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Raymond HINNEBUSCH*

ABSTARCT

This article assesses the effect of the Arab Uprising on MENA within a historical sociology framework. Expectations of benign outcomes have not been realized. The weakening of the Arab republics has deepened their penetration and dependency and shifted the balance of power to the monarchies and non-Arab MENA states. Trans-state discourse has empowered Islamists and sectarian narratives. Outcomes can be seen in the continuing dependency of Egypt, state failure in Syria and Iraq and the collapse of the liberal peace between Turkey and Syria.

Keywords: Arab Uprisings, Historical Sociology, State Formation, Middle East, Regional States System.

Arap Ayaklanmaları ve Ortadoğu ve Kuzey Afrika Bölgesel Devletler Sistemi

ÖZET

Bu makale Arap ayaklanmalarının Ortadoğu'ya etkilerini tarihsel sosyoloji çerçevesinde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayaklanmaların iyi sonuçlar doğuracağına dair beklentiler gerçekleşmemiştir. Arap cumhuriyetlerinin zayıflaması bölgeye müdahaleleri ve bağımlılığı arttırmış ve güç dengesini monarşiler ve Arap-olmayan Ortadoğu devletler lehine değiştirmiştir. Devlet-ötesi söylemler İslami hareketleri ve mezhepsel anlatıları güçlendirmiştir. Ortaya çıkan sonuçlara bakıldığında Mısır'da devam eden bağımlılık, Suriye'de ve Irak'ta devletin çöküşü ve Türkiye ve Suriye arasında liberal barışın yıkılması dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Ayaklanmaları, Tarihsel Sosyoloji, Devlet Oluşumu, Ortadoğu, Bölgesel Devletler Sistemi.

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Introduction

What effect is the Arab Uprising having on the MENA regional states system? Some believed that revolution and democratization would transform the region. States would be strengthened as authoritarian elites gave way to representative leaders and publics could therefore identify with states as their own. Public opinion would become a newly empowered factor in foreign policy making. The narrative of democratic peace led some to anticipate that the overthrow of authoritarian elites and a democratized Middle East would be more stable and peaceful. Also widespread was the expectation, particularly after the fall of Mubarak, that revolutions against Western clients would bring more regional autonomy. It is perhaps too early to say what the longer term effect of the Uprising will be since the consequences will be unfolding for many years; however, three years after the Uprising started, expectations of benign change appear unrealized. Putting current events in historical context may help us understand the region's likely tangent.

Historical Sociology and MENA State Formation¹

A Historical Sociology (HS) approach gives historic depth to understanding the regional system. It tells us that political practice evolves over *stages*, with each *path dependent* on the previous one: each period's *solutions* to liabilities created in the previous period then have their own costs and negative side effects which have to be further addressed, driving historical evolution. HS also alerts us to the on-going feedback between the kind of state that dominates at a particular phase and the corresponding dynamics of the states system. Neo-realists have long argued that the states system shapes the states, with the insecurity of an anarchic system driving the emergence of national security states that balance against external threats. On the other hand, Buzan and Weaver² argue that the kind of states shapes the dynamic of the state system. Historical sociology sees a circular feedback, as exemplified in Tilly's famous statement that war makes the state and the state makes war.

The Middle East regional system is even more complicated than this debate suggests since there *four* distinct layers interacting: the global hierarchy in which the region is embedded as a periphery of the world core; the inter-state regional system with rival states balancing each other; a level of trans-state flows, movements and discourses over identity and legitimacy; and the domestic level where state builders try to create bureaucratic structures and the legitimacy to assure the loyalty of their populations.

The state level is the most immediately decisive, with the ability of trans-state forces and global level forces to penetrate states a function of their relative levels of

1 Raymond Hinnebusch, "Toward a Historical Sociology of State Formation in the Middle East", *Middle East Critique*, Vol.19, No.3, Fall, 2010, p.201–216.

2 Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

consolidation: when unconsolidated they are exposed to penetration by both global and trans-state forces while in periods of consolidation they are more able to defend their sovereignty against such penetration and also power balance against each other—much as realists expect. Yet, MENA state consolidation depends on state builders' ability to draw on economic resources, political protection and arms from the global level and on legitimacy and popular support from the trans-state arena; the more states can access global level resources, the less vulnerable they are to trans-state pressures; the more they can mobilize trans-state support, the more leverage they have in dealing with global powers.

As regards state formation, the trajectory of the region has arguably described a bell shaped curve, with the impact of the other levels shaped by rises and declines in state consolidation. In the first decade after independence (1945-55) most Arab states were ruled by weak landed-tribal oligarchies while the second decade (1955-67) was one of middle class political mobilization and Pan-Arab revolution that ushered in praetorian instability. Weak states made for global subordination in period one and trans-state penetration in period two.

A third stage was apparent from the 1970s to the 1990s, namely one of increased, albeit incomplete, state consolidation under the impact of war and oil rent. This period saw the rise of quite durable neo-patrimonial regimes with cohesive elite cores based on *asabiyya* (primordial solidarity)—either tribal-backed monarchs or presidential monarchs backed by “trusted men”—both governing via clientalism, bureaucratic institutions, *mukhabarat* surveillance and welfare entitlements for the masses. Patronage enabled by the oil boom of the 1970s gave more strata a stake in their individual states and states' more effective control over their territories made them less permeable to trans-state penetration. If domestic instability declined, the states now made, through their arms races and wars, a regional system fraught with inter-state insecurity, in which they power balanced against threats from neighboring states. Since states were at the top of their formation curve, the core great powers were less able to penetrate them or affect their decision-making than hitherto.

In the next two decades (1990-2010), however, levels of state consolidation declined, particularly in the Arab republics: states overdeveloped on rent and over-militarized in excess of their economic bases, leading to chronic fiscal crises. These were typically addressed through economic openings to the West that prioritized the interests of investors and crony capitalists at the expense of mass welfare; the resulting post-populist authoritarian regimes politically demobilized the masses and repressed the Islamic opposition that claimed to speak for the have-nots; the main threats to regimes were again internal, but external ones persisted. States “omni-balanced” with the US hegemon to get resources and protection from regional and internal threats, generating levels of dependency on the West not seen since stage one. Iraq, the exception, had sought a way out of these constraints via war but suffered isolation, invasion by the US, and extreme state deconstruction.

By 2010, on the eve of the Arab Uprising, the Arab states had reached a dead end, having exhausted their legitimacy. At the regional level, two coalitions were struggling to promote opposed solutions to this crisis--different versions of regional order. A US-dominated coalition regionally led by the main Sunni Arab powers, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and tacitly including Israel, stood for Pax Americana and deepened neoliberalism; an Iran-led "Resistance Axis," heavily but not exclusively *Shia*, including Syria, *Hizbollah* and *Hamas*, stood for statism and anti-imperialism. The power balance was tilting its way because of the declining credibility of Egypt and Saudi Arabia owing to their stands on Israel's Lebanon and Gaza wars; to the US pull back from its interventions in Iraq and Lebanon, leaving both under Iranian/Syrian influence; and owing to the partial alignment of newly active Turkey and Qatar toward the "Resistance Axis". However, the Arab Uprising, in completely reshuffling the cards among regional players, re-opened the whole issue of regional order.

The Arab Uprising: Consequences for State and System in MENA

State Re-Formation or Deconstruction?

While in principle, the Arab Uprising, insofar as it leads to more politically inclusive institutions, could lead to state strengthening, in the short term the result has been a further state weakening, especially in the more fragmented societies. This is most obvious in Syria where the outcome has been civil war, but in Yemen, Iraq and Libya central government capacity has fallen precipitously while states' societal penetration, monopoly of violence and territorial control has been damaged by the rise of armed groups and unruly protestors unleashed by revolution. Even in the cases of more peaceful political transfer, Tunisia and Egypt, the state has been weakened. The Uprising led to considerable political mobilization, but none of the Uprising states were able to develop the stable institutions needed to incorporate this mobilization in spite of holding relatively free elections to parliaments and executives. This is because publics became sharply divided along sectarian and Islamist vs. secular lines, and between remnants of the old state establishment and radicals wanting more thorough revolution, producing a three sided struggle over the very rules of political order. This renewed "praetorianism" was manifested in continued street violence and crime that threatened public order. Instability also damaged economic capacity, including tax collection, and deterred investment. As a result, successor regimes lack the capacity to incorporate unemployed youth who are the major tinder of revolutionary conflagration. State immunity to trans-state penetration also plummeted, with the use of the social media and the Internet by revolutionary youth and the influx of funds via trans-state networks from the Arab Gulf to Islamist movements. Amidst economic decline, dependency of the Uprising states on outside powers, whether the IMF or the petro-monarchies, actually rose. In short, the weakening of the Arab states meant forces at the other levels--trans-state networks and the core great powers--

were potentially better enabled to penetrate them, a regression to the early period of state formation. On the other hand, regional state weakening has been very uneven: specifically, the non-Arab states, Iran, Israel and Turkey, and the Arab monarchies have not suffered state de-construction. This has profoundly tilted the regional balance of power in their favor.

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The Trans-State Ideological Struggle

MENA states have always been exceptionally penetrated by supra-state identities and trans-state networks that compete with loyalties to the territorial states; while the effect of this was muted with the consolidation of the states through the 1980s, the supra-state public arena was reinvigorated by Arab satellite TV from the 1990s. In the “New Arab Cold War”³ of the late 2000s, there was a battle for public opinion which the “Resistance axis” was winning, with its leaders Ahmadinejad, Assad and Lebanon’s Nasrallah, far more popular than their counterparts in U.S.-aligned regimes which suffered substantial de-legitimization owing to their Western alliances.⁴

The Arab Uprising both manifested and stimulated a deepening of the trans-state level via the proliferating networks of cyberactivists. It has also re-opened contests over identity, between sub-state, state (*watani*) and supra-state--the Arab nation (*qaumi*) or Islamic *umma* loyalties. But this was no equal contest: on the one hand, state weakening in the republics exposed them to trans-state penetration; on the other hand, control of the Pan-Arab media was disproportionately concentrated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and reflected their agenda, with *al-Arabiyya* founded by Saudi money and *al-Jazeera* by Qatari money. Trans-state networks using the social media were dominated by the Western-educated middle classes and Arab expatriates, with Western foundations playing a role in bringing such Arab cyberactivists together.

As such, the content of the post-Uprisings regional discourse shifted away from the resistance-axis narrative. Thus, while Bush’s project of forced democratization, unleashing civil war in Iraq and Lebanon, had seemingly discredited the notion in the 2000s, the demands of the youth movements were chiefly for democracy and freedom in their *own states*, rather than the traditional Pan-Arab, anti-imperialist, or anti-Zionist concerns that

3 Morten Valbjorn and Andre Bank, “Signs of a New Arab Cold War: The 2006 Lebanon War and the Sunni-Shi’i Divide”, *Middle East Report*, No. 242, Spring 2007.

4 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey, Brookings Institution (2010) http://www.brookings.edu/%7E/media/Files/rc/reports/2010/08_arab_opinion_poll_telhami/08_arab_opinion_poll_telhami.pdf.

had dominated the New Arab Cold War.⁵ Moreover, Arab nationalism suffered from association with the repressive republics the Uprising was targeting, notably the Syrian regime. While previously Arab regimes and publics had agreed on sovereignty as a defense against Western imperialism, in the discourse wars over Libya and Syria, a major portion of Arab opinion embraced the Western norm, “responsibility to protect,” legitimizing Western intervention, although majorities had second thoughts after casualties soared in Libya.⁶

In the longer run, if the Arab states are democratized, citizens may be more able to identify with the state as “theirs” and possibly have less need for a supra-state Arab or Islamic identity. If the Uprisings foster identification with the individual states at the expense of supra-state identities, what the West does in Palestine or in its “war on terror” may cease to inflame the region against it to the degree that has been previously seen, and states that legitimize themselves with the discourse of resistance would be weakened and, in fact the Uprisings pushed Pan-Arab issues, including Palestine, into the background. Identities can, of course, co-exist and there is no *necessary* conflict between state and Pan-Arab or Pan-Islamic identity and states can legitimize themselves as defenders of Arab-Islamic causes. Indeed, emerging aspirants for regional leadership, whether Turkey, Iran or a re-empowered Egypt, would, for this reason, still need to champion the Palestinians.

However, the immediate consequence of the Uprising has been to precipitate identity discord, with struggles between secular and Islamic visions of statehood inside several states, notably Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, which seems to be retarding consolidation of agreed state identities. While initially the increased trans-state power of Islamic movements manifest in the Uprisings appeared to heighten Islamic identity at the expense of the state, the fightback of the “deep state” manifest in Egypt and Syria, was indicative of a continuing stalemate over identity.

Moreover, there are many variants of Islam and they have not been uniformly empowered by the Uprising and indeed, have often been in conflict.⁷ The initial main beneficiary was the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) from its electoral prowess. The Brotherhood’s agenda was largely compatible with the neo-liberal regional order since it legitimized incorporation into the global capitalist market and mostly sought to culturally Islamize the individual states. However, the simultaneous rise of Brotherhood branches toward the levers of power in several states, plus, the financial support provided by Qatar and their kinship with Turkey’s successful variant of democratic Islam seemed to be constituting a formidable Pan-Islamic network—until the Brotherhood suffered several reverses, notably in Egypt.

5 Ahmad H. Rahim, “Whither Political Islam and the Arab Spring,” *The Hedgehog Review*, Fall, 2011, Vol.13 No.3; Yassine Tamlali, “The ‘Arab Spring’: Rebirth or Final Throes of Pan-Arabism?”, *Perspectives*, No.2, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2011, p.46-9.

6 Shibley Telhami, “The Striking Arab Openness to Intervention,” *The National Interest*, 4 April 2011, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-striking-arab-openness-intervention-5109%3Fpage%3Dshow>.

7 Anissa Haddadi, “The Arab Spring and Islam: Politics, Religion, Culture and the Struggle for Identity,” *International Business Times*, October 24, 2011, <http://m.ibtimes.com/the-arab-spring-and-islam-politics-religion-culture-and-the-struggle-for-identity-236538.html>.

In parallel, anti-imperialist Islamic movements were weakened. *Hizbollah's* support for the Asad regime has made it vulnerable to accusations that it followed a *Shia* sectarian, rather than an Arab nationalist, agenda. Al-Qaida's anti-imperialist Pan-Islamism targeting the Western "far enemy" that had seemed so potent in the 2000s seemed weakened when its new leader, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, denounced the principle of majority rule, defying the yearning of Muslim populations for democracy. To be sure, it enjoyed new opportunities to establish a presence in the failing states of Libya, Yemen, Iraq and Syria where it and similar jihadis promoted a trans-state Islamic identity hostile to the West as well as secular regimes; but in attacking the Syrian regime, its interests in practice coincide with those of the West.⁸ Finally, *Salafi* fundamentalist currents mobilized by Riyadh appeared on the rise as they penetrated the republics, and enjoyed electoral success, notably in Egypt. Turned against Iran as part of the Saudi's geo-political struggle, the *salafis'* mobilization deepened the sectarian character of Islamic identity, empowering Sunni militants against *Shias*. Syria and Iraq were the most violent battlegrounds of this conflict, with Saudi Arabia/Qatar and Iran promoting the warring sides. As Dergham put it, "The smell of sectarian wars is becoming ever more redolent across the whole region,"⁹ increasing insecurity and defensive sectarian solidarity in Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and Iraq.

The Regional Level: The Inter-state Power Struggle

The Uprising both intensified the regional struggle for power and shifted the balance between the antagonists. Its immediate effect was to reshuffle regional states into two categories, regional powers that competed to affect the outcomes and states that, having experienced Uprisings, were the object of this competition. In the first category were three rival *regional powers*, Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, that had enough power resources and enough immunity to the Uprisings to be in contention to shape the post-Uprisings regional order. They each sought to shift the domestic balance in the Uprising states so as to bring to power (or prevent the fall of) friendly forces, hence to expand (or protect) their spheres of influence. On the other hand, Uprisings made what had been two previous major players, Egypt and Syria, arenas of competition among the contending regional powers. While they were the main prizes in the regional contest, lesser prizes included Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen; also battlegrounds were Iraq and Lebanon, where unconsolidated regimes and fragmented societies were highly vulnerable to spill over of the conflicts unleashed by Uprisings in their neighbors.

Over three years into the Arab Uprisings, the main cleavage remained that between the pro and anti-Western coalitions, but their struggle was increasingly framed in sectarian terms; expressive of sectarianization, Sunni Turkey, Qatar and Hamas had de-aligned from the Resistance axis. The balance between the two sides had not, however,

8 Gilad Stern and Yoram Schweitzer, *In their Own Words: Al Qaeda's View of the Arab Spring*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 30, 2011, www.fpri.org.

9 Raghida Dergham, "The Dangerous Upcoming Year after the Arab Spring", *Al Arabiya*, January 1, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/views/2012/01/01/185692.html?PHPSESSID=tf100ia5sumf4g26s3kc76b9u4>.

been decisively transformed. The resistance axis lost much of its pre-Uprising soft power but still survived. On the other hand, Egypt and Iraq were loosened from their American moorings and avoided full alignment with either side, with their foreign policies sharply contested by rival domestic forces.¹⁰

Of the three rival contending powers, Iran—hence the resistance axis—initially appeared most weakened. Iran suffered from greater domestic vulnerabilities, having just turned back the challenge of the Green Uprising. Its economy was being constricted by international sanctions. Iran lost soft power from support for the Asad regime and the limited attractiveness of the Iranian model, compared to Turkey, for the emergent democracies. It suffered from the decline of *Hizbollah's* regional standing and the break of Hamas from the Resistance axis. The main threat to Iran was the prospect that its most important ally, Syria's Asad regime, might be replaced by Western-installed expatriates or a hostile *Salafi* regime aligned with Saudi Arabia. In that case, Iran's ability to support Hezbollah and be a player in the Arab-Israeli arena—important to the regime's legitimacy—would be damaged. On the defensive, Iran sought to create via Iraq (where post-US occupation, the move of the Maliki regime against Sunni rivals made it more dependent on Iran), a corridor linking Iran to Syria and the Lebanese coast, allowing Iran to supply *Hizbollah* and providing the Asad regime with a two-sided buffer that could help it survive.¹¹ With the 2013 election of President Rouhani and the initiation of negotiations with the US/West over Iran's nuclear program, Iran's extreme isolation was at least temporarily eased.

From the viewpoint of the pro-Western monarchies, the overthrow of Mubarak in Egypt, near-state collapse in Yemen, and the potentially contagious *Shia* Uprising in Bahrain appeared to be so many opportunities for Iran and the Resistance Axis. But the monarchies proved more resilient than the republics in dampening the domestic threat of the Uprisings via a combination of repression, most obvious in Bahrain; political concession, most obvious in Morocco, and economic blandishments to citizens, most obvious in Saudi Arabia where \$97 billion USD worth of jobs and benefits were promised, the equivalent to \$5,000/citizen. The GCC was informally upgraded into a "Holy Alliance" to contain the democratic threat, with the richer monarchies transferring billions to the poorer ones (Morocco, Jordan, Oman and Bahrain) and using petrodollars to promote *salafism*, e.g. against the democratic youth in Egypt. For the Saudis, Yemen was becoming a failed state on their soft underbelly where al-Qaida and pro-Iranian elements were finding space to operate but they managed a controlled transfer of power

10 Paul Salem, "Arab Spring' has yet to alter region's strategic balance", May 9, 2011, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2011/05/middle-east-arab-spring-has-yet-to-alter-regions-strategic-balance-.html>.

11 Kayhan Barzegar, "Iran's Interests and Values and the 'Arab Spring'", Op-Ed, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, April 20, 2011; Nazanine Metghalchi, "Is Iran Immune From The Arab Spring?", Analysis, FRIDE, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/08102011-is-iran-immune-from-the-arab-spring-analysis/>, October 8, 2011; Jubin Goodarzi, "Syria and Iran at the Crossroads," *Muftah*, Nov 30, 2011, <http://muftah.org/?p=2081>.

in Sana that preserved their influence in the country. The GCC also took advantage of the vacuum left by the marginalization of the key Arab republics and of its bloc vote in the Arab League to bid for Pan-Arab leadership: it used the League to legitimize Western intervention against Qaddafi, an old monarchic foe, and then against Syria, where it aimed to break the Resistance Axis that had repeatedly attacked the legitimacy of its Western alignments, notably during the wars in Lebanon (2006) and Gaza (2008).¹² However, the monarchies suffered from a certain backlash in the Uprising states they sought to penetrate: both Qatar's *al-Jazeera* TV station and Saudi funding of *salafis* were resented in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. Then, the cohesion of the GCC suffered a dramatic reversal with Qatar's 2014 ostracism owing to its support for the regional project of the Muslim Brotherhood, which most of the monarchies saw as a threat to their Islamic legitimacy

Turkey represented a third pole, democratic-capitalist and also more independent of the West than the monarchies. Turkey had, prior to the Uprising, situated itself as balancer between the two rival pre-Uprising blocs, even tilting toward the resistance axis in reaction to the US destabilization of Iraq, which had empowered Kurdish separatism. Its "zero-problems" policy of good relations and business deals with non-democratic neighbors was a bid to assert regional leadership, but the Uprising initially threatened Ankara's standing in the region. The Libya crisis, where Turkey opposed Western intervention, angered the eventually triumphant opposition; the Uprising in Syria, the showcase of the zero-problems policy, cost Turkey economic opportunities, the anti-Kurdish alliance with Damascus, and good relations with Iran, as the two backed opposing sides. As, however, Turkey shifted its stance to back the "people" against authoritarian governments, it seemed better positioned to benefit from the Uprisings. Prime Minister Erdoğan was welcomed in Egypt as a hero (where he was by far the most popular world leader). The congruity of Turkey's political system—a democracy that incorporates Islamic forces—with regional popular aspirations; its alignment with rising business/Islamist coalitions similar to the AKP in the new Egypt and Tunisia; and the economic prowess which enabled it to build interdependences with the Uprising states, empowered Turkey's bid for regional leadership. Ankara could be the main influence in Damascus should the opposition triumph. Yet, as the Syrian Uprising deepened into intractable conflict, Turkey looked impotent to control the turmoil on its own borders, much less to bid for regional leadership and was forced to turn back to the West to deal with the fallout. And the overthrow of President Morsi in Egypt removed a kindred leader and put Ankara at odds with Cairo's new military rulers.

Three years into the Uprising, therefore, the three contending regional powers each had strengths and weaknesses, with none able to take decisive advantage of the Uprising

12 Christen Coate Ulrichsen, "Counterrevolution in the Gulf," May, 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/05/06/counterrevolution_in_the_gulf?page=0,1; Christian Koch, "The Gulf and the Arab Spring," *Gulf Research Center*, November 1, 2011; Nael Shehadeh, "Economic Costs, the Arab Spring and the GCC," November 4, 2011; Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "The Arab Regional System and the Arab Spring," in S Calleya and M Wohlfeld, *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, University of Malta, 2012.

to establish hegemony. Iran, initially, on the defensive, seemed to recover its balance while Turkey and the monarchies appeared to overreach themselves and suffered reversals, especially as the rising Sunni Islamism they promoted fragmented and was repulsed by secular forces.

The Global Level: MENA in the Core-periphery Hierarchy

After an attempt starting in the 1990s to impose a Pax Americana on the region, US power appeared, by mid-2000s, to be receding owing to the failure of the peace process, the regional perception that the war on terror was a war on Islam, and the invasion of Iraq, which inadvertently empowered Iran and provoked counter-balancing against the US even by its Turkish ally. Rival powers were penetrating the region, with Russia and China developing stakes in arms sales, energy and trade.

The Arab Uprisings potentially reversed this Western recession. The Uprising in Libya presented an opportunity for the US to reverse perceptions that US power in the region was declining (in the face of the resistance axis). The historic ideological resistance to the West of Arab nationalism collapsed as opposition groups called for foreign intervention against their own governments. The US hegemon benefited from the empowerment of the GCC, while states where US-friendly regimes fell (Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen) were too dependent to turn against Washington. The main checks on Washington, the resistance axis and China and Russia, lost soft power and appeared to be on the wrong side of the region's turn to democratization. If the main struggle in the region was over the competing bids of the US and Iran for regional hegemony, the Uprising in Syria provided the former with an opportunity to debilitate the Resistance axis. Not only that, as *Hizbollah* and various *al-Qaida* avatars fought each other in Syria, Washington's two most formidable non-state enemies were wearing each other down.

The West was not, however, able to fully capitalize on regional disarray for several reasons. First, Russia started actively contesting Western intervention in the region, with Syria the showcase of this "New Cold War." Second, the economic crisis in the West constrained the interventionist impulse, while in the US, in particular, fatigue at highly costly interventions led the Obama's administration to retreat to off-shore balancing, "leading from behind," and proving particularly reluctant to fully involve itself in the Syrian quagmire. Indeed, the region's landscape of failed states, warring movements and competing regional powers, appeared much more resistant to great power management than it had done in the previous two decades.

Notwithstanding this, key regional states became even *more* economically vulnerable to Western penetration owing to the economic collapse resulting from Uprisings. Western IFIs reframed the Uprisings, actually against global neo-liberalism and its crony capitalist manifestations in MENA, as revolts against the intrusive state and rentier monopolies; this was to be addressed by enhanced competition from *further opening* to global finance capital. Thus, they exploited the post-Uprisings economic crises

to make badly needed loans conditional on this opening.¹³ This had implications for regional democratization: since the dominance of global finance capital tends to hollow out democracy, the outcome of the MENA Uprisings is likely to be what Robinson¹⁴ calls “low intensity democracy,” limited to the political sphere, with countries locked into international agreements that remove the big socio-economic issues from democratic accountability and with all political parties pursuing similar economic policies, much as in the West itself. This is likely to produce disillusionment with democracy as it fails to deliver governments responsive to the electorate. Politicians, unable to decide on or deliver on questions of “who gets what,” between rich and poor will fall back on identity politics for mobilizing their constituents, deepening sectarian and secular-Islamist cleavages.

Outcomes At Year Three

Regional consequences of the Uprising over three years after it began, are exemplified by three pivotal cases: 1) the persistence of dependence, seen in constraints on Egyptian foreign policy; 2) the failure of liberal peace, seen in Turkey-Syria relations; 3) the debilitation of the state and spread of trans-state sectarianism, most apparent in Iraq and Syria.

Egypt: The Persistence of Dependency

With the fall of Mubarak in Egypt’s revolution, the country became the potential swing power where a possible major change in foreign policy would be decisive for the regional power balance. Indeed, Cairo early signaled its intention to pursue a foreign policy independent of the rival alignments in the region and to restore its traditional leadership position in the Arab world. Moreover, the revolution was widely seen as Egypt’s chance to reassert its independence from the United States. Dependence on the US was widely seen as the main threat to Egypt’s autonomy but was especially unacceptable because of Washington’s strong support for Israel. The main threat to Egypt’s territorial security was a much more powerful Israel, which constrained its sovereignty over Sinai and was seen by most Egyptians as an enemy state despite the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. Under Mubarak, balancing against these threats was implausible and Egypt instead bandwagoned with the US (at least partly to contain the Israeli threat). While no dramatic reversal of Egypt’s alliance with Washington was to be expected during the military dominated post-Mubarak transition, with the 2012 election of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Muhammad Morsi, as president, “Mubarakism” appeared on the way out. Remarkably, however, despite widespread expectations in Egypt, the post-revolutionary change in leadership produced neither a move toward balancing against these threats, nor toward restoring Egypt’s Arab leadership.

13 Adam Hanieh, “International Aid and Egypt’s Orderly Transition,” *Jadaliyya*, May 29, 2011, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1711/egypts-‘orderly-transition’-international-aid>.

14 William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

It was soon clear that Egypt's politicians were caught between the pervasive anti-Americanism of their constituents and inherited dependencies on the US, which could withhold crucial resources: the arms that sustained the bloated military, the economic aid that Egyptian governments needed to overcome the economic crisis precipitated by the Uprising. The military swung between its material stake in the US relationship and its need for legitimacy by occasionally playing the anti-US card in public discourse; the Muslim Brotherhood was caught between the anti-American sentiments of its rank and file followers and President Morsi's need of US and IMF support to empower his market strategy, satisfy the rich businessmen in the Muslim Brotherhood's inner core and power an economic recovery needed to satisfy the electorate. In a period of democratization, public pressures to restructure the US relationship--making it less asymmetric and less conditional on serving Israel's interests--required all rivals to rhetorically eschew Mubarak's perceived submissiveness to Washington. But actually pursuing a foreign policy independent of the US was another matter.¹⁵

Even more of a domestic liability was Egypt's relationship with Israel. Mubarak's complicity in Israel's blockade of Gaza was a major cause of his legitimacy deficit. Democratization and Egypt's Arab role conception both generated pressures to reverse the normalization of relations with Israel that deepened under Mubarak. A Muslim Brotherhood government was bound to be under especially strong pressure from its constituency to defend Egypt's Palestinian brethren, all the more so since a branch of the brotherhood, Hamas, ruled in Gaza.

Yet good relations with Washington were contingent on sustaining Egypt's peace with Israel. Moreover, Cairo's drive to reassert sovereignty over Sinai against both Camp David constraints and trans-state Islamist militants who could drag Egypt into conflict with its more powerful neighbor, gave Egypt a shared interests with Israel in stabilizing their common border.

The Gaza conflict of November 2012 was a test of whether Morsi could change Egyptian foreign policy: he was pulled between the expectations of the West and his constituency: thus, while ex-US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, warned that Egypt would sacrifice US aid if it did not clamp down on Hamas, Egyptian political parties, activists and the media called on Morsi to sever relations with Israel. Morsi sent his prime minister to Gaza, recalled the Egyptian ambassador from Israel, met with Hamas leaders and organized anti-Israeli demonstrations. Yet he offered little material support and, rather, assumed a Mubarak-like attempt to broker between Hamas and Israel; and the outcome of the ceasefire negotiations, while supposedly easing Israel's blockade of Gaza, also committed Egypt to intensify its own efforts, on Israel's behalf, to stop arms deliveries via Sinai into Gaza.

15 Shadi Hamid, "Beyond Guns And Butter: A U.S.-Egyptian Relationship For A Democratic Era," *Middle East Memo*, No. 22, Saban Center, Brookings Institute, April, 2012; Samuel Tadros, "The Muslim Brotherhood And Washington: Courtship And Its Discontents", *Middle East Media Monitor*, FPRI E-Note, April, 2012.

Asserting regional leadership and diversifying dependences potentially allowed Egypt to increase its bargaining power in dealing with the US and Israel. Post-revolutionary Egypt, with its new democratic legitimacy and under a president from the parent organization of the modernist Islam that was rising across the region and also ruled in Turkey and Tunisia, was potentially well positioned to recover a regional role. Balancing between the pro-US and pro-Iranian camps could maximize Egypt's value to both. Yet, as Salem observed, contemporary Egypt is not that of Nasser's day.¹⁶ The bi-polarity that had allowed Nasser to diversify dependency is a thing of the past. Then Egypt was the strongest state and largest economy in the Arab world. Today's Egypt is impoverished and its revolution considerably exacerbated its economic troubles, making it extremely vulnerable to not only to IMF and US demands and constraints but also to those of the Gulf States. The imbalance of power with Israel, combined with dependency on the US, constrained Egypt's ability to soft-balance against Israel, hence stunting the capacity to defend Arab-Islamic causes that is needed for regional leadership.

Egypt's potential for regional leadership was also debilitated by the three-cornered internal struggle for power among the revolutionary youth (in coalition with, notably, leftists and secularists), the Islamists, and the military (together with the remnants of the old regime). Affecting this struggle, Egypt's political process was penetrated and distorted by outside financial flows: the US funded the liberals and the military, Qatar the Muslim Brotherhood and Saudi Arabia the *salafis*, giving all of them potential leverage over Egypt's foreign policy. As a result, public opinion, which in the aftermath of the revolution was expected to be empowered, was by 2013 too disunited to matter much. President Morsi had to move cautiously, negotiating between his MB constituency and the security establishment, which stood for continuity in foreign policy, often deferring to the latter, and eschewing decisive choices.

Morsi did seem to want a more independent foreign policy. If Mubarak had increasingly omni-balanced with (or appeased) US and Israeli power to get the resources to deal with his main threat, the Islamist opposition within, Morsi sought to diversify dependencies and to ride the wave of regional Islamism to acquire the resources to soft balance against Israel and the US. In his post-election visit to Washington, he suggested that Egypt's continued peace with Israel was conditional on whether the US would "live up to its own Camp David commitment to Palestinian self-rule".¹⁷ Post-revolutionary Egypt's jettisoning of Mubarak's anti-Iran enmity and Morsi's attempt to broker a settlement of the Syrian crisis via a contact group that would include Iran also appeared harbingers of an independent foreign policy.

16 Paul Salem, "Mursi Moves to Rebuild Egypt's Mideast Leadership Role," *Al-Monitor*, October 5, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/morsi-egypt-regional-role.html#ixzz2EI3bQyZF2012>.

17 David D. Kirkpatrick and Steven Erlanger, "Egypt's New Leader Spells Out Terms for U.S.-Arab Ties", *The New York Times Online*, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/world/middleeast/egyptian-leader-mohamed-morsi-spells-out-terms-for-us-arab-ties.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&: last accessed 09/11/12.

But the results were meager. The Syrian initiative went nowhere, with the Saudi's rejecting cooperation with Iran. Full diplomatic relations were not even re-established with Tehran.¹⁸ And Morsi's most high-profile foreign policy initiative, the Gaza ceasefire, kept Egypt embroiled in defending Israel against Gaza militants as under Mubarak. Thus, alterations in Egypt's policy were mostly symbolic and aimed at affecting the domestic power balance. Then Morsi's overthrow restored what could be called "Mubarakism without Mubarak," with the new military authorities collaborating with Israel to squeeze Hamas in Gaza in parallel with their repression of the Brotherhood at home. The expectations of realists that external constraints would sharply dilute pressures issuing from revolution and democratization for a foreign policy transformation in Egypt appeared to be validated.

Failure of Liberal Peace: Turkey- Syria Relations

The year 2000 rise of the AKP government to power initiated a transformation in Turkey's Middle East policy. By contrast to preceding *Kemalist* governments that had eschewed involvement in the Middle East and hard balanced against threats from it, the AKP pursued a policy of "zero problems" with its neighbors, seeking to ameliorate the region's interminable conflicts by exporting to it the liberal practices of the zone of peace.¹⁹ The primary instrument of this policy was economic, transport and energy integration with its neighbors that would enable the export, as well, of Turkish business in need of new markets. At the political level, Turkey now had the ambition to fill what it saw as an enduring post-Ottoman power vacuum. It tried to legitimize this bid for hegemony in the ethnically different Arab world by appeal to shared Islamic civilization, with brothers said to have been artificially severed by Western-imperialist imposed borders at the time of Ottoman collapse, and through Erdoğan's high profile discourse in defense of the Palestine cause (accompanied by clashes with Israel).

Turkey's ambitions made good relations with contiguous Syria of first importance and, indeed, Syria became the showcase of its zero-problems strategy. As relations improved, the trans-state issues that had hitherto been occasions of conflict, notably the disputed Turkish annexation of Iskenderun and Kurdish separatism, which Syria had supported, were quickly resolved. The issue of Euphrates river water sharing, over which previously both sides had taken rigid positions based on rights or sovereignty, was now de-securitized, allowing trans-state links between irrigation bureaucracies to stimulate cooperation over water-management. Historic trade ties ruptured at the breakup of the Ottoman Empire began to be reestablished. A free trade agreement was signed in December 2004 and trade rapidly increased. Turkey was seeking to build a regional economic belt extending towards the Arab and Gulf area and Syria, as a member of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area

18 Ahmad Morsy, "An Eager Iran and Hesitant Egypt: Relations Before and After the Arab Spring," *Muftah*, September 13, 2012, muftah.org/an-eager-iran-hesitant-egypt-relations-before-after-the-arab-spring/.

19 A Murinson, "The strategic depth doctrine of Turkish foreign policy", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 6, 2006, p.945-964.

(GAFTA), provided a key to this larger Arab market; Syria, for its part sought access, via Turkey, to European markets. The opening of borders to passage without visas was meant to blur the territorial demarcations between the states. Infrastructure and energy pipeline projects were proposed that would make the two states an international energy hub. These growing interdependences were accompanied by explicit discourse, notably from Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, claiming that the partners were constructing a security community, expected in Ankara to pull Syria into the orbit of the liberal peace; in Damascus, the stress was put on the partnership as a counter-balance to the destabilizing intervention of the US in the Middle East.

However, this project came to an abrupt halt amidst the Syrian Uprising. When Asad dismissed Turkey's calls to carry out political reforms and instead continued repressing the protestors, Turkey sacrificed its ties with the Asad regime, helped organize the Syrian opposition and gave it safe haven to operate an insurgency from Turkish territory. With renewed Turkey-Syria hostility, mutual threat perceptions escalated. Asad's new enmity to the AKP was driven by the existential threat from Ankara's support for the Uprising. Turkey's anti-Asad stance requires more explanation since it was sacrificing not only economic ties but also security cooperation against the PKK, hitherto the major threat to Turkey. However, the AKP was convinced that repressive dictatorships had become a serious threat to its ambition for a pacific neighborhood; certainly Asad's use of violence against unarmed protestors would have been seen as incompatible with a liberal peace. The Turkish government apparently also miscalculated that the Asad regime could not long survive the Uprising. Ankara also saw the stimulus given to both democracy and to political Islam by the Arab Uprisings as a unique opportunity for Turkey to translate soft power into regional hegemony and this required supporting the Syrian opposition. Were the Muslim Brothers to come to power in Damascus, the AKP could expect to enjoy special influence there. Turkey was positioning itself to become the big brother of the fledgling Arab democracies.

In the immediate term, however, the earlier achievements of the liberal peace were rapidly lost as each side sacrificed the shared benefits of cooperation and resumed the use of trans-state interdependencies *against the other*. Turkey imposed economic sanctions on Syria, which responded by ending the free trade arrangements that had favored Turkey, ousting Turkish investors and obstructing Turkey's transit links to the Gulf. The Syria-Turkey border, which had been open during the rapprochement, allowing dense cross-border family, tourism and trade ties, was now re-militarized and the border areas suffered economic losses. Davutoğlu announced the suspension of the High Level Strategic Council that had facilitated cooperation over issues such as water. Sunni Islamic identity became an element in Turkey's armory against the secular/Alawi regime in Damascus; Syria threatened to retaliate by reviving support for the Kurdish PKK and indeed it allowed a PKK-affiliated party to take over much of its Kurdish border zone with Turkey. Turkey tried to head off this threat by striking an alliance with Iraq's KDP to restrain the PKK and later by entering into peace negotiations with the PKK. It also gave safe haven and arms access to anti-PKK Syrian Islamists. However, the inability of Turkey to affect

the ever escalating turmoil in Syria, which periodically spilled across its border, seemed to cast doubt on Turkey's capacity to act as a regional liberal hegemon.

In retrospect, the security community the two country's leaderships had envisioned as the end goal of intensified cooperation was exposed, at least from a liberal perspective, as lacked the solid foundation of common liberal political systems. The costs of abandoning it were, however, high: Turkey's attempt to export democracy to its neighbor had much the same effect as the earlier US attempt in Iraq: collapse into a failed state.²⁰

State Deconstruction and Trans-state Sectarianization: Syria and Iraq

Post-Uprising deconstruction of the state and the resulting empowerment of the trans-state level was most exaggerated in Syria and Iraq. Iraq' state apparatus had already been de-constructed by the 2003 US invasion and occupation, which decapitated the central government and dissolved the army and bureaucracy. The US-constructed new regime institutionalized sectarianism: the constitution, electoral arrangements and the party system fostered sectarian solidarities producing permanent *Shia* governing majorities, while the reconstructed military and police were filled with the clients of *Shia* factions. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki used appointments to the army, clientalism, sectarian solidarity and, ironically, both US and Iranian support, to establish semi-patrimonial governance in Baghdad. The alienated *Sunnis* became the backbone of the insurgency against the US occupation and its client regime. In parallel, the Kurdish north was separated under an autonomous government with its own militias and oil resources. A debilitated Iraqi state lacked full control over its territory, was incapable of maintaining security or delivering services, and faced separatist tendencies in each of its three major regions. A decade after the US invasion, the country was increasingly Balkanized, with people afraid to venture into areas affiliated with the opposing identity, and sectarianism the main tool by which politicians mobilized their communal constituencies. It appears that, once deconstructed, a state cannot so easily be put back together.

The Syrian Uprising led to a similar de-struction of the state in Syria. Although anti-government protests in Syria began with a cross-sectarian discourse, they took on an ever more Sunni Islamist cast against an Alawi dominated regime. The mostly Sunni protestors felt empowered by the rising influence of Sunni movements across the region and particularly that of the Muslim Brotherhood whose Syrian branch was the historical alternative to the *Ba'th* regime. Initial centers of the Uprising were mixed areas where *Alawis* and Sunni lived together, such as Latakia, Banias and Homs or areas of concentrated Sunni religiosity, such as Hama. Fatally, the regime also played the sectarian card to rally its minority core by depicting the opposition as Islamist terrorists and unleashing violent *Alawi* militias against it. The regime discourse of Islamist terror became a self-fulfilling

²⁰ For extensive analysis and documentation of the tangent of Turkey-Syria relations, see Raymond Hinnebusch and Özlem Tür, *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Amity and Enmity*, Abington, UK, Ashgate, 2013.

prophecy: government violence radicalized Sunnis and, in time, led to defections from the army and an armed resistance to the regime, the Free Syrian Army. Escalating violence led to massive exit of the secular upper middle and middle classes, leaving a vacuum filled by radical Islamist fighters from the countryside or who flooded in from around the region. While the Uprising was essentially indigenous, external forces sought to use it to their advantage. Qatar's *al-Jazeera* amplified the Uprising while the Saudis funneled money and arms to the tribes. The Asad regime's only chance of slipping out of this tightening stranglehold lay in its links to Hezbollah in the west and, in the east, to Iran and Iraq, both *Shia* powers. It increasingly relied on Iran for financial and counter-insurgency support, on *Hezbollah* fighters and on Iraqi oil. Thus, Syria became a regional battleground, the conflict framed in *Sunni-Shia* terms quite similar to Iraq. Three years into the Uprising, the country was a failed state, split between government controlled areas, such as Damascus and the western coast, a countryside under a fragmented patchwork of local Islamist insurgencies, the northeast under Kurdish control, and parts of the east under control of tribes with links to the *Sunni* tribal areas of Iraq.

The Arab Uprising unleashed forces that threatened to further destabilize the fragile Iraqi regime as well. Regular mass *Sunni* protests in the Western provinces started against Maliki's use of anti-terrorism laws to target Sunni politicians, with tribal leaders defying the Baghdad government and raising the discourse of separatism. Moreover, the conflict in Syria soon spilled over into Iraq, symptomatic of the trans-state tribes and identity groups that Western-imposed boundaries had cut across, but which were now increasingly porous as state power collapsed. The al-Maliki government, fearing the rise of a Sunni-dominated government in Damascus would strengthen the alienated Sunnis in Iraq's western provinces, and perceiving a Saudi-Qatari-Turkish plot to spread Syria's Sunni insurgency to Iraq, aligned with Asad. In contrast, the western Sunni-majority provinces of Iraq supported the Syrian insurgents. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, the tribes and mosques of *Deir al-Zur* had provided significant numbers of fighters and weapons to Iraqi insurgents in Anbar province; now the situation was reversed as Euphrates Valley tribes in Iraq sent money, weapons and fighters to support their Syrian cousins in *Deir al-Zur*. They attacked *Sadr* *Shia* militias traveling to Syria to support the Asad regime.²¹ Anbar province became an arms supply route from Saudi Arabia to the Syrian insurgents. Violence by al-Qaida insurgents in Iraq increased in parallel with their presence in Syria and in 2014 they seized parts of the cities of Ramadi and Falluja. Syrian insurgents crossed the Iraqi border to attack Syrian regime forces taking refuge on Iraqi soil, even killing Iraqi troops. A "Free Iraqi Army," mimicking the Free Syrian Army, was formed and Syrian activists called for a revolution in Syria and Iraq that would "quench the fire of Magi" [a derogatory reference to *Shiites* and *Alawis*].

There was considerable potential for state de-construction to accelerate. A victory by *Sunni* insurgents in Syria would possibly mean support for Iraqi *Sunnis* from an Islamist Syrian government as well as from Saudi Arabia which had never accepted a

21 Carsten Wieland, *Syria: A Decade of Lost Chances: Repression and Revolution from Damascus Spring to Arab Spring*, Seattle, Cune Press 2012, p. 206.

Shia-governed Iraq; the Iraqi *Shia* regime would draw closer to Iran for protection. Iraq would again become the front line in the *Sunni-Shi'a* war from which a possible partition of the country between the *Sunni* West and *Shia* east could not be excluded.

Furthermore, Kurdish national ambitions were strengthened by the state weakening issuing from the US invasion of Iraq and the Syrian Uprising. Syria's northwest Kurdish regions, effectively autonomous since Damascus lost control of its territory, had trans-state links to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) controlling Iraqi Kurdistan and which competed with the PKK to influence Syrian Kurds. In parallel, Turkey played a dangerous balancing game of strengthening, in order to coopt, the KRG, hence separating it from Baghdad. If Syrian Kurds extract recognized legal autonomy from a post-Asad government, alongside a virtually independent Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, the demonstration effect may be hard to contain among Kurds in Turkey and Iran. Multiple autonomous Kurdish regions would be a first step toward carving a new united Kurdistan out of the MENA states system. The unmaking of the Versailles-imposed Westphalian system which, a hundred years ago denied Kurdish national aspirations, was no longer unthinkable. As Barkey pointed out, Syria and Iraq are both at the "cusp" of Arab-Kurdish, Persian-Kurdish and Turkish-Kurdish divisions: "Before it has run its course [the Syrian Uprising] could undo multiple existing regimes and even alter the region's post-World War I territorial boundaries."²²

Conclusion

Most liberal expectations about the democratizing effect of the Arab Uprising have not been realized *in the short run*. Rather than moves toward democratization strengthening the Arab republics, they have been weakened and the more so in the more identity-fragmented states, Syria and Iraq, but to a lesser degree even in more coherent ones like Egypt and Tunisia. In the former, the rapidity with which the weakening of the regimes empowered sectarian identities and allowed a growing trans-state merger of *Sunni-Shia* conflicts and Kurdish separatism in Syria and Iraq, indicates that, almost a century after their arbitrary creation by Western imperialism, in what Fromkin²³ appropriately named a "peace to end all peace," these states remain, in certain respects, "artificial". But everywhere trans-state forces, whether discourse, finance or arms and fighters, now penetrated states losing control of their borders. The trans-state public space deepened but the pre-Uprising inclusive Pan-Arab discourse of Arab satellite TV changed to the promotion of exclusionary sectarian discord both within and between states.

Rather than democratizing Uprisings making for a more autonomous region, they opened new fissures that outside powers have exploited. While most revolutions enhance nationalism, the Arab protestors invited Western intervention, notably in Libya and Syria,

22 Henri Barkey, "Spinoff: The Syrian Crisis and the Future of Iraq", December 2012.

23 David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East: 1914-1922*, London and NY, Penguin Press, 1989.

and the latter became a battleground of global powers. Egypt shows how dependency on external patrons increased, not diminished. While public opinion may matter more in states where leaders must face election, external constraints—the balance of power with neighbors, dependences on external patrons—are bound to substantially dilute its effect and no more so than in the weak states of the global periphery.

As for the narrative of democratic peace, the immediate consequence of the Uprising has been the *intensification* of the regional power struggle, nowhere more evident than in Turkey-Syria relations where pre-Uprising progress in establishing a zone of peace regressed into a zone of war, a casualty of the Uprising. The regional power struggle no longer takes the form of limited state-to-state conventional war but instead competitive interference in internal wars. In the resulting “new wars” no distinction is made between military and civilian opponents, hence casualties are enormous, with the more than 100,000 killed in Iraq followed by 30,000 in Libya and over 100,000—and-climbing in Syria, with similar refugee displacements in the millions.

The Uprising has also shifted the balance of power among the contenders in the regional struggle. It has weakened the Arab world generally by debilitating the historically key Arab powers, Egypt, Syria and Iraq (in the last case, this began with the 1990 Gulf war). Within the Arab world, the republics have been weakened while the oil-rich tribal monarchies have come through unscathed and well positioned to penetrate the republics through media power, use of their petrodollars and support for Islamists. Of the three main regional powers, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran, the former two aligned in backing Sunni movements, initially putting Iran on the defensive; and while Iran proved tenacious in materially defending its allies, Asad and *Hizbollah*, the reframing of their alliance from “resistance axis” against imperialism to manifestation of *Shia* sectarianism cost them their pre-Uprising soft power among regional publics.

In the longer run, the debilitation of the resistance axis may open the door to the possible future emergence of a liberal regional order built around a coalition of Turkey-led new business/Islamist democracies and the GCC states with their command of media and money, all under Western hegemony. Alternatively, a new era of deepened dis-order could be triggered by the spread of failed states, notably Syria and Iraq, exacerbated by the Israel-Palestine and US-Iran conflicts and by global great power rivalry over energy sources. The reality is likely to be a mix of these two scenarios.

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