobility or secure employment. Those grievances became even stronger due to the MENA countries' problems with soil degradation combined with climate change and water shortages that forced rural communities to migrate to the cities. As a result, these conditions opened new opportunities for joining a protests or rebellion and increased the greed, while at the same enabled armed groups to capture oil/gas facilities and extract profits.

Seven, the economy's effect is similar in the cases, because grievances were triggered as a result of stagnating economies, the followed liberalization reforms, noncompetitive industries on the world market, and the role of rising food prices as a critical juncture in setting the environment for protests that have happened before because of these factors. Consequently, these

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developments were helped by the decreasing influence of Arab nationalism and the increased political leverage of conservative Islam.

Eight, the variety of countries bordering the three countries of analysis are either more powerful or instable, which triggered the security dilemma social mechanism, characteristic for the whole MENA region. Logically, this shifted resources from the civil to the military industry with negative results. Meanwhile, the returning Jihadi fighters increased the military and organizational capabilities of the radical anti-regime groups and enabled them to influence the direction of the revolutions.

Nine, the study did not find significant effect from the diaspora except that of social media, however, during the protests period foreign anti or pro regime actors contributed via diplomatic and material support to the dynamics that ultimately led to the civil wars. What is more important is that several weeks in the protests it became obvious that the "social distance" (Galtung, 1989, p. 19) based on social, ultimate vision of the country among the broad coalition of anti-regime groups remained strong, which decreased the cohesion and set the path to further conflict.

Ten, despite that the regimes' use of force produced more mobilization that did not lead the nonviolent campaigns' to success even after the formal opposition joined the street protests. The reason was the ethnic-tribal nature of the security forces, which increased the intergroup hatred and help the mobilization of the large pool of poor young men.

Finally, the demographic group that started the first mass protest demanding for electoral democracy in all three cases was the urban youth. At the same time, the effective grass roots recruitment strategy of the Islamic organizations and tribal based local communities' increased their potential for mobilization, while at the same time the experienced jihadists used their supply lines to take on the security forces in conjunction with the general opposition' use of mountains and city districts as a bases of operation.

Conclusion

The theory-guided process tracing method combined with the comparative analysis demonstrated that interconnections between each explanatory variable and mechanisms specified in the institutional, grievance, and greed based theories of the actors' strategies and incentives works in unison to explain the socio-political process leading to the civil wars. Hence, the three theories' tools can provide a more detailed explanation, however, this does not mean that the theories are in general correct for cases other those in the study.

Through the empirical analysis the study found that the following causal mechanisms had a primary role in the onset of the ongoing civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. First, the campaigns in the three countries initially started with reformist goals, but the strong informal institutions based on ethnic-tribal groups, and the repression by unaccountable security services produced grievances, higher costs to stop a decentralized mobilization, and radicals searching for revenge. After the first violent repressions of the protesters, it became very hard for the moderate regime collaborators to fully join the protesters, due to fear that they could be killed. In the meantime, during the transition periods the institutions failed to solve the problems, due to the low trust in the coopted opposition organizations, which failed to accommodate the rising civil and contradictory demands, the regimes' multiple broken promises, the proliferation of weapons, and the subversive work by the established regime collaborators in protecting their positions. In congruence with this factional political violence played a vital role in the final outcomes, especially in the anocratic Yemeni regime. Additionally, the factors including elections, which failed to convince the losers to play by the rules, only increased the identification on ethnic, tribal, and sectarian lines, and the relative deprivation combined with

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internal migration towards the cities, triggered by soil degradation and climate change, lowering opportunity costs for a rebellion. Conversely, the economy's pre and post 2011 connection with the outcome is through the mechanisms of the socioeconomic and political grievances combined with the security dilemma in the whole region, both of which produced higher influence of conservative Islam as an alternative and large pool of recruits for the militias, due to the youth bulges, and the still strong ethnic-tribal hatred as a result of the killings and loss of relative power.

With respect, to the link between the civil wars onset and the Arab Spring the study points to two factors. First, there is the mechanism of the demonstration effect, which is very strong due to the technological factor of social media and in a sense these were revolutions in large part inspired and in the first days overcame the collective action problem, through the internet. The other effect of the Arab Spring enabled by social media was the ability of the protests to start at relatively the same time thus avoiding later discouragement by news of security forces repression, regime learning, or even the start of major armed conflict. Social media networks also allowed citizens in the different MENA countries to see how similar their problems were, spreading higher expectations and opportunities to mobilize through national, tribal, ethnic, or social class cohesion, but it did not increase the capabilities, which ultimately led to stronger grievances, just as the regime's ability to provide welfare and cooptation was weakened by the global financial crisis in 2007. A proof of similar workings of the demonstration effect are the Islamic insurgencies in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Algerian insurgency, whose participants were clearly inspired by the struggle in Afghanistan with the Soviet Union. Hence, in contradiction to the "standard accounts" that the three cases are very different the study found that, the micro-macro level connections between agency and structure are very similar in a detailed analysis.

Finally, it is important to note that future research should be focused on gathering more data on countries which still have or had ethno-tribal based command structures of their security forces and examine their effect on the likelihood of success of both peaceful and violent campaigns aimed at regime change. Such a research agenda will contribute to the already existing NAVCO 2.0 dataset compiled by Chenoweth and Lewis (2013) which, however, does not have a variable measuring this particular aspect of the listed regimes' power structure. On the practical side of policies for conflict prevention, the study argues that the fundamental problem of the lack of productive information exchanges between major intelligence services and conflict scholars should be addressed. Both groups work to predict and prevent instability from arising, especially in the still considerable number of countries amid political transitions, in order to prevent the creation of a socio-political environment with high conflict potential. Having said that, the need for more cooperation between political scientists and intelligence services to establish better conflict prevention and management techniques, become apparent. Finally, the study supports the gradualist's approach (See: Carothers, 2007, p. 21), which indicates to be better suited than the sequential, because the former aims to implement incremental changes that foster political culture of competition based on the rule of law and the construction of legitimate institutions, which in the long turn leads to more democratic societies.

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Appendix I

Table 2 Cross-table of the factors

FACTORS	Libya – pre-2011	Libya –post 2011	Pre - Post 2011 Yemen	Pre-Post 2011 Syria
Institutions	Direct democracy (in reality a one party rule)	National Transitional Council followed by National Council by mid-2012	Presidential system	Presidential system
Parliament	Weak role of the local popular committees, while the central congress' enforcement powers were heavily constrained	Strong - Main institution, but lack ability to enforce decisions	Weak to no role, prior 2011. Post 2011 – lacking ability to enforce decisions.	Weak to no role. Lacks powers to enforce its decisions.
Informal institutions	Dominant	Dominant	Dominant	Strong
Power base	Tribes-family-security forces-state employees-elite paramilitary brigades and crony capitalists	Tribes-defected army units-militias-foreign suppliers of finance and weapons	Tribes-family-security forces-elite army units-state employees-tribal militias and crony capitalists	Ethnic minorities-family-security forces-army-state employees-Sunni business and part of the secular middle class
Unaccountable security services	Yes	Yes – mainly the militias	Yes	Yes
Civil society	Underdeveloped	Underdeveloped	Most developed, but still highly constrained by the regime	Moderately developed, but with controlled organizations
High Corruption	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Army/security forces/militias defections	Large – mainly joining the rebel groups	Large - Militias changing sides and joining either the secular or the pro-Islamic camp	Pre-2012 Balance with the regime's army units and militias; post-2012 the balance is maintained	Minor – not affecting the regime offensive capabilities severally
Recruitment in the army/security forces/militias	Allied tribes and mercenaries	Young men recruited by the militias	Allied tribes, political affiliations, and sectarian groups	Allied tribes, political affiliations; domination in the army high posts

				minority group of the Alawites
Weapons proliferation	Allied tribes before 2011 – intensified during the first months	Post- 2011 Through the looted stockpiles and cross-border channels	Allied tribes before 2011; intensification in post-2011	Alawite militias, and later pro-regime militias with a more broad social base
Prior experience with democracy	No, only minor elements in the popular peoples' councils	Factor not valid	Yes, 1990s experiment with relatively open electoral politics	Yes, limited election of MPs in the Peoples' Congress – the national parliament
Non/Competitive elections	Yes –but no elections during the brief transitional period	Yes – competitive elections	Yes, but noncompetitive before 2011 and during the transitional period	Yes – but no elections during the transitional period
Change in state employees	Declared – but not implemented	Minor	Declared and implemented	Declared and partially implemented
Old's regime support of the fundaments of the previous political order	Low	Low	High	High
Ethnic-sectarian groups	Strong – no minority rule, but tribal alliance strong network of former revolutionaries – sectarian rule	Strong – no minority rule, but weak party coalitions – Islamic leaning government; later mainly a secular party coalition is elected	Strong – one dominant tribal confederations and a strong Shia group Post 2011 weak alliances between tribes, civil society, and the Islamic president	Strong – minority rule Shia sectarian rule Sunni dominated demographics, but with substantial Christian community
Development	Low	Low	Low	Low
Rapid population growth – Youth Bulge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Housing crisis	Yes	Yes, but the association with the civil war is not clear	Yes	Yes
Similar secondary school enrolment levels for boys	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economy	Oil/gas based; very high unemployment; lack of social mobility	Oil/gas based; suffering from lack of qualified labor; very high unemployment; lack of social mobility	Oil/gas based; very high unemployment; lack of social mobility	Oil/Gas/commodity based; very high unemployment; lack of social mobility
Neighbors	Unstable – Chad, Sudan, Algeria's civil war, Egypt and Tunisia' revolutions	General political instability in all its neighbors and migrant waves;	Somali's instability and insurgent groups, Ethiopia' instability;	Politically unstable Lebanon, Kurdish population at the border, Iraqi ongoing insurgency, and Israeli

	Pre-2011 Libya	Post-2011 Libya	Pre-Post-2011 Yemen	Pre-Post 2011 Syria
		movement of radical groups	movement of radical groups	military pressure; movement of radical groups
Time between conflicts	Suppression of Islamic militants in the 1990s	Uninterrupted local armed clashes	Only short periods of a couple of years during which there are no armed clashes	Military operation in Lebanon in the late 2000s
GREED (opportunity model)	**Pre-2011 Libya**	**Post- 2011 Libya**	**Pre-Post- 2011 Yemen**	**Pre-Post 2011 Syria**
Increased grievances – high inequality and minor political rights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commodity based economy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes The growth rate of the economy in the previous period
Diaspora funds	Yes – not clear whether they are vital	Yes – vital	Yes – not clear whether they significantly affected the outcome	Yes – vital
Support from a foreign country	Limited to anti-terrorist cooperation and oil contracts – practically no foreign support for the pre-2011 regime after the first protests	Yes – several – for both camps	Yes – for both camps	Yes – several – for both camps
Large numbers of young men with low income – lowering the costs of recruitment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Possession of military equipment by the group	Not significant in pre-2011	Significant	Significant pre and post 2011	Not significant in pre-2011
Presence of mountains	Yes – used by the rebels	Yes – used by the opposing sides	Yes- used by the rebels	Yes – but limited strategic use by the rebels
Large groups with social cohesion	Yes – urban masses	Yes – mainly tribes	Yes – tribes, ethno-religious groups, and urban masses in both pre and post-2011	Yes – urban masses and ethno-religious groups
Ethnic or religious hatred	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political repression	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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GRIEVANCES	Pre-2011 Libya	Post- 2011 Libya	Pre-Post- 2011 Yemen	Pre-Post 2011 Syria
Political exclusion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GRIEVANCES	**Pre-2011 Libya**	**Post- 2011 Libya**	**Pre-Post- 2011 Yemen**	**Pre-Post 2011 Syria**
Progressive deprivation – expectations progress faster than capabilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Limited access to state power	Yes- southern ethnic group, Islamists, the Eastern region as a whole	Yes –for the Pro Gaddafi tribes,	Yes – Houthis , southern socialists movements	Yes - the rural and the urban poor Sunni communities, Kurds
Presence of groups that have recently lost its dominant position in the state	Yes – Eastern region, due to the 1969 coup	Yes – former secular regime supporters, pro-regime tribes	No – a mix between tribal and government coalitions	Yes - the rural and the urban Sunni communities
Demography	Land scarcity, rapidly growing population	No change in condition in comparison to pre-2011 period	Land scarcity, rapidly growing population – migration towards the cities	Land scarcity, rapidly growing population – migration towards the cities
Decreased cooptation of the regime – presence of groups with social cohesion	Yes – due to the liberalization reforms – limiting the regime's ability to provide quality services to the increasingly young population	Yes – due to multiple power centers and deep economic crisis	Prior- 2011 – yes – liberalization reforms; Post-2011 – yes transitional government reforms resulting in smaller networks	Yes Liberalization reforms – limiting the party's ability to provide services to a wider social base
Political and Economic inequality	Yes - deprivation and rising inequality among the urban masses	Yes – no improvement in the living conditions and deep economic crisis	Yes - deprivation and rising inequality among the urban masses	Yes - deprivation and rising inequality among the urban masses
Present and past state repression	Yes	Yes – weak state; repression is done mainly by militias	Yes	Yes

Note: the table is based on the author's work.

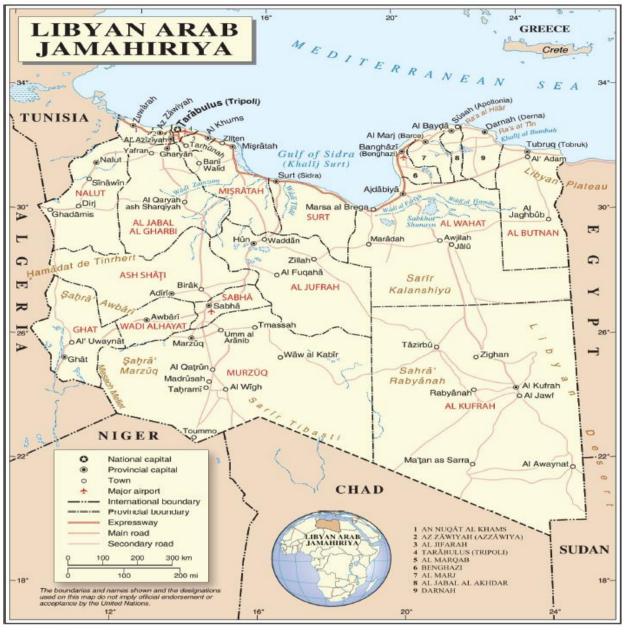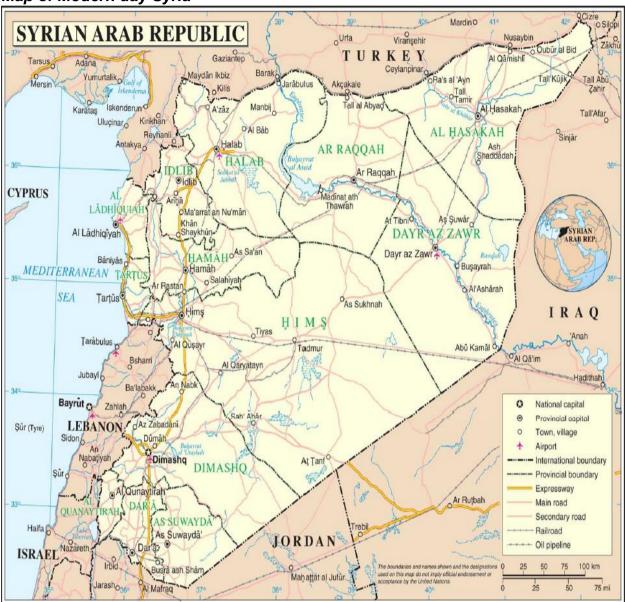# Appendix II

Map of modern day Libya

Figure 6 Map of Libya Source: International Crisis Group (Middle East/North Africa Report №107 – 6 June 2011).

Map of Modern day Syria

Figure 7 Map of Syria Source: International Crisis Group (Middle East/North Africa Report №109 – 13 July 2011)

Map of Modern day Yemen

Figure 8 Map of Yemen Source: International Crisis Group (Middle East/North Africa Report №102 – 10 March 2011)