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The North African Revolutions, Africa, and Democracy

Many forms of Government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

—Winston Churchill, 1947

No matter how bad the political, economic, and social conditions, no matter how steep the fall to unimagined depths, democracies can pull through. There is a way up. There is always hope, and one should never let go of it.

—Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President of the Republic of Indonesia

Contrary to popular belief, the spread of democracy is not a new phenomenon in Africa. As Peter Schraeder points out, "the 'third wave' of democratization within the international system (the first two waves began in the 1820s and the 1940s) has led to an outpouring of scholarship. . . . In the case of . . . African studies, scholarly analyses of the democratization process—often referred to as Africa's 'springtime' or 'second independence'—dramatically increased at the end of the decade of the 1980s."[1] That wind of democratization, blowing since 1974, did not spare Africa, with the exception of North Africa—an area that lagged behind the rest of the continent. However, the "Jasmine Revolution"—prompted by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, and the ousting of Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali 28 days later on 14 January 2011—was a brutal awakening. The North African revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya gave a new impetus, a trigger, to Africa's democratic evolution. Immediate reactions came from Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Uganda, Nigeria, Malawi, and Senegal. Some African governments banned any mention of the dreadful words *Jasmine Revolution*, *Arab Spring*, or *North African revolutions* from the Internet and public media. Other autocrats openly supported the despots being ousted. The North African revolutions spread like fire in the Middle East and shocked the whole world, especially authoritarian

regimes that impede the United Nations Security Council's search for a way to protect communities and civilians from abuses by their own governments.

Until recently, democracy was synonymous with wealthier countries and almost all nations that have largely Western cultures. Supposedly, democracy was incompatible with non-European nations having different cultures, civilizations, religions, and so forth. At best, most people considered democracy a luxury that poorer countries could not afford. Mali, however, represents a disavowal of such belief. Without fanfare that country has moved from 35 years of single-party rule and 23 years of military dictatorship to a multiparty democracy. Mali has none of the supposed preconditions for democracy. Landlocked, it has a population of more than 14 million, most of them illiterate, about half of them destitute (below the international poverty line of $1.25 [US] a day), and facing a life expectancy of only 44 years. Furthermore, the Malian population, comprised of more than 10 ethnic groups, is overwhelmingly Muslim.[2] If democracy can emerge and persist for more than a decade in Mali, then there is no reason why it cannot develop in the remaining totalitarian nations, rich or poor.

No longer is democracy a luxury. Authoritarian regimes do not exist because their people want dictatorship; on the contrary, the recent demonstrations of courage have shown the world that all peoples aspire to freedom. In point of fact, these regimes exist because they cater to narrow, corrupt, self-serving, and entrenched political elites. Larry Diamond writes that "there are no preconditions for democracy, other than a willingness on the part of a nation's elite to attempt to govern by democratic means."[3] Democracy is present in every major religious and philosophical tradition, in countries predominantly Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Muslim.

Furthermore, Indonesia, though clearly not African, can still teach us lessons about democratic governance. That nation, the largest Muslim country in the world, has experienced colonization, coups d'état, dictatorships, ethnic rivalries, and violent insurgencies. Nevertheless, according to Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Regardless of how one defines that elusive term 'democracy,' I have no doubt that the future belongs to those who are willing to *responsibly* embrace pluralism, openness, and freedom. . . . Once individuals and communities get a taste of the exercise of democracy and choice, they are likely to cling to it and fight for it when it is under threat. In short, we [Indonesians] have awakened our democratic instinct" (emphasis in original).[4]

All over the world despotism is in retreat. Just as dinosaurs failed to survive the Ice Age, so will authoritarian regimes fail to survive the age of democratization.

Notes

1. Peter J. Schraeder, "Understanding the 'Third Wave' of Democratization in Africa," *Journal of Politics* 57, no. 4 (November 1995): 1160.
2. The most significant ethnic groups include the Bambara, Soninké, Khassonké, Malinké, Fula, Voltaic, Songhai, Tuareg, and Moor.
3. Larry Diamond, *Can the Whole World Become Democratic? Democracy, Development, and International Policies* (Irvine, CA: Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California–Irvine, 2003), see abstract, http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7bv4b2w1.pdf.
4. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "The Democratic Instinct in the 21st Century," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 3 (July 2010): 6.

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Revisiting Transitions in the Arab World, Spring or Fall?

David S. Sorenson, PhD*

Beginning in December 2010, mass public protests swept much of the Arab world, bringing a mix of hope, sadness, and foreboding for the future. Although the demonstrations sent several long-serving presidents out of their countries, other rulers mobilized their security forces and inflicted high civilian casualties to retain their grip on central power. This article considers some of the reasons for the revolts that have occurred in numerous Arab countries and assesses some potential outcomes and implications, both for the Arab world and for the United States. Recent events raise a number of questions:

- Will the proverbial 100 flowers of democracy spring forward in Arab countries that have either exiled their leader or are in the process of challenging established autocracies?

- Will democracy building become sustainable through the building of democratic institutions and popular support, or will incomplete democratic construction ultimately lead to disappointment and a possible democratic rejection?

- Will corrections to the economic conditions that contributed to the waves of populism in the Arab world follow democratization?

- Will religious forces, initially marginalized in the popular revolutions, reassert themselves through democracy, and should that happen, will democracy survive possible religious radicalization?

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- Might Arab-world democratization make the Middle East less war prone?
- How will the United States recraft its Middle East policies in the wake of the so-called Arab spring?

The "Arab Spring" Begins

In December 2010, 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi of Bouzid, Tunisia—unable to get a job despite a degree in computer science—was being harassed by authorities for selling vegetables from a cart without a license. The police badgered him and stole his wares, and when he complained to a magistrate, she allegedly slapped him. His frustration and humiliation drove him to drench himself with paint thinner and light it; he perished from his burns two weeks later. Videos of Bouazizi swathed in bandages quickly spread throughout Tunisia, and angry crowds gathered to demand the resignation of Pres. Zine Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled the country autocratically since 1988.

After several weeks of escalating violence between security forces and demonstrators, leaders of the Tunisian army demanded that Ben Ali depart the country. Surprisingly, he complied and boarded a plane for Saudi Arabia, thus becoming the first Arab autocrat in many decades to wither in the face of public unrest. More significantly, his departure triggered a wave of popular actions in a number of Arab countries, ushering in what the media came to refer to as the Arab spring, fueled by the lowest levels of full democratization in the world.

In Egypt, cries of "Tunisia is the solution" replaced "Islam is the solution" as the movement spread to Cairo in January 2011. Discontent over the Hosni Mubarak regime, which had occasionally exploded into angry demonstrations over the years, rekindled as Egyptian citizens watched Tunisians rising up against Ben Ali. Large crowds gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square and elsewhere. Their discontent reflected some of the same issues that motivated protests in Tunisia: poor national economic performance, high levels of corruption, and a loss of faith in the electoral system, which many Egyptians believed was particularly manipulated in favor of regime supporters in the national elections of 2005. The crowds grew in Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt. After numerous confusing signals from the regime and spasms of

violence wrought by state security forces, senior Egyptian army officers joined the protestors in support. With an important support base gone, President Mubarak boarded an aircraft for Sharm el-Sheik, leaving considerable disarray behind as many citizens in the square realized that the task of reconstruction lay ahead in a long and uncharted journey.

Decades of political stagnation and top-down control across a wide swath of Arab countries fueled the anger of activists, who took to the streets and to social media, determined to oust the occupants of the presidential palaces. From Tunisia and Egypt, revolutionary zeal spread to Oman, Jordan, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and Libya. However, these movements and their targeted regimes took different trajectories. In Oman, protests occurred largely in the port city of Sohar, though they spread briefly to Muscat but waned after Sultan Qaboos ibn Sa'id promised reforms. Jordanian monarch King Abdullah II fired key cabinet members (a tactic used by his father, King Hussein, to quell protests or coup efforts), while dissenters in Yemen and Syria continued the conflict with their rulers and regime supporters. Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad used his military and internal security forces to quell large demonstrations in most large Syrian cities, as did Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh. In June 2011, Saleh was wounded in a palace attack and departed to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. Yemen slipped farther into chaos as armed Islamist gangs roamed the periphery of the key port city of Aden, while the army and state security forces melted away without leadership or direction. Even Saleh's resignation in November 2011 did not bring stability to Yemen, as rival groups continued to wage what was becoming a civil war. Demonstrators flooded Pearl Square in Manama, Bahrain, and were first repelled by Bahraini security forces. As the protests grew, Saudi Arabian and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces crossed into Bahrain to quell the demonstrations. This move, the sole coalition effort to dampen antigovernment activism during the 2011 Arab revolts, came with the explanation that the mostly Shia Bahraini movement would have benefited only Iran had it succeeded. In Libya, Mu'ammar Gadhafi fought the opposition with most of his armed forces, leading the United Nations Security Council to declare a no-fly zone that morphed into a "prevent civilian casualties" policy, including targeting military vehicles along with aircraft. Warplanes from several North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, joined by Qatar, attacked Libyan security forces,

and Libya appeared to literally fall apart. Gadhafi clung to power as rebels captured half the country and set up a "capital" in the eastern city of Benghazi. After months of bloody fighting between rebels and pro-Gadhafi forces, the rebels finally captured the dictator and executed him in October after NATO aircraft attacked his convoy. Gadhafi's heir apparent, his son Saif al-Islam, tried to escape the country, but several weeks after his father's death, NATO air strikes also hit his convoy, and insurgents took him into custody.

With Ben Ali's departure, demonstrators in other countries began to believe that in at least some Arab nations, the man behind the curtain was just that, ruling with illusory powers and standing on a fragile power base. Yet Ben Ali proved to be the exception. The military in socially liberal Tunisia, small but professional, refused to dispatch troops against their fellow Tunisians, lining up instead to protect the protestors against the security police. Moreover, the head of the armed forces, Gen Rachid Ammar, told Ben Ali that the army would not obey his orders to shoot demonstrators and that the president should depart. It may also be the case that Tunisia's economic elite were not sufficiently bought off through patronage to make them willing to put up much of a fight in Ben Ali's defense because, as one author argues, most of the corruption in Tunisia existed within the president's own family.[1]

In other Arab countries few, if any, demonstrations broke out; thus, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, and most of the Gulf Arab states remained relatively calm. Bahrain was the notable exception, but harsh prison terms for Bahraini protest leaders and the GCC intervention seemed to dampen any more interest in taking to the streets. Scattered demonstrations broke out in Jordan and Morocco but quickly dissipated. Thus, at this writing, parts of the Arab world are in political limbo, leaving important questions about the future.

The Arab storms surprised many observers, yet they should not have been surprising. With the growth of global media, popular pressures grew over the years against other unaccountable governments in most parts of the world. The refrain was the same: we want democracy and, along with it, economic progress. Given the conditions there in 2011, the Arab region seemed more vulnerable than anywhere else in the world to mass public outcries.

Democracy may be on the march in other parts of the globe, but Freedom House rankings in 2011 showed no Arab countries rated as "free" (Israel was the only Middle Eastern country so ranked); three were considered "partly free," and 14 ranked "not free."[2] Furthermore, the march to democracy in the Arab world was moving backwards, as the Freedom House ratings in 2009 carried seven Arab countries as partly free, but Bahrain, the Palestinian Territories, Yemen, and Jordan moved from partly free to not free in the 2010 report.[3] Limited freedoms in some Arab countries vanished as regimes became more fearful of the rising tides of discontent fed by stagnant economies, growing corruption, regime misbehavior (lavish spousal gifts and nepotism got special attention), and the rise of Islamist movements that wanted to enter the political system through popular elections. Unaccountable Arab regimes dreaded that street protests enabled by a growing adoption of social communications media would quickly spread to their own countries. Paradoxically, some Arab governments reflexively rolled their limited democracy back, censoring or suspending news media, banning Islamists from parliament, and jailing those whose political activism went beyond regime redlines, thus setting the stage for the very revolts that pushed for the ouster of those same regimes.

Will Democracy Build and Spread in the Arab World?

The push toward global democratization accelerated in several parts of the world in the 1980s and 1990s. East Asia saw South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Taiwan transition to democratic rule. Latin America witnessed numerous military juntas fall to political change. Sub-Saharan Africa gradually began to democratize, and political change also came in Eastern and Central Europe as most postcommunist countries adopted Western European–style democracies. In these cases the old order rarely used violence to stay in power. They either acceded to elections in the false hope they would prevail; departed the country, as did former Philippines president Ferdinand Marcos; or were executed—the fate of Romanian leader Nicolae Ceauşescu in 1989. Although some autocratic regimes displayed dogged resistance to protestor demands—as have Burma's military rulers and the Chinese Communist Party at Tiananmen Square in 1989—they were the exceptions, more often than not.

Might the Arab world follow these regional "waves" of democratization? Further, how might democracy arrive, embed, and survive in Middle Eastern Arab states? Conversely, might the passions for accountable governance founder as regime supporters mobilize and raise the price of protest to the point where hope is replaced by the realization that further dissent will only result in jail or death, as it did in Iran in 2009? Initial answers involve the identification of fundamental requisites for democracy, elements that may both empower democracy and impede it.

Some Democratic Requisites

One essential requirement for establishing democracy is a favorable attitude by the recipient public. Numerous public opinion surveys in Arab countries reveal broad majority support for the concept: to wit, a Pew Charitable Trust survey in spring 2010 found that 60 percent of Egyptians, 69 percent of Jordanians, and 83 percent of Lebanese agreed with the statement "Democracy [is] preferable to other forms of government."[4] These results mirror other findings of widespread support for accountable governance in the Arab region, as Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler find: "Despite—or perhaps because of—the persistence of authoritarianism across the Arab world, popular support for democracy there is widespread. The evidence for this may be gleaned from twenty different surveys carried out in nine different Arab countries between 2000 and 2006."[5] Implicitly these sentiments not only support the establishment of accountable participatory political systems but also discredit the old clientelist governments that characterize so many Arab states.

Democracy grows best when incubated through institutional mechanisms: acceptance of the rule of law; state building, to include impartial administrative bodies and their managers; an open news media; and a viable education system, allowing citizens to make informed choices. Some would additionally argue that democratization also requires outside pressure (often read, "from the United States"). US policy has sometimes been hesitant to support democracy or reluctant to back away from autocrats, even as they were slipping from power, as in Indonesia.[6] The United States opposed election results it did not like in the Hamas victory in Palestine in 2006 and ignored the thwarting of democracy after the military clampdown in

Algeria following the 1991 elections, which favored the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party.[7]

Democracy also requires patience because few countries make dramatic leaps from autocracies to full-fledged democracies. Only Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro jumped from "not free" immediately to "free" on the Freedom House scale after their elections in 2000, while most others either became lodged at partly free (Albania, Armenia, Macedonia, and Moldova) or tumbled back toward autocracy (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia).[8] Because the elites who benefited under autocracy will most likely resist democratic efforts to normalize the distribution of wealth, democracy will remain incomplete. As Charles Tilly observes, "On average, people who experience equitable treatment from their governments and/or have direct say in governmental operations gain more satisfaction from politics and display greater willingness to bear burdens for the common good."[9]

Barriers to Democratization

The primary barrier to democratization is the resistance of regimes and their entrenched economic, political, and military elites. Administration supporters who draw considerable benefits from autocratic rulers may resist political transition unless they can shape it.[10] These elites contribute to state constructions designed more to facilitate central rule than to provide essential public services, including a large state security network, expensive housing compounds, private schools and tutors for the wealthy, and soldier-run hospitals that cater to wealthy foreign medical tourists. They also include hefty militaries and military budgets, which provide not only national security but also military support for the regime that signs the checks. Thus, even if elections occurred in the Arab world, the "deep state" structures would remain impediments to democratic growth.

The Persistence of Arab Autocracy

Persistent rule became a hallmark of many Arab regimes: the al-Saud family has governed Saudi Arabia since 1932, Sultan Qaboos has ruled Oman since 1971, the Alouite family has reigned in Morocco since 1956, the Assad family has controlled Syria since 1970, Muʿammar Gadhafi ruled Libya between 1969 and 2011, and Ali Abdullah Saleh first served as pres-

ident of the Yemen Arab Republic in 1978 and then became president of unified Yemen in 1990, to name just a few cases of Arab longevity. In other cases the polity has been dominated by the "big men," as is the case in Lebanon and in Palestine under Yasser Arafat from 1996 to 2004.[11] These and other long-serving Arab leaders could claim to have brought political stability and security to their countries since they not only quashed leftist and Islamist movements but also negotiated to keep the military from launching periodic coups by buying off soldiers with powerful positions in the government and the economy. They did the same for powerful tribal and family leaders, as patronage kept many Arab leaders afloat.[12]

In these cases strong Arab rulers prolonged their stay in power by capturing existing institutions or creating new ones to serve the interests of themselves and their parties, usually to distribute patronage to regime supporters. However, when the "strong man" leaves, an institution often withers away, not independent enough to stand on its own. Without viable political structures, a country is thus often vulnerable to yet another strong man who can rule in the absence of independent organizations. He steps in to fill a vacuum due to the lack of mechanisms tying him to public consent. He can demand such consent after arrival and then continue to "ask" for it through periodic staged "elections." Partly because of these patronage and Potemkin village–like electoral structures, the kinds of political institutions upon which democracy must be constructed are lacking, such as independent judiciaries, civil societies independent from the old regimes, and electoral mechanisms designed to facilitate elections instead of steal them.[13]

Religion and Autocracy

Sometimes political elites construct their resistance to democracy on religious grounds. Saudi Arabia is particularly important in efforts to block further democratic transitions in the monarchical Arab world, fearing a sweeping away of such regimes if one falls to popular rule. The al-Saud family justifies its right to rule largely through its adherence to the "Wahhabi" understanding of Sunni Islam, which has fairly extensive quarrels with the practice of Shia Islam.[14] Thus, Saudi Arabia is trying to have Jordan and Morocco admitted to the GCC, joining the "king's club" of Gulf Arab countries, in an effort to emphasize the stability of Arab monarchies as a bulwark against potential Iranian influence in the area.[15] Saudi Arabia

is also working to head off Egyptian support for Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood since that organization professes to follow an understanding of Islamic law which differs from the dominant one in Saudi Arabia—a conception which would challenge the Saudi Arabian understanding that justifies absolute monarchy. Said one Saudi Arabian lawyer, "If another model of Shariah says that you have to resist, this will create a deep difficulty."[16] Most significantly, Saudi Arabia joined other select GCC countries in deploying security forces to quell antiregime demonstrations in neighboring Bahrain, sending a strong signal that the most powerful Gulf Arab country would not tolerate threats either to itself or to other Gulf kingdoms. In doing so, Saudi Arabia inserted itself as a defender of the Sunni-dominated Gulf countries against demonstrations mostly conducted (though not exclusively) by Bahraini Shia. The message reflected concern that the Shia populations, not only in Bahrain but also in the other Gulf Arab countries, would challenge Sunni domination and, in doing so, would facilitate Iranian Shia influence.

Other barriers to democratization include mechanisms for "rent distribution." "Rentier" states sell their raw material resources to foreign consumers, and the accrued rents go directly back to the state, which distributes the proceeds through an enlarged state capacity system to buy off the opposition rather than having to face it in electoral competition. These so-called rentier states do not levy personal income taxes on their populations, thus removing a key measure of political accountability.[17] This was the case in countries such as Venezuela and Russia, which wandered from a path to democracy as petroleum revenues strengthened the state. However, as Tilly notes, state capacity may either impede or facilitate democratization, particularly when it is lubricated by petroleum sales: "International sale of such resources as oil often promotes de-democratization."[18] Additionally, because rentier states depend on prices of raw material to sustain their rulers, sharp fluctuations in such prices can lead to popular discontent because the flow of rewards plunges during price downturns. Oil prices alone have gyrated dramatically since 1973, enriching on the upswing and stoking hopes of good fortune, yet plunging downward several years later and angering those who had dreamed of better economic futures.

Arab Military Politics

In most Arab states, the military has been and remains a powerful player, portraying itself as the backbone of independence, either constructing the state after leading the independence movement (e.g., Algeria) or ousting a postimperial lackey government, as did the armed forces in Egypt in 1951 and in Libya in 1969. Arab militaries often became Praetorian guards that deposed monarchs and sultans on a regular basis, replacing them with those of their liking.[19] Thus, soldiers emerged in the postindependence periods as a major part of state capacity, often participating in and controlling, to some extent, the distribution and redistribution of national resources. Their reward is often a significant part of the national budget: many Arab-world defense burdens—the percent of gross domestic product taken by defense—are among the highest in the world. Oman tops the list at over 11 percent; Saudi Arabia and Qatar spend 10 percent; Iraq is fourth in the world; Jordan, fifth; and Yemen, seventh.[20]

In some cases Arab militaries, often joined by state security services, fought to crush popular protests (e.g., Syria, Libya, and Yemen), and GCC troops joined to dampen Bahraini demonstrations, as noted above. Some soldiers appeared to truly believe their duty was to defend the regime. Others most likely feared they would sink along with the state leader and be executed or imprisoned for corruption or human-rights violations, along with a loss of military privilege. They could calculate that military largesse would not survive democracy, as it had not in other democratic transformations. As James Lebovic notes regarding Latin America, "The effect of democratization was to increase civilian relative to military spending shares in the budgets of countries within the region."[21]

When the military adopts the mantra of state defender, it may decide its ideal of a nation is harmed by the continuing rule of an unpopular autocrat, as it did in Tunisia and Egypt. But this does not mean that the army will move the next step to promotion of democracy. The Tunisian army returned to its bases after Ben Ali left, but the Egyptian military remained in power, ruling via a rump military council and engaging in activities that raised questions about its motives. Said one observer in Cairo, "I think they are incapable of understanding the extent to which the revolution wants to change things in the country. . . . To them, removing the president was enough."[22] The military began to censor publications critical of it and

threatened some journalists for crossing over what it seemed to believe were media redlines.[23] This is probably reflective of the Egyptian military's belief that Islamist activism represented one of the greatest threats to Egypt and that democratization would empower the very groups that the armed forces had campaigned against since the founding of the Egyptian Republic. Egypt's armed forces may be willing to negotiate a "pacted transition" to the next leader, stipulating certain demands in exchange for moving back to their bases. They apparently preserved some of their privilege when they kept the ministry of military production under military control and may have even negotiated with the Muslim Brotherhood to finally clear Cairo's streets of protestors. Noted one analyst, "There is evidence the Brotherhood struck some kind of a deal with the military early on. . . . It makes sense if you are the military—you want stability and people off the street. The Brotherhood is one address where you can go to get 100,000 people off the street."[24]

How Arab-World Democratization Might Start

Partly because of these obstacles to democracy, the test cases for democratization will be in the countries that have initially sent their autocrats packing—Tunisia and Egypt. Post-Tahrir Arab-world democratization began in Tunisia, which, though ruled authoritatively since its founding, still features a relatively liberal social order that reflects the values of founding president Habib Bourguiba, who emphasized a secular vision for his country that continued after his replacement by Ben Ali in 1988. Bourguiba also politically marginalized the Tunisian military, professionalizing it while restricting its political space.[25] Furthermore, he countered the elite power seen in other Arab countries through his sometimes troubled support of Tunisia's labor movement, the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail, or UGTT. After Ben Ali's exit from Tunisia, the country's temporary leadership rescheduled the July elections for September to give democracy more time to ferment and grow, though, as Larbi Sadiki told *Al-Jazeera*,

> And now, all of a sudden, it is as if there is too much democracy—unimaginable a few months ago. A once-starved fortress of political thought and deliberation besieged by Ben Ali now has mastered the art of deliberation in a variety of registers. Professional elite politics, endless political new media freelancing and cafe politics—where the bulk of protesters take

> breathers—tests the pulse of the national mood, caricatures the octogenarian leadership, and laughs at the expense of all parties and leaders.[26]

Tunisia finally held elections in October 2011, and the moderate Islamist party En-Nahda, headed by long-time Islamist ideologue Rachid al-Ghannoushi, whose party won almost 40 percent of the popular vote, competed against candidates from an astonishing 110 political parties.[27] The results gave En-Nahda 89 of the 218 parliamentary seats. Al-Ghannoushi promised that his Islamist vision would not impinge on Tunisia's moderate societal values, stating that the party would not mandate restrictions on alcohol, attire, or existing women's rights.[28] Yet Tunisia differs even from its North African neighbors and from the rest of the Arab world, as noted above. Few Arab countries have Tunisia's relatively progressive political culture or politically neutral military. Thus, Tunisia's electoral outcome may differ from elections in other Arab countries that lack Tunisia's political and social culture.

Some other Arab states may become at least partly free, joining Lebanon, Kuwait, and Morocco; these three countries will most likely remain in this status. Morocco held an election in late November 2011, and the Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party (PJD) won the largest number of parliamentary seats, with the payoff providing 107 of the 305 elected seats.[29] Egypt finally held an election in late November 2011, overcoming early efforts by a military committee that now manages political affairs in the post-Mubarak regime to delay suffrage. Jordan's King Abdullah II has promised more parliamentary oversight of the government (though not of the monarchy), allowing for parliamentary control of some of the budget and the appointment of ministers (and removal for cause).[30] Other Arab countries now in the throes of revolt, however, may witness only more bloodshed and turmoil as largely discredited regimes try to hang on to power, as in Yemen and Syria. Bahrain remains a monarchy with few reforms and no movement to democracy after Bahraini and GCC forces moved to protect the Crown. Additionally, Yemen without President Saleh remains a question mark. On the one hand, it is highly unlikely that even a furtive effort at democracy will bridge that country's deep divisions. On the other hand, as one writer notes, even under Saleh, Yemen has developed more liberal structures and openness than have most other Arab auto-

cracies, permitting open criticism of the regime and the president, and has held several elections deemed free and fair by outside observers.[31]

If It Arrives, Will Arab Democracy Last?

Finally, even if more Arab leaders join presidents Mubarak, Ben Ali, and Saleh in the old autocrats home, democracy takes time to grow. According to Jack Goldstone, "Even after a peaceful revolution, it generally takes half a decade for any type of stable regime to consolidate. If a civil war or a counterrevolution arises (as appears to be happening in Libya), the reconstruction of the state takes still longer."[32] In the few months since the regime exits in Egypt and Tunisia, frustration is beginning to build again, and if democracy requires public patience, that tolerance may not last long enough for even partial democracy to develop.

Democracy carries a high price because it demands compromise, delay, stalemate, and, frequently, indecision or compromised decisions at best. Over time, enthusiasm for democratic rule may wane, as it did in places like Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. After years of turbulent democratic governance, individuals preferring democracy to a strong leader fell from 51 to 29 percent in Russia, 79 to 42 percent in Lithuania, and 57 to 20 percent in Ukraine.[33] To be sure, not all populations in former autocratic countries felt betrayed by democracy, but the danger of disappointment is clear. Transitions to democracy often build popular hopes that can be easily disappointed should democracy not produce the expected results. After the Soviet Union's collapse, many Russians welcomed the establishment of an elected parliament and a presidential system, and new political parties quickly emerged to challenge the Communist Party. But constructing a market economy on the foundations of a Marxist-inspired economic system riddled with corruption and favoritism proved difficult, and as the economy foundered, discontent with democracy grew. Some Russians seemed to welcome the transition from partial democracy to autocracy under Vladimir Putin and his successor, Dmitri Medvedev. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez came to power in an election but has gradually pushed the country back to its authoritarian past. Even mass protests have not stemmed the slide away from democracy.

Sustainable democracy also requires the establishment and defense of autonomous political institutions that dispense justice independent of regime leadership, that referee political disputes in a manner widely accepted,

and that provide outlets for diverse political views without censorship. However, such institutional construction can take years and encounter stiff opposition from those who have benefited from the old order. Often the military is wary of limits on its authority, and religious groups may fear that strong democratic institutions may restrict religious expression or religious power. Religion, after all, derives its influence more from faith than by democratic choice. Because Islamic organizations in particular gain influence by having their religion designated the official state religion, as in most Arab countries, they may fear in particular a political loss to secular institutions. Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan supposedly said that "democracy is like a streetcar; you ride it somewhere and then you get off." The fear is that the more radical Islamist parties like al-Nour in Egypt will try to thwart future elections because of professed beliefs that all sovereignty belongs to God and not to people. But the al-Nour party leadership claims that it wants Sharia law implemented "slowly" and will respect the rights of women and Coptic Christians.[34] Such words might just indicate that the al-Nour party has learned to use words to mask its real intentions or that it learned the lessons of Tahrir Square (i.e., popular uprisings may spring up against any kind of tyranny, secular or religious).

Arab Transformations and Economic Progress

The transition forces' narrative in many Arab countries was the call for political change, but poor economic conditions underpinned much of the protestors' anger. High population growth, persistence of rentier state economies, doggedness of the state-managed economy, endemic corruption (the highest in the world, according to Transparency International), and a host of other factors combined to restrict economic progress.[35] The *Arab Human Development Report 2002* argued that

> most countries in the region formerly adopted, and some long adhered to, now discredited statist, inward looking development models. These models may have been appropriate in early post-independence years, but they now serve neither governments (which need rapid economic growth in order to achieve policy objectives, including human-development objectives with respect to, e.g., health care, education and provision of social safety nets) nor people (who seek more good jobs with decent wages and working conditions).[36]

In some Arab countries, guided economic development came from "Arab socialism," which empowered the state to manage economies though

the result was often a confusing welter of conflicting ideas drawn from Arab historical experience, Marxism, or "scientific socialism," all supported by sometimes tortuous logic. As Fauzi Najjar wrote in 1968, "Necessity in society is the same as inevitability in society. It is a historical inevitability, like the inevitability of the triumph of socialism in our country. . . . For society is governed by necessity . . . but necessity in society is, in the final analysis, economic necessity."[37] The result was often a large bureaucracy that operated much of the economy through state planning and desired not only to reduce unemployment but also to engage in import-substitution industrialization to reduce dependency on the industrial West.

In some cases, the regime supported existing economic elites, as did early independence leaders in Syria. Both rural landowners and urban merchants contending for influence desired independence from the French Mandate but feared that revolution or democracy would bring left-wing movements into power.[38] Jordanian economic leaders largely came from "East Banker" Bedouin families, whom the monarchy rewarded with industrial aid to allow them to catch and surpass the Palestinian merchant class in levels of industrialization.[39] In Morocco critical fingers point at the small group of elite business owners "who live on unearned income from official favors, such as transportation permits and quarry and fishing licenses."[40]

In other cases state socialism closed opportunities for private sector investments, and so, as the failures of socialism became apparent, some regimes initiated a privatization process. Egyptian president Anwar Sadat began *infitah* (openness) after the 1973 war, which, according to some critics, opened doors for a new business elite that would show its appreciation through regime support, particularly when privatization helped create monopoly power and political favoritism.[41] For example, Tarek Osman observes that the allocation of contracts for property, tourism, and development often went to business tycoons with close ties to the ruling regime.[42]

The persistence of the state in the economy is generally not conducive to economic progress; for example, in Morocco and Tunisia, the state lagged behind the industrialists and business associations in promoting and upgrading the apparel economic sector.[43] Robert Springborg and Clement Henry attribute this lag to "crony capitalists [being] provided either local oligopolies and monopolies that they exploit, leaving the more competitive and risky business of producing for export to those unable or unwilling to

strike deals with the political leadership."[44] Partly for such reasons, Arab countries were less industrialized in 2007 than they were in the 1970s, four decades earlier.[45] According to Paul Rivlin, "The balance of political forces that prevails in the beginning of the twenty-first century does not encourage economic development. The forces for economic change are weak, while those favoring the status quo are strong."[46] Thus, prospects for economic progress are limited.

If political transformation leads to at least the foundations for democracy, will economic change follow? The answer is probably a qualified no or, at least, not rapidly—and not at a pace that would satisfy most of the protestors who are demanding more jobs, more accessible and better education, better economic infrastructure, and the other economic factors that make up a healthy economy. Moreover, there are already indications that the Egyptian public believes economic conditions are worse after Mubarak's exit. According to a Gallup survey conducted between 25 March and 2 April 2010, 28 percent of Egyptians ranked the economy as "getting better" in March 2010; this dropped to 20 percent in March 2011, a month after Mubarak left.[47] Some may view economic chaos as the price for change, but others may hold that things were at least economically better under the old order.

One possible remedy for anemic Arab economic performance involves continuing the process of privatization of state firms, begun in the 1980s in some countries but never completed. However, such a move would probably produce more problems initially than it might solve. One strident complaint—high unemployment—fueled Arab discontent, but privatization is designed in part to reduce the bloated job levels in inefficient state enterprises. Thus, viable privatization might only swell the current Arab unemployment ranks. Second, privatization often benefits the oligarchs and their families; witness in particular the anger directed at the Mubarak family and their cohorts who benefited from the transfer of state enterprises. If such a pattern repeats after political transformation, supporters of the new political order might get the rewards the old oligarchic families received, thereby fueling a new round of political discontent.

Finally, street demonstrators persistently complained about deeply embedded corruption, yet efforts to root it out may worsen economic conditions. As one observer in Egypt stated, "The main sources of capital in this country have either been arrested, escaped or are too afraid to engage

in any business," and many construction projects funded with corrupt money have been stopped. Banks have ceased lending money as anticorruption investigations probe illegal activities of the Mubarak elite.[48]

Might Arab Transitions Change the Politics of Religion?

Islam is the prevailing religion in the Arab world, mixed with pockets of other faiths, and its role in Arab politics has varied. Before the arrival of European colonialism in the nineteenth century, Islam provided governance, if not democracy, in many parts of the Arab world. Timur Kuran explains that

> until the establishment of colonial regimes in the late 19th century, Arab Societies were ruled under Shariah law, which essentially precludes autonomous and self-governing private organizations. Thus, while Western Europe was making its tortuous transition from arbitrary rule by monarchs to democratic rule of law, the Middle East retained authoritarian political structures. Such a political environment prevented democratic institutions from taking root and ultimately facilitated the rise of modern Arab dictatorships.[49]

The dominant political movement in many colonial-ruled Arab countries was Arab nationalism, which brought a new class of autocrats to power in newly independent states, calling not for religious governance but political modernity.[50] These demands came from multiple sources: European contacts; the Arab renaissance, or Nahda, of Egypt's Muhammad Ali Pasha; the narratives of modernizing Islamist thinkers like Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abduh, and Jamal al-Afghani; and nationalist figures like Mustafa Kamil and Lutfi al-Sayyid, along with Christian Arabs from the Eastern Mediterranean.[51] Nevertheless, Islam and its legacies were always in the political and cultural background, and when Arab nationalism began to fail expectations, political Islam emerged. Consequently, some Arab regimes have suppressed political Islam together with its leaders, followers, and parties, either fearing it will compete successfully for their national narratives or believing it will lead to interfaith conflict and repression should it prevail in political spaces. Others faced a violent threat from radical Islamists, as occurred in Syria in the early 1980s when the Muslim Brotherhood literally declared war on the ruling Ba'ath regime. Algerian forces and violent Islamist movements clashed in the 1990s in a bloody civil war that claimed over 100,000 lives, initiated partly when the Algerian armed forces suppressed elections in 1992 that would probably have resulted in a majority

Islamist parliament. Other regimes banned or severely limited Islamist participation absent a real challenge to their regimes, so Tunisian presidents banned the al-Nahda party, and Jordan constrained considerably the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt restricted or banned outright the Muslim Brotherhood and either assassinated or executed some of its key leaders, like Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. Other polities have tried to embrace political Islam, authorizing their own spiritual leadership, as in Saudi Arabia, or capturing the voices of Islamic institutions, as have successive Egyptian regimes that have pushed the venerable Al-Azar University to speak in their support. Yet both the most popular and the most violent Islamist groups were at least kept at arm's length if not banned outright by autocratic regimes. Should such regimes depart and even limited forms of democracy emerge in the Arab world, will the results empower Islamist groups?

Considerable public support exists for Islam's playing a greater role in politics, as noted in a 2010 Pew poll. In a question asked only of Muslim citizens, fully 95 percent of Egyptians, 53 percent of Jordanians, and 72 percent of Lebanese said that it was "a good thing" that Islam played a large role in politics.[52] This of course raises the question, What kind of Islam? The common answer usually divides across "radical" versus "moderate" Islam, but such categories do more to confuse than to clarify. As Jillian Schwedler deftly points out, the context matters. Although most Muslim Brotherhood branches, some Salafi groups, and conservative clerics all explicitly reject violence, their goals range from limited reforms to a complete makeover of the government and economy—so are they radical or moderate? Other Islamists choose violence against the military but not against civilians, while even the most moderate Islamist faction might turn to violence if subjected to severe repression or total exclusion from political spheres.[53] In short, Islamists are less likely to adopt violence as a tactic if they are at least partly included in posttransformation dialogues and policies and allowed to participate in elections. At the same time, some Islamist groups that have experienced repression at the hands of autocratic governments may not trust the new order to include them, or if there is no new order but just continuing disorder, they may continue violent struggles. Thus, Islamist groups like the al-Houthi in Yemen, a branch of the minority Shia Zaydi sect, quite possibly may continue to use violence against a likely

Sunni-dominated political order in the post-Saleh era.[54] An increase in Islamist militancy is reported in some parts of Yemen after Saleh, particularly in less-governed parts of the country.[55] However, Hezbollah in Lebanon, widely considered a radical, violent Shia group, has lessened violence against other Lebanese (though clearly not against Israel) and contested successfully for Lebanese parliamentary seats. In June 2011, Hezbollah and its Christian and Druze allies expanded their parliamentary seats from 11 to 18, allowing them even more influence, albeit through the electoral process.

This last trend reflects a wider practice in the Arab world and beyond of Islamist groups contesting for influence under a democratic umbrella, raising concerns in some quarters that Islam and democracy are inherently incompatible. Bassam Tibi writes that "the Islamists propagate the formula *al-hall huwa al-Islam* ('Islam is the solution'). For them, this solution is the Islamic *shari'a* state. This state is based on the principle of *hakimiyyat Allah* (God's rule), which is clearly not in line with democracy."[56] Even though some extreme Islamists argue that sovereignty must be found in God and not in popular participation, Asef Bayat describes a more significant trend: "Since the late 1990s, against the backdrop of intensifying religious sentiment in the Muslim world, a nascent post-Islamist trend has begun to accommodate aspects of democratization, pluralism, women's rights, youth concerns, and social development with adherence to religion."[57] Offering support for this position is the *2011 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey*, which included questions about the kind of leader the respondents would like the next president of their country to look like. In five Arab countries, the overwhelming choice was Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who heads the modestly Islamic Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, or AKP), with 31 percent of the total, followed by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah with 9 percent.[58]

The other question addresses whether elements of what is described as "radical Islam" will moderate under Arab transformations. One answer maintains that it will have to if it wishes to survive public preferences. The call for an "Islamic state" has been a consistent demand of many more radical Islamist groups, yet the appeal of such a polity is small for most Muslims. David Cook writes that "Radical Muslims offered Afghanistan under the Taliban (1996–2001) as an example [of a Sharia state], and it was not persuasive to the vast community of Muslims."[59] Very few Muslim Arabs

would find either the strict application of Sharia law or membership in an Islamic caliphate desirable. Although Islamic law informs much of personal jurisprudence in the Arab world (facilitating such matters as divorce, alimony, and other issues), civil codes are prevalent in most of the region, and the complaint is not that Islamic law should replace civil structures but that such structures have become arms of the state.[60] The idea of a caliphate is more popular outside the Arab region, partly because it offers few solutions to immediate problems facing Arabs and because Arabs, at only 20 percent of the world's Muslim population, would be a distinct minority in an Islamic empire.

Apostasy, another aspect of Islam, has spawned debate within Islamist circles although the very term causes confusion because of the variety of understandings. The most radical jihadists may claim the right to declare certain Muslims apostates (*tahwid*) and then either call for their death (as did the late Ayatollah Khomeini in the Salman Rushdi case) or kill them directly, but, as Olivier Roy comments, even eminent Islamists have not called for the death of people accused of apostasy but their legal separation from the Muslim community.[61] Moreover, the "Amman Message," initiated by King Abdullah II of Jordan and adopted at an Islamic conference in Saudi Arabia in 2005 with the endorsement of over 500 Muslim scholars, specifically forbids the declaration of any Muslim as an apostate.[62] This message gives some religious sanction to the forbidding of this practice (known as *takfir*) by certain radical Islamists that had little support anyway among the wider Islamic community.[63] Everyday Arab Muslims risked death by Islamist fanatics who decided on the basis of some illegitimate fatwa that those not fighting violently in support of radical ideals were apostates; consequently, a democratic Arab political entity would not likely endorse death for individuals considered apostates.

Other potential fissures cross religious boundaries, including relations between Muslims and minority Christians. Authoritarian regimes generally managed potential tensions between faiths even though tense moments occurred. Egyptian Coptic Christians relied on tacit bargains struck between Coptic leaders and the Mubarak government to protect Egyptian Copts, estimated at around 10 percent of Egypt's population. However, in the political vacuum that resulted from Mubarak's ouster, religious pressure escalated, with several churches burned and dozens dead in the wake of rioting sparked by rumors of Christian abductions of women trying to convert to

Islam to circumvent Coptic divorce laws.[64] Egyptian Islamists, marginalized by decades of National Democratic Party rule, may now gain more power, raising fears among Egyptian Copts that the rights and protections negotiated under Mubarak may disappear or at least weaken.[65] It is also possible that the progressive groups of Muslim scholars and journalists that Raymond Baker called "the new Islamists" will exercise more influence with their beliefs that both Muslims and Christians have shared the Egyptian stage and that, ultimately, both must cooperate in solving Egyptian problems.[66] Further, Bruce Rutherford asserts that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, perhaps reflecting the views of younger members, has emphasized religious pluralism and described the Copts as "partners and brothers in our long struggle to build the nation."[67] Some Copts raised questions about the Islamist al-Nour Party, which won over 20 percent of the Egyptian election in November 2011, fearing that it might adopt anti-Christian policies. One al-Nour official tried to assuage such fears by stating that "the presence of some Christians, who respect their covenant with the Muslims, and who consider that the Muslims have the right to have their Shari'aa as the ruling one, and their identity as the prevalent one, is something that undoubtedly calls for being happy with them and for welcoming them, and not otherwise."[68]

Democracy will most likely result in a moderation of the more dramatic interpretations of Islam, but the religion will probably remain in the public sphere. The kind of secularism represented by the Kemalist Turkish image remains doubtful. Because the autocratic Arab state widely engaged in such practices, Arab Muslim publics are unlikely to accept Turkish state control of the mosques or state appointment of religious mufti to articulate the government's position on religious matters. Even in Turkey itself, public restrictions on Islamic expression are gradually withering under the rule of the modestly Islamist AKP Party, which continues to win majorities in the Turkish parliament.

Will Democracy Make Middle Eastern Wars Less Likely?

The traditional Kantian assumption that democracies are less likely to wage war against other democracies has been a part of American national security strategy since the Clinton administration, but recent scholarship challenges this principle.[69] Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder argue that

emerging democracies which fail to develop democratic institutions to check the potential power of a war-prone leader might actually be more likely to engage in war. They note that earlier waves of democracy generally involved middle-income countries but that subsequent democracy waves are more likely to involve low-income countries with lower citizen skills and immature institutions. Thus, "botched democratizations in such settings could give rise to grave threats to international peace and security."[70]

Wars have been selective events in the Arab world. Some Arab countries have been involved in numerous conflicts, including Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, which fought Israel in 1948, 1967, and 1973; Syria was also briefly involved in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Other Arab countries, though, have rarely if ever found themselves in a significant interstate war. Morocco and Algeria fought the brief "War of the Dunes" in 1963 but have not gone to war since. Although some Gulf Arab countries sent troops to the 1990–91 effort against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, their conflict was brief. Not one of these states was democratic in its time of war, but it is not obvious that a democratic political order would have made much difference. These were small engagements, and when national leaders calculated the cost of continuing the conflict, they demurred and the troops came home.

Regardless, Mansfield and Snyder's arguments are important because the building of viable political institutions may not accompany democratization should it occur in the Arab world. Moreover, given the powerful emotional pull that the Palestinian issue has on Arab publics, it is possible to imagine situations in which faltering economies under incomplete democratization may push some elected leaders to pick a fight with Israel to deflect criticism from their own domestic problems.

Interstate wars may become less likely; nevertheless, for reasons other than democratization, civil wars may grow in number and intensity. Although Yemen's President Saleh was increasingly unpopular in his own country, he at least controlled the forces of dissolution that loomed large since the country's unification in 1999 but did not explode into civil war. With Saleh's departure or demise, the anger in south Yemen about alleged northern favoritism could easily rekindle civil war, as could resentment in the areas dominated by Saleh's rival tribes. Syria, long under the political domination of the minority Alawite, could also see civil war as its majority

Sunni Muslim population fights to reclaim what it considers its right to dominate the state.

Arab Transformations and Relations with the United States

The United States entered the Arab transformation period in a disadvantaged position largely of its own making. The George W. Bush administration had few friends in the region outside the ruling circles in select Arab countries, and what little capital it enjoyed evaporated in the Iraq operation of 2003 that received almost universal Arab condemnation. One observer wrote that promotion of democracy under the second Bush administration was "part of a wider set of US interests and policies with which it is frequently in contradiction, and US credibility is so low in the Arab Middle East that the US message of democracy is often rejected together with the messenger."[71] The Obama administration fared somewhat better at its outset but squandered capital as well when it failed to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts and continued to support the same autocrats that a considerable majority of the Arab populace wanted to remove. It did not help that, even as the wave of protests gathered steam in Cairo, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared the Mubarak regime "stable." Moreover, the United States was highly inconsistent, with President Obama calling for Gadhafi's removal and sending US warplanes to support rebel efforts against him, while at the same time saying very little about harsh regime policies in Bahrain, a US security partner and host to US military bases. Critics of US Arab-world policy also noted that the United States was much more involved in transformations to democracy in places like Serbia, Ukraine, and Georgia, actively using funds of the US Agency for International Development to support antiregime broadcasts in these countries, while remaining silent in the Arab transformation period.[72]

Should democracy spread even marginally to the Arab world, the resulting governments will have to respond to the opinions of their publics. Further, if surveys are partial indicators of attitudes toward the United States, accountable Arab regimes will find their freedom to cooperate with the United States constrained. According to a Brookings Institution poll of 2008, 64 percent of respondents in the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia hold a "very unfavorable" attitude towards the United States, and a similar number believe that Iran

has a right to acquire nuclear weapons.[73] Most importantly, deep suspicions of American motives remain, as revealed by Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, a widely respected Egyptian journalist, in an interview with *Al-Jazeera Television*: "Although the Arab world has great expectations, it is still facing serious dangers simply because the multinational forces [code for United States and its allies] have interests in the region and are working to protect them through sectarian lines, economic and psychological pressure, or military action."[74] Thus, relative to American policy, the real concern is whether or not US Middle East interests are advanced through Arab democracy. In this case, "probably not." More importantly, however, we do not yet know what kind of democracy will occur—if any—or where or how stable it might be.

For the United States, this should be a period of watchful waiting and recognition that the old policies of supporting unelected Arab leaders in the name of regional stability may not produce the same results as it did for many decades. Granted, such support sometimes produced useful shared intelligence, cooperation in arresting suspected terrorists, combined military exercises, and basing rights. In reality, though, such support now may only weaken Arab absolute rulers. Thus, choices must be made with much more care about which Arab leader(s) to embrace. More importantly, the range of possible outcomes in countries like Egypt is too wide to craft definitive US policy because Egypt might become a semi or full democracy, the Muslim Brotherhood might win enough seats to block Egyptian cooperation with the United States, or the Egyptian army may decide to retain the reins of power, hoping to preserve privileged positions and keep democracy limited at best. Rash American choices without a long-term view of the changes in the Arab world will only produce policy disappointments.

Conclusions

The year 2011 started auspiciously in the Arab world as two long-standing autocratic regimes collapsed after a decades-long period of rule. Initially, hopes sprung up in the region, and beyond, that democracy might finally bloom—a genuine "Arab spring." Yet the belief that transition would be relatively quick and painless disappeared as some Arab absolute rulers learned from the experiences of their former colleagues and tightened their rule, banding together in some cases and raising substantially the price of

opposition. Revolts that emerged in Oman, Bahrain, and Jordan faded when a combination of violence from security forces and partial reform measures quelled them. In other cases, street protests continued, but dictators in Syria, Yemen, and Libya used their elite armed forces, sometimes supplemented with foreign mercenaries, to violently suppress popular movements. In the Libyan case, NATO and Qatari support probably made the difference in the end of the Gadhafi regime. Life returned to the status quo in the few Arab countries not wracked by violence. Disorder grew in Egypt and Yemen after their leaders left, partly because their departure created too large a political vacuum for anyone to fill except the armed forces or, in the case of Yemen, because rival factions fought over the remains. The United States and other outside countries were left wondering how to craft revisions to their Middle East policies with so much uncertainty left in the area.

At the same time, a force has been unleashed in the Arab world that will prove very difficult to curb completely. In countries where the regime response has been particularly violent and repressive, however, the movement may all but die, as happened in Iran after 2009. Certainly the hopes of people who expected a fairly rapid and wide Arab democratic transition have been dashed. Yet if even slow democratization comes to Tunisia and perhaps to Egypt, and if Jordan and Morocco continue to open a fairly closed political system, Arab hopes for political transformation will continue, and democracy may spread slowly. That may be a more favorable long-term outcome for advocates of Arab democracy because, as noted here, sometimes the too rapid diffusion of democratic governance may carry the seeds of its own destruction.

Notes

1. Christopher Alexander, *Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb* (London: Routledge, 2010), 64–65.

2. Freedom House issues an annual map of freedom, available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fiw/FIW2011_MENA_Map_1st%20draft.pdf. The organization considers Western Sahara a separate country ranked not free, while Morocco, which claims Western Sahara, is ranked partly free. Of the total population of the Middle East and North Africa, 78 percent live in countries rated not free compared to 35 percent of sub-Saharan Africa.

3. Iliya Harik notes that relatively undemocratic Kuwait and relatively democratic Turkey hold the same score (partly free) and that some sub-Saharan African nations with severe democratic challenges rank higher than do most Arab countries. He says, "The argument here is not that Arab countries have a stellar record of democratization, as indeed they do not. It is a matter of whether [Freedom House's] quantitative measurement of democratization across

the board is reliable at all." Harik, "Democracy, 'Arab Exceptionalism,' and Social Science," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 676.

4. James Bell, "Will Enthusiasm for Democracy Endure in Egypt and Elsewhere?," Pew Charitable Trust, 8 March 2011, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1918/enthusiasm-for-democracy-in-egypt-tunisia-fragile-eastern-europe-experience-shows.

5. Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler, "Attitudes in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 1 (January 2008): 97. Like all surveys, these results must be taken with appropriate caution. Not all who respond to the survey have a similar understanding of "democracy," and sometimes support for democracy is higher in nondemocratic countries than in their counterparts. Yu-han Chu and Min-hua Huang find that uncritical support for democracy is lower in Taiwan and South Korea, two successful Asian cases of democratic transformation, than it is in Vietnam and China, where one-party rule still prevails. See Chu and Huang, "Solving an Asian Puzzle," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 4 (October 2010): 114–22.

6. Thomas Carothers, "The 'Sequencing' Fallacy," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 1 (January 2007): 21.

7. Ian O. Lesser, "Policy toward Algeria after a Decade of Isolation," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 8–21. Daniel Brumberg chillingly predicted that "if the Algerian experiment immediately founders, or succeeds temporarily only to give rise to a new authoritarianism, the prospects for a new democratic bargain in the Arab world will be dealt a severe blow." Brumberg, "Islam, Reform, and Elections in Algeria," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 71.

8. Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 4 (October 2006): 6.

9. Charles Tilly, "Inequality, Democratization, and De-Democratization," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 1 (March 2003): 41. Michael Bernhard makes a similar argument to explain the failure of Weimar Germany to sustain democracy: "This marriage of iron and rye (agriculture in the east and industry in the west) perpetuated the social pattern of unequal development. It preserved the quasi-feudal character of German agriculture in the east, while Germany in the west increasingly evolved into a modern society. . . . Because of this alliance, Germany is seen as the classic European example of the antidemocratic potential of the bourgeoisie." Bernhard, "Democratization in Germany: A Reappraisal," *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 4 (July 2001): 382.

10. Some members of these elites did line up with the protestors against the established regime, but that was largely because they either thought they could maintain their power under democratic rule or they had fallen from favor in the presidential palace.

11. David S. Sorenson, *Global Security Watch: Lebanon* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 79–80; and Amaney A. Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 24.

12. For examples, see Toby Craig Jones, *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Christopher M. Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and Marc Valeri, *Oman: Politics and Society in the Qaboos State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

13. This is not to imply that Middle East civil societies are all or mostly tools of the state because many have been performing essential work that fills voids left by governmental neglect. Yet Arab autocrats have viewed most civil society groups as threats and have clamped down on those that rulers believe are conduits of internal opposition and/or outside influence. Laith Kubba correctly notes, however, that Arab civil society groups are effective agents to demonstrate the lack of performance by too many Arab governments. Kubba, "The Awakening of Civil Society," in *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 28–34.

14. See Natana J. DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 86–90.

15. Neil MacFarquhar, "Saudi Arabia Scrambles to Limit Region's Upheaval," *New York Times*, 27 May 2011.

16. Ibid.

17. Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?," *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (April 2001): 325–61. Rentier states derive wealth from raw material rents, which often prop up authoritarian regimes because proceeds from them are used to buy off potential opposition and because income flows mitigate the need for personal income taxes—one primary means of accountability between the citizenry and government. See Gwenn Okruhlik, "Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of Opposition: The Political Economy of Oil States," *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 3 (April 1999): 296–97; Donald L. Losman, "The Rentier State and National Oil Companies: An Economic and Political Perspective," *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 427–45; Steffen Hertog, "The Sociology of the Gulf Rentier Systems: Societies of Intermediaries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 2 (April 2010): 282–318; and Jay Ulfelder, "Natural Resource Wealth and the Survival of Autocracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 8 (August 2007): 995–1018.

18. Charles Tilly, *Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 200. Studies vary on exactly how much of a barrier rentier states pose for democracy, though. Michael Herb argues that although rent-seeking states do have an impact on democratization, other factors such as income distribution and the percent of the population that is Muslim also affect levels of democracy. Herb, "No Representation without Taxation: Rents, Development, and Democracy," *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 3 (April 2005): 297–316.

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48. David D. Kirkpatrick and Dina Salah Amer, "Egypt's Economy Slows to a Crawl; Revolt Is Tested," *New York Times*, 9 June 2011.

49. Timur Kuran, op-ed contributor, "The Weak Foundations of Arab Democracy," *New York Times*, 28 May 2011. Kuran argues elsewhere that Islamic law also retarded economic growth in the Middle East; see Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

Press, 2011). Kuran's explanation is interesting but incomplete because there are ample other reasons for the persistence of Middle East autocracy. These include patterns established during the period of European colonial rule that most Arab states experienced and, some would argue, the demands of a harsh desert environment that limit individual freedom and favor collective action.

50. Colonialism varied in intensity and effect across the Arab world. In some cases, it was deeply rooted, and hundreds of thousands of Arabs died in colonial resistance (e.g., Algeria, Lebanon, and Libya). In other situations, colonial powers drew boundaries but ruled largely through local leaders, as was the case in the Arabian Gulf, Iraq, and Jordan. In other instances, however, European colonialism had little national effect, as in Saudi Arabia.

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53. Jillian Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis," *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (April 2011): 151.

54. The al-Houthi movement, a subgroup of Zaydi Muslims founded by Badr al-Din ibn Amir al-Houthi, is located in northern Yemen. The Zaydi, who have lived in Yemen for many centuries, claimed persecution by the majority Sunni regimes over many years, even under the Saleh government, although Saleh himself is a Zaydi.

55. Sudarsan Raghavan, "Militants Linked to al-Qaeda Emboldened in Yemen," *Washington Post*, 12 June 2011; and "Clashes Continue between Al-Qa'ida Militants, Yemeni Military Forces in Zinjibar," *Ma'hrib Press* (Open Source Center), 12 June 2011.

56. Bassam Tibi, "Islamism and Democracy: On the Compatibility of Institutional Islamism and the Political Culture of Democracy," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (June 2009): 144.

57. Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 188–89.

58. Shibley Telhami, *2011 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey* (College Park: University of Maryland, October 2011), http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/events/2011/1121_arab_public_opinion/20111121_arab_public_opinion.pdf.

59. David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 163.

60. The Sharia courts were, above all else, *local* courts, which fell under the ax of state centralization, beginning with the Ottoman Empire. See Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 23, 62–65; and Wael B. Hallaq, *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially chap. 15. As Patricia Crone notes, although Western notions of government functions included internal order and external defense, medieval Muslim scholars identified the purpose of government as maintenance of moral order through law. Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 286–87. The modern state, for many Islamist critics, adopted the Western vision of the state while abandoning the classic Islamic version.

61. Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 81.

62. Amman Message website, accessed 14 December 2011, http://www.ammanmessage.com/.

63. Debate over the meaning and consequences of *takfir* is deeply lodged in Islamic tradition. The practice probably stems from early Kharijite tradition, but it was not widespread, and Muslims abhorred the ritualistic killing practices. See Crone, *God's Rule*, 296–97; and David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 139. A substantial part of Islamic thought emphasizes the need to remove "un-Islamic" leaders but not to kill them. See 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, "The Present Rulers and Islam: Are They Muslims or Not?," in *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, ed. Roxanne Leslie Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 352–53. Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb is credited for a revival of *takfir. S*ee Mohammed Aboob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 58. Qutb, however, placed more

emphasis on accusations of *jahiliyya*, the state of ignorance of Islam that he believes Islamic leaders fall into when they behave in un-Islamic ways. See John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), especially chap. 6.

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68. Waleed Abdul Rahman, "Al-Nour Party: Egypt's Salifists Go Mainstream," *Asharq Al-Alawsat*, 6 December 2011.

69. See, for example, Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); 3–57; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post–Cold War World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); James Lee Ray, *Democracy and International Conflict: An Evaluation of the Democratic Peace Proposition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995); Tobias Bachteler, "Explaining the Democratic Peace: The Evidence from Ancient Greece Reviewed," *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 3 (August 1997): 315–23; and Spencer Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

70. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 12.

71. Katerina Dalacoura, "US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: A Critique," *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (October 2005): 978.

72. Shadi Hamid, "The Struggle for Middle East Democracy," *Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, 23 May 2011, http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=20.

73. Brookings Institution, *2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll*, slides 32 and 62, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf.

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Wither the Jasmine

China's Two-Phase Operation for Cyber Control-in-Depth

Scott J. Henderson*

China's Jasmine Revolution, an online movement that emerged from the embers of revolutions sweeping the Middle East, experienced an enthusiastic birth but ultimately suffered a premature and rather mundane death. A passive shrug of the shoulders, and the embryonic movement withered and died on the vine. Some would argue that the Jasmine Revolution never took the breath of life—that it was merely a manifestation of the Chinese government's overreaction to the possibility of social unrest and the Western media's exuberance to cover it. The timing was wrong: China is not the Middle East, economic conditions were not conducive to a revolution, and it was not a serious movement. These and a host of other reasons explain the Jasmine Revolution's untimely demise. Whether the result of one or a combination of these factors, the downfall of the nascent movement illuminates the mechanisms behind Beijing's ability to provide comprehensive cyber control-in-depth through a two-phased system comprised of seven components: external monitoring, internal monitoring, blocking, attacks, intimidation, campaigning, and self-censorship.

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The Jasmine Revolution represents Beijing's latest, but not its first, attempt to control and smother a burgeoning online uprising in the crib. Government officials have developed and perfected their skills at online manipulation for 17 years, cutting their teeth on the Falun Gong, Free Tibet, Hong Kong pro-democracy, and anti-Japanese protest movements. It isn't necessary to study the specific details or chronology of each of these events. Rather, one need only understand the objective and current evolution of China's online crisis-control mechanisms. According to Chinese military writings, one attains control through reducing the destructive and negative effects of a crisis to their lowest level in order to terminate them in the shortest time and with minimum cost. Doing so involves the implementation of methods that will prevent and contain crises before they occur.[1] As we will see, the process is far from flawless, and the formulation needs constant adjustments and tweaks.

Historical precedents are plentiful. For example, in April 2005 Japan's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, along with revisions to historical textbooks that downplayed Japan's actions in World War II, spawned large anti-Japanese demonstrations which spread across China, attacking anything symbolic of Japan.[2] In late April, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security sought to bring the demonstrations to a halt. Utilizing Internet postings and text messages in combination with traditional print media, the ministry ordered protestors not to organize anti-Japanese demonstrations without police approval. Summing up the Communist Party's ability to control the populace, China's minister of state council information declared that "most citizens obey no-demonstration orders. For example, a Beijing newspaper's warning against illegal demonstrations deterred all but a few hundred protesters from gathering for a second weekend of demonstrations in the capital last April. You need to understand that Chinese citizens still respect the government. So if the government makes clear that this kind of demonstration is not OK, 90% of the people won't go."[3]

Taking the statement issued from the ministry at face value, along with an understanding of known Chinese methodologies employed in online campaigns, this article examines the most effective method of deterring the remaining 10 percent. It does so by selecting the Jasmine Revolution as a case study of procedures used by the Chinese government to curtail online dissidence, laying out events chronologically to give the reader a better indicator of reactions from that government.

The Jasmine Revolution: A Case Study

Phase One: Passive Defense (External Monitoring, Internal Monitoring, and Blocking)

From 17 December 2010 through 18 February 2011, Chinese monitors increased their active screening of events taking place in the Middle East, concerned that the latter would foment internal unrest at home. Outside observers are aware of several groups and methods associated with China's monitoring of domestic Internet communications (the State Council Information Office [SCIO], Cyber Police, and Great Firewall), but they know less about Beijing's external monitors.

External Monitoring. Two sources hint that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) plays a role in reporting external hot spots. First, in 2009, sources inside the PLA's University of Foreign Languages suggested that, due to critical deficiencies in mission training, the curriculum would need revamping, with emphasis placed on research involving open-source military intelligence.[4] Second, in May 2011 reports out of the Guangzhou Military Area Command explained that, in order to expand international strategic vision, departments under the headquarters of troop units were "specially-assigned personnel for the collection, organization and post production of the materials that come from major news media outlets, academic reports of some research institutes, lectures of military academies, and so on."[5] These types of PLA units likely would be responsible for the dissemination of information regarding potential hot spots worldwide.

Although we are not certain about the exact government agencies or organs that conduct external monitoring, the timeline from the Jasmine Revolution makes clear that these observations are taking place (fig. 1). On 17 December 2010, the self-immolation of a Tunisian graduate student set off violent protests inside Tunisia, marking the beginning of that country's Jasmine Revolution.[6] Officials inside the People's Republic of China (PRC), monitoring world events, quickly picked up the news and followed the situation as it unfolded. In less than a week, China began online blocking tactics to filter out references to the revolutions taking place in Tunisia and Egypt.[7]

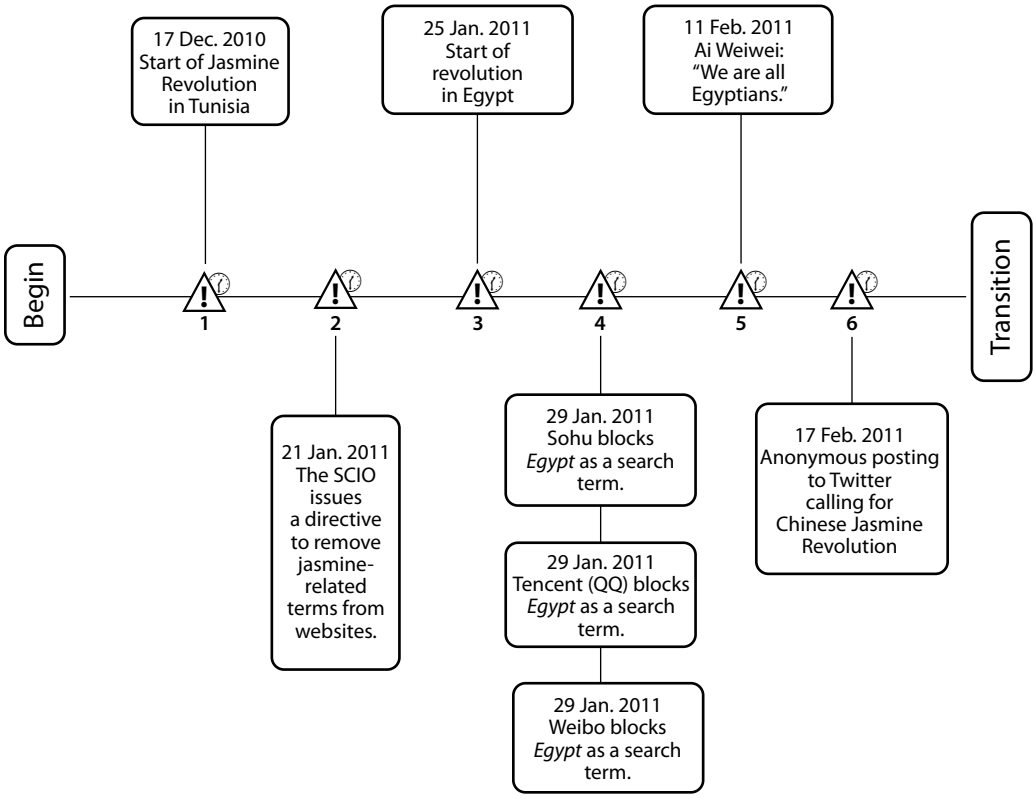

Figure 1. Monitoring and blocking timeline, 17 December 2010–17 February 2011

Blocking. On 21 January 2011, sensing a potential catalyst for domestic unrest, the Chinese SCIO issued a directive requesting all websites to "conduct strict searches of interactive spaces such as online forums, blogs, microblogs, instant message tools, and text message services. Immediately delete the phrase 'A nice bunch of jasmine' and related information."[8]

External Monitoring. As the Arab Spring continued to spread across the Middle East, actions inside the PRC showed signs of growing tension and unease with the rebellions. On 25 January 2011, the turmoil reached Egypt, causing Chinese officials to expand blocking operations.

Blocking. On 29 January 2011, three of China's most popular and highly trafficked social websites (Sohu, Tencent, and Weibo) blocked the Chinese word for *Egypt* as a search term.[9]

Internal Monitoring. On 11 February 2011, renowned Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei posted a message to Twitter: "Today we are all Egyptians. . . . It took merely 18 days for the collapse of this 30-year-old military regime—one which looked harmonious and stable. This thing . . . that has existed for 60 years may take several months."[10] On 3 April 2011, authorities arrested Ai Weiwei, ostensibly for committing financial crimes.

External Monitoring. On 17 February 2011, an anonymous message appeared on Twitter, calling for a Chinese revolution similar to the upheavals taking place in Egypt and Tunisia.[11] The simple posting stated that the Jasmine Revolution (named after the uprising in Tunisia) would begin on 20 February in the busy downtown areas of 13 Chinese cities. Two days later, Boxun.com, a US-based website, echoed the calls and provided specific locations for the first protests, including the McDonald's restaurant in the Wangfujing shopping district, perhaps one of the busiest commercial areas in Beijing.[12]

Phase Two: Active Defense (Attacks, Intimidation, Campaigning, and Self-Censorship)

The postings to Twitter and Boxun on 17 and 19 February, respectively, calling for real-world protests, mark the transition from the passive to active defense phase. The announcement of these physical demonstrations, visible to the general public, likely crossed a line of demarcation in the minds of Chinese officials. The active defense phase, which lasted from 19 February to at least 19 April 2011 (fig. 2), involved increased confrontation and consisted of four components: attacks, intimidation, campaigning, and self-censorship. It is important to understand that Chinese officials do not view these measures as offensive actions or operations but merely as reactions to events and efforts to restore stability. The transition to active defense does not curtail the passive measures of phase one, which continue throughout the active phase.

Attacks. On 19 February 2011, almost instantly after the call for Chinese demonstrations, patriotic or government hackers launched a distributed denial of service (DDOS) attack against Boxun.[13] Not a passive blocking operation carried out by the Great Firewall, the attack sought to limit the site's influence and shut it down (fig. 3).

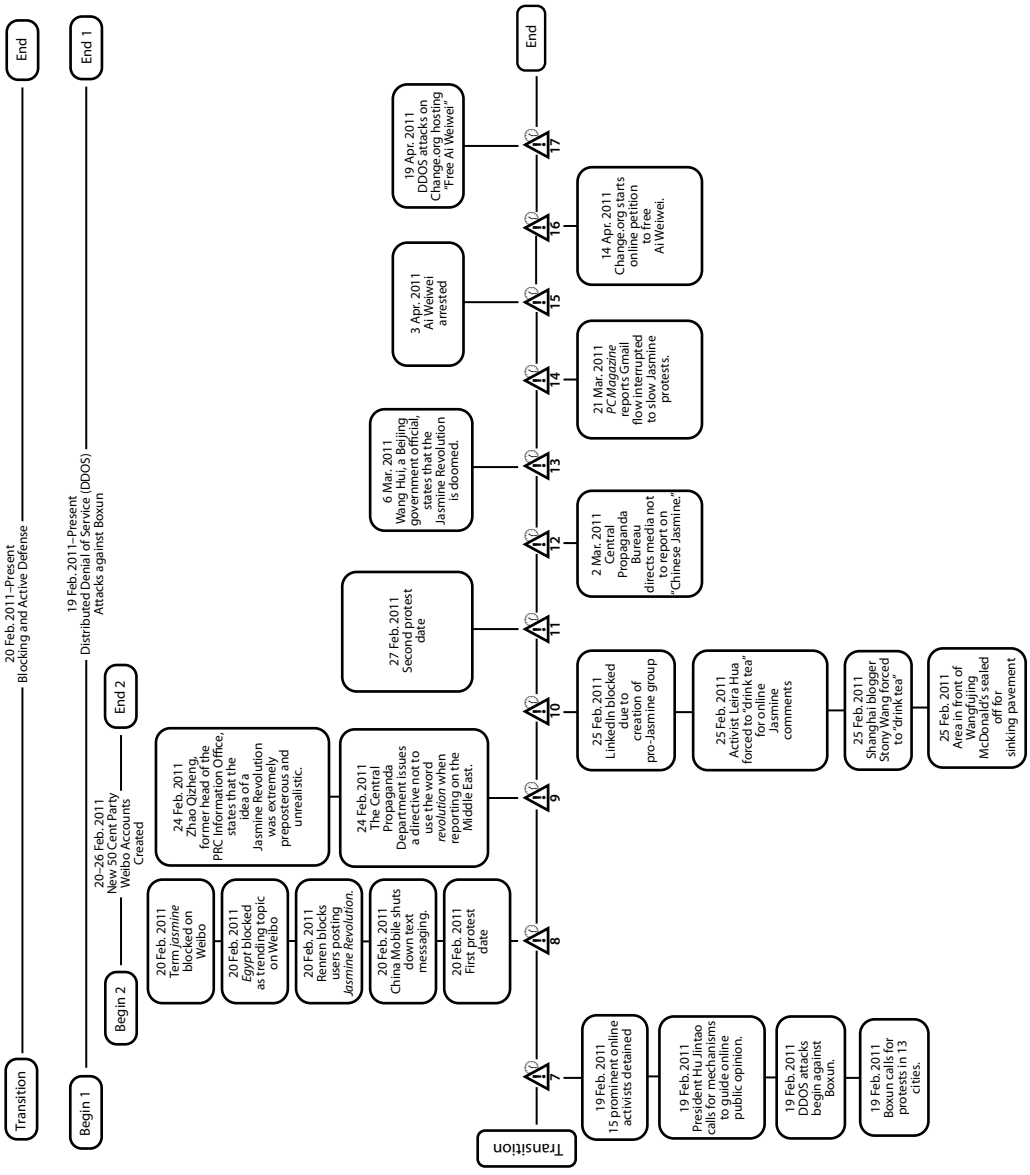

Figure 2. Blocking and active defense timeline, 19 February–present

Figure 3. Screen capture from Boxun.com announcing the attack and directing visitors to a temporary website.

Intimidation. On 19 February 2011, at least 15 prominent activists and lawyers were detained prior to the start of announced street protests.[14] Authorities invited some of them to "chat" or "drink tea" (online slang for forced interrogation), detaining and forcing additional activists to do the same over the next few months.[15] Stoney Wang, a blogger from Shanghai, offers his account of one of these interrogations:

> At first there were two relatively serious men with very rigid attitudes, who first asked me to confirm my Twitter ID, and then asked what trouble hotspots I'd been involved in lately, constantly twisting my words. I said that since they were unwilling to tell me what sensitive phrase they'd come across, I wasn't going to say either. There are a lot of these hotspots, and I'd been on Twitter for years, and posted tens of thousands of tweets: which of these was the issue now? Actually, I was laughing to myself that these three characters [茉莉花—Jasmine] had them so scared that they didn't dare say them in front of me.
>
> And then, twisting, twisting, twisting, winding me up tighter and tighter and tighter, until we reached stalemate . . . I followed what they were saying exactly: the country needs management, and the Internet also needs management in accordance with the law, so I personally had to be willing to accept a certain degree of scrutiny. Now that you've come and found me, I said, I'm certain that something I said must have been untrue; if you'll just point to it specifically, I'll take another look, and if I've made a mistake, I'll admit it, apologise, and delete it, and that'll be that, right?
>
> But throughout this winding, they just wouldn't say which was the offending phrase. In fact, their aim in coming here was quite clear: it was to intimidate me into keeping my mouth shut. From my point of view, though, this was a good opportunity for me to observe the police in the aftermath of 2/20.[16]

Campaigning. Beijing used the standard practice of having high-ranking officials make public statements to dissuade protesters. Leaders such as Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao, Zhao Qizheng, and others called for greater

control of online opinion, dismissed the Jasmine Revolution as preposterous and unrealistic, and pronounced it doomed.[17]

The most interesting evolution in the campaign strategy came in the form of the 50 Cent Party, which derived its name from the amount of Renminbi (Chinese currency) that online commentators receive to post messages supporting the PRC government. Party commentators distract online conversations about unpopular government policies or failures.[18] From 20 to 26 February, the 50 Cent Party created fake Weibo (the Chinese version of Twitter) accounts, sometimes using the names of popular activists to make positive statements about the government. The website *China Digital Times* translated a sampling of these messages left on Weibo, aimed at virtual deception:

> @kesen4 Li Jianlong: Recently there were some police officers who told me not to participate in the "Jasmine" thing. I replied that only idiots would participate. . . .
>
> @meimeib1101: People who are saying these things [encouraging a jasmine revolution] are totally evil. Their evil intentions are abundantly clear. Isn't it the case that they themselves are attempting to be the rulers of China and then use their power to enslave us?! Don't even think about it!!!. . . .
>
> @yiwannianaini yiwannianaini: Every time there's a political revolution, it's at the expense of the common people's happiness. Everyone's got to open their eyes. . . .
>
> @wangwei7509 wangwei: Those of you always going on about how bad the Communist Party is, why don't you try governing 1.5 billion people for a bit? Winning the approval of the vast majority of people as they have is an amazing achievement! Not everyone gets along in America, either: why do you think there's so much crime there?[19]

Self-Censorship. Documenting specific incidents of self-censorship with regard to the Jasmine Revolution is difficult; nevertheless, it is known that people who operate websites inside China commonly engage in this practice. During a normal day, website operators remain cautious about posting sensitive topics, going on heightened alert when directives from the SCIO and Propaganda Bureau begin circulating. Danwei.org conducted interviews with several Chinese bloggers, summing up the most powerful argument for self-censorship: "To run a website hosted in China legally, you need an Internet Content Provision License—an ICP license. And if you have one of those, you don't want to lose it because then you won't be able to run a website. So most websites will actually censor themselves. They

are often guessing about what will annoy the government, and they will take down content that they think may get them into trouble."[20]

Monitoring and Blocking. On 20 February 2011, the presence of large concentrations of police officers in the Wangfujing shopping district demonstrated that the authorities had kept abreast of the online calls for protests and were prepared to halt organized gatherings. Furthermore, on the same day, Weibo blocked the term *jasmine* and kept *Egypt* off the trending list; Renren (China's Facebook) blocked users posting the term *Jasmine Revolution*; and China Mobile shut down text messaging.[21] On 24 February, China's Central Propaganda Department issued the following directive:

> Media reports on the current changing situation in the Middle East must use standard copy sources. Reports cannot have the word "revolution" (*geming*). Regarding the reasons for the emergence of these mass protests, nothing can be reported regarding demands for democracy or increases in commodity prices. Reports also cannot draw connections between the political systems of Middle Eastern nations and the system in our country. In all media, when the names of the leaders of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and other countries are given, the names of Chinese leaders cannot appear next to them.[22]

By 25 February 2011, the area in front of the Wangfujing McDonald's was sealed off with signs saying that the area was under construction due to sinking pavement.[23] On the same day, China blocked LinkedIn, a professional networking website, after the establishment on the site of a pro–Jasmine Revolution group advocating that Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution spread to China.[24] On 2 March 2011, China's Central Propaganda Bureau issued a directive to media outlets not to report on "Chinese Jasmine."[25] On 21 March 2011, Google issued a statement that a government blockage designed to look like a problem with Gmail had disrupted its e-mail distribution in China. Reportedly, this blockage was tied to the Jasmine Revolution.[26]

Attacks. On 14 April 2011, responding to Ai Weiwei's arrest, the US-based website Change.org started an online petition calling for his release. Attracting high-profile sponsors from the art world such as the Guggenheim, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Tate Museum, the petition went viral and drew more than 124,000 signatures. On 19 April 2011, the website began experiencing DDOS attacks.[27]

Summary and Conclusion

Viewing China's cyberspace as perhaps the natural successor to a real-world gathering place for dissent, one could see it as the potential venue for a virtual Tiananmen. From Beijing's perspective, the digital landscape is inhabited with millions of young nationalists and activists who discuss explosive topics that could lead to revolutionary zeal. Large social-networking websites such as Tencent, Sohu, Weibo, and Renren are the public squares; cell phones and online forums serve as platforms that could launch these virtual citizens into flesh-and-blood mobs taking to the streets. For these reasons, over the last 17 years, PRC officials have incrementally increased and perfected the government's ability to implement cyber control across the full spectrum of Chinese cyberspace. These control mechanisms range from human to machine, cyber police to software. They appear to be sequenced in a two-phase operation made up of seven primary components.

Although this case study of the Jasmine Revolution covered a specific time period, phase one (passive defense) operations likely occur daily. External monitors would need to maintain a constant vigil for outside events that could cause internal unrest and quickly disseminate information to national-level decision makers with the authority to set countermeasures in motion. The SCIO would then issue guidance and directives to subordinate units, informing them of the words and phrases to restrict and the topics to declare off limits. Internal monitors would have to become twice as vigilant, observing the effects of external influences and keeping watch on internal dynamics. Filtering software could block and record the volume of censored words running across the web, but it probably would not add much context, intensity, or direction. Human analysts would have to evaluate the subjective nature of these types of postings.

It is difficult to ascertain the metric used by Chinese officials to move beyond passive defense; clearly, however, some sort of catalyst signals the need to escalate defensive measures into the active stage. In the case of the Jasmine Revolution, the call for demonstrations in 13 major cities throughout China represented the final act that brought about a stepped-up response. However, the postings alone probably did not tip the scale. Internal monitoring must have shown enough widespread reaction to the Jasmine Revolution to warrant action. The exact formula of online activity and increased calls for civic initiative that determines the tipping point remains unknown—but likely

exists. When a situation crosses the line, authorities add the four components of active defense (attacks, intimidation, campaigning, and self-censorship) to the passive measures of monitoring and blocking.

The decision to launch DDOS attacks against offending websites, perhaps to restrict their ability to reach a wider audience, appears contingent upon their location outside China. As with passive measures, the websites could have been blocked or search results skewed and filtered. Instead, government officials needed to isolate and punish the parties involved, perhaps judging them the most egregious key nodes in the publicity battle for world opinion. Further, time sensitivity seems to have played a part in the risk-management factors for launching the attacks. Although DDOS attacks can last for days or weeks, normally they prove ineffective beyond a certain length of time because website administrators can block attacks on Internet provider addresses or set up an alternate site. Paralyzing or delaying the harmful information would also be a high-priority objective of Chinese authorities.

Inviting prominent bloggers and activists to "drink tea" brings about the destruction of individual anonymity and the mental safety that protection affords. This type of pressure reveals the state's ability to track and monitor the activist even in cyberspace and highlights the fact that postings contrary to official positions have real-world consequences. Harassment and thinly veiled threats used in this manner can dampen and deter future involvement in actions against the state. As with other methods, intimidation is not designed to be completely effective; rather, it is used to prevent and contain.

Campaigning involves the blending of traditional and new-age media exploitation to send signals for halting certain types of behavior the state deems inappropriate or harmful. High-level government officials make comments through the traditional media that will bleed over into online social networks and forums to influence, guide, and direct the populace. Establishment of the 50 Cent Party creates the illusion that the government enjoys popularity where it may not exist. The weight or number of commentators supporting the government position can also make the current cause appear to lack widespread appeal. Engaging other people online enables members of the 50 Cent Party to take the conversation off-thread, distract from the original argument, and thus thwart reaching a consensus for action.

Self-censorship has been a Chinese cultural trait dating back hundreds of years, and the government has developed a vehicle to enhance this practice in the form of the Internet Content Provision License. Failure to properly censor one's own content or those of people commenting on one's website could result in suspending the license and, ultimately, shutting down the website. Threats such as denial of access will result, either consciously or subconsciously, in a moderating or watering down of ideas, removing a certain percentage of passion from the debate. The ultimate goal, once again, is to ensure that the underlying fuel does not spark and become a full-blown fire.

Though not a part of the efforts to defuse the Jasmine Revolution, preemptive reactions and defensive measures could become potential evolutions in this process. If the state decides to arrest a prominent dissident like Ai Weiwei in the future, why not attack a site such as Change.org before its petition gains popularity or shut down Boxun's ability to organize protests before it posts dates, times, and locations? It would be unrealistic to think that the Chinese government does not track and keep records of these types of websites. Could that effort also extend to physical intimidation outside China's sovereignty? The ability to organize pro–Chinese government operatives similar to the 50 Cent Party outside the nation could dissuade some organization from participating in anti-Chinese activities. Preemptive efforts need not necessarily be destructive or coercive in nature; they could take the form of influence or positioning, manifested by gaining financial interest in a potential adversary's online medium or control of an Internet service provider. As with domestic control, we are likely to see incremental changes as Beijing learns to manipulate its international message.

Notes

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2. Scott Henderson, *The Dark Visitor* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, January 2007), 150–52.
3. Ibid., 151.
4. Wu Jianbin and Meng Qiang, "The People's Liberation Army Foreign Language Institute Pushes Educational Transformation" (in Chinese), *PLA Daily*, 30 December 2009, http://www.allzg.com/n64355c40.aspx.
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6. "Tunisia Suicide Protester Mohammed Bouazizi Dies," BBC, 5 January 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12120228.
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Mobilizing in Different Political Opportunity Structures

The Cases of French and British Muslims

Imène Ajala, PhD*

Issues related to Islam in the European sphere have increasingly been at the forefront of public spaces and part of decision makers' agendas. According to the European Union (EU) Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, the EU includes at least 13 million Muslims, representing 5 percent of Europeans.[1] For Jocelyne Césari, "Muslim immigration to Europe and North America can be seen as the foundational moment for a new transcultural space—a space where individuals live and experience different cultural references and values that are now disconnected from national contexts and boundaries."[2] Such a transcultural space is characterized by the forceful emergence of a transnational religion (Islam) in a secularized public space (Europe).[3] This situation necessarily leads to tensions; that is, European Muslims experience difficult relations with their respective governments.[4] The context of the "war on terror" since the attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) and the security implied have drawn additional attention to Muslims and their claims-making in terms of economic, political, and religious rights in European countries. Muslims' integration is considered a challenge constructed as a confrontation between religious discourses and secular spaces. Of course, national differences have different effects in terms of the conceptualization of multiculturalism, and one can distinguish among them by different "philosophies of integration."[5]

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France and Great Britain traditionally stand for two theoretically opposed models of integration—assimilation and multiculturalism, respectively. Each model shapes characteristics of the country's political opportunity structure, and those same characteristics affect and constrain the political mobilisation (i.e., collective action) of minority groups. This comparative study puts forward the official conceptions of race and ethnic group politics in each country before addressing the emergence and development of Muslims' mobilisation in each country. The analysis traces the ways in which Muslims frame their mobilisation rhetoric and narratives in conformity with these conceptions. However, this study also goes beyond the static view, presenting the models of France and Great Britain as ideal types and offering evidence of the changes affecting both countries' philosophies of integration.

First the article provides an overview of both models in terms of their official philosophies, the supported conceptions of identities, and the implied perceptions of minorities. Doing so allows consideration of the definition, measurement, perceptions, and self-perceptions of Muslim communities in both countries. The analysis then places Muslims' mobilisation in a longitudinal perspective in order to highlight the metamorphosis of mobilisation and its conceptions throughout the years.

Defining Muslims

Immigration in France and Great Britain

From the assumption of some form of influence and implication in the public sphere to the extreme idea of a Muslim lobby in France, the place of Muslims in that country has been viewed from different perspectives. France has a long relationship with Islam, notably as a result of its colonial past.[6] For at least two centuries, it has been a country of immigration.[7] After World War II, labor market considerations ruled immigration, with labor migration essentially beginning in 1945. However, the need for a labor force did not mean that all immigrants were equally welcome. In fact, North African recruits were considered less desirable than their European counterparts.[8] The larger number of immigrants first included Algerians, followed by Moroccans in the 1970s, and finally Tunisians. The year 1974 constituted

a turning point. During the oil crisis, administrative bills issued by the secretary of state for immigrant workers on 5 and 19 July suspended immigration, which dropped significantly.[9] Immigrant workers who initially intended to go back to their home countries turned into permanent settlers, bringing along their families. The reunification of families soon represented the largest component of immigration, especially during the 1980s and until 1993, when policy changes brought about a decrease in the absolute levels and proportion.[10] France automatically granted citizenship to children born there, and this population became known as *Français issus de l'immigration* (French resulting from immigration). Attempts to encourage immigrants' return—first and foremost that of the Algerians—failed. Progressive awareness that these migrants were there to stay started to emerge only in the 1980s. Even in the 1990s, "most of those who were perceived as 'immigrants' in France were no longer immigrants."[11] They had become a permanent part of the population.

Indeed, the suspension of immigration in 1974 would initiate the move towards higher selectivity and tighter restrictions. Though this trend would be accepted as a consensus by the Right and the Left, the rise of the National Front would soon make immigration a politically charged issue: "Thus, as the proportion of foreigners in the country has diminished, the salience of political conflict over foreigners has increased."[12] Talks about selective immigration started in 2006. In this respect, the Loi Hortefeux, legislation adopted in 2007 to tighten conditions for family reunification, represents a reorientation of French immigration. The pressure to expel undocumented immigrants has increased, and debates around immigration remain tense, as reflected by the controversial creation of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and United Development in 2007 and the discussion about national identity that took place between November 2009 and January 2010, stirring considerable disagreement.

Martin Schain observes that, unlike France and the United States, Britain is not a traditional country of immigration, having been a country of net emigration until well after World War II.[13] In France, immigrants came mostly from other European countries (especially from southern Europe) until the 1960s, but the majority of immigrants to Britain came from its former colonies.[14] What changed since then is that the proportion of immigrants from the "New Commonwealth" (essentially India and

Pakistan) has increased, in contrast to that from Ireland and the "Old Commonwealth" (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand).[15] Until the first Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, which introduced the first restrictions, citizens of British colonies and of the Commonwealth could enter freely into the United Kingdom (UK). However Britain already had a policy in place for the restriction of "nonwhite" people coming from the New Commonwealth, even long before World War II. The relative open-door policy did not necessarily apply equally to all members of the Commonwealth.[16] Immigrants from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan arrived to work in industrial cities, especially in textile towns.[17] As in France, Britain considered some immigrants less desirable than others, deeming their capacity to integrate weaker.[18] Though the heritage of the empire entailed an expansive and multicultural conception of citizenship, the accelerating flow of immigrants from the New Commonwealth (which has increased by about 50 percent since 1981) and widespread anti-immigrant sentiment forced authorities to redefine and narrow the rules for citizenship. The immigration Act of 1971, for example, reinforced restrictions. Thus, reunified families remain the largest category of immigrants.[19] Moreover, in the 1990s significant Muslim refugee flows from Bosnia, Kosovo, and countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia took place.[20]

A Large, Diverse, and Concentrated Community in Both Countries

France has the largest Muslim population in Europe. Determining the precise number of Muslims in that country is not an easy task since French law forbids ethnic statistics and political considerations can lead to overestimations. Counting Muslims does not necessarily imply counting practising Muslims; in fact, the term primarily refers to people with a Muslim background and origins, as noted by Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaïsse. They refer to Muslims as "those individuals who, by dint of their national origin or ancestry, are of Muslim culture or sociological background. The population of course includes many secular-minded citizens who would object to being primarily classified as Muslims. In that respect, [their] book's main theme is itself a concession to viewing integration problems from a religious perspective."[21] Although Laurence and Vaïsse recognize that their study "admittedly succumbs to the convenience of shorthand and so emulated the recent trend among policymakers and community activists," it is difficult to

proceed differently, as in all ethnic studies.[22] This reflects the necessity of using fixed categories for the sake of research.[23] Therefore, the number of Muslims in France will differ, depending upon the criteria used for the estimates. The usual figure is 5 million when talking about Muslims in the wider sense but 220,000 for practising Muslims, understood as those who regularly attend the mosque.[24] Distinctions made on the basis of ethnicity lead to the following results: 69 percent Arabs; 30 percent of Turkish, Berber, African, or Asian origin; and 1 percent French or European converts.[25] When it comes to national origins, Bernard Godard and Sylvie Taussig's estimates are close to Laurence and Vaïsse's: 1.5 million Algerians, 1 million Moroccans, more than 400,000 Tunisians, nearly 340,000 sub-Saharan Africans, and 313,000 Turks.[26] Counting Muslims is thus a challenge in France but not in Great Britain, where official ethnic and religious statistics are available.

The Office for National Statistics' 2001 census was the first to include questions about religion, establishing a Muslim population of 1.6 million (2.7 percent of the UK's population), compared to 71.6 percent Christians and 15.5 percent with no religion.[27] Muslims constitute the second largest religious group after Christians in the UK.[28] The Muslim population is mainly concentrated in England and Wales (hence the focus of this article on Muslims in Great Britain).[29] The Muslim population has experienced rapid growth, from 21,000 in 1951 to 600,000 in 1981 and 1.6 million in 2001.[30] According to the Office for National Statistics, 2.4 million Muslims live in Britain as of January 2009, and the population is growing faster than any other.[31] Sixty-eight percent of that population is of South Asian origin.[32] People with a Pakistani background constitute the majority (750,000 or 43 percent), followed by Bangladeshi (200,0000 or 17 percent), and Indians (150,000 or 8 percent).[33] Eight hundred thousand Muslims are British citizens.[34] In addition to South Asians, there are also Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and African communities.[35] The number of converts is estimated at 10,000.[36] According to Ceri Peach, "the characteristics of the British Muslim population strongly reflect those of the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian Muslim population living in Britain, but with a significant White, Mixed, African, Cypriot, North African, and Middle Eastern minority."[37]

The Muslim population is younger than the French general population: people 15 to 34 years old represent 32 percent of the French general

population and 63 percent of French Muslims.[38] Those 50 to 65 years of age and above represent 42 percent of the French general population and 13 percent of French Muslims.[39] Similarly, British Muslims are younger than all other religious groups in England and Wales.[40] Ninety percent of Muslims are less than 50 years old, and the national average age is 28, compared to the general national average of 41.[41] Thirty-four percent of Muslims are 15 years of age or younger, compared to a national average of 20 percent.[42]

Immigrant populations are concentrated mostly in big cities such as Paris, Marseille, Lyon, and their outlying suburbs. Sixty percent of all immigrants in France live in Paris and its surroundings (Ile-de-France region). Thirty-five to 40 percent of all French Muslims live in the Ile-de-France region, 15 to 20 percent around Marseille and Nice (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region), 15 percent in Lyon and Grenoble, and 5 to 10 percent around Lille.[43] Immigration flows have determined settlement patterns in industrial and urban areas.[44] These include, for example, the south of Alsace; the northern departments; areas such as Val-d'Oise, Seine-Saint-Denis, and Val-de-Marne; and areas around Paris such as Somme, Seine-Maritime, and Eure-et-Loire.[45] One also finds many Muslims on the Mediterranean shores, especially self-declared Muslims in Hérault, Gard, and Bouches-du-Rhône.[46] Geographically, Islam in France highlights a line going through Le Havre-Valence-Perpignan—the exact line situating strongholds of the National Front vote.[47]

Again, as in France, early phases of settlement strongly determined geographical distribution of immigrants in Britain; seeking jobs, they settled primarily in industrial and urban areas.[48] Eighty percent of Muslims live in the five major conurbations of Great Britain: Greater London, West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, and East Midlands.[49] They represent 8.5 percent of London's population, and a quarter of London Muslims live in Tower Hamlets and Newham.[50] Muslims are also present in industrial areas: the industrial Midlands, the northern mill towns, and the west coast of Scotland.[51] Though Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims show high rates of segregation, this does not mean that Muslims live in religiously exclusive wards.[52]

In sum, Muslim communities share common patterns with regard to demographics and settlement patterns in both countries. Such similarities

have roots in the colonial past of France and Britain, but, as we shall see, the environments in which these communities evolve are antagonistic.

Antagonistic Political Opportunity Structures

The Question of Identification and Self-Definition or the Articulation of Citizenship and Religion

French citizenship is conceived of as a universal identity.[53] It is "a philosophical concept expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789, mainly inspired by universalistic ideals of freedom, legal equality and property, while nationality has a legal definition in the Civil Code."[54] Politicization of citizenship started in the 1980s. The tradition of *jus soli* has existed in France since the 1789 revolution, but a movement emerged in the 1980s to consider citizenship more of an active choice than something automatically granted to anyone who chooses to live in France. Legislation introduced in 1993 (Loi Méhaignerie) specified that people between 16 and 21 years of age should request citizenship. After the Loi Guigou in 1998, one could still claim citizenship when he or she reached 16; if not, it became automatic at age 18. About 3 million Muslims in France are French citizens.[55]

Britain likely has the most liberal citizenship regime in Europe.[56] Citizens of the Commonwealth, the dependent territories, and the Irish Republic can vote and run for office.[57] Most British Muslims are citizens, and 46 percent are British-born.[58] For a long time, British citizenship has been shaped by the status of the British empire and the resulting expansive definition of the concept until after World War II.[59] In 1948 the British Nationality Act gave citizens of Commonwealth countries the right to freely enter, work, and settle with their families in the UK as permanent residents.[60] Since then, different, more restrictive legislative acts have redefined citizenship.[61] The British Nationality Act of 1981 directly addressed the matter. Only citizens of the UK have the right to enter, and automatic citizenship is restricted to children born in the UK of a British mother or father or of non-British parents in the UK.[62] The act represented "the culmination of a process of withdrawal of citizenship rights, which progressively restricted citizenship to those born in UK and their direct descen-

dants."[63] The meaning of citizenship has also changed: older generations are more "denizens" in the sense that citizenship is narrowly linked to their residence in Britain, whereas for new generations, citizenship means access to British identity.[64] The unity of modern Britain has never been "one and indivisible," as in France.[65] The devolutions of some powers to regional assemblies of Wales and Scotland in 1997 have reinforced decentralization; a high degree of cultural pluralism and therefore a lack of a "common public culture" exist.[66] Schain notes that "most self-identify as English, Scottish, Welch or Irish, rather than British" and that Britishness or Englishness — understood by Yasmin Hussain and Paul Bagguley as the sharing of "some substantive beliefs" and the requirement of "a common public culture"—is not subject to consensus.[67] Consequently, the multicultural character of British society brought by immigration is seen as an extension of diversity within the UK.[68]

As for the emergence and awareness of a community identity—more precisely, a specifically Muslim identity—evidence points in several specific directions. On the basis of polls and previous studies, Laurence and Vaïsse point to the emergence of a strong Muslim identity.[69] In fact, Muslim identity even trumps French identity.[70] Religious identity as such, however, is not necessarily more pronounced; rather, it refers to cultural and religious traditions.[71] Religious self-identification and a sense of religious collective identity fed by integration issues have grown, as has the visibility of Islam on the international scene. Sixty-six percent of the French with North African origins declare themselves Muslims, 8 percent are Catholic, and 20 percent have no religion.[72] However, only 36 percent of people with Muslim background (*personnes de culture musulmane*) declare themselves as practising, and only 15 percent go regularly to the mosque. Religious practise also declines with time spent in France.[73] The five daily prayers and attendance at the mosque are the usual criteria that distinguish practising from non-practising believers.[74] As for cultural behaviour, fasting (ramadhan) and the nonconsumption of alcohol are the most shared characteristics.[75] The wearing of the veil, despite its disproportionate coverage in the media, pertains to a minority of practising believers.[76] Integration cannot be separated from the issue of Islam, independently of whether the minorities in question define themselves first and foremost as Muslims and independently of their practise.[77] In this context, it seems difficult to dissociate the religious

variable from the ethnic Arab variable as revealed by the commonly used expression *arabo-musulman*, even if one can question the legitimacy of assimilating all the French of African origin with Muslims. Deprivation partially explains this re-Islamization process, which can be understood as "the process whereby French youth of African, Turkish, or Middle Eastern origin turn to Islam in their search for identity—and often, but not always, to a form of abstract and globalised Islam rather than the 'family Islam' of their parents."[78] However, even if French Muslims, like their European counterparts, tend to identify more strongly with their faith than does the general population, this does not mean that they do not also identify strongly with their host country—particularly true in France where 42 percent of French Muslims see themselves as French citizens first.[79] Forty-six percent of French Muslims consider themselves Muslims first, whereas this proportion reaches 81 percent for British Muslims.[80]

Religion is also very significant to British Muslims, for whom Muslim identity is more important than British identity.[81] During the campaign for inclusion of the religious question in the 2001 census, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) repeatedly emphasized that "British Muslims identify themselves on the basis of faith not ethnicity."[82] A range of surveys confirms this tendency.[83] In 2006 Islamic identity was the strongest among British Muslims in Europe, 81 percent of them identifying themselves as Muslims first rather than British. The figure for French Muslims is 46 percent, 69 percent for Spanish Muslims, and 66 percent for German Muslims.[84]

Contrary to French politics, which regards religion as a private matter, public affairs in Britain consider it a participating force. Former prime minister Tony Blair remarked that "religious faith has much to contribute to the public sphere; is still a thriving part of what makes a cohesive community; is a crucial motivator of millions of citizens around the world; and is an essential if non-governmental way of helping to make society work. To lose that contribution would not just be a pity; it would be a huge backward step."[85] The question of identification is crucial regarding both divided loyalties and the articulation of religion and citizenship as complementary or, on the contrary, competing concepts.[86] Transnational and local processes redefine identity, especially in younger generations.[87] Indeed, divisions among British Muslims do not occur only along ethnic, national, or ideological divisions; generational gaps also strongly characterize the British Muslim

community. The re-Islamization of youth has no link to the parents' homeland but is defined by adherence to transnational Islam and the emergence of radical Islamic activism—a matter of great concern to British Muslims.[88] Conceptions of a purified Islam in the Wahhabist tradition, brought in by Middle Eastern religious teachers in the 1990s, filled a void created when young British Muslims could not identify with their parents' (primo-migrants) "cultural Islam."[89] This phenomenon does not necessarily suggest a rejection of British identity because there is an accommodation of the "universalism of citizenship claims with particularism of their ethnic identities"; in other words, no conflict exists between transnational Muslim identity and British citizenship.[90] Identity is complex, plural, and composed of different layers—a fact especially well perceived in younger generations who not only consider themselves British citizens but also "members of religious, racial, ethnic and linguistic groups."[91] The diversity of Muslim organisations also entails the plurality of Muslim identity conceptions since "representations (that is, characterizations) of community identity are invariably bound up with claims to represent (speak for) a community."[92] The political aspects of these organizations shape their definition of identity.[93]

Two Antagonistic Philosophies: Assimilation versus Multiculturalism

France is the strongest representative of the assimilation model, usually perceived as very rigid and known to reject any recognition of groups on ethnic, cultural, or religious bases.[94] Policies designed for economic and political integration, for example, will target geographical areas but never directly address ethnic communities. More importantly, this rejection implies a form of renunciation, in the French imagined community, of the republican myth of integration to the nation and to the general interest.

This Jacobin obsession for national unity and "national cohesion" hinders any consideration of ethnicity in the social sciences.[95] Such a pattern is all the more striking in the French perception of the United States, for example, where the recognition of immigrants is tied to ethnic politics and the consequent public collective identities. This also results in ethnic lobbying, whereas in France republican individualism entails the assimilation of individuals and the private, not public, expression of collective identities.[96] As summed up by Pierre Birnbaum, according to the French perspective, the ethnicity concept refers to ghettos and to "a fragmented nation

without unifying identity."[97] The French have a word for this, *communautarisme*, which means a parallel identity defined by the belonging of a group at the infra- or supranational level in opposition to national identity and which can bring about a fragmentation of the public space.[98] Any recognition of the de facto multiculturalism of French society can also lead to accusations of fomenting fragmentation of the nation.[99] These paradigms have concrete effects in that the collection of ethnic statistics, defined as "data of a personal nature showing, directly or indirectly, racial or ethnic origins," is forbidden by French law, mentioned above.[100]

Despite the official discourse, a process of ethnicization of some debates in relation to "the second generation" has occurred.[101] France is a de facto multicultural country, and public authorities have become increasingly aware of this characteristic of French society.[102] In fact, according to Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, "multiculturalism has acquired some legitimacy under the pressure of immigration, of Europe and of globalisation, but also from the desire to assert the weight of local cultures in the patrimony of national culture."[103] The EU has already contested some of the principles of republican individualism through the institution of European citizenship and antidiscriminatory directives.[104] It played an important role in change, especially via directives in 2001 and 2002 that banned discrimination in employment and housing.[105]

The debate over ethnic statistics and the ensuing official codification of identities in ethnic categories by the state reflects different approaches to social realities in France. In 2006 the Centre of Analytical Strategies (a public institution) organised a colloquium on ethnic statistics, and Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy opened the debate by stating his favourable position regarding affirmative action (*discrimination positive*) and his support for ethnic statistics, contrary to the position of President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. It is interesting to note that positions on this issue are not divided along partisan lines. The community of statisticians is strongly divided with regard to the introduction of ethnic statistics as well.[106] The main problem concerns finding a way to treat ethnicity objectively.[107] The issue touches not only upon measuring issues but also upon the final use of the data.[108]

Thus, we do not necessarily dispose of estimates, but the absence of official, state-sponsored statistics does say a a great deal about the institu-

tional context in terms of political opportunity and the expression of private interests. The first general data including parents' place of birth became available in 1999, with the release of the survey "Etude de l'Histoire Familiale" (Studies on family history).

Since then, surveys have included more questions related to parents' place of birth. Only the collecting of data on the actual nationality and place of birth of an individual and of his or her parents was authorised. As a result, evidently no "transfer" of this Anglo-Saxon concept could occur, especially if it entailed using a narrow conception of ethnicity as dictated by the republican myth of equality (i.e., reduced to the claims making of a specific identity in the public space).[109] In fact, a more appropriate definition of ethnicity would address all groups that are a "minority in respect to the national context."[110] Such a definition would serve as a reminder that ethnicity is a wide concept that can apply to all countries.

Republican blindness to the recognition of ethnic minorities weighs heavily on state policies connected to religious and ethnic communities and explains the growing debate regarding the possibility of ethnic statistics. The emphasis on discrimination and employment issues is thus symptomatic of a move towards a focus on ethnic integration typical of multiculturalism, but a multiculturalism that seeks to avoid dispersion.[111] The consensus about the need for equal institutional religious representation and for frameworks dealing with racism and discrimination issues has slowly emerged. The picture, as it "evolves," is then more nuanced than the typical "color-blind" republic image.[112] Still, Wihtol de Wenden concludes that "the difficulty that collective identities have in defining themselves in the face of republican values shows that French political space is poorly integrated and scarcely permits the emergence of communitarian groups. Multiculturalism has a long way to go in order to be more explicit and acquire full legitimacy."[113] Britain has chosen multiculturalism—a choice more and more contested these last years, especially since the riots in several cities in 2001 and the terrorist attacks in London during 2005.[114] Multiculturalism emerged at a time when "Britishness" itself had to be redefined after the end of the empire.[115] British authorities favoured a race relations approach to the problem of integration that emerged in the 1960s, and as a consequence, the concept of race has been used since then to talk about the New Commonwealth immigrants.[116] The Commission for Racial Equality was created in

1965, and the first Race Relations Act of the same year constituted a first basis for the institutionalization of integration policies and of a policy framework supporting pluralism.[117] The mandate of the Commission on Racial Equality, for example, is limited to racial, not religious, discrimination.[118] The 1991 census was the first to include questions about ethnic groups' membership; therefore, Muslims are seen through the prism of ethnicity.[119] Because the race relations legislation provides protection for Sikhs and Jews (religious groups), Muslim organizations have exerted pressure to frame issues in terms of religion, especially those concerning discrimination. Those organizations specifically demand that religion be taken into account as a category.[120] The 2001 census provided data on the basis of religion for the first time. In the 2000s, one might argue that religion has replaced race and ethnicity as the cutting-edge interest in minority populations.[121] Muslim identity politics have shaped and have been shaped by the creation of a race-relations and then of a faith-relations industry.[122]

Multiculturalism has come under question more frequently, and the emphasis now resides on civic integration, shared values, and collective identity.[123] The Cantle report, which followed riots in Bradford, Oldham, and Burnley in the summer of 2001, reflects this new orientation. After observing the segregation characterizing the places where riots had taken place, it recommended a greater sense of citizenship.[124] A white paper published by the Home Office in 2002, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*, also reinforced this idea by tying integration to increased civic integration.[125]

Social unrest emerged with riots in the Notting Hill area of London and in Nottingham in 1958.[126] Public authorities have changed the way they framed these riots. In the 1980s, they were considered a structural condition linked to discrimination, but in the 1990s, tensions with the police force, socioeconomic indicators, cultural misunderstandings, and religious differences constituted the dominant framework for understanding these events.[127]

The violent Bradford riots of 2001, provoked by the announcement of a march of the British National Party, had polarized the debate over Muslims' integration in Britain.[128] Those riots became a symbol of the limits of multiculturalism, and those local events were wrongly apprehended through national and global perspectives, systematically assigning to rioters the

status of spokespersons for their community.[129] Official reports about the Bradford riots tended to avoid attempts to explain the events, emphasizing instead the broader issues of segregation, social cohesion, and proposals to instil a liberal conception of citizenship into the minds of South Asians.[130] The reassertion of national belonging over and above ethnic identity has remained a central theme in these reports.

Academic accounts regarding the riots highlight several factors. Some of them place most weight on deprivation, segregation, and the demands of "new generation" South Asians, yet others concentrate on long-standing grievances against the police and local manifestations of racism.[131]

The intensifying political focus on Islam may also be responsible for the change in political discourse in Britain from multiculturalism to social cohesion.[132] In this regard, one can identify a growing public discussion regarding multiculturalism.[133] The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and, above all, the attacks on London in July 2005 constituted a pivotal moment, amplifying concerns and leading to questions about multiculturalism and the integration of Muslims perceived to be on the margins of the national community.[134] Antiterrorism legislation has added a climate of fear and suspicion to issues of deprivation.[135] Muslim organizations regard the portrayal of Muslims in the media as a continuing source of concern, especially the coverage related to international crises, which, to Muslim organizations, emphasizes extremist views that depict Muslims as a threat from within or as a fifth column.[136] The MCB points out that "most British Muslims have actually been born in the UK. They are indigenous British citizens. There is no question of them being 'hosted' in any way."[137] In fact the MCB has judged integration relatively successful.[138] Trevor Phillips, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, has described multiculturalism as "outdated" and encouraging "separateness"—criticisms widely reported as a "bombshell."[139] Allegedly, he said, "What we should be talking about is how we reach an integrated society, one in which people are equal under the law, where there are some common values."[140]

Therefore, if both models strongly stand as ideal types, they both experience pressure from the antagonistic model. The rigid French framework of assimilation has come under question, especially in the context of the EU, whereas the British multiculturalist model has come under attack, especially since 9/11 and even more so after the London bombings.

Mobilisation and Institutionalisation

Political Participation

Because of data constraints, this section uses ethnically diverse candidates and immigrants as a proxy for French Muslims. Schain notes in his studies on immigrants that France consistently shows the "worst record of political representation."[141] People with an immigrant background are poorly represented politically. Schain specifically observes that "between 1995 and 2000: on average, [there were] just over 3 percent of municipal counsellors from ethnic communities in towns of 50,000 or more."[142] It is difficult for minority candidates to be appointed to political parties, in part because of the pressure exerted by the National Front, but also because of more structural causes related to the reproduction of the political elite.[143] The main parties remain closed to the admission of diverse candidates, as proven by the results of the legislative elections in 2007.

Candidates from minorities often present themselves as independent. The legislature included 123 ethnically diverse candidates out of a total of 8,424, but only one for the Union for a Popular Movement, the right-wing party; two for the Union for French Democracy; and three for the Socialist Party. So although many ethnic minorities run for office, we rarely see them representing the major parties in France. The first three members of Parliament of North African origin were elected in the senatorial elections in September 2004.[144] The three deputies from minorities in the National Assembly and four for the Senate produce a total of seven deputies or 0.81 percent of metropolitan deputies with North African origins.[145]

The question of diversity also seems to represent a minor concern raised exclusively during elections. The Union for a Popular Movement, for example, eliminated the position of the national secretary of diversity after the presidential election of 2007.[146] Though the Socialist Party does possess a national secretary of diversity, an office held by Faouzi Lamdaoui, the party has often alienated candidates from minorities, especially under Lionel Jospin's government (1997–2002).[147] Besides, the internal dynamics of the party at the grassroots level do not help the emergence of these candidates. No local section of the Socialist Party presented a minority candidate in the legislative elections in 2007. Then, the party had to freeze 20 constituencies for "diversity candidates" but usually in constituencies diffi-

cult to win. A telling example is that of Malek Boutih, sent to the fourth constituency of la Charente, whereas the local candidate, Martine Pinville, kept on running for the election.[148] Additionally, Abel Djerrari, a former member of "France Plus," an association for the promotion of political representation, was a candidate for the regional elections, receiving only 0.4 percent of the vote.[149] We can only note the relative success of Mouloud Aounit, former president of "SOS Racisme," who ran for the Communist Party, obtaining 14.3 percent of the support during regional elections of 2004 in Seine Saint-Denis, a place with a high concentration of populations with foreign origins. Indeed, he obtained "up to one third of the vote in heavily Muslim neighbourhoods."[150]

In sum, French political parties seem hardly interested in the question of diversity.[151] From the minorities' perspective, especially those who have recently immigrated to France, economic success is much more important than diversity, and elites do not necessarily invest the political field.[152] Minority candidates cover a heterogeneous population, but the situation can differ from one group to the other. Eric Keslassy, for example, indicates that political socialisation and integration are higher for the French of North African origin than for the French from sub-Saharan Africa because the North Africans have inherited political capital from the mobilisations of the 1980s.[153] Besides, investment creates strong competition among minority candidates, which makes them fight each other for offices instead of fighting together for more offices; in other words, there is a lack of collective mobilisation.[154]

Are political parties simply reflecting the French population's preferences? Barack Obama's election in the United States has prompted this question, asking whether the same thing could have happened in France. Diversity may represent added value during an election, especially, of course, concerning minority voters.[155] In a 2008 poll, when asked, "Could you personally vote one day for a black candidate running for president?" 80 percent of the French said yes; the percentages are 72 for a candidate of Asian origin and 58 for one of Maghrebi origin.[156] The stakes, of course, are higher in a real election, and some form of "reluctance" may occur.[157] Furthermore, during 2006, polls showed that voters draw a distinction between different elections. That is, the proportion of French people ready to vote for a minority candidate in local elections can be significant, but the proportion for legis-

lative elections, though increasing, is weaker.[158] Two traits define Muslims' political involvment: their relative lack of participation and their preference for parties on the Left.[159] Both phenomena, especially the skew to the Left, are first and foremost driven by social and economic exclusion. When asked about their current lives and expectations, "French Muslims are half as likely as the general public to be considered thriving."[160] For Wihtol de Wenden, the question "How can one be French and Muslim?" remains relevant in political debates "although neither an Arab or ethnic vote nor a penetration of external allegiances can be perceived among the majority of Muslims in France."[161] In other words, the heterogeneity of the population also prevents it from acting as a voting bloc.[162] A strong consensus exists regarding the absence of a specifically Muslim vote.[163] One can conclude that formal political institutions do not constitute the main instrument of mobilisation for Muslims. Furthermore, the constraints of the assimilation philosophy seem to be interiorized by Muslim political actors who do not think and conceive of their mobilisation as one that favours particular ethnic rights; on the contrary, they try to embed their rhetoric in conformity with the universalistic claims of the assimilation paradigm. Therefore, the philosophy characterizing the political opportunity structure substantially constrains and shapes the features of Muslim mobilisation. The same phenomenon happens in Great Britain but in opposite forms as the multiculturalist model not only admits but also calls for a religious space.

Integration into political life has proven more successful than in the French case.[164] One can even trace participation in politics back to the pre–World War II period.[165] Immigrant minorities represent 6.6 percent of the electorate.[166] Political awareness has especially increased after the older generations' "myth of return" lost all significance and as ethnic organisations created political awareness and emphasized the necessity to engage in homeland politics.[167]

However, as in France, nonregistration is higher among ethnic minority voters.[168] Like their European counterparts, British Muslims vote massively for the Left—for the Labour Party.[169] Having said that, the trend may be changing in favour of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, especially since the war in Iraq. One can see some success at the local level in that 10.6 percent of local councillors in 2001 were from ethnic minorities in London's boroughs.[170] In the House of Commons in 2005, 15 out of 630

members represented ethnic minorities.[171] One can attribute this local success to the system of designation of candidates by the Labour Party, which uses a ward-based system, taking advantage of the concentration of ethnic votes in a district and finally ensuring some level of influence over national representation.[172]

If we go back to the two strategies concerning the use of immigrants as a political resource or as a challenge to national identity, given their share in the electorate and the institutional recognition of diversity, some move towards the first strategy has taken place.[173] This strategy of reaching out to ethnic voters was exemplified by the establishment of the Labour Party Race and Action Group in 1975 as well as the setting up of a Black and Asian Advisory Committee.[174] Jack Straw's message to Muslims to beware of "fair-weather friends" (Liberal Democrats) before the June 2004 elections has been interpreted as evidence of the Labour Party's viewing the Muslim vote as crucial.[175] These initiatives were not restricted to that party—witness the fact that the Conservative Party also established an Ethnic Minority Unit that helped the emergence of an Anglo-Asian Conservative Society. Moreover, the Anglo-West Indian Conservative Society later on was replaced by the One Nation Forum to recruit respective minorities in the Party.[176] The Liberal Democrats also set up the Asian Liberal Democrats in 1991 as well as a forum called Ethnic Minority.[177]

However, two factors have limited this strategy. First, the concentration of ethnic votes is limited. Second, it often takes place in constituencies safe to Labour.[178] The second factor concerns the relatively weak politicization of Muslim communities in terms of civic values.[179] Schain notes an interesting contradiction whereby French Muslims, despite their attachment to civic values, are not or are rarely used as a political resource. In Great Britain, however, where Muslims show a deeper attachment to religious rather than to national identity, they still constitute a political resource and have better access to political life.[180]

Organisation and Institutionalisation

In light of the fact that *laïcité* (secularism) is one of the founding principles of the Republic, the visible expression of Islam has presented a new challenge in recent years.[181] According to the Ministry of Interior, the number of mosques increased from 100 in 1970 to 1,600 in 2004.[182] France now has

about 1,700 mosques, just behind Germany, which has the most in Europe with 2,300.[183] In Ile-de-France, there are more than 50 mosques in eight *départements*.[184] Godard and Taussig put the number at more than 1,800 on the basis of different data from the Ministry of Interior, regional committees of the French Council for the Muslim Cult (CFCM), and regional studies.[185] With regard to financing the mosques in France, most of the foreign funds for their construction and maintenance come from the Middle East, not from countries of origin except for the Algerian subsidy for the Great Mosque of Paris and salaries of imams.[186] However, mosques receive most of their financing from the population's contributions.[187]

The absence of any Islamic clergy explains in part the religion's lack of organisation and the obstacles to building a strong representative entity.[188] Awareness by French authorities of a need for recognition of the Muslim cult came after several international events, especially the Iranian revolution.[189] A driving incentive for involvement of the French state in the emergence of a specifically French Islam has to do with decreasing foreign influences and financial dependence on foreign sources.[190]

Several factors explain the strong involvement of foreign regimes, especially homeland countries, in matters related to Islam in France. Historically, French secularism and the myth of return encouraged French authorities to delegate all issues related to Islam to foreign regimes—done through consulates and embassies.[191] Other geopolitical factors, such as an increasing dependency on Saudi oil, also have played a role. Thus, the Muslim World League opened a branch in France in 1976.[192] Two factors contributed to French authorities' change of mind: integration issues and the emergence of Islamic radicalism and security threats.[193]

The first significant step towards building representation for Islam in France was the creation of a Council for Deliberation under Minister of the Interior Pierre Joxe. Under Charles Pasqua, the Great Mosque of Paris became the predominant interlocutor, and a charter of the Muslims' faith was signed. Although the charter sought to regulate the different currents, it failed to federate the different associations.[194] Significant progress occurred under Jean-Pierre Chevènement in 1999. A series of consultations began, resulting in both the establishment of a framework of agreement whereby French Islam reaffirmed loyalty to the Republic, and the rendering of decisions regarding voting procedures and status of the CFCM.[195] On 9

December 2002, the three big federations—the Great Mosque of Paris, the Union of Islamic Organisations in France (UOIF), and the National Federation of Muslims in France—signed an agreement on the composition of the CFCM.[196] The first CFCM was elected in April 2003 with 80 percent of the prayer spaces participating.[197] The latest elections, won by the Gathering of Muslims in France, took place in June 2011.

The CFCM, which comprises regional councils, is supposed to be exclusively dedicated to religious issues such as the certification of halal meat or organisation of the hajj.[198] The creation of a French Islam also entails a sort of transnational mediating political role although this is not always explicit.[199] However, the CFCM introduced substantial change—specifically, the representation of Islam as a cult on equal footing with other religions and its legal institutional status, comparable to that of the Catholic clergy, the Protestant Federation and the Consistory, and the representative body for French Jews.[200]

The CFCM is in fact, however, a weak body—one that has not successfully fulfilled its mission.[201] The results are disappointing in that it has been dominated by well-organised and conservative Muslim groups.[202] Laurence and Vaïsse depict the institution's paradox, noting that it constitutes "the only game in town for leaders of Muslim background," which can lead to even more confusion in terms of the constituency represented.[203] Indeed, the council gives a highly visible community role to practising Muslims but leaves aside younger generations, as well as secular Muslims. Another reproach often addressed to the CFCM is the involvement of foreign regimes. Even in the consultation process leading to creation of the CFCM, foreign governments had their say.[204] At the same time, the Ministry of Interior has been heavily involved in the composition of the governing board.

Thus institutionalisation remains based on the lowest common denominator, and rivalries between federations are strong and complicated by foreign pressures.[205] Godard and Taussig indicate that this institutionalisation led to what was supposed to be avoided: a new empowerment of foreign governments.[206] On the contrary, for Riva Kastoryano, such institutionalisation and domestication in the national framework could precisely help contain transnational networks, which emphasize the transnational and deterritorialized reimagined *umma* (community of all Muslims). Moreover, they seek to shape European Muslims' identification and type of belonging,

over which the state would then have no control.[207] Finally, the CFCM is divided, the search for consensus is difficult, and when reached, it is fragile. The council cannot pretend to be a community spokesperson, a fact that can only limit "its actual influence over Islam-related policies in France."[208] Then, in terms of influence, most forms of political organisations, including those based on Islam, have failed.[209] Most of these groups were born in the 1980s and tried to expand in the 1990s, but overall, an obvious crisis of political organisation dynamics remains. Former leaders evolved towards a less religious discourse in order to seek alliance with other secular movements, but another tendency seeks to replace the religious discourse at its core.[210] While leaders began to consider the secular political space, intermediary leaders demobilised, leaving the basis of these movements (geographically represented by the *banlieues* [deprived urban areas]) without representation. There are, of course, exceptions such as the UOIF, which still mobilises although its influence is restricted to "communitarian" events. Though dedicated to making Islam visible in society, the UOIF is also affected by a crisis of militancy that can be explained by a social division. That is, tensions exist between institutionalisation and militants' aspirations, as proven by the UOIF leadership's refusal to publicly oppose the 2004 law banning head scarves in school. These failed mobilisations have left a void characterised by two pathological forms of political mobilisation: jihadism and riots (*révoltes de banlieue*).[211] The Salafist movement emerged in reaction to the failure of previous movements.

The riots of 2005 proved again that the communitarian structuring of Muslims in France is a myth.[212] Therefore, one can hardly equate the problem of the *banlieues* with Islam since even major organisations (first and foremost, UOIF) that had tried mediation failed. Sarkozy asked the imams to intervene in the riots, but they did not.[213] This episode is quite telling in terms of the perceptions of the political elite, if not of the French population. In fact, no community intervention has sought to regulate the crisis, and the dominant picture is that of an atomized/individualized population having strong and unsatisfied demands towards the state, which occasionally leads to violent forms of mobilisation.[214] In short, the French political opportunity characterised by the assimilation philosophy and the weight of Jacobinism is not favourable to the mobilisation of specific interests—even less to ethnic mobilisation. As to the resources of the group itself, French

Muslims do not constitute a homogeneous group because divisions along national origins trump religiosity, especially as reflected in the CFCM dysfunctions. Given the focus on foreign policy in this article, the UOIF stands out as the most active organisation regarding this type of issue and constitutes a useful source to investigate interactions with the government concerning international affairs.

A British Muslim civil society has emerged relatively recently.[215] For Peach, British Muslims' "social organization is conservative and family centred."[216] Around 1,000 prayer spaces exist as well as informal Islamic law courts.[217] Compared to other European Muslims, British Muslims have a specific relationship not only with religion but also with religious law—sharia law—as shown by the existence of informal courts.

The controversy over Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* constituted a shifting point in the emergence of a single Muslim community, its mobilisation, and its political assertion.[218] The campaign was particularly led by the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), whose head, Iqbal Sacranie (who later became the first head of the MCB), recognized the influence of the Jamaat-e-Islami party on his actions.[219] The UKACIA took the *Satanic Verses* case to the House of Lords.[220]

However, the peaceful lobbying and search for recognition by the UKACIA did not function and was shadowed by the "old grassroots" leadership of the Bradford Council of Mosques, which resorted to violent protest and publicly burned Rushdie's book.[221] For Toby Archer, however, this event reflects more of an importation of Pakistani subcontinental politics.[222] The episode was also significant in revealing the lack of unity and organization of British Muslims.[223] Creation of the MCB and the orientation of its strategy towards political participation are perceived as a reaction to the failure of this confrontational Islam.[224]

However, the most significant breakthrough came in 1997 with the establishment of the MCB, an umbrella organization.[225] Like its French counterpart the CFCM, the MCB emerged because of the need expressed by the British government for a single interlocutor representing British Muslims.[226]

Presented as the "first democratic British Muslim organisation," the MCB counts more than 500 affiliated organisations and claims to challenge extremist groups.[227] Its 2007–8 annual report presents the MCB as "a

non-partisan body," declaring that "the Muslim interest lies in working with all the main political parties."[228] The MCB was designed to be an "integrated framework for Muslim self-expression and participation in the life of the country." Towards that end, the council "will plan and conduct effective public campaigns on Muslim issues, encourage fuller participation of Muslims in public affairs and provide an informed, competent and authentic representation of Muslim interests at all levels."[229] Another Muslim organisation, Al-Mujahiroun, however, opposes efforts of the MCB to encourage voting and political involvement. Followers of Omar Bakri Mohammed (leader of Al-Mujahiroun) disrupted an election meeting organized by the MCB in 2005, thus shedding light on "issues of unprecedented importance in this election: the influence of the Muslim vote in marginal constituencies; and the battle within the Muslim community between the moderate mainstream and extremists trying to hijack the agenda to impose their own intolerant views on fellow British Muslims."[230]

The MCB is presented in a favorable light as "a group of some 350 affiliates formed to give Muslim views greater coherence and prominence in Britain"—one that "advocates 'constructive engagement' with the Government and has urged its members to use their vote as citizens to make their voices and concerns heard. In doing so, the council has taken an important step to counter the marginalisation and alienation of many British Muslims and to inculcate the notion that democracy is compatible with Islam."[231]

The MCB has indeed worked with the Electoral Commission and mosques to encourage registration.[232] In 2005, a document titled "Electing to Deliver" and a voter card listing 10 key issues were also prepared for the general election.[233] MCB advertisements encouraged people to vote, and fringe meetings took place with the three important British parties.[234] The MCB has systematically asked imams in mosques and leaders of organisations to reach out on the grassroots level in the context of local, national, and European elections.[235] Prevention of the far Right's electoral success also justifies the MCB strategy.[236] The council issued a press release to voice its concern about the winning of two seats by the British National Party in 2009 for the first time.[237] The idea of "serving the common good," which developed early on, lies at the core of the MCB's mission.[238] In its response to the report by the Conservative Party's Group on National and Inter-

national Security, the MCB argues that its objectives are "to collate and articulate Muslim opinions on prevailing issues of the day much like any other conceived interest group. It is not a 'single issue group,' nor are its interests confined to the members it represents. Its ethos is to work for the common good of all; in the belief that religion, if practised properly, can be a force for good in the lives of all mankind."[239] This stance also corresponds to the future stage identified by Sacranie, former secretary-general of the MCB, whereby the council would engage in issues affecting not only Muslims but also the entire British nation, thus leaving identity politics behind.[240] As a result, the MCB has been highlighting its partnerships with other organisations—for instance, with other faith communities during the campaign for the question on faith in the 2001 census.[241]

The MCB has access to the government, as proven by consultations between the two actors that have occurred on different occasions. Conceived from the beginning as an organization close to the government, "the MCB was given a role in recommending appointments from the Muslim community to government advisory committees, for instance at the Foreign Office, and suitably moderate spokespersons for BBC programming, although subsequently these privileges have been challenged."[242] The MCB consulted on various occasions with the government, especially after the 9/11 attacks, to discuss various issues such as media coverage, the protection of Muslims, and, of course, foreign policy.[243] Consultation meetings have taken place with the home office as well as Foreign and Commonwealth Office delegations, including Muslims sent to Muslim countries.[244]

The government has clearly defined the MCB as an actor in the building of antiterrorist policies.[245] In March 2004, in the wake of the Madrid bombings, Sacranie wrote to imams to encourage them to cooperate fully with the police.[246] The MCB participated in the "Prevent Extremism Together" groups set up by the Home Office, whose recommendations were presented in November 2005. The MCB also convened a meeting as a follow-up to the issue on 13 May 2006 to decide that "a steering group led by community organizations, which would include the MCB, as well as others, must work together to establish an independent and inclusive advisory board to deal with specific issues related to mosques and *imams* in the UK."[247] The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, presented in a

press release as "a community-led independent body . . . to achieve the objective of self regulation," was finally elected in May 2009.[248]

The MCB repeatedly presents itself as "arguably Britain's most prominent Muslim representative organisation."[249] It seems to be perceived as a legitimate actor. An article that appeared in 2002 referred to the council as "an organisation recognised by Downing Street as representative of mainstream opinion among Islamic communities."[250] Reporting the police raid on the Finsbury Park Mosque that took place on 20 January 2003, another article refers to the MCB as "the moderate umbrella group" which often noted that British Muslims had been repeatedly upset by the "publicity given to the 'outrageous' statements of Abu Hamza."[251] Yet another article, listing some of the MCB's demands (such as "a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq" or "legislation banning incitement to religious hatred"), concludes that "we would not endorse all the demands. But to set them in a democratic, constitutional framework is the legitimate right of any religious or political lobby group."[252]

An article titled "Anger over Forest Gate Fuels Culture of Denial for Muslims" describes the MCB as "the national body that purports to represent British Muslims and which is frequently consulted by Downing Street."[253] Jonathan Birt's analysis of the MCB explicitly mentions the "government creation of a unified Muslim lobby."[254] British authorities, with a "hearts and minds" approach to Muslims, have been trying to engage with the Muslim community to prevent radicalization—but with only limited success.[255] After the London bombings in 2005, Prime Minister Blair organized a conference to ask Muslim communities to support his strategy aimed at eradicating extremism, most notably the monitoring of independent Islamic schools and the regulation of imams' immigration flows.[256] International connections came into play during a hostage crisis when Norman Kember and three other people from the Christian Peacemaker Team were taken hostage in Iraq in November 2005.[257]

In terms of success or representation, Archer reckons that the strong links between South Asian politics and MCB leaders mean that the organisation never had full support from Muslims in Britain.[258] Exactly like the CFCM, international connections and credentials of the leaders also imply a distance from younger generations. A *Times* article notes the MCB's difficulty in representing a diverse population in terms of age and ideologies.

The council tries to represent "at the same time the standpoints of older, more conservative Muslims in Britain, the younger, better educated generation entering the professions and the angry Muslim youths on the housing estates of Oldham or Bradford."[259]

The MCB may be popular in many parts of the country, but some individuals are not as supportive of its goals or approaches. In the famous policy exchange report by Munira Mirza, a poll revealed that only 6 percent of polled Muslims felt that the MCB represented them and that 51 percent felt no organization did.[260] Ziauddin Sardar, who notes the emergence of a new generation of people who are defining themselves both as Muslim and British without difficulty, criticizes traditional Muslim organisations—including the supposedly democratic MCB—as being run by primo-migrants who use a traditional discourse that young people cannot understand.[261] However, the organization also depends on British-born newer generations representing an emerging middle class to show that it "provid[es] a non-sectarian space for the advance of a Muslim politics of recognition."[262]

Two events have made the relationship between the MCB and the government more difficult: Blair's support of the war in Iraq and the London attacks in July 2005. Security reasons have driven this search for an interlocutor, reflected by the use of the MCB transnationalist networks until the relationship became more difficult because of the council's opposition to the government's support of American policy in Iraq.[263] Moreover, the MCB has taken positions that have damaged its image, such as its failure to send representatives to the Holocaust Memorial Day.[264]

The MCB no longer seems to be considered the principal Muslim interlocutor for the government. For example, Archer notes the speech made by Ruth Kelly of the Ministry of Communities and Local Government that challenges the MCB's decision concerning the Holocaust Memorial Day and the more general search for alternative Muslim voices such as the Sufi Muslim Council, which questioned the MCB hegemony.[265] Even if Muslim organisations believe that the effort to consult Muslims showed progress, concerns exist that the government was imposing leadership on the community by favouring some groups over others and that consultation was superficial.[266] Finally, an article published in 2007 noted that "the MCB has lost its favoured-son position, but it is still not finished."[267] The council has also come under regular criticism for alleged links with extremist

organisations such as the Deobandis or the Jamaat-e-Islami and even for being a fundamentalist body.[268] Ed Husain also voices this criticism in his book *The Islamist*, which considers the MCB "a front for the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood."[269] An article reporting the condemnation by the Muslim Association of Britain (a group affiliated with the MCB) of the London bombings described the association as "a fundamentalist organisation that has been criticised for alleged links with terrorist groups such as Hamas."[270] A Panorama documentary broadcast on the BBC in 2005 implies, on the basis of interviews with members of the MCB, that its affiliated groups adopt hard-line views and that ideology from Pakistan exerts an "undue influence."[271] In a response to a Channel 4 programme titled "Who Speaks for Muslims?," the MCB restated its democratic structure, origins, and independence from any political party, and countered accusations of anti-Semitism.[272] In another fierce response to Martin Bright's investigation in the *Observer*, the MCB also attacked usual criticisms concerning alleged links with the Jamaat-e-Islami party, its position regarding the Palestinian issue, the lack of representation, and its position on the Holocaust Memorial Day.[273]

As a result, a major part of the MCB rhetoric consists of establishing its legitimacy as an actor representing "mainstream" Muslims and differentiating itself from fringe groups. The council has also condemned excessive coverage in the press of these fringe groups, pointing out that the "Finsbury Park (mosque) received more media coverage than all the rest put together."[274] In September 2001, "in a bid to redress the imbalance in reporting, the MCB wrote to the BBC, ITN and Sky urging them to give greater coverage to mainstream Muslim voices. The MCB also met the editors and senior staff from the *Daily Mail*, the *Times*, the *Independent*, and London's *Evening Standard* to convey the same message."[275] Finally, Birt comments on the centrality of the MCB:

> In the short term as least, the MCB has remained "the only show in town" in the eyes of the government, whether for the symbolic purposes attendant on the "politics of recognition"... or as a means to gauge Muslim reaction to impending policy, in particular to attune foreign policy rhetoric to Muslim sensibilities both at home and abroad. . . . Having groomed and promoted a unified Muslim lobby for nearly a decade, the British government depicted it as part of the problem when it proved insufficiently compliant.[276]

Conclusion

The British structure of political opportunity characterized by multiculturalism as well as the recognition and endorsement of identity politics favours the exertion of influence by ethnic, religious, and political groups. As for the resources of the group itself, Muslims appear to be a relatively active entity, given the electoral possibilities and mobilisation in various organisations. It is also true that British Muslims are heterogeneous. The MCB stands out as the most visible organisation, especially because of its endorsement by the government—less because of a representative character still subject to question. Although a similar top-down impulsion in France favours creation of a representative Muslim organisation, the circumstances are very different. The assimilation philosophy seems to paralyse any mobilisation framed in ethno-religious terms, which implies a relatively inefficient ethno-religious presence in the public sphere.

Both environments shape the contours of actors' potential for mobilising, and—aside from the determinant philosophies of integration coming under attack in both countries—this does not affect the movements of mobilisation, at least for now. We can expect each model's antithesis to exert pressure. In other words, we can expect France's rigid model to become more and more flexible and Britain's model to become less so. It is difficult to quantify or determine to what extent both models will change because the main structures sustaining each one are firmly anchored in each country's history. The real question concerns whether the changes that have started to affect each model will translate into effective public policies, which could mean, for instance, in France, the creation of official ethnic statistics. In any case, in order to understand ethnic minorities in any country, one should look first and foremost at the characteristics of the political opportunity structure that will determine and affect the potential, mechanisms, and forms of mobilisation.

Notes

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19. Ibid., 144.

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29. Ibid.

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62. Schain, *Politics of Immigration*, 134.
63. Ibid.
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68. Schain, *Politics of Immigration*, 151.
69. The authors cite the previous work of Vincent Geisser and Khadija Mohsen-Finan as well as a US Department of State poll showing that 34 percent of Muslims indicate Muslim identity compared to 21 percent who indicate French identity. Laurence and Vaïsse, *Integrating Islam*, 75.
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162. Laurence and Vaïsse, *Integrating Islam*, 195.

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192. Laurence and Vaïsse, *Integrating Islam*, 108.
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218. Salman Rushdie himself recognized that "the *Satanic Verses* controversy was a pivotal moment in the forging of a British Muslim identity and political agenda. I did not fail to note the ironies: a secular work of art energised powerful communalist, anti-secularist forces, 'Muslim' instead of 'Asian.' And yes, as a result, the argument about multiculturalism has become, for me, an internal debate, a quarrel in the self." Rushdie, "Cultural Debate Needs." See also Archer, "Welcome to the Ummah," 335; Brighton, "British Muslims," 5; and McLoughlin, "State, 'New' Muslim Leaderships," 58.
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Constructing Identities

Alternative Explanations of Conflict and Violence in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Located in the southern part of Nigeria and comprising a sizeable proportion of the country's Atlantic coastline, the Niger Delta region (about 40,000 square miles of swamps, creeks, and mangrove forests) has seen growth totaling more than 30 million people (in 2005), representing 23 percent of Nigeria's total population. Further, "the population is . . . among the highest in the world with 265 people per kilometer-squared . . . [and a growth rate of about] 3% per year."[1] As poverty and urbanization increase, the lack of accompanying economic growth and employment opportunities work against the emergent spirit of rising expectations and the quest for improvements in the quality of life.

Concerns about the Niger Delta existed in Nigeria even before oil became a central element in the country's economy. Because the crisis, at one

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time or the other, has involved competing issues of territorial autonomy, economic opportunity, environmental control and compensation, infrastructural development, political representation, and/or self-determination, accurately pinpointing the single element that lies at the forefront of the conflict has proven problematic. Due to the simple fact that the bulk of Nigeria's oil exports and petroleum reserves is linked to this region more than any other place, the increasing level of infrastructural and economic underdevelopment in the area has become part of a central debate on the distributional incentives of Nigeria's federalist system.

However, "competition for oil wealth has fuelled violence between innumerable ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian military and police forces."[2] The rising spate of violence, kidnappings, and murder that pervades the region has thus become more salient to the country and the international community. In the midst of all this, the more central and authentic issues such as poverty, education, the environment, and the competing interests of multinational oil conglomerates and the state economy have become secondary to—or overshadowed by—the more immediate physical manifestations of violence and disorder.

This article proposes that a proper appraisal of the Niger Delta and its security challenges should reflect on some of the historical events that informed it. The autonomy of this area—mostly inhabited by several minority ethnic groups, the largest of whom are the Ijaws, Urhobos, Itsekiri, Ogonis, Andonis, Annang, Isoko, and many others—from the influence of majority ethnic groups in the country was always a major factor in the demand for state creation even before independence. Viewing the crisis in the Niger Delta as solely a matter of relative deprivation and/or environmental degradation would certainly be an understatement. It is much more than that. Because the underlying issues of contention essentially concern property rights and legitimate authority, the evolving nexus between state power and a conflict economy means that the pervasiveness and intensity of ethnic politics and conflict, in the final analysis, would remain a measure of ongoing political contention.

By utilizing a social constructivist approach to ethnic and political conflict, this article seeks to explain how differences in the construction of ideas and identities form the underlying principles that oftentimes lead to and sustain conflict situations in areas such as the Niger Delta. In examining how to approach the idea of social constructivism in political conflict, we draw upon the role of individuals, community, and society in constructing

an "objective reality" in which ideas (perception and interpretation of national events, historical experiences, and policies) constitute material causes leading to conflict and violence.

Violence as Political Participation: Analogues with a Difference

In many developed and developing polities, one cannot help seeing the resort to violence as a form of political participation even when it is morally abhorrent as well as a challenge to the rule of law. Although violence may be relative in terms of degree and type, suffice it to say that it generally seeks to achieve a political objective or attract attention to an issue of importance to the party or parties concerned. But the issue in contention does not necessarily drive most violent acts in politics; more often than not, it is the lack of political opportunity or formal access to bring forth a case to the prevailing authorities. When such opportunity does not exist or the possibility seems remote, collective anger and frustration transform or morph into a violent form of political advocacy.

In his seminal work on the social psychological model of "civil strife," Ted Robert Gurr carried out quantitative analyses of a variety of forms of conflict through national measures of protest and rebellion. Though interested in the individual-level variable of "relative deprivation," he mainly drew on aggregate national demographic data to operationalize his major variables.[3] Two years later, his work *Why Men Rebel* drew attention to some of the political determinants of conflict. He pointed to such factors as the relative balance of institutional support and coercive control, but he was mainly interested in the determinants of collective contention that could be cross-nationally correlated with various measures of conflict.[4]

Contemporary scholars have drawn inspiration from Gurr's earlier work and have sought to analyze different conflict situations, including civil wars. For example, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler found significant correlations between civil wars and high levels of primary commodity exports, large populations, low levels of secondary education, low economic growth, low per capita income, and the presence of previous civil wars. They also discovered that the lack of democracy was significant, that inequality was insignificant, and that ethnic and religious fractionalization was surprisingly unimportant.[5] Although Nigeria meets the above characteristics, the latter finding is also pertinent because most civil strife in Nigeria is almost always attributed to ethnic or religious foundations, even when other structural but remotely placed factors may be at work.

This observation becomes more important when we look at later works by James Fearon and David Laitin. Proceeding from a similar definition of civil war that involves numerical violence and from microeconomic premises like those of Collier and Hoeffler, they too found that primary exports—especially oil—correlated highly with outbreaks of civil war. Fearon and Laitin also concluded that civil wars would most likely occur in countries governed by weak but nondemocratic governments marked by political instability. Of equal relevance, they found no statistical correlation between civil wars and ethnicity.[6] Consequently, one can learn some crucial lessons in matters of conflict and violence within political communities: "Violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues."[7] Further, like the various forms of political participation, "power and violence, though they are distinct phenomena, usually appear together. Wherever they are combined, power, we have found, is the primary and predominant factor."[8]

However, the context in which this proposition is cast pertains to situations in which distinct groups seek political, economic, religious, or cultural supremacy over other competing elements in society. In federal systems with generally weak institutions, competing groups will more likely use extraconstitutional means as a way of dealing with seemingly avoidable conflict situations. Therefore, one may conceivably view regional political conflicts in Nigeria as a result of the inevitable quest for power and control over the authoritative allocation of values, which in federal systems such as ours, is more often than not a natural prerogative of the central government. As Hannah Arendt would argue, because power is inherent in the very existence of political communities, it needs no justification—but it does need legitimacy.[9] All the same, many Nigerians, having become so enamored of the level of violence and communal acrimony befalling the country, call for accelerating the devolution of power to the regions in response to various ethnic orientations that seek effective representation at the center.

Nevertheless, one must still raise the question, what type of devolution should take place and how? Moreover, what are the core and specific distinctions between a traditional federal system and the concept of "true" federalism? A substantial difference exists between federalism as division of powers between the center and the constituent units, as opposed to federalism in the context of devolution of powers. They are not the same. The first requires a resolution on specific structural issues that the constitutional document should highlight, specifying the forms of functional and associational relationship within the system. The second is much more problematic

because it requires a more complex platform for renegotiating the constitutional and political fundamentals of association within the federal system as well as who gives up what, how much, and to whom. To the extent that most advocates focus on the latter (while construing it as the former), the evident mismatch between purpose and endgame creates difficulty in developing an initial consensus regarding the practical objectives of political negotiation.

Since May 1999, various ethnic, advocacy, or militant groups have emerged, spearheading one endorsement or the other in the country. We have the Odua Peoples Congress (fighting for the Southwest Yoruba states), the Arewa Consultative Forum (seeking the interest of the northern states), the Middle Belt Forum (seeking to reaffirm an inherent geopolitical identity), the Ohanaeze (seeking a new political affirmation for the southeastern states), and the South-South Forum (seeking increased representation in the political leadership of the country. Other organizations include the Egbesu Boys and the Ijaw Youth Council (seeking a redistribution of Nigeria's oil and petroleum rents in favor of the indigenous interests of the oil-producing areas), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, and many others less vociferous but equally disapproving of the current state of affairs in the country. Given the present stasis, however, one must still inquire about reconciling the different platforms to attain the primary goal of national integration and unity of purpose.

Competing Epistemology: Structuralist and Social Constructivist Approaches

One cannot blame the source of ethnic and political militancy in Nigeria on Cold War politics (1945–89); instead, it is deeply rooted in the history and character of state formation, power, and the trajectory of political development, especially in the formative years of Nigeria's independence. Although one can also partly attribute such militancy to the competing issues of federalism in the country, it did not evolve as a challenge to the ideal of federalism per se but as a testimony to the various and oftentimes formidable challenges related to emergent issues of governance and distributive politics. In explaining the reasons for ethnic and political conflict, the structuralist and social constructivist approaches offer important analytical lenses to account for specific idiosyncrasies and value premises that are highly consequential in the development of conflict situations.

On the one hand, Fearon and Laitin suggest that since civil war happens along structural rather than ethnic lines, the best way to prevent it involves

removing factors that make insurgency more likely, such as increasing the competence (administrative and military capacity) in a central government. Approaches designed to reduce grievances and boost democracy might appear desirable in their own right, but Fearon and Laitin conclude that they are not "magic bullets" for stopping civil wars.[10] On the other hand, Collier and Hoeffler seem to agree with the basic points of Fearon and Laitin's arguments, attempting to discern whether civil wars will more likely occur in situations characterized by large grievances or in those that hold greater opportunity for a successful rebellion. Their findings reveal little support for the idea that civil wars will most likely occur because of ethnic grievances. For them, the factors that improve opportunities for rebellions include "availability of finance," the potential "cost of rebellion," and the "military advantage" of rebel forces.[11] All of these factors may thus indicate that civil wars are not necessarily created by ethnic tensions but are precipitated by structural factors favorable to a rebellion.[12]

In the Niger Delta region, one finds structural factors that may, in and of themselves, offer opportunities for engaging in militant insurgency. Some of these include the terrain, creeks, and mangrove forests that offer cover and hiding places. Besides providing the opportunity for a quick strike and exit, the area is also less conducive to the application of heavy machinery and military hardware needed to confront a standing army. Because of the loosely structured configuration of militant/insurgency groups, they operate in small cells, and the larger civilian population oftentimes becomes part of their cover, thus complicating the process of preemption and/or interdiction. The general ecology of the region and the resources at its disposal also permit the emergence of a subterranean and illicit economy that supports the funding and maintenance of the insurgency's logistics.

In terms of political hierarchy, the overarching political structure of the state and its institutions creates a framework in which local militant groups appear, on the one hand, as subsystemic actors within a broader national geopolitical system. On the other hand, they seem to operate outside the traditional prerogative of state power and its laws. As the state seeks to reassert its authority, militant groups attempt to limit or, at best, redefine the scope and nature of such authority. The fact that the logic of their argument is buried deeply within the inner recesses of their cultural history, experiences, and their view of the world unfolding around them suggests that understanding the way groups utilize the past in framing and analyzing the future offers an important theoretical pathway for bridging differences over critical social and political issues before they metamorphose into overt violence.

Social Constructivism

As an analytical model, social constructivism has shown promise in the study of ethnic conflict. It has presented new ideas and has utilized ideas advanced in the game-theoretic and structuralist approaches in order to explain how socially constructed ideas and identities can lead to ethnic and political conflict and violence. As described by Alexander Wendt, this approach attempts to see how ideas "constitute" the "ostensibly 'material' causes" of "power, interests, or institutions."[13] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman discuss how society constructs "an objective reality as humans interact and certain patterns are habituated in social interaction and become institutionalized"; hence "any deviance from this perceived institution will be seen as a radical departure from reality."[14]

The social constructivist approach focuses on how differences in the construction of ideas, identities, historical experiences, and worldviews (biases and idiosyncrasies) form the foundation on which people see, understand, and frame important public and national issues. Robert Jervis observes that "what one learns from key events in international history is an important factor in determining the images that shape the interpretation of incoming information." Thus, "analogies are seized upon only to bolster pre-existing beliefs and preferences." He also discusses the interaction between different socially constructed realities that might seem "deviant" to those who do not possess them as something that might lead to conflict.[15] Hence, perceptual differences in terms of relative political and socioeconomic issues generate disparate and competing templates for finding solutions to national problems. When one premises these differences on fundamental ideological and cultural foundations, they oftentimes become quite irreconcilable and hence less amenable to long-lasting and durable solutions. Furthermore, when we throw in the usually diverse conceptions of justice and due process (as is typical among many competing groups), potentially solvable issues could become all the more intractable.

By juxtaposing the competing interests of state power and the various advocacy groups in the Niger Delta, the figure below offers a brief look into the generally incommensurable nature of the foundational issues at the core of the crisis. As the ultimate arbiter of law and order, the state seeks to maximize its authority and power over the territory, whereas advocacy groups seek an incremental (possibly radical) devolution of such power—a minimalist orientation regarding state power and control. They justify their cause as one inspired by normative matters of relative equity, property rights, and political representation. Ho-Won Jeong writes that "differences in perceived interests, values, and needs are perhaps the most basic elements in the motivations behind social conflict.

Inter-group conflict often represents different ways of life and ideologies with implications for incongruent views about relationships with others."[16]

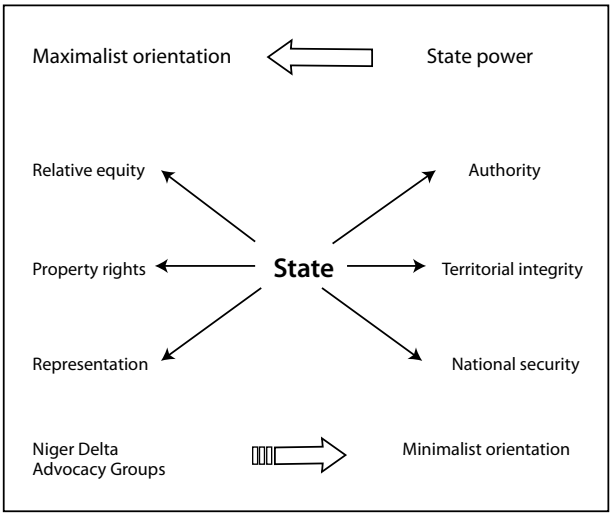

Figure. Negotiating structure and the imperatives of competing endgames

Since the evolution of the modern state system following the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, a state is generally considered the highest authority within its territorial and geopolitical space. A central element in the exercise of state power entails the preservation of its territorial integrity and the provision for internal and external security (national security). To do so, the state has options in the form of hard power (military action) and soft power (negotiation and diplomacy). The state can use both options individually to realize a specific objective. But the unfortunate reality of the modern world, where access to funds and weapons needed for an insurgency movement remains readily available, is that the application of hard power as a complement to soft power becomes a matter of political expediency—a situation most aptly termed the "carrot and stick" approach.

Discussing a number of case studies on ethnic and political conflict, Fearon and Laitin examine several ways in which the social construction of ethnic identity can lead to ethnic and political violence. Based on their findings, they identify support for three constructivist explanations of ethnic violence but believe that more research is needed in each of these areas. The first, "social construction by discourse," posits that social construction occurs at the cultural or social level and that ethnic conflict and political

violence result from the symbols and ideas made when one group differentiates itself from another.[17]

The two other explanations, which focus on "individuals as agents of construction" seem equally credible, according to Fearon and Laitin. The first of these says that ethnic violence is caused by an identity constructed by elites who attempt to cause violence by constructing more "antagonistic ethnic identities." The violence created by this new identity is the desired result of the elites, who believe that violence will allow them to "strengthen their hold on power."[18] This explanation hearkens back to the "in-group dynamics" studied by game theorists. The other explanation focuses on how ordinary people construct identities. Under this framework, violence may occur as dissidents attempt to change cultural identities and boundaries; historical experiences are therefore amplified and sometimes distorted for maximum effect.[19]

Hence, individuals who wish to stop change will, more or less, resort to violence. Fearon and Laitin point to the Basque region of Spain as the perfect example of this phenomenon. As the idea of being a "Spaniard" expanded to "include Basques," those seeking separation from Spain provoked Spanish authorities into taking "punitive actions" due to their violent attacks, thus stopping the adoption of a new identity.[20] From this, one can glean that "the emergence of a collective self-consciousness is found and expressed in a joint awareness of the depth of the challenges as well as the common obligation it imposes on all members of the community."[21] The average individual thus sees and identifies his or her own individual space as an integral part of the community space and identity.

Test Cases in Practice

Edward Aspinall attempts to expand the use of social constructivism in ethnic conflict to include issues concerning natural resources, an idea that also seems to have some overlap with the structural approach. Aspinall looks specifically at the separatist movement of Aceh in Indonesia, noting that "natural resource exploitation gives rise to conflict when it becomes entangled in wider processes of identity construction." He also emphasizes how political entrepreneurs will attempt to exploit existing ethnic issues by "reinterpreting" a new identity back to a populace.[22] Sanjib Baruah examines how different groups constructed identities and visions of reality that have affected the Naga conflict in India, writing that the idea of the Nagas as a distinct group is a very recent one, perhaps originating as early as the 1920s.[23] Prior to this time, the Nagas were simply an incoherent collection

of tribes engaged in constant warfare with one another. Over time, however, those people who consider themselves Naga have constructed a distinct identity that includes unifying all of the Naga people into a single governmental entity.

The conflict in India has to do with who exactly is a Naga and what areas should be unified with Nagaland. Perceived differences in the reality of the Naga claims with regard to ethnic identity have thus paved the way for conflict with those who see an alternate version of reality. Consequently, a socially constructed ethnic identity has managed to create conflict where the identity did not previously exist. Hence Baruah argues that resolution of the conflict depends upon all parties confronting claims about the construction of the Naga identity.[24]

Kristen Williams and Neal Jesse examine how "promoting overlapping identities and pooling sovereignty" can help resolve nationalist conflicts. Addressing the Northern Irish conflict in particular, they argue that a group's construction of a positive identity for itself often leads to conflictual relationships with other groups. They contend that as long as this negative view between groups remains, it impedes the establishment of trust, leading to a security dilemma. Williams and Jesse then ask an important question: "If these conflictual group identities are socially constructed, could that not also mean that they are malleable?" They argue that by creating institutions which promote overlapping identities, we should be able to construct a new identity that allows previously conflicting groups to cooperate. Thus, Williams and Jesse contend that the institutions established by the Northern Ireland peace accords allowed just this kind of overlapping identity which eventually paved the way for peace.[25]

The same scenario seems to apply equally to the Niger Delta situation, drawing upon ideas and historical issues of regional and group identity. People seek not only the political security that a powerful Nigerian state offers but also the political autonomy to decide the nature and boundaries within which it must operate. As Eghosa Osaghae points out, "even with the rebellions in the region, the demands have continued to be for equity and justice within the Nigerian state rather than for separate sovereign states."[26] Because the resolution of key issues of political and economic autonomy (property rights) demands dramatic solutions, both sides have difficulty reaching a compromise. Temporary stop-gap measures can assuage current emotions, but they cannot offer long-lasting solutions.

Conclusion

This article has tried to argue that underlying cultural and psychological variables represent important factors in the evolution as well as the resolution of ethnic and political conflicts. Various studies in the literature attest to the robustness of social constructivism as a way of bridging perceptual differences among social groups in terms of objective realities, identities, and worldviews. By building on ideas, beliefs, and historical experiences that groups use as templates to interpret contemporary national events and issues, the social constructivist approach offers a useful prism for understanding the conflict in the Niger Delta and its broader implications for national security and political integration.

To the extent that all parties bring crucial issues to the table, they should thus be seen as an integral part of negotiating a mutually acceptable solution. The "goalpost" may continue to shift, but only around the margins of the key issues in contention without creating enough momentum that could explode them prematurely. Thus, they still would offer the necessary enabling conditions critical for final resolution of the issues. Even if the opportunity for some form of durable agreement remains remote, that in itself should not provide enough justification for negating them. The mere fact that they are presented for deliberation has its own political benefit.

The fluid nature of Nigerian politics and the often tempestuous flashes it generates should bear constant reminder that the possibility for a prolonged argument on the various competing issues of our federal system does not necessarily lend itself to overnight and impromptu solutions. As long as one can adequately preserve life as well as safeguard the objectives already achieved, and to the extent that violence is avoidable without worsening the current condition, one should view the various bridge-building mechanisms currently in place as part of a multifaceted approach to restoring confidence in the ability of the competing actors to come to a mutual understanding. Therefore, all parties must participate in a continuous process of positive adjustments framed within the context of an overarching principle of national security and territorial integrity.

Notes

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