

Arab exceptionalism?

A case study of Egypt's regime breakdown

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Abstract

The focus of this study is to examine how an authoritarian regime within the Arab world, remarkably stable and long deemed as inhospitable to democratic tendencies, ‘suddenly’ witnessed mass pro-democracy movements and ultimately regime breakdown. In this thesis the case of Egypt is discussed. Firstly, in an attempt at establishing the core working mechanisms of an authoritarian regime; the conclusion being that the answer lies in the regime’s hybrid nature coupled with its access to rents and international legitimacy, and factors which have sustained its coercive methods and capabilities; and not cultural or religious attributes of the region. Secondly, the core mechanisms resulting in the breakdown of the regime is established. Here again, the hybrid nature of the regime is argued to play a key role. With its periods of liberalization, civil society has been allowed space and, consequently, grown. These movements were later able to seize the opportunity and galvanize masses, spurred by the successful revolts in Tunisia and peoples’, long overdue, discontent with President Mubarak and the regime.

Keywords: Regime breakdown, Hybrid regime, Arab exceptionalism, 2011 revolts, Egypt

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1 Introduction

The revolts of 2011 taking place in Egypt and in the Middle East and North Africa (the MENA region)¹, termed as "The Arab Uprising", have resulted in the consequent upheaval of several authoritarian regimes in the region. What fundamental changes these predominantly non-violent pro-democracy revolts have set into motion remain to be seen. Presently however, the strong will of the regions inhabitants for obtaining democratic reform is being pronounced in a loud and clear voice. What the world has witnessed is a will and a pursuit that up until recent events has been assumed to be non-existent by numerous scholars studying the region. These uprisings were thus for many quite unexpected.

The MENA region has long been regarded as "the Arab exception", often characterized by scholars as the foremost example of an exception to the globalization of democracy by emphasizing the uniqueness of lack of democratic progress and remarkable resilience of the regimes², consequently leading to conclusions of a durable authoritarianism. Possible explanations for this have typically been that an autocratic nature, and thus rejection of democracy and democratic values, is something inherent to Arab and/or Muslim values and culture³. This way of reasoning however, not only fails to present a satisfying explanation; as shall be demonstrated later in this text, but also relays a concept of the people of the region as being inherently different to the West, and the rest of the democratic world.

The recent developments in the region pose an intriguing question: How have the Arab regimes, who according to experts been stable and resistant to democratic tendencies, suddenly been faced with extensive popular mobilization for some resulting in collapses as in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya; Egypt being of incomparable political importance to the region.

¹ By MENA region I refer to the following 20 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The Palestinian Authority is included since it recognised as a state within the Arab League. Five countries which are members of the Arab League are however excluded since they are situated further south in Africa and are typically not included when referring to the Middle East. These countries are: the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia and Sudan.

² Lebanon is currently the only Arab state in the MENA region that has ever been a democracy. When I refer to the Arab world the following 16 Arab states are included: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

³ See for example: Braizat 2010:131; Rothstein & Broms 2010:3.

1.1 Research questions and purpose

The overall research question is: *What factor(s) explain the regime breakdown in Egypt?*

The purpose of posing this question is to examine how an authoritarian regime, , regarded as remarkably resilient and reluctant to democratic transition within the MENA region, disintegrated as a result of popular protests calling for democratic reform; thereby challenging the depiction of the Middle East as static, unchangeable and predictable in regard to democratic progress.

In providing a greater understanding of the Egyptian case the following question will also be posed: *How was the Mubarak regime able to sustain its power?*

Through this question I attempt to crystallize the factors that made the Egyptian regime seemingly remarkably democracy-resistant. The intention of doing so, and of discussing Arab exceptionalism, is to deduce the motivating factors that led people to participate in the 2011 protests. A greater understanding of the regime's working mechanisms is helpful in understanding its ultimate breakdown. The enabling factors of the regime's stability have presumably declined progressively, ultimately leading to its downfall.

The presented thesis challenges the typical depiction of the democracy deficit in the region. The region's "exceptionalism" is traditionally considered as being due to cultural/religious factors. With emphasis on the specific case of Egypt, I attempt to provide an alternative explanation for the causes of Egypt's overdue democratic transition, which consequently ignited the mass protests, and ultimately, the upheaval of Egypt's authoritarian regime.

1.2 Delimitations

Egypt, one of the world's oldest states, has long played a unique and highly influential roll as the region's cultural, intellectual, religious and political centre. This history, coupled with the events of 2011, therefore makes Egypt an intriguing case study. With over 80 million inhabitants, Egypt is the most populated country in the Arab World, and bears great geopolitical importance as an intersection between Africa, Asia and Europe. Besides being a main non-NATO ally of the United States and the EU, Egypt plays a vital role in the region's continued peace with Israel. An in-depth understanding of the Egyptian regime's breakdown is in itself valuable, considering Egypt's outstanding position both regionally and globally. Egypt is among the first Arab countries to witness the disintegration of its regime following the mass demonstrations that took place early 2011. The example of Egypt can be helpful when attempting to explain the collapse of other regimes in the region, as well as in understanding the factors contributing to the regimes prior sturdiness.

Having made this general assumption, it should be noted that the main ambition of the thesis is not to draw general conclusions about the region as a whole, as that would require a comparative study, which this thesis is not. The thesis' results can, however, be implemented on a comparative basis, and its significant variables can be applied to other states in the region. The study is nonetheless indirectly comparative when considering that the variables are drawn from large-N studies.

The thesis focuses exclusively on Egypt, during the period of Mr. Mubarak's presidency between 1981-2011. Due to space limitations, I have chosen not to go into deep detail regarding certain stakeholders like the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and other opposition parties.

Furthermore, the foremost aim of the thesis is to understand the processes that inaugurated the Egyptian regime's dissolution; with the subordinate ambition of recognizing the factors that contributed to Arab exceptionalism though the latter will not be dealt with as extensively. Therefore, I refrain from testing all variables that have been equated in the trial to solve the question of "Arab exceptionalism", and instead focus on presenting the variables that have, after extensive research, been proven most reliable and adequate in explaining central elements of the authoritarian nature of the region and its regime's efficiency in sustaining its hegemony and power.

1.3 Method and theory

In the ambition of answering my proposed research questions I have conducted a case study. Since my main focus is to understand how an authoritarian regime in the Middle East, which has been viewed as remarkably stable and democracy resistant, could breakdown a case study seems appropriate for the purpose. Case studies are considered to be especially useful for gaining rich and detailed data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000), allowing for extensive analysis, and giving room for a greater understanding of the relationships between the case and the tested variables (Burnham 2004:55). I thus conduct explanatory research, in the sense that I attempt to find interrelations between the variables within the specific problem (Saunders et al. 2000).

I have chosen my theories and variables, drawn from established theories and proven significant in Large-N studies, from the premise that they will have the best value in understanding my case. In the case of a theory being of value, I will confirm its usefulness and possible needs of necessary adjustments will be highlighted.

The theories used to answer the first question: *What factor(s) explain the regime breakdown in Egypt* are mainly drawn from Brownlee (2009) and Hadenius & Teorell (2007) who focus on the effect of the political structure of regimes snared between liberal democracies and closed dictatorships on regime breakdown. They recognize that several "hybrid regimes", not least within the Middle East, do not clearly correspond to a particular democracy or dictatorship

cluster. The Egyptian regime, under the rule of Mubarak, was such an ambiguous state. The effect of “regime hybridity”, including the effect of prior liberalization, economic factors and the military’s institutionalization level, will be applied in attempting to explain the Egyptian regimes’ breakdown, since they have previously been established to have had an effect on regime breakdown

In regard to the second research question, the stability uniquely prevailing in many Arab regimes has sparked numerous studies devoted to solving the “Arab exceptionalism” puzzle, and several possible theories on the causes for the failed democratic transition in the region have been developed. The theoretical foundation used when attempting to answer the second research question: *How was the Mubarak regime able to sustain its power*, is predominantly drawn from Diamond (2009) and Bellin (2004), who focus on the authoritarian statecraft, and on the contributing factors to the Arab states’ apparent ruggedness. I here test the effect of regime hybridity as well; however with regard to its possible effects in sustaining regime power. The effect of rentier income as well as geopolitics in sustaining the Mubarak regime’s power is also discussed.

As mentioned, I pose the second research question for gaining a better understanding of the working mechanisms of the regime; which thus can help in understanding its ultimate breakdown. When considering this question, the “culturalist approach”, which was briefly introduced above, will also be tested and discussed more thoroughly.

In answering the questions of the study, the factors approached, albeit in various degrees depending on the question, are as follows: economical, political/structural and cultural.

For the theoretical framework I draw from relevant research articles, surveys, and news articles. The statistical material is taken from reliable sources as: Freedom House, Transparency International and the World Bank

1.3.1 Measuring the regime breakdown variables

- Regime hybridness: will be measured using Brownlee’s method (2009:523-4) based upon the World Bank’s database of political institutions (DPI index).⁴ Brownlee defines the three different categories of hybrid regimes as the following: Closed authoritarian if labelled 1 to 4 in the index; hegemonic authoritarian from 5 to 6; and competitive authoritarian system if it is categorized as 7 in the index.
- Economic variables: several economic indicators are tested with the use of the World Bank database; these are presented in section 4.1. Recent fluctuations or differences, confined to the last five to ten years, are considered to deduce the average change and its possible influence in igniting mass protests. .

4 The index is set up in seven steps according to the following categorization: 1 = no legislature, 2 = unelected legislature/executive, 3 = elected legislature/executive, one candidate/post, 4 = one party, multiple candidates, 5 = multiple parties are legal but only one party won seats, 6 = multiple parties did win seats but the largest party received more than 75percent of the seats, 7=largest party got less than 75percent (Brownlee 2009:523-4).

- Prior liberalization: the following Brownlee (2009:525) categorizations are used: “Regime-years that had received a civil liberty score of 5–7 (basic parameters of Freedom House’s ‘not free’ category) were coded as un-liberalized. Those regime-years with a lower, better rating on civil liberties (1–4) were coded as liberalized”.
- Military institutionalization: I use Bellin’s (2004) definition of what constitutes an institutionalized military, which is presented in section 4.4. I then mainly use Droz-Vincent (2011) study to assess whether the Egyptian military was institutionalized or not.

1.3.2 Measuring the Arab exception variables

- Culturalist approach: the findings of surveys, assessing the notion of an Arab exception being due to religious/cultural factors are used.
- Regime hybridness: I use the same operationalization as previously defined .
- Rents/geopolitics: the extent of Egypt’s rentier income from oil/gas rents (in % of GNP), as well as financial and military aid, are measured in accordance with Diamond’s (2009) and Bellin’s (2005) method.

1.4 Disposition

The following section, chapter 2, will provide a brief overview over Mr. Mubarak’s presidency. In chapter 3 a selection of dominating theories/hypotheses, on the prevalence of authoritarianism in the MENA are presented and assessed. In chapter 4 the relevance of the tested variables on regime breakdown are put forward and tested. Chapter 5 consists of a summarizing analysis of my findings.

The theoretical sections will be divided into two larger sections, following my inter-related research questions. The first section, titled “the Arab exception” (chapter 3), dealing with my *second* research question, focuses on the robustness of the regime. Section two, titled “Regime breakdown” (chapter 4), focuses on understanding the regime breakdown in Egypt and deals with the *first* research question. Each of these general sections will contain subsections addressing the above-mentioned factors, and each subsection will be followed by an immediate analysis where the variables’ validity is tested. The purpose of this structure is to facilitate the reader progression over several theories and variables.

2 Mubarak's presidency

Since the military coup of 1952, Egypt has been ruled by authoritarian regimes. Following President Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981, Hosni Mubarak, vice president and a high-ranking officer of the military air force, rose to power. Relative tolerance initially prevailed and the control and governing of activism was relaxed to an extent. Political prisoners were released, and the press was permitted to criticize government ministers (Brownlee 2007:124). President Mubarak's rule, however, grew increasingly authoritarian and intensified in the 1990s when civil and political rights became heavily restricted, and political opponents became increasingly repressed, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) experienced pronounced limitations. The Party Law was amended, and serious restrictions on political and human rights, limitations on press freedom were also implemented (Statcher 2004:216).

Sharing the region's democratic shortcomings, Egypt lacked free and transparent parliamentary elections. Through fraud, harassment and repression, the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), arranged obstructions and manipulations of the electoral process, allowing continuous results with a clear majority for the NDP, an organization without a unifying ideology (Sharp 2011:21). The regime however, seemed remarkably resilient a combination of oppressive laws and sophisticated security apparatus created serious obstacles against the emergence of any genuine political competition. The Emergency law allowed the state to bypass the Egyptian constitution, and bestowed security forces with seemingly unrestrained powers⁵ (Sundell 2006:17).

Tactics of control included the prohibition of strikes, the regulation and assimilation of several non-governmental organizations and trade unions⁶, media-censorship, restriction of public gatherings⁷, and the constriction of opposition

⁵See: Amnesty International, Egypt: Emergency law biggest threat to rights since "25 January revolution", 15/9/2011, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/egypt-emergency-law-biggest-threat-rights-%E2%80%9825-january-revolution%E2%80%99-2011-09-15>).

⁶ Restrictions on freedom of assembly were entrenched in Egyptian legislation and practice. The Emergency Law gave the authorities the power to "restrict people's freedom of assembly, movement, residence, or passage in specific times and places; arrest suspects or [persons who are] dangerous to public security and order [and] detain them; allow searches of persons and places without being restricted by the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code; and assign anyone to perform any of these tasks." The beformentioned can be exercised by a simple "oral or written order" (Article 3.1). Other existing legislation severely constrains freedom of assembly in Egypt, including Law No. 10 of 1914 on gatherings, which prescribes imprisonment and fines for individuals refusing orders to disperse from public gatherings composed of more than five people with the purpose of endangering "public peace" (Article 1). Similarly, Law No. 14 of 1923 relating to public meetings and demonstrations gives unfettered powers to security forces to disperse any demonstration deemed to endanger "public order" (Article 10) (Francis 2011).

⁷ Rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly were further restricted by the Anti-Terrorism Law (Law No. 97 of 1992) as the broad definition of terrorism existing under the

party activities⁸. Furthermore, political opposition and anti-regime sentimentalists were heavily restricted through legislation⁹.

2.1.1 Restriction of the opposition

Following the US occupation of Iraq in 2003, and the second Palestinian 'Initifada', Egypt's political sphere grew increasingly dynamic.¹⁰ The already active political protests intensified between 2004-05, and several parties and movements¹¹ grew increasingly influential. Among which were the: MB, The Kefaya Movement, Judges for Change, and the El Ghad (Sundell 2006).

The opposition spurred popular demands for political reform with focus on the amendment of the constitution, which would allow competitive presidential elections, ending the 'State of Emergency' and introducing fair and free elections. The movements propagated the demand for President Mubarak's resignation, and protested against corruption and the continued career of his son, Gamal Mubarak, within NDP ranks.¹²

In response, an intended revision of the constitution, allowing multiple-candidates in presidential elections was announced (ibid:19). Although initially welcomed, criticism grew once the criteria for accepted candidates were known, as these made it virtually impossible for independent candidates and established parties to participate (ibid). Consequently, the NDP practically constructed its own opposition (Dunne 2006)¹³, minimizing any chances of alternative parties coming into power (ibid)¹⁴.

Egyptian law covered "any threat or intimidation" with the aim of "disturbing the peace or jeopardizing the safety and security of the society."

⁸ The only official trade union was the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Unions Federation (ETUF).

⁹ Paragraph 98b, 102, 102b and 174 in the Egyptian legislation, state that: "Anyone in Egypt, who advocates, in any way, the changing of basic principles of the constitution", and "anyone who shouts or sings in public with the purpose of inciting dissent" and spreading "false or instigating news, information or rumours that disturb the public peace, frighten people, or harm the public interest", and "anyone inciting the overthrow of the ruling regime in Egypt, or expressing hatred or contempt"; ran the risk of possible prosecution and jail sentence (Kassem 2004:57).

¹⁰ See for instance: Howeidy, Amira "A chronology of dissent:2000|2002|2003|2004|2005", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 23 - 29 June 2005 (<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/748/eg10.htm>); El-Hamalawy, Hossam "Egypt's revolution has been 10 years in the making", *The Guardian*, 2/3/2011 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/02/egypt-revolution-mubarak-wall-of-fear>).

¹¹ These new movements are discussed further in section 4.3.2

¹² See for example: El-Sayed, Mohamed "Change of tack", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 27 April – 3 May 2006 (<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/792/eg7.htm>); Howeidy, Amira "A chronology of dissent:2000|2002|2003|2004|2005", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 23–29/7/2005 (<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/748/eg10.htm>).

¹³ The amended Article 76 of the Presidential Election Law gave all legitimate parties the right to put one candidate in the ballot. Due to strict conditions, a candidate could only be nominated once he had been on the party's executive for at least one year. This prevented popular figures, from outside the circle of well-known politicians, to candidate (Dunne 2006).

¹⁴ The amended Political Parties Law restricted and banned religious parties, thus the MB was successfully blocked. The presence of senior NDP members and sharpened control over The Political Parties Committee, which revised applications by new parties, maintained the NDP's dominance over the opposition (Dunne 2006).

The first multi-candidate elections in September 2005 clearly illustrate the controlled election process; Mubarak was re-elected with a two-thirds super majority (Ernesto 2010; Sullivan 2009).¹⁵ Although the presence of judges during the elections made it harder for “NDP-thugs” to intimidate voters and stuff ballot boxes in the traditional manner¹⁶, the NDP continued its supervision and manipulation of the electoral process by purchasing votes and implementing intimidation tactics. However, the MB candidates gained unprecedented campaigning freedom compared to previous elections, although it was due to its formal ban in 1954 (Otterman 2005), forced to campaign independently, resulting in significant MB gains, obtaining more seats (20% of total) than any other opposition group (ibid).

This prompted the regime to a series of deliberalization measures by cracking down on political opponents and popular protests, particularly on MB members; postponing the April 2006 local elections in order to avoid further success of the Brotherhood; and extending the state of emergency (Sullivan 2009; El Ghobashy 2010).

In 2007, the regime introduced a series of amendments further constraining political freedom. These amendments were implemented by abolishing the judiciary’s role as electoral supervisors¹⁷, by empowering the President to dissolve parliament without referendum, and by afresh banning explicitly religious parties. Mubarak also gained the authority to refer civilians suspected of acts of terrorism for trial in military tribunals (Brown et al., 2007). Consequently, the opposition’s participation in political-life significantly decreased.

The 2007 elections for the upper house parliament did not win the MB any seats. The April-08 local elections led the MB to announce a last-minute boycott after nearly all MB candidates, as well as most candidates from legal opposition parties, were prevented from registering. The 2010 elections were marked by, unprecedented and widespread violations of political freedom, arrests of MB activists prior to the vote, and violence and pressure on the media. This resulted in the NDP gaining a sweeping majority at parliament, leaving the opposition merely two per cent of the seats (Dunne & Hamzawy 2010).

¹⁵ Ayman Nour, the leader of *al-Ghad* Party, came second with 7% of the vote. This led to his five year imprisonment sentence.

¹⁶ The Egyptian constitution of 1971 required judicial supervision of elections (“a judge for every ballot box”), but this never happened in practice until 2000 and was later abolished in 2007, see: El Tahawy, Randa “Rewriting the Future- A look at the constitutional articles to be amended”, *Egypt Today*, 1/3/2011 (<http://www.egypttoday.com/news/display/article/artId:203>).

¹⁷ See: Dyer, Gwynne Why polls are a charade in Egypt under Hosni Mubarak”, *The Citizen*, 7/12/2010 (<http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/editorial-analysis/47-columnists/6154-why-polls-are-a-charade-in-egypt-under-hosni-mubarak.html>).

3 “The Arab exception”

As previously mentioned, the characteristic stability of Arab regimes’ has spurred numerous studies devoted to solving the puzzle of “The Arab Exception” resulting in various theories of why democratic transition has largely eluded the region. The ‘cultural’ argument is among the most common arguments used in explaining this peculiarity, and will be presented and critiqued in the following section. Succeeding this; I present two alternative theories, which I consider valuable when generally explaining authoritarian stability in the MENA region; the ‘economic’ argument, and: the ‘regime type’ argument. Each theory is presented and applied to the case of Egypt in a directly following sub-section.

3.1 The culturalist approach

The general absence of Arab democracies in the MENA region is commonly accredited to the region’s ruling religion and/or culture. The main argument for this view being that the greatest denominator of the MENA countries is their Arab heritage suggesting that there are cultural traits, structures, and practices that more or less are common to all countries of the region (Braizat 2010; Diamond 2010; Tessler & Gao 2005) as well as Islam, the predominant religion of the region, (though significant Christian minorities exist), is not compatible with democracy (Diamond 2010: 93-94).

Western observers have long discussed Islam’s proper role in political affairs, including its compatibility with democracy, popular sovereignty and pluralism (Tessler 2002:5). Whereas democracy depends on political competition, pluralism and openness, Islam, they argue, “Encourages intellectual conformity and an uncritical acceptance of authority.” (Tessler 2002:5), drawing a causal link between Arabs and autocracy”¹⁸ (Fattah & Butterfield 2006: 49).

18 For example see Pryce-Jones, David (1989). *The closed circle: an interpretation of the Arabs*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Pipes, Daniel (1992). *Dealing with Middle Eastern Conspiracy Theories*. Orbis 36, no. 1; Lewis, Bernard (1989). *The Political Language of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Halliday, Fred (1999). *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. New York: I.B.Tauris; Lewis, Bernard (1972). *Islamic Concepts of Revolution*, in P.J. Vatikiotis, ed., *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 30–40; Patai, Raphael (2002). *The Arab mind*. Rev. ed. New York: Hatherleigh Press; Huntington, Samuel P. (2002). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. [New ed.] London: Free Press

The principles of democracy are, according to Elie Kedourie, the late British historian, “profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition”¹⁹ (cited in Tessler & Gao 2005:85).

The scholar Samuel P. Huntington attributes considerable scope for violence, and little prospect for democratization to the Islamic world.²⁰ Similar conceptions are expressed by Daniel Pipes²¹ who claimed: “nearly all Muslim subjects kept away from politics and became actively engaged only when they had a chance to apply the law or battle non-Muslims.” (Cited in Fattah & Butterfield 2006:49). Bernard Lewis, the influential historian and scholar of oriental studies regarded a foremost expert on the Middle East and Islam, also argues that Muslims’ “dominant political tradition has long been that of command and obedience, and far from weakening it, modern times have actually witnessed its intensification”²² (Lewis cited in Fattah & Butterfield 2006:49).

Francis Fukuyama, among others, asserts that Islamic law and doctrine are fundamentally illiberal and hence create an environment within which democracy cannot flourish²³ (Jamal & Tessler 2008: 101; Braizat 2002).

Conclusively, the Islamic environment is considered hostile; Islam “has to be ultimately embodied in a totalitarian state” (Choueiri cited in Tessler & Gao 2005:85).

3.1.1 Assessing the culturalist approach

Despite claims of an alleged innate Arab incompatibility with democracy, many scholars reject the presumption that the MENA region’s democracy deficit is due to cultural and/or religious attributes, instead claiming quite the opposite²⁴.

Numerous studies report an overwhelming support for democracy among Arab-Muslim populations regardless of their majority or minority status, and

¹⁹ He has also stated that “nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world—which are the political traditions of Islam—which might make familiar, or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government.” (Cited by Diamond 2010:95).

²⁰ “Islam”, he asserts, “has bloody borders” (Huntington cited in Brynen 2009: 4) and “...has not been hospitable to democracy.” (Huntington cited in Fattah & Butterfield 2006:49). Huntington has also asserted that: “Among Islamic countries [...] the prospects for democratic development seem low. The Islamic revival [...] would seem to reduce even further the likelihood of democratic development, particularly since democracy is often identified with the very Western influences the revival strongly opposes.” (Huntington cited in Anderson 2001:3).

²¹ He is an Influential writer and political commentator, founder and director of the Middle East Forum and editor of its *Middle East Quarterly* journal. He has served as director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute and was nominated by President George W. Bush to the board of directors of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

²² In response to the revolts unfolding in the MENA region, Lewis commentated that among its main causes was sexual frustration among Muslims. See: Riyadh, Aryn Baker “In Pursuit of Romance”, *Time Magazine*, 21/6/2011 (http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2084273_2084272_2084265,00.html#ixzz1aVwvq8SN).

²³ See Fukuyama 1992: 45–46; Fukuyama, Francis. “The west has won”, *The Guardian*, 11/10/2001 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/11/afghanistan.terrorism30>).

²⁴ See for instance: Diamond 2010; Braizat 2010; Jamal & Tessler 2008; Tessler & Gao 2005.

remaining true when living under autocratic rule²⁵. Jamal & Tessler conclude that cross-regional data from the World Values Survey indicate that: “support for democracy in the Arab world is as high as or higher than in any other world region” (Jamal & Tessler 2008: 97).

The significant differences that may occur in the interpretation of religious law by Muslim scholars and theologians there are several expressing explicit supports for democracy²⁶.

Evidence collected from a substantial amount of Large-N surveys, and studies conducted in the region, show that piety and a strong religious attachment have no relationship and impact on attitudes and values related toward democracy²⁷. In fact “more religious Muslims are as likely as less religious Muslims to believe that democracy, despite its drawbacks, is the best political system.” (Jamal & Tessler 2008: 101).

Haklai (2009:35) concludes: the accumulative body of recent research shows that “there is no single Muslim mindset regarding democracy”. When measuring the Arab public’s support for democracy, well over 80 % in Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, and Iraq, agree that “despite drawbacks, democracy is the best system of government,” and that “having a democratic system would be good for our country” (Tessler & Gao 2005; Jamal & Tessler 2008)²⁸.

Braizat (2010:101-102) concludes “[...] public support for democracy is necessary for a successful and consolidated democratic transition, and since available evidence indicates that religiosity does not diminish this support for democracy among Muslim publics, it seems clear that the persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world cannot be explained by the religious orientations and attachments of ordinary men and women.”

These results challenge the notion of Islam and Arab culture as being inherently incompatible with democracy since; “neither culture nor religion offers a convincing explanation for the Arab democracy deficit.” (Diamond 2010:93).

As Saad Ibrahim (2007) accentuates, we must consider that two-thirds of the planet’s billion Muslims currently live under democratic rule, both in majority (Bangladesh, Senegal, Turkey and Indonesia), minority (most notably in India), and in roughly even numbers with Christians (Nigeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina).

²⁵ See: Braizat 2010; Arab Barometer 2009; Teorell 2010; Rothstein & Broms 2010

²⁶ See for instance: Abded, Shukri (1995). *Islam and Democracy* in Garnham, David and Tessler, Mark (1995). *Democracy, War, and Peace in the Middle East*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 127–28.

²⁷ See: Tessler & Gao 2005; Tessler 2003; Tessler 2002; Braizat 2003

²⁸ Similarly, the Arab Reform Initiative that surveyed individuals in Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan, about the importance of democracy and of fifteen types of civil liberties and political rights; found an overwhelming majority affirming their importance in each country. 96% of respondents in Lebanon, 93 % in Morocco, 92% in Egypt, and 89% in Jordan, for example, consider “Freedom of the press”, an important democratic factor (Arab Reform Initiative 2009:11–15). Similar results were noted for “personal freedom, freedom of movement, ownership, thought, belief, and expression”; as well as “freedom to elect legislatures (local and national), “belong to civil society organizations, parties, and associations, establish parties and associations, and organize public events and peaceful demonstrations (Braizat 2010:133).

These factors question the one-dimensional depictions of Islam and Arabs and their supposed incompatibility with democracy, which have long dominated the Western view of the MENA region.

3.2 Economic factors – ‘rentier- state’ and geopolitics

The ‘rentier argument’ may basically be interpreted as the ‘economic argument’, and will here be connected to geopolitical factors. According to this, the MENA region’s authoritarian regimes’ relative political and economic stability may be explained by the fact that an exceptionally high percentage of the state’s income derives from rents. The region’s extensive gas and petroleum resources; its geostrategic utilities; and its control over important transit facilities, have made a majority of the MENA states major beneficiaries of ‘rentier’ income (Bellin 2004:148). These rents, mainly consisting of oil and political rents, are directly allocated to the state income without need for reinvestment according to economic terms and foundations. This income is instead distributed according to political terms, and can thus directly serve the regimes interest.

Eleven of the MENA regions’ sixteen Arab countries are economically dependent on the earnings made from the collection of gas- and oil rents, which constitute between 70 and 90 % of the state’s total export-earnings (Diamond 2010:97-98). Diamond, as well as Bellin, claims that the oil-states monetary abundance enables state investment in widespread and dynamic modes of state-security, including excessive policing and control. Rents are thus presumed to be of profound importance for sustaining coercive apparatuses. Bellin claims that the “exceptional access to rents has nurtured a robust coercive apparatus in many states across the region” and goes on to argue that the authoritarian rule in the region is sustained by the continued inequalities between the ruling and the opposing powers, which come as a result of the disproportions in the allocation of rents (Bellin 2004:148).

‘Rentier-income’ also allows for unrestricted resources, and will allow a ‘rentier-state’ to, despite overall meagre economic health, disregard conventional economic wisdom and prioritize the payment and maintenance of military and security forces (Bellin 2004:148).

3.2.1 Assessing the ‘rentier-state’ theory and the importance of geopolitics

Although Egypt is a ‘rentier-state’ it is not an oil-state. From the year 2000 to 2009 Egypt had an average of 7.7 % of GDP in oil rents²⁹. Egypt has however,

²⁹ Data from: The World Bank
(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS/countries/IW-EG-SA?display=graph>)

experienced a pronounced increase of gas rents, which prior to the year 2000 lay steadily around 1% of the GDP. In 2008, for example, Gas rents, constituted 12.2 % of Egypt's GDP. In 2009 however, this figure decreased to 5.1 %³⁰. Although these figures are quite low when compared to those of the region's oil-states, they are not entirely insignificant; they do however have a low "explanatory value".

Egypt does, however, possess 'rentier-income' in the form of foreign aid. According to Diamond "foreign aid is like oil: another source of rents that regimes use for survival. Like oil, aid flows into the central coffers of the state and helps to give it the means *both* to co-opt and to repress" (Diamond 2010:101).

The great powers' interest in the region has historically been, and continues to be, greatly in part due to the vast oil resources that the region possesses. Although not having abundant oil resources, Egypt has been a strategically interesting ally in the region. Egypt; along with other Arab authoritarian regime's (among some of which are not oil-rich), has gained crucial economic resources, as well as political legitimacy and security assistance, through the aid historically provided by the Soviet Union, and presently by Europe and the United States. Thus, Mubarak's regime and its' endurance was supported and facilitated by the funding bestowed on Egypt by Western governments. Since 1975, Egypt has received over \$28 billion in "development" assistance, and has since the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords received roughly \$50 billion in unconditional military aid (Diamond 2009:101). Egypt was, after Israel, the largest beneficiary of US aid under the rule of Mubarak.

The United States and the European Union have been inconsistent and hesitant in supporting and advancing political reform in Egypt due to their reluctance of endangering their interests in the region³¹. Examples of this seemingly innately Western timidity towards the Egypt's former regime can be seen by the American response to the 2007 constitutional amendments³² and the unfolding of the 2011 revolts³³. This is further exemplified by the ambiguous stand that the EU and the US took towards opposition groups in Egypt in fear of the consequences on security that may occur if an Islamist emancipation were to take place (Balfour & Cugusi 2010; Droz-Vincent 2010; Bellin 2005:148). Western powers continued to aid the Egyptian regime economically, despite consistent displays of repression against political opponents, and ardent lack of political reform. The West's choice to aid the regime in this manner bequeathed it with greater legitimacy.

³⁰Data from: The World Bank

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS/countries/1W-EG-SA?display=graph>)

³¹ Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks this strategic approach was momentarily abandoned as the US pressed the Egyptian regime towards political change with greater assertiveness. Since early 2006, however, the need of guaranteeing Egyptian support in the War against Terrorism, the deteriorating situation in Irak, the growing success of the MB at the 2005 elections, Hamas' victory at the 2006 Palestinian elections and the Lebanese-Israeli war of 2006; the US' efforts towards supporting democratic transitions in Egypt and the MENA region, considerably declined (Droz-Vincent 2009).

³²See: Andrew Exum and Zack Snyder, "Democracy Demotion in Egypt: Is the United States a Willing Accomplice?", *Policy Watch*, 23/03/2007.

³³See: Weaver, Matthew; Siddique, Haroon & Adams, Richard. "Protests in Egypt – as they happened" *The Guardian*, 28/01/11 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/blog/2011/jan/28/egypt-protests-live-updates>).

To summarize: 1) Western interest in the region, based on the importance of maintaining a reliable and consistent oil supply, as well as the perceived Islamic threat, has meant that the authoritarian MENA did not see their sources of international patronage evaporate with the end of the Cold War, neither has it ended with the United State's subsequent battles for democracy. Western policymakers have found these two concerns sufficient ground to persist in their patronage of several of the MENA region's authoritarian states (Bellin 2004:148). 2) Through rentier income authoritarian states in the region have assisted the sustaining of elaborate security apparatuses.

'Rentier-income' should thus be view a positive asset in an authoritarian regime's quest for political stability and dominance. However, in order to draw a more insightful picture on the multifaceted processes of regime maintenance, one would need to look beyond fiscal capabilities of the regime and concentrate on its structure in order to explain its political survival. The political structure of Egypt's authoritarian regime is thus discussed in the following section.

3.3 Political structure – hybridity

In hybrid regimes democratic institutions are mixed with authoritarian rule. The ruler and ruling party try to sustain a democratic image (mostly to the outside world), implementing democratic institutions and hosting elections. These institutions are, however, merely a façade (in various degrees), meaning they are still ruled in a more or less authoritarian style and structure.

Diamond (2002:25) presents two classifications within hybrid regime, in order to distinguish to the regime's authoritarian nature extent: competitive authoritarian (drawn from Levitsky & Way 2002) and hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes (drawn from Schedler 2002). Brownlee (2009) uses the same categorization.

Competitive authoritarian regimes are "regimes [where] formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. However, incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy" (Levitsky & Way 2002:52). Although the ruling party "[...] may routinely manipulate formal democratic rules, they are unable to eliminate them or reduce them to a mere façade."(ibid). They point out, that even though the opposition are limited, and encounter serious obstacles "the persistence of meaningful democratic institutions creates arenas through which opposition forces may, and frequently do, pose significant challenges." (ibid:53-54). Within hegemonic electoral regimes (the other subtype to hybrid regimes) elections and other "democratic" institutions are largely façades, "[...] yet they may provide some space for political opposition, independent media, and social organizations that do not seriously criticize or challenge the regime." (Diamond 2002:26).

The following phrase clearly marks the difference between the two: "One defining feature of competitive authoritarian regimes is significant parliamentary

opposition. In regimes where elections are largely an authoritarian façade, the ruling or dominant party wins almost all the seats” (Diamond 2002:29, 32).

Hybrid regimes do not wholly depend on force and fear to survive; areas of repression are carefully selected and mixed with, and thus often concealed by “mechanisms of representation, consultation, and cooptation”. Daniel Brumberg, argues that hybrid regimes, with its “guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression” is not simply a “survival strategy’ adopted by the authoritarian regimes, but rather a *type* of political system whose institutions, rule, and logic defy any linear model of democratization, proving far more durable than once imagined” (Diamond 2010: 99). Hybrid regimes are thus adaptable towards the needs of the regime. When there is public, and/or, external pressure towards reforms and freedom, the regime can loosen its grip, at least temporarily, only to strengthen it again if the resistance is perceived to grow in an uncontrollable way. In that case, the regime will use methods like rigging elections, limiting and shrinking political space, and arresting opponents (ibid).

3.3.1 Assessing the effect of political structure on Arab authoritarianism

When measuring Egypt’s political hybridity³⁴ one can categorize Egypt, since 1980, as a hybrid regime in the form of a Hegemonic authoritarian System³⁵, according to the Diamond (2002) and Brownlee categorization.

Egypt jacked any real political contestation, and the regime has been very effective in limiting and controlling political opposition (as described in section 2.1). As an authoritarian regime, Mubarak and the NDP have enjoyed a hegemonic position, dominating the political scene and oppressing political opposition, thus ensuring no political contestation occurring from within the states institutions. In this sense the regime was stable.³⁶

It is here proposed that the type of hybridity that constituted Egypt’s regime was effective in controlling formal political opposition; the institutions where political contestation were supposed to occur were under the control of the regime. Egypt’s political hybridity, more specifically as a hegemonic electoral regime, benefitted the regime; allowing it to control the opposition and simultaneously seeming somewhat legitimate. Besides receiving financial and military support, it also enjoyed political support and international legitimacy (as described in chapter 3.2).

Egypt was thus balancing coercion with institutions implying representation, and would at certain periods relax the control on political opposition allowing

³⁴ I follow the same operationalization in defining hybrid regimes as Brownlee (2009:523-524), see chapter 1.3.1.

³⁵ According to Brownlee’s (2009:523-524) method; Egypt has had a constant score between 5-6 on the DPI scale, thus entailing that was a hegemonic authoritarian system. Data from: The World Bank.

³⁶ For example; during the 1990s president Mubarak was “re-elected” with well over 90% of the votes, about 80 % in 2000 and an 87 % in 2010 (Carnegie 2011; Diamond 2002:29, 32)

relative liberalization processes to occur, albeit back-to-back with methods of coercion followed up with deliberalization when the opposition was considered to be a greater threat.³⁷

It is thus argued here, that the regime's hybrid nature is of great importance in understanding the regime success in sustaining itself. However, I shall later³⁸ argue that the hybrid nature of the regime was also one of its greatest weaknesses.

3.4 Final conclusions of “The Arab exception”

Empirical evidence clearly does not support the idea of a cultural/religious explanation to authoritarianisms' strong hold in the Middle East. Recent events prove that there is a general desire for democratic reform and that an earlier transition to democracy has been hindered by structural factors. As demonstrated in the above section, Egypt's authoritarian regime was sustained through its strong ability to obstruct competition for power through extensive coercive methods eased by the ‘Emergency Law’, extensive security apparatus, and its access to rents. International pressure for reforms has been weak, largely due to the geopolitical interest of Western governments besides an interest in securing the region against fundamental Islamists thus preferring seemingly stable and predictable regimes before democratic reform with, in their view, an unsure outcome. The cultural/religious explanation has thus not just been confined to certain Western scholars; it has also had a profound effect on real politics. Consequently they have contributed to sustaining authoritarianism in Egypt, as well as the MENA region in general.

The hybrid nature of the regime allowed it to regulate itself in times of increased domestic or international pressure easing the way for Western support. Repressive methods would however follow, if the opposition were considered to be an increasing threat. The regime was thus successful in regulating the political opposition and sustaining its position.

³⁷ Egypt's liberalization periods will be further discussed in section 4.3.

³⁸ This will be discussed under the Regime breakdown section under chapter 4.2.

4 Regime breakdown

This flowing section is aimed at answering the central research question of the thesis; *What factor(s) explain the regime breakdown in Egypt?*

As already mentioned, Egypt's access to rent and international support remained stable during recent years, even during the initial protests in January 2011. No changes in this have occurred which could explain the regime breakdown, and will thus not be further evaluated here.

Regarding the structural factors examined earlier, hybridity and authoritarian nature, there is more to examine. The regime, as demonstrated earlier, was effective in limiting political opposition, but considering the existence, and flourishing of, several political civil society *movements* during the last decade; allegedly playing significant roles during the protests, Egypt's hybridity seems to have had a back side in its allowance of society to flourish although simultaneously curtailing political opponents taking the shape of political parties. This thus demands further evaluation in order to examine what effect the hybrid nature of the regime had on the regime breakdown.

The theories used in this section are in large extent drawn from primarily Brownlee (2009) and Hadenius & Teorell (2007). These are: regime's hybridity, prior liberalization, and economic variables effect on regime breakdown. The possible role of the Egyptian military in the regime breakdown will also be discussed, drawing from Bellin (2004). The chapter starts by examining what possible effect economic variables played in the breakdown of the Egyptian regime.

4.1 Economic variables

Teorell & Hadenius (2007) and Brownlee (2009) have, when measuring GDP per capita's effect on regime breakdown found correlations. Additional economic variables will be measured since GDP per capita can be misleading and overly simplistic. The additional variables are: inequality and poverty; inflation and consumer prices; unemployment and corruption rates.

Economic variables are considered to be possible of having long-term, as well as direct triggering effects on regime breakdown. Some economic factors, like price changes, do have an almost instant effect and have previously led to riots/demonstrations³⁹ in the region. GDP per capita, unemployment, corruption

³⁹ For example the 2008 bread riots see: The Telegraph "Egyptians riot over bread crisis" 8/42008. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/2787714/Egyptians-riot-over-bread-crisis.html>.

and distribution of wealth are economic indicators with medium and long-term effects, but could have triggering effects if they witness intense and/or sudden changes.

4.1.1 Testing the economic variables

- *GDP:*

During the period of 2003-10, Egypt experienced strong economic growth, reaching the peak of 7.2% in 2006-09, as well as a rapid increase in exports⁴⁰ and FDI inflows (Achcar 2009). In the midst of a world recession, Egypt nearly doubled its GDP per capita numbers⁴¹ during the last five years, indicating that they managed their macro-economics very well during this period and thus making GDP per capita a weak indicator when trying to explain the regime breakdown in Egypt.

- *Inequality and Poverty:*

Gini index⁴² is here used to measure the level of economic inequality. In average from 2000-2010, Egypt scored 32.1 points (from a scale from 0-100, where 0 represents perfect equality, while 100 implies perfect inequality) (Klugman 2010:153). Compared with the rest of the world, Egypt's economic inequality was very moderate. Out of 169 countries represented in the last Human Development Report, a lower rate of inequality was only observed in 23 countries, while countries including France, Australia, Switzerland and USA had higher inequality than Egypt (ibid:152-155). Regarding the extreme poverty rate, Egypt is performing very well with less than 2% living below 1.25\$ a day⁴³, making it one of the top performing countries in the world⁴⁴ (ibid:161-163). Nonetheless a high and increasing percentage of the Egyptian population is living below the national poverty line, from 16.7% in 2000 to 22% in 2008⁴⁵ marking an increase from 13.7 million persons of income-poor people (2005) to 16.3 million persons by 2008-09.

- *Inflation and consumer prices:*

Egypt has suffered a high inflation, which effected consumer prices. In the 2000s, mainly driven by a rise in food prices, the consumer price index (CPI) has

⁴⁰ Although severely decreasing 2008-2010, from + 20 % (% in annual growth) to – 10 % in exports. Data from: The World Bank

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.KD.ZG?page=1>)

⁴¹ From 1,162 in 2005 to 2,591 in 2010. Data from The World Bank

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>)

⁴² Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution.

⁴³ Percent of people living below \$1.25 a day during 2000-2008.

⁴⁴ However there is debate whether the poverty estimates and trends presented above are underestimated. See Sabry, S. (2009). Poverty Lines in Greater Cairo: underestimating and misrepresenting poverty. Human Settlements Working Paper Series: Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas-21. London, IIED. 48 pages (<http://pubs.iied.org/10572IIED.html>)

⁴⁵ Data from: The World Bank

(<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC/countries/EG?display=graph>).

increased by 73% compared to 2005 figures⁴⁶, a much higher increase than the world average of 29.1% during the same period⁴⁷. Inflation reached an unprecedented peak of 18.3% in 2008 and although declining, still remains high (11.3% in 2010).⁴⁸

Moreover, real wages, in both the public and private sectors, continued to decrease over the last decade (Abdelhamid & el-Baradei, 2009). Soaring food prices resulted in rising income poverty over the last decade. In 2008 consumer prices led to serious food riots. In late 2010, although food inflation was lower compared to 2008, vegetable prices increased by 51%, while poultry and meat increased by almost 29%.⁴⁹

- *Unemployment Figures:*

In the last five years total unemployment has improved⁵⁰ (9.4% in 2009) as well as total youth unemployment from 30 percent in 2005 to 25 percent in 2007⁵¹ although with a relative constant high during the 2000s not dropping below 20%. Youth unemployment among university graduates was around 14.4%⁵² in 2006 (Assaad 2007).

- *Corruption rates:*

Egypt had a corruption of 3.1 in 2010 (where 0 indicates most corruption and 10 least corruption), which is an average figure during the last 10 years in Egypt. Although these levels are relatively high they are on par with corruption levels in for example countries and in the Southern and Eastern European region.⁵³

⁴⁶ Consumer price index (2005 = 100): "Consumer price index reflects changes in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a basket of goods and services" at a yearly bases. The price increase is compared to a set date, in this case from 2005 which represent 100, changes following years are then compared to the prices of 2005. Egypt reached a level of 173 in 2010, marking a 73 percent increase during this period (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL>).

⁴⁷ Consumer price index (2005 = 100), increasing from 100 in 2005 to 129.1 in 2010, indicating a 29.1% increase during this period, a much lower figure than Egypt's 173 (73%) increase during the same period (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL/countries?display=graph>).

⁴⁸ Inflation, consumer prices (annual %), reflects the annual percentage change in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a basket of goods and services (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG>); Niveen, Wahish, "Of prices and interest rates", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 19-25 February 2009 (<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/935/ec2.htm>); Ali Abdel Mohsen, "Meat market mystery", *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 2 April 2010 (<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/news/meat-market-mystery>); "Egypt inflation steady in October, rates seen on hold", *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 10 November 2010 (<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/news/egypt-inflation-steady-october-rates-seen-hold>); Ashraf Khalil, "Egypt's vegetable crisis: 'This is how revolutions start'", *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 26 October 2010 (<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/news/egypt-s-vegetable-crisis-how-revolutions-start>).

⁴⁹ See: Ashraf Khalil, "Egypt's vegetable crisis: 'This is how revolutions start'", *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 26/10/2010 (<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/216337>)

⁵⁰ Total unemployment figures have fluctuated during the last 10 years, but have decreased since 2005 from 11.2% to 9.4% 2009. Data from World Bank (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS/countries/1W-EG?display=graph>).

⁵¹ Youth unemployment refers "to the share of the labor force ages 15-24 without work but available for and seeking employment". Data from: The World Bank (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>). There is no data from 2008 onwards.

⁵² An increase from 9.7% in 1998 (Assaad 2007).

⁵³ Data from: Transparency International: "Corruption Perceptions Index 2010 results" (http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results)

4.1.2 Conclusive remarks on the relevance of the economic indicators

The different economic indicators do not give a clear picture of the importance of economics in the uprisings, as there have been both improvements and deteriorations. Egypt experienced strong economic growth as well a rapid increase in exports and FDI inflows, although the increase in GDP did not materialize into broad economic development, and was thus not sufficient in order to handle Egypt's main socio-economic challenges.

To summarize the indicators: GDP per capita indicator, corruption rates and inequality rates, do not seem to have had a direct triggering effect on the mass protests, since no serious fluctuations occurred during the last period. However, in a longer perspective they most certainly led to dissatisfaction with the government. Consumer-price rises; on the other hand, seem to have had more significance, considering that they were well above the world average. Considering that a large proportion of the population are relatively poor and that increases in consumer-prices have previously incited protests it is likely that the increases had a motivational effect in the revolution. When one takes into note the relatively high unemployment rates one can conclude that increases in food prices in combination with a large amount of relatively poor people and high corruption certainly made a contribution to political destabilization in Egypt. However, none of these factors by themselves appear to have had a direct triggering effect for the revolution, these factors had an importance in contingency with other economic factors, as well as social factors. If one recalls peoples' demands during the revolts, economical grievances were not in the forefront, rather political and social change was emphasized. Moreover, all economic classes of Egypt were partaking in the protests, not just the lower ones.

Conclusively, these factors in contingency led to dissatisfaction towards the government and delegitimizing it thus having importance in mobilizing people, but can hardly be recognized as the sole cause of the Egyptian events, especially when taking into account people's demand during and before the revolution.

4.2 Structural factors

Concerning revolutions Theda Skocpol, points out: "although the intuitive prerequisite for revolution-mass disaffection from the regime in power--is a relatively common phenomenon in human experience, successful revolution is a relatively rare event (Skocpol cited by Bellin 2004:142). It is thus important to understand how the Egyptian discontent came to overthrow President Mubarak and the NDP from power. In order for this, it is necessary to understand the underlying structural factors of Egypt's authoritarian regime, its core principles and logic from which it acted in order to reveal its weaknesses.

4.2.1 Hybrid regimes

To understand the possible effect of regime type on Egypt's regime breakdown the concept of hybrid regime will be further examined. I here retain to the definition used earlier in section 3.3 and operationalization in 1.3.1⁵⁴ whereby Egypt could be defined as a hegemonic electoral regime.

In Teorell & Hadenius' (2007) and Brownlee's (2009) Large-N case studies they test the effect of various degrees of hybridity on regime breakdown; whether the more democratic features a hybrid authoritarian regime possess makes a regime breakdown more probable. They did find that some type of regimes have a longer life-span than others, one party system and monarchy was the regimes with the longest durability, and according to Teorell & Hadenius (2007) dominant and non-dominant limited multiparty regime are the two shortest-lived ones. Brownlee, however, did not find robust correlations of hybridity (categorized as either hegemonic or competitive authoritarian) on regime breakdown, claiming that there is too much diversity in terms of longevity among the regimes to show a clear correlation (2009:527).

4.2.2 Assessing the effect of hybridity on regime breakdown

Despite Teorell & Hadenius' (2007) and Brownlee's (2009) different conclusions, the argument made here is that the mere fact that Egypt was trying to uphold a democratic façade meant serious difficulties when trying to address opposition and even more so regarding popular protests. Being a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime effectively meant they were effective in quenching political opposition, since this is how they sustained their power and ensured their survival. They were able to hinder change from within the political scene and sustain its power, when deemed needed the opposition would be dispersed and run over⁵⁵.

Since the regime was trying to uphold a democratic façade it faced difficulties when trying to handle popular demands and political opposition. As Jan Teorell points out: "Multiparty dictatorships are sensitive to major popular movements and demonstrations. Since they are trying to appear legitimate and democratic, it is more difficult for them, than for example China, to counter demonstrations with violence" (Teorell cited by Björck 2010). Effectively, it meant that the Egyptian regime needed to balance coercion with relative degrees of openness and

⁵⁴ Regime hybridness: is measured using Brownlee's method (2009:523-4) in which is based upon the World Bank's database of political institutions (DPI index).⁵⁴ Brownlee defines the three different categories of hybrid regimes as the following: Closed authoritarian if the regime is labelled 1 to 4 in the index; hegemonic authoritarian from 5 to 6; and competitive authoritarian system if it is categorized as 7 in the index.

⁵⁵ For example as they did when jail sentencing prominent figures in the opposition as Ayman Nour leader of the El Ghad party and members of the MB. See: BBC News, "Profile: Ayman Nour", 24/11/05 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4558054.stm>).

representation.⁵⁶ This logic and its effects are more closely discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Prior liberalization- political/structural factor

Prior liberalization has been recognized to have an effect on regime breakdown (Brownlee 2009). Liberalization however, contrary to democratization, does not indicate a certain result and does not have to involve all of society (Albrecht & Schlumberger 2004:375). When occurring in an authoritarian regime, it can be done in a careful and deliberate manner towards particular goals, in contrast to democratization which would be a process directed at all society. Furthermore, as is often not the case with democratization, the process can be reversed (ibid:373-374).

The theory states that once people have witnessed political liberalization it's difficult to take it away from them. Liberalization, even if followed by deliberalization, is considered to have an impact on the structure of the regime. Periods of liberalizations open for all types of civil society initiatives. Conclusively these organizations can easily join forces in possible uprisings. If the society has enjoyed freedom to a certain degree, the regime needs to strongly assert its power in times of national crises in order to survive. Conclusively, the more prior liberalization, the greater is the chance for regime breakdown. Brownlee (2009), finds significant correlation for this variable on regime breakdown.

4.3.1 Assessing the effect of political liberalization

According Brownlee's (2009:525) method of measuring political liberalization⁵⁷, Egypt is categorized as liberal between the years of 1984-1990, and although Egypt was later categorized as illiberal (1981 and 1991-2011), there have been fluctuations in the level of civil rights. From 1999-2000, Egyptians enjoyed more civil rights than they had done during the previous seven years, this was then followed by increased deliberalization during 2001-2002, until 2003 when civil

⁵⁶ Diamond puts it figuratively: "When pressure mounts, both from within the society and from outside, the regime loosens its constraints and allows more civic activity and a more open electoral arena—until political opposition appears as if it may grow too serious and effective. Then the regime returns to more heavy-handed methods of rigging elections, shrinking political space, and arrestment. The electoral arena in these states is thus something like a huge pair of political lungs, breathing in (at times deeply and excitedly) and expanding, but then inevitably exhaling and contracting when limits are reached" (Diamond 2010: 99).

⁵⁷ "Regime-years that had received a civil liberty score of 5–7 (basic parameters of Freedom House's "not free" category) were coded as un-liberalized. Those regime-years with a lower, better rating on civil liberties (1–4) were coded as liberalized" (Brownlee 2009:525). Civil liberties, as defined by freedom house, "allow for the freedoms of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state." Data from: Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org).

rights increased⁵⁸ and stabilized at a constant level of 5 (on a scale from 1-7, where 1 represents the highest, and 7 the lowest level of civil rights)⁵⁹.

Egypt has thus had periods of relative tolerance during the last decade. Although not categorized as liberal in recent years, there has been a continuously increasing liberalization pressure from below⁶⁰. Despite repression, the opposition had relative room to manoeuvre. The increased civil rights were also demonstrated in the emergence of new political movements, and an increase in protests, strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of social protest during the last decade.

Prior to this, Egypt has had a long tradition of civil society and one of the longest histories in the Arab world of formally organized voluntary associational activity parallel to the longest period of liberalization (Langohr 2004:182-183).

As affirmed by Brownlee's (2009) study, founded upon thirty years of data treating 138 regimes, political liberalization has an effect on regime breakdown. Egypt is no exception; it is most likely that prior liberalization had an indirect effect, as these liberalization periods created civil society organizations, and more recently political movements; movements that have expressed their discontent and which eventually were participating in mobilizing protestors, thus succeeding in igniting liberalization from below.

When studying the functions of civil society and nongovernmental organizations in democratization the common interpretation are that they are essentially quite different from parties (Langohr 2004:182). The Egyptian case suggests that both nongovernmental organizations and parties should be regarded as parts of an "oppositional field". The point being that while insufficient and reversed liberalization has limited the position of opposition parties, liberalization, created the societal frames for participation in a larger trend; civil society (although under supervision) was left more space to flourish. This effectively meant that although political opposition in the form of political parties did not get strengthened during the last decade (which the Freedom House scores for political rights also indicate)⁶¹, popular organisation and movements did.

This is in part due to the serious dilemma encountered by hybrid autocratic incumbents (as discussed in section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2), and in part because the effect of liberalization can not be fully controlled due to the fact that the challengers tend to be viewed as legitimate both within the nation itself and internationally and in the same time the holders of power risk losing their power if the democratic processes are freely allowed. Egypt, a hybrid regime and in accordance with its strive of appearing legitimate and democratic, would not use

⁵⁸ Data from: Freedom House (www.Freedomhouse.org).

⁵⁹ A minimum civil right score of 4 is required to be considered as liberalized according to Brownlee's rating (2009:525).

⁶⁰ Egypt had during the last decade been relatively liberal compared to the majority of the 1990s. Data from: Freedom House (www.Freedomhouse.org).

⁶¹ The political rights score in Egypt has had the same score of 6 (on a scale from 1-7 where 1 represents the highest and 7 the lowest level of political rights) from 1993-2010. Political rights are by Freedom House defined as enabling people "to participate freely in the political process, including through the right to vote, compete for public office, and elect representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and are accountable to the electorate". Data from: Freedom House (www.Freedomhouse.org).

blatant coercion unless deemed absolutely necessary. The argument made here, which will be further developed in the next section, is that civil society was not viewed as big of a threat as political parties were.

In the following section this new character of political opposition which emerged during the last decade will be discussed, and it will be argued that this is one of the key factors that later resulted in the breakdown of the regime.

4.3.2 Political Liberalization; a new kind of political opposition

The Kefaya movement was the first of its kind when it emerged on the streets of Cairo in 2004 and is thus useful for assessing changes in regime- opposition relations in Egypt during the period around 2005 witnessing political liberalization. The argument made here is that this later paved the way for other movements to oppose the government, and eventually its removal.

In December 2004, a group of around 300 Egyptian intellectuals and political activists from various ideological backgrounds staged protests at the main entrance of the Supreme Court in downtown Cairo, surrounded by hundreds of security personnel. The movement staged demonstrations at strategic locations that reached further than the borders of the capital (ibid). The Kefaya movement is unique in that through it, emerged a new kind of political activism, a form of street politics, and also in the fact that social protest expressed in this form was unheard of in the recent history of the Middle East.

The initiators of Kefaya originally emerged as activists of the Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada (CSPI). However, there are fundamental differences in how the regime reacted towards the early incidents of street politics and towards the Kefaya. Concerning the CSPI demonstrations in 2003 the regime responded in an excessively brutal way. While Kefaya demonstrations were in principle unscathed two years later (ibid:122). This difference may well be due to the fact that the anti-war movement attracted larger crowds of demonstrators compared to the Kefaya gatherings (ibid:123).

In that sense, I argue that Kefaya, in its early phases, was viewed more of a political happening than a movement of serious purpose which explains its ability to push the limits set by the regime to an extent unprecedented in Egyptian state-society relations (ibid:124). However, the regime later increasingly resorted to violent measures in order to contain Kefaya, as well as utilizing state-controlled media to discredit Kefaya⁶².

Nevertheless, the movement of Kefaya succeeded in the sense that they, through their demonstrations and confrontations with the regime, broke a fear-barrier (Sundell 2006:22), and encouraged the formation of many succeeding

⁶² See: Carnegie Endowment, "Kifaya 'The Egyptian Movement for Change'", (<http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/22/the-egyptian-movement-for-change-kifaya>)

movements⁶³. It was also the first political initiative in Egypt to truly communicate and mobilise through social media and digital technology.

This period had a profound effect on Egypt's civil society and in 2008 another significant movement emerged: the April 6 Youth Movement. More than 100 000 Facebook users joined an online group in solidarity with textile workers in al Mahalla al-Kubra and in a call for a nationwide strike in solidarity⁶⁴. This group, which was in part formed by youth activists from Kefaya eventually, formed itself into an own movement. In 2011 The April 6 Youth Movement, together with the "We are All Khaled Saeed" Facebook Page, played a major role in organizing protests during the January revolution. The "We are All Khaled Saeed" Facebook Page was initiated when Khaled Saeed was beaten to death by policemen after revealing evidence of policemen splitting seized narcotics and cash. The Facebook page quickly grew and by July had more than 473,000 members, playing a vital role in organizing and mobilizing people during the protests.

4.3.3 The unfolding of the regime breakdown

The 18-days of protests that consequently led to the resignation of President Mubarak began on January 25th 2011. The protest coincided with Egypt's Police Day and was galvanized by Khaled Saeed's murder and the Tunisian revolt. Egypt's pro-democracy activists, including movements such as "Kefaya" and the 6 April Youth Movement, and the "We are All Khaled Saeed" Facebook group played a key role in organizing calls for the protests; primarily mobilizing through Facebook and Twitter.

As the demonstrations spiralled an estimated 12 million people simultaneously mobilised all over Egypt, perhaps the largest civil revolution in history (Zunes 2011:11). They called for the resignation of Mubarak, protesting against the regime's continuous abuse of human rights, and demanding democratic reform. The regime allegedly hired armed thugs, who together with security forces members, rampaged through the streets dressed in civilian clothing, looting and coercing peaceful protestors and installing fear and chaos. The ordinary police were simultaneously withdrawn from the streets. There were several bloody confrontations. Journalists, human rights activists, protestors and political activists were arrested, detained and allegedly tortured by security forces (Amnesty 2011:20-21). The peaceful protesters eventually came out victorious; on 11 February, as a general insurrection looked increasingly likely, the army stepped in and President Mubarak resigned.

⁶³ For instance the March 9 movement for university independence, Workers for Change, Youth for Change, Doctors for Change, Writers and Artists for Change, and the Egyptian judges movement.

⁶⁴ These workers' strikes where not an isolated event, due to deteriorating conditions for workers and threats of unemployment Egypt had increasingly witnessed workers activism prior this. For example 202 incidents of protest where reported during 2005 as well as after: 478 incidents during 2009 and 530 incidents during 2010 (MENA 2011)

4.4 Role of the military

The relationship between the military and the regimes in the Middle Eastern countries have been a fundamental factor in the regimes' capacity to resist the impact of social mobilization. Eva Bellin wrote, "Democratic transition can be carried out successfully only when the state's coercive apparatus lacks the will or capacity to crush it. Where that coercive apparatus remains intact and opposed to political reform, democratic transition will not occur." (Bellin 2004:143) It will here be argued that these two factors are central in understanding why the regime was unable to withstand the pressure.

The Egyptian regime did indeed have the capacity to crush the revolts consisting of unarmed demonstrators. However, the regime's hybrid nature made it ambivalent in choosing its reactions; hence vulnerable to popular mobilization. It is costly to violently repress big masses of people, even if it is within the physical capacity of the security forces, it may put at risk the "institutional integrity of the security apparatus, international support, and domestic legitimacy" (Bellin 2004:143). However, as the demonstrations proceeded the regime resorted to increasingly violent methods. These tactics however failed, as well as the decision to cut-off phone lines and internet access⁶⁵ the 28th of January, an attempt to hinder mobilization and spreading of news and information between the demonstrators, which in fact gave the opposite effect as greater crowds gathered on Tahrir Square and the streets.

As the regime realized it's imminent downfall, it grew increasingly drawn to use more drastic methods, and allegedly ordered the military to violently hit down on the demonstrators.⁶⁶ This never materialized though, as the military generals refused to comply.

4.4.1 Why didn't the military break-up the protests?

Bellin argues that: the robustness of the coercive apparatus, or its will to repress reform initiatives, is related to its level of institutionalization (Bellin 2004:145). Where the coercive apparatus is institutionalized, the security elite has a sense of corporate identity separate from the state. They do not perceive that they will be "ruined by reform" (Bellin 2004:145).

Although the Egyptian military, being the largest military power in the region, has been part of the authoritarian settings for decades, and have been an integral

⁶⁵ See Daily Mail, "How the Internet refused to abandon Egypt: Authorities take entire country offline... but hackers rally to get the message out", 30/1/2011 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1351904/Egypt-protests-Internet-shut-hackers-message-out.html>).

⁶⁶ See Kirkpatrick, D. David & Afify, Heba. "Military Rulers Called to Testify in Mubarak Trial", *The New York Times*, 9/7/2011 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/08/world/middleeast/08egypt.html>); Droz-Vincent 2011

part of the authoritarian rule, there has been an increasing “demilitarization” of the political system.⁶⁷

The police in particular, have been the state’s method of regulating daily social life and politics by being a repressive body in the forefront of social repression (Droz-Vincent 2011:3). As previously mentioned, the state of emergency law, in place since 1981, provided Egyptian security forces⁶⁸ with practically unlimited powers to control, censor, monitor, and detain opponents.

In contrast, the military had a much more withdrawn position. Despite their outer impressive appearance, when it comes to acting out in society the military in Egypt has dominantly been visible only in times of crucial importance (ibid:3) as in 1997 when army units secured areas at the massacre in Luxor; during bread riots in 2008⁶⁹; and when providing emergency support after the fatal Al-Duwayqa rockslide.

The difference between the security forces and the military is that the military acts out of service for the nation, and is not involved in the regime’s “dirty task of policing society”. It holds its distance from the regime. Furthermore, parallel to the regime’s efforts in limiting the influence of the military on one hand, by for instance carefully monitoring its internal and external activities, whilst on the other hand satisfying the military through large budgets, freedom from external revision, extended privileges within the social sector⁷⁰, it is not being regarded as a threat to the regime (ibid:4). Furthermore, the military is not disposed to rapid change, as initiating military coups (ibid:10).

Throughout the revolts, the relationship between the regime and the army played a crucial factor (ibid:7). This relationship was displayed when in February 2011, the police and paramilitary security forces suddenly vanished from Egypt’s main cities; soldiers and tanks instead were deployed (ibid). The people responded by welcoming the army as heroes on the streets. The military however, assumed a passive role, giving the regime space and quietly siding with the regime without actually physically participating⁷¹ in the repression.⁷² When the pressure mounted and the position of the President further diminished, the army ultimately decided to outspokenly side with the protestors. On 31 January the military clearly stated that it would not use force against the people, recognizing the protestors’ “legitimate demands” on state television (ibid:7). After allowing the events to unfold in the hands of the President, he finally resigned on the 11th of February, handing over power to the military.

⁶⁷ See Neil Cooper, “The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet”, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (May 1982), p. 203-225.

⁶⁸ I.e. ordinary police, special units, secret police, riot police, etc

⁶⁹ During this of shortage of bread the military distributed as well as produced bread from its own bakeries (Amnesty 2011:13)

⁷⁰ For example access to military-only facilities - schools, hospitals, clubs, leisure facilities, cheap housing, transportation facilities, and easy access to low-interest credits (Droz-Vincent 2011:4).

⁷¹ However warplanes and helicopters flew over Tahrir square in a presumed show to demonstrate it’s force and intimidate protestors. Al Jazeera, “Cairo protestors stand their ground”, 30/1/2011 (<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/201113033817859936.htm>)

⁷² As exemplified by several leaks in the media reveal that when plain-clothed police and armed hired gangs attacked protestors in Tahrir Square, the military initially stood by and did nothing despite the protestors pleading the military for protection (Droz-Vincent 2011:7).

5 Conclusions

I have, in this thesis, demonstrated the Egyptian peoples' legitimate reasons for grievances with the regime; reasons which motivated millions of people to participate in the demonstrations of 2011.⁷³

However, I have argued that it was the nature of the Egyptian regime's structure, more precisely its hybrid nature, which eventually rendered its breakdown possible. Being a hegemonic electoral regime, genuine political contestation was long efficiently prevented. However, due to its hybrid nature and attempts to uphold a democratic façade, the regime dealt with serious difficulties when addressing political opposition, as it would consequently try to balance its authoritarian nature with liberalizing processes. These liberalization processes, though followed by periods of deliberalization, proved to have more far-reaching effects than imagined.

Brownlee (2009), established a correlation between prior-liberalization processes and regime breakdown. Egypt is argued to be no exception; prior-liberalization created an atmosphere in which civil society was given enough space to flourish, and where Egyptians enjoyed increased civil liberties; to the point where Egypt, during the last decade, had in fact been on the verge of being categorized as liberalized (albeit to its minimum requirements).

This however, did not apply in regards to political rights⁷⁴; formal parties, and freedom to freely elect representatives, had been severely undermined. Conclusively, civil society had been allowed space while formal parties were severely repressed. The civil society movement, "Kefaya", emerged with a new kind of political activism, a form of street politics openly criticizing the government. This broke a fear barrier. Kefaya's primary political impact was however, limited and thus, initially not feared by the regime. Yet, Kefaya adherents were eventually also suppressed. Other civil movements had by then emerged, whom later formed key figures in mobilizing protestors galvanized by frustration with the regime and its election frauds, the killing of Khaled Saed, increased hardships for the population, and the successful revolt in Tunisia. Consequently, on the 25th of January 2011, mass demonstrations were a fact.

The regime's political structure made it problematical to deal openly with the unfolding of events, yet the increasingly desperate regime employed coercive methods in efforts to scatter the protests, mainly through plainclothes police and

⁷³ Police brutality; emergency law; elections rigging; lack of accountability on behalf of the regime; as well as economic grievances; lack of representation

⁷⁴ I.e. the possibility "to participate freely in the political process, including through the right to vote, compete for public office, and elect representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and are accountable to the electorate" Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org). in regards to political rights Egypt has had an average score of 6 (on a scale 1-7, where 7 indicates the lowest level of political rights).

hired thugs, and simultaneously withdrawing the police force; in attempts of coerce without obviously doing so.

The regime allegedly ordered the military to strike down on protestors but failed in its aim as the Egyptian army was institutionalized. The military had its own sources of income, such as the military aid from the US and its corporate investments in Egypt. Unable to cope with millions of protestors; the regime breakdown became a fact.

Conclusively, the notion of an inherent “Arab exception” should be severely re-examined. The region’s inhabitants have truly shown sceptics that there is, and has long been, a will and strive after democratic reform. As Leon Trotsky famously said, "Revolution is impossible until it is inevitable," it is thus not the will that has been lacking. Rather, a revolution has not been able to materialize until the cumulative body of events and processes, of whom the regime hybrid nature is key, finally appeared as mass mobilizations, and thus consequently displayed the regime's weakness and not its long emphasized robustness.

6 References

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