SYMPOSIUM

Assessing (In)security after the Arab Spring

Editor's Introduction

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More than two years after the heady days of protest and uprising that characterized the Arab Spring, the glow of revolution has given way to the intricacies and complications of regime building. Coalitions are being formed, constitutions written, judiciaries vetted, and security services (re)built. As collective attention focuses on these complexities of regime restructuring, it is worth noting that a fundamental security paradox sits at the heart of transitions in the Middle East and North Africa.[1] On one hand, individuals who hit the streets or battlefields in support of revolution in 2011 did so in the belief that a new form of government would improve their political, social, and economic security over the long term. On the other hand, subsequent (and ongoing) efforts to draft new rules of the political game have triggered internal conflicts and, on occasion, those conflicts have compromised citizens' physical security over the short term.

Of course, states that played host to the Arab Spring are not the first to face this paradox of political change. Transitions from communist rule in Eurasia prompted outbreaks of collective violence in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, Moldova, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia. Equally, processes of regime restructuring in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia predicated an upswing of violence during the 1990s in cases as diverse as Kenya and Indonesia. And, of course, the violent after-effects of externally driven regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to be felt in those countries. In each of these cases, the development of violence alongside transition resulted in a grave loss of human life. In many cases, violence also had a negative impact on the process of regime-building and it contributed—directly or indirectly—to the installation and consolidation of political systems that were ultimately far less liberal than revolutionaries on the streets had initially envisaged.

But lest we despair for post-Arab Spring states by thinking that regime transition is an inherently violent and often self-defeating process, note that sustained collective violence remains exceptional during periods of regime restructuring. In fact, in view of the scope and breadth of political change that has swept around the globe during the past four decades, it is striking how little transitional violence has occurred. For example, sustained violence did not accompany most of the transitions from authoritarian rule that unfolded in southern Europe and Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s.[2] Nor, indeed, were most transitions from communist rule characterized by large-scale collective violence; outbreaks of violence in parts of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were the exceptions, not the rule.

If there is a tendency for transition to breed violence, but that tendency is variable, then three questions demand attention. First, under what conditions are processes of regime transition likely to incite collective violence?[3] Second, are those conditions present in post-Arab Spring states? And third, what steps might internal or external actors take to reduce the potential for (further) transitional violence in the region? In this symposium, we address these questions across five short articles.

This introduction provides the theoretical framework for the symposium by identifying three broad causal paths that run from transition to violence. One path unfolds when regime change prompts a weakening or dissolution of state security structures. As a state slides toward anarchy, nonstate actors take up arms—either as a means of self-defense or to support opportunistic profiteering. In a second path, transitional violence is essentially a form of "politics … [by] other means" (von Clausewitz in Heuser 2002, 37); political factions compete for transitional power and, in the absence of institutionalized mechanisms for peacefully managing that competition, rival factions clash. In the third path, state security agencies (police, military, secret services) challenge one another for preeminence in the security apparatus of the new regime and use the violent means at their disposal to realize strategic goals that are aimed at boosting their respective institutional standings in the posttransition era.

In the three articles that follow, regional experts use this tripartite framework to assess the dynamics of transitional violence in three post-Arab Spring states. First, Brian McQuinn draws on his extensive experience on the ground in Misratah to give an assessment of security in Libya since the fall of Muammar Qadhafi. April Longley Alley, who reports from Sanaa for the International Crisis Group, then gives a detailed

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treatment of the highly complex Yemeni case. And, finally, Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar draws on his comparative regional expertise to offer a reading of security trends in Egypt since the fall of Hosni Mubarak. We focus on these particular cases because they are the only three countries in the region that witnessed regime change in 2011 *and* have subsequently played host to significant degrees of collective violence. That combination of transition and violence means that the conceptual lenses sketched in this introduction offer an appropriate, and potentially rewarding, framework for assessing (in)security in the three countries. By contrast, those lenses bring less conceptual leverage to an assessment of protracted armed conflict in Syria, since Bashar al-Assad has taken no meaningful steps to facilitate a change of regime there. Collective violence in Syria, as such, is an example of regime repression spiraling into civil war, rather than regime transition triggering violence. In Bahrain, similarly, the refusal of King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa to step down or engage in wide-reaching reforms means that street violence there has unfolded in the absence of transition. Tunisia was, of course, the first country in the region to witness regime change. However, despite tensions among three broad political groupings—conservative Salafist Islamists, supporters of the moderate (governing) Islamist party Ennada, and a loose coalition of so-called secularists—factional tensions in Tunisia have not yet spilled into sustained collective violence.[4]

The authors have two main objectives in their case studies: One goal is to use existing understandings of transitional violence to account for variation in the presence or absence of violence in their respective cases and also variation in the form of that violence, when it has been present. As a discipline, political science tends to privilege theory-building and theory-testing over using existing causal theory to "merely" understand the social world. However, when given phenomena are of particular historical or policy interest—as is evidently so with the selected cases—using existing explanatory frameworks to make sense of those cases has analytic merit (George and Bennett 2005, 75). The authors go beyond mere explanation, however. Their second goal is to offer theory-based assessments of the likelihood for further violence in Libya, Yemen, and Egypt as processes of transition continue to unfold in each of those countries. Again, political scientists tend to be wary of forecasting potential outcomes, partly due to the discipline's poor track record in predicting social trends (Stevens 2012). Although enormous resources were devoted to studying the Middle East and North Africa during the decade that followed September 11, for example, few social scientists foresaw the wave of revolution that moved across the region with the Arab Spring (Gause 2011). But despite our seeming incapacity to predict the political future, it is arguably still important to map potential outcomes in broad terms. When those possible outcomes include conditions of crisis, such as transitional violence, there is particular worth in such a mapping exercise because the resulting analysis can indicate where internal or external actors might consider pursuing a conflict mitigation strategy.

Since risk assessments open up space for policy recommendations, the symposium's conclusion considers how the danger of further violence in post-Arab Spring transitions might be reduced. In offering this consideration, I return to a core theme of this introduction and the case studies: Transitional violence is rooted in uncertainty—about state capacity, the balance of political power, and the balance of power among state security agencies. Because these dynamics of uncertainty are all rooted in a lack of public information about the interests, actions, and capacities of transition players, internal and external stakeholders should ensure that on-going transition processes are realized in the most transparent and inclusive ways possible. Although intuitive, this argument carries weight when it is couched in a theory-based understanding of the relationship between transition and violence, which is the focus of the remainder of this introduction.

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WHEN MIGHT REGIME TRANSITION BREED COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE?

To understand the dynamics of (in)security in post-Arab Spring transitions, it is arguably necessary to first understand the dynamics of (in)security in processes of transition, generally. I use the term "arguably" quite deliberately here, because one school of thought holds that politics of the Middle East and North Africa are "exceptional" and, therefore, impervious to cross-regional comparison (see Haddad and Schwedler 2013, 211). While claims of Middle East particularity are no doubt true, they are also truistic because every region of the world is characterized by its own, particular set of institutional and cultural traits. By and large, that particularity does not prevent rewarding cross-case comparison.[5] To the contrary, beyond the evident fact that a given case can only be considered exceptional when compared with the norm, there is heuristic merit in setting studies of supposedly unique cases within a comparative framework because any points of commonality that are observed across contrasting cases will raise questions of causal significance and invite further investigation.[6] With that benefit of comparison in mind, the sections that follow bracket discussion of post-Arab Spring cases and, instead, present a generalized framework for understanding the relationship between transition and violence.

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Table 1

Paths from Regime Transition to Violence

	PATH 1: DILEMMAS OF SECURITY	PATH 2: DILEMMAS OF GOVERNANCE	PATH 3: SECURITY SECTOR DILEMMAS
Causal Condition	Severe weakening or failure of state security agencies	Disputed balance of power between political factions	Unclear distribution of power among security agencies
Causal Mechanism	Competition between militias and/or violent entrepreneurs	Competition between political factions	Competition between security agencies
Form(s) of Violence	Clashes between militias and/or profiteering	Episodic clashes between political factions	Episodic, state-sponsored violence
Examples (Non-Arab Spring)	Iraq (2003–) Georgia (1991–1993)	Russia (1993) Kenya (1992)	Indonesia (1998) Romania (1990)
Examples (Post-Arab Spring)	Yemen (2011–) Libya (2011–)	Egypt (2011–) Yemen (2011–)	(Possible in all cases, going forward)

Although studies of regime transition and collective violence have, respectively, dominated comparative political inquiry during the past three decades, the relationship between the two processes has remained remarkably under-theorized. Still, by combining a survey of related literature with consideration of recent cases of transitional violence, three broad paths that run from regime change to collective violence can be identified. Those paths are outlined in the following text and summarized in table 1.

Path 1: Dilemmas of Security

Some collective violence is almost certain to accompany regime transition when state security organs weaken, or collapse, alongside regime change. Such a scenario is most likely during transitions from totalizing or patrimonial regimes because the security and administrative structures of the state are closely intertwined with the political organs of the regime or government. Where such a conflation of politics and administration exists, efforts to restructure the institutions of government (i.e., regime change) may precipitate a collapse of state organs. In the former Soviet Union, for example, the very idea of the USSR as a multinational federation of republics was devised and promoted by the Soviet regime. Consequently, when the legitimacy and structures of that regime began to weaken in the late 1980s, so too did the federal Soviet state (and its security agencies) begin to fold (see Brubaker 1994). This also happened in Iraq, where Ba'athist ideology and personnel were seen to have penetrated the Iraqi state to such an extent that the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (controversially) dissolved the state's security forces, to complete the process of regime change that began with Saddam Hussein's flight (Pfiffner 2010).

When state security structures significantly weaken or fold alongside regime change, the logic of the domestic "security dilemma" is a common way for scholars to understand the collective violence that likely follows (see Fearon 1998; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Posen 1993; Rose 2000). This approach assumes that, in the absence of state-sponsored security, individuals will turn to nonstate social or political organs for protection. Because no effective government is in place to mediate relations between those organs, the efforts of any given faction to arm itself for defense are likely to be seen as offensive and threatening by other factions. A dynamic of mistrust then drives competing groups to arm, and counter-arm, until one faction feels compelled to take preemptive action against ostensibly threatening rivals. Intense clashes between militias follow as each group seeks to guarantee its own security by first establishing, and then maintaining, a monopoly on violence within a finite piece of territory. Where that is the case, the outcome will be civil war,[7] as seen in Afghanistan and Iraq following externally enforced regime change in those countries (Jones 2008; Kaufmann 2007). Several post-Soviet states also traced such a path from regime change, through state collapse, and on to civil war during their transitions from communist rule.[8]

Although the domestic security dilemma is a useful explanatory tool, it has one particular limitation: it can overpredict the likelihood of transitional violence spiraling into civil war. It does so by bracketing consideration of informal, community-based organs of governance, which often form when central governments are weak. Where such informal governmental structures are indeed present, they can manage relations between militias that are operating within their "jurisdictions" and serve as forums for the exchange of information about the interests and capacities of those militias (see Ahram 2011; Menkhaus 2007). Both steps reduce the likelihood that relations between armed nonstate actors will dissolve into unchecked violent conflict.

Alongside the possibility for offensive or defensive clashes between militias, there is also likely to be an increase in violent profiteering when transition triggers a weakening of state capacity (see Mueller 2000). At the unorganized level, such opportunism takes the form of violent looting—like that seen in Baghdad following Saddam's fall (Burns 2003; Diamond 2004). And at the more organized level, opportunism is likely to manifest itself in protection racketeering. The particular form of that racketeering will vary according to the residual capacity of the state. When state security forces weaken but do not wholly collapse, for example, localized mafia-type gangs are likely to form and then violently compete against state

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forces for the right to sell protection and contract enforcement within a finite territory. This happened in parts of Eurasia following the breakup of the Soviet Union (Varese 1994; Volkov 2002). When state forces wholly collapse at the point of regime change, however, large and well-armed racketeer groups are likely to form under the leadership of a warlord.[9] As those groups fight among themselves to monopolize control over the market for private protection across large swathes of territory, sustained collective violence unfolds, as in Somalia following the dissolution of Siad Barre's regime in 1991 (Marten 2007, 52–53).

Path 2: Dilemmas of Governance

A second path from transition to violence is driven by the development of intense competition between political actors who aim to control the levers of transitional government or the process of transition. This competition, which may play out at the national or regional levels, is particularly likely to emerge when those who opposed the outgoing regime were a coalition of strange bedfellows, who shared little beyond their objections to that regime. Unsurprisingly, after the common goal of regime change is realized, such uneasy coalitions tend to fracture. This happened in Timor-Leste, for example, where opposition to Indonesian rule masked tensions between the political wing of the Timorese resistance movement, *Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente* (FRETILIN), and the armed resistance movement that was led by Xanana Gusmão. Those tensions surfaced shortly after Indonesian withdrawal in 1999. They then morphed into open political competition after FRETILIN took control of the country's first parliament in 2002, while Gusmão took the presidency (ICG 2006; Ingram 2012).

In a consolidated (democratic) regime, competition between evenly matched political factions might be seen as a welcome check on despotism. However, intense political rivalry can be dangerous in a context of regime transition because rules governing the management of political contests are often weakly institutionalized, if they exist at all (Paris 1997). In the absence of accepted and enforceable mechanisms for adjudicating political disputes peacefully, parties sometimes turn to violence as a means of dispute resolution. Episodic clashes between supporters of competing factions then ensue and persist until one party demonstrates a power advantage over its rival (s) (McFaul 2001; McFaul 2002). This occurred in transitional Russia, where power was evenly balanced between Boris Yeltsin (who controlled the presidency) and opponents of his reforms (who controlled the legislature). After increasing tension between the two factions, their rivalry tipped into violence on the streets of Moscow in September and October of 1993. Violence ended only when the army shifted the balance of power in Yeltsin's favor by siding with the president (McFaul 2001, Ch. 5; Reddaway and Glinski 2001, Ch. 7).

One particular argument that attends to the dangers of political competition during transition focuses on the impact of introducing elections. This account starts from the assumption that the introduction of a competitive ballot threatens political elites who are emerging from an authoritarian system because the access of those elites to power then rests on their untested abilities to sustain popular support. Under these conditions of political insecurity, unscrupulous elites may resort to using targeted violence immediately before elections (to intimidate the electorate into voting "appropriately") or after elections (to punish opposition groups). Such strategies of violence were allegedly employed by Daniel arap Moi's government alongside the introduction of multiparty elections in Kenya in 1992 (Africa Watch 1993; Klopp and Zuern 2007). Elections may also trigger violence when competing elites seek to drum up popular support by fomenting ethno-nationalist or religious sentiment while selling themselves as prime defenders of the national or religious group (Mansfield and Snyder 2005; Snyder 2000; Toft 2007). If this electoral strategy is initially successful, governing elites may then incrementally "up the ante" in terms of their exclusivist rhetoric, to stay ahead of any competitors who are also looking to win the national or religious vote. The endpoint of out-bidding by competing parties may be a move by governing elites to strike against supposed enemies. Where those enemies lie within, violence grows out of internal conflict, as was arguably the case in the former Yugoslavia (Snyder 2000, 189–90 and 204–20). Where enemies lie outside of the state, transitional violence takes the form of international conflict, as seen between Eritrea and Ethiopia (Steves 2003).

When state forces wholly collapse at the point of regime change, large and well-armed racketeer groups are likely to form under the leadership of a warlord.

Path 3: Security Sector Dilemmas

In a third scenario, transitional violence is a manifestation of competition between distinct branches of a state's security apparatus for power and resources in the posttransition era (Gledhill 2012).

Competition among security agencies is particularly likely to develop when the "type" of regime that might emerge from the transition process is highly uncertain. Although all transitions are characterized by a degree of outcome uncertainty (Karl 1990, 6), the intensity of that uncertainty varies across cases as a function of several context-specific factors including the "mode of transition" (Karl and Schmitter in Gel'man 1999, 944); the breadth of the institutional reform agenda (McFaul 2001, 9–16); the number and nature of players involved in the transition game (Gel'man, Ryzhenkov, and Brie 2003, 23–24); and the perceived balance of power between those players (McFaul 2001, 16–21). Regardless of the particular sources of ambiguity, however, when it remains unclear what type of regime will emerge from a transition, so too will the future distribution of power and resources among the police, military,

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and secret services remain unclear because different types of regime are characterized by different logics of resource distribution.[10] Liberal democracies, for example, tend to professionalize their militaries, separate domestic police forces from those militaries, and reduce the size of their secret services (see Chanaa 2002; Janowitz 1964). Authoritarian regimes, by contrast, often privilege the secret police as defenders of the regime while neglecting the needs of a conscript army (see Stepan 1988, Chs. 1–2). Consequently, as long as the form of posttransition regime remains undetermined, so too will the future distribution of resources and responsibility among security actors remain undefined. Under this cloud of distributional uncertainty, the ordinary interest of security agencies in cooperating with one another to provide state security may be replaced by an extraordinary interest among those agencies in competing against one another for position in the new regime.

Interagency competition increases the likelihood of transitional violence in two ways. First, when state security forces compete, rather than cooperate, the collective capacity of the state to repress violence weakens and opportunity space opens up for the organization and execution of violence. Second, within a context of interagency rivalry, one or more security agencies may have an interest in using the means of violence at their disposal to support strategic efforts aimed at strengthening their respective standings in the posttransition era. When that happens, state-sponsored episodic violence follows. In Nigeria, this violence took the form of regular, low-level clashes between military and police forces during the decade that followed the country's shift to civilian rule (1999) (Solomon and Ajasa 2011). In post-Ceauşescu Romania, by contrast, officers from the country's competing secret services coordinated attacks by civilians on political groups that were opposed to the country's provisional government, in order to win the favor of political elites who were set to control the distribution of state resources in the new regime (Gledhill 2011). And in Indonesia, special forces within the military facilitated rioting on the streets of Jakarta in May 1998 in an apparent effort to reveal the incapacity of regular forces and, therefore, demonstrate the need for strong special forces in the post-Soeharto era (Gledhill 2012).

ASSESSING (IN)SECURITY IN LIBYA, YEMEN, AND EGYPT

In the three articles that follow, the contributors use the theoretical framework described here as a basis for assessing variation in the presence or absence of transitional violence in Libya, Yemen, and Egypt. Where violence has indeed been present, the authors account for variation in the degree and form of that violence. Looking forward, they also offer their views on the likelihood of further violence as processes of transition and regime consolidation continue to unfold. To facilitate comparison across cases, we worked together in structuring their contributions, and all authors mapped their analyses directly onto the tripartite framework introduced here. As a result, there is consistency across the three studies, as each author systematically assesses security in his or her case of expertise under three, fixed headings: (1) dilemmas of security, (2) dilemmas of governance, and (3) security sector dilemmas.

In his investigation of the Libyan case, Brian McQuinn finds that the formation of diverse, nonstate armed groups during the country's civil war of 2011 was matched by the establishment of community-based mechanisms for governing those militias. Since the war's conclusion, the armed groups and the informal governance structures have both remained in place. Consequently, McQuinn argues, although episodic clashes between militias are a clear concern in Libya, informal governance institutions are currently checking the potential for those clashes to escalate.

April Longley Alley also identifies a multiplicity of armed nonstate actors operating in Yemen. Although the size and strength of those militias expanded as the capacity of the Yemeni state contracted with the dissolution of the Saleh regime, Longley Alley argues that the Yemeni state has long been feeble and, as such, informal institutions that manage relations between armed nonstate actors existed before the transition, and they have persisted. While those community governance structures have helped prevent Yemen from sliding into civil war since 2011, the proliferation of armed factions means that disputes between national, regional, and local political actors have occasionally turned violent, and they may continue to do so. The likelihood of further violence, Longley Alley concludes, will be shaped by the inclusiveness of the ongoing "National Dialogue" talks and the willingness of stakeholders to devolve power to regional centers.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, state security structures have remained intact and largely unreformed across the change of regime, and so there has been little or no space for nonstate armed groups to form there. However, as Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar explains in his contribution, there has been a weakening of the willingness or capacity of police services to ensure order on the streets since 2011. Consequently, confrontations between state forces, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, and diverse actors opposed to the powerful Islamist movement have turned violent on several occasions—most recently in wake of the military's decision to remove Mohamed Morsi as president in early July 2013.

In Egypt, as in Libya and Yemen, violence in the wake of regime change serves as a reminder of the inherent volatility of transition processes that have played out in wake of the Arab Spring. Reading across the three cases, it becomes clear that security in the region remains precarious; transition processes could continue to prompt violence or, equally, they could give way to peaceful, inclusive, and institutionalized forms of government. Which way the pendulum ultimately swings depends, in part, on the interests and actions of internal and external stakeholders. Consequently, the conclusion to this symposium considers what steps stakeholders might take to ensure that future reform efforts are managed in a way that will improve the long-term political and economic security of citizens of post-Arab Spring states, without compromising their physical security in the short term.

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NOTES

1. Following Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986, 6), we use the term "transition" broadly throughout this symposium in reference to a period of institutional interregnum that begins with the dissolution of an existing system of government and ends with the (somewhat undefined) consolidation of a new set of rules of the political game. Beyond the widely recognized merit of this understanding, its breadth allows us to maxmize the empirical and temporal scope of our case investigations.
2. Although "Latin" transitions were characterized by less violence than the cited transitions from communist rule, episodic violence occurred in southern Europe and Latin America. See discussions in Bermeo (1997).
3. We adopt Charles Tilly's understanding of "collective violence," which is an act of force that inflicts physical damage and which is coordinated/perpetrated by more than one actor (2003, 3). By setting the concept at such a high level of abstraction, we allow ourselves space to assess any form, or degree, of violence alongside transitions across the region.
4. There was particular concern about the potential for an escalation of violence in Tunisia following the assassination of Chokri Belaid in February 2013. However, at the time of writing, those concerns had not played out.
5. For a discussion of various research traditions and cross-case comparison, see Lichbach (1997, 253–56).
6. See discussion in Tarrow (2010).
7. This understanding of civil war as divided sovereignty draws on Kalyvas (2006, 17).
8. See, for example, treatment of the Georgian civil wars in Zürcher (2007, Ch. 5).
9. For a discussion of the characteristics of a warlord, see Giustozzi (2009).
10. For a selection of works that broadly attend to the relationship between forms of government, civil-military relations, and logics of resource and power distribution among different branches of the security forces, see Huntington (1996), Janowitz (1964), and Perlmutter (1986).

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