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**FROM THE EDITORIAL
BOARD**

The publication of this issue concludes our first year editing the newsletter. We would like to express our gratitude to those who took time out of their busy schedules to provide the content for our first three newsletters. We would also like to thank those of you who have provided suggestions and feedback. We are still experimenting with the format. As in the previous editions, this issue includes a focused symposium—on the problems of doing research

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CHANGE OF LEADER, CONTINUITY OF SYSTEM: NASCENT LIBERALIZATION IN POST-MUBARAK EGYPT

Jason Brownlee, *The University of Texas at Austin*
Joshua Stacher, *Kent State University*



Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's resignation, through a mix of popular revolt and military intercession, sheds light on the ongoing domestic and international challenges to democratization. On January 25 Egyptians launched the Middle East's largest democratic experiment. Mubarak's exit on February 11 then opened a still-ongoing negotiation between military leaders and the civilian masses. The long-term politics of post-Mubarak Egypt remain to be determined, but so far there is as much continuity as change.¹

Either by design or for lack of one, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which turned tank turrets upon the Presidential Palace and ushered Mubarak into early retirement, has not dismantled Egypt's corrupt security and political apparatus, or heeded the reform

1. For initial prognoses of regime continuity see Robert Springborg, "Game over: The Chance for Democracy in Egypt Is Lost," *Foreign Policy* (2 February 2011). Available at http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/02/game_over_the_chance_for_democracy_in_egypt_is_lost. and Ellis Goldberg, "Mubarak without Mubarakism: Why Egypt's Military Will Not Embrace Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* (11 February 2011). available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67416/ellis-goldberg/mubarakism-without-mubarak?page=show>. For an alternative view, consult Paul Amar, "Why Egypt's Progressives Win," *Jadaliyya* (8 February 2011).

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EYES WIDE SHUT: DEMOCRATIC REVERSALS, SCIENTIFIC CLOSURE, AND POST-SOVIET EURASIA

J. Paul Goode
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The collapse and breakup of the Soviet state promised not just a democratic breakthrough but a social scientific opening. The former USSR became a vast proving ground for theories in comparative politics about regime transitions, institutional design, and identity politics. Scholars gained unprecedented access to the post-Soviet region at the same time that Eurasia's newly independent states grappled with the challenge (it was hoped) of crafting democracy. In the rush to plant comparative politics in post-Soviet soil, research focused on what was readily observable, measurable, and otherwise understandable in terms commensurate with ways of explaining political reality in the West.

Before long, expectations were dashed for post-Soviet democratization. Aside from the Baltic states, the rest of Eurasia lagged considerably behind the pace of democratization in the former communist states of Eastern Europe. Nearly two decades since the collapse of the USSR, democratic reversal rather than democratic opening best characterizes the post-

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Editors

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under politically harsh conditions. However, you will also see a stand-alone article which addresses a topic of contemporary interest for the first time. It is our intention to give space, when possible, to allow members of the section to write on the topics of the day.

For the members of the section, what could be more timely than a piece that discusses the Arab uprisings of the past year? Jason Brownlee of the University of Texas at Austin and Joshua Stacher of Kent State University, recently did fieldwork in Egypt and used the experience as an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which democratization theory helps us to make sense of what is transpiring there. We hope to publish a second set of reflections on the wave of protest in the Middle East in the fall issue as well.

This issue's symposium is entitled "Research under Authoritarian Conditions." The theme was proposed to us by Paul Goode and is based on a roundtable at last year's Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Bryon Moraski at the University of Florida served as the project

editor. Many of us who look at processes of democratization have used fieldwork as an essential strategy for data collection. Nowadays, in many parts of the world such as Southern Europe, large parts of Latin America, Central Europe, and parts of East Asia, the dangers of conducting fieldwork are not so great. However, for scholars who work in the Middle East, parts of Africa, the former Soviet Union, and China, the situation is different. In these countries, researchers have to worry about whether they will get permission to carry out their research, cooperation in gaining access to archives and individuals, the safety of their interlocutors, and sometimes even about getting ejected or harassed by the political authorities.

The authors of the articles for the symposium are all in the early stages of their careers; they are either assistant professors or Ph.D. candidates on the verge of finishing their dissertations. As such, their perspectives and experiences are both current and fresh. Paul Goode, an assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma, writes on the former Soviet Union. Two

pieces discuss fieldwork in the Middle East. Shervin Malekzadeh, who recently defended his dissertation at Georgetown, reflects on his experience conducting research in Iran, and Ariel Ahram, also an assistant professor at Oklahoma, reflects on the pitfalls of conducting research on Iraq at a distance. Cyanne Loyle, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland and a visiting fellow at the Kroc Institute at Notre Dame, explores the intricacies of conducting fieldwork following genocide in the context of Rwanda. Finally, Marie-Eve Reny, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Toronto, looks at how the opening of China to unprecedented levels of fieldwork by foreign researchers still poses thorny problems. Our hope is that this symposium can serve as a practical guide to other young researchers about how to embark on field research both safely and effectively.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee,
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Brownlee and Stacher, CONTINUED

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proposals of the youth movement that drove the January 25th Revolution. Instead of working alongside civilians to overhaul Egypt's deeply autocratic 1971 Constitution, the generals have wrapped the idioms of popular emancipation around the worn practices of Mubarak: pledging incremental change, warning of domestic instability, and fomenting fears of Islamism. All of this stands to help ensure that military rule (whether or not in uniform) continues to eclipse democratic alternatives.

After visiting and conducting research in Egypt for over a decade, we have found

the scholarly literature on transitions and authoritarianism highly useful for understanding why popular forces suddenly rallied to depose Mubarak and why they now face a protracted struggle against his regime. Take, for example, the timing of events. Egyptians began rising up against their ruler just eleven days after President Zein Eddine Ben Ali fled Tunisia. Other countries that experienced protests, with still indeterminate results, include Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Iraq, Morocco, and Syria. Therefore diffusion has been a reality for Arab autocrats and

the social scientists studying them.² At the time of this writing, though, only two Arab rulers have stepped down, raising the prospect that political outcomes in the Middle East may be quite heterogeneous, more like sub-Saharan Africa than Latin America or Eastern Europe.³

2. Daniel Brinks and Michael Coppedge, "Diffusion is No Illusion: Neighbor Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 39:4 (May 2006): 463–489.

3. Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Valerie Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from

Without precipitously classifying the post-Mubarak system to date (much less the ultimate outcome), we are comfortable describing the process that began on February 11. In political science terms, Egyptians have initiated the first real process of liberalization in the country's post-World War II history. It came not through executive fiat (like the ersatz reforms of Anwar Sadat and Mubarak) but through concerted popular struggle in which millions braved state violence and hundreds lost their lives. With liberalization in mind, the Egyptian scene can reciprocally inform and be informed by existing theories about electoral authoritarianism, the necessity of elite splits for political transitions, the importance of opposition coordination, civil-military relations, and the role of external actors. The remainder of this essay presents some initial lessons from Egypt for these areas of the field.

The Dead End of Mubarak's Elections

Although the multiparty elections introduced by Sadat (r. 1970-1981) had long been a subject of social science scrutiny, controlled voting under Sadat and Mubarak never substantially redistributed political power. Unlike his counterparts in Mexico and Taiwan, Mubarak provided no means of incrementally shifting from single-party dominance to multiparty power-sharing. Indeed, in fall 2010 he dismissed the opposition's initiative to establish a parallel, more representative parliament. After his National Democratic Party implausibly took over 90% of elected seats in last November's elections, the Egyptian president added insult to injury by deriding his challengers' plan for an alternative forum: "Let them amuse themselves." It was a fateful

the Postcommunist Experience." *World Politics* 55 (January 2003): 167-192; and Michael McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World," *World Politics* 54 (January 2002), 212-244.

expression of Mubarak's arrogance. The bankruptcy of Egyptian elections, long ignored by the overwhelming bulk of the country's voters, was both a contributing cause to the uprising and a testament to the titular place of elections in some authoritarian regimes. Since 1976 Egypt had experienced nine "multi-party" elections that delivered super-majorities for the president's organization. Such elections manifested state power rather than reallocating it among contestants.⁴

Egyptian youth activists recognized and exposed how the formal political arena served only the regime's reproduction. By taking to the streets like earlier movements in the Philippines, Georgia, and Ukraine, they underscored the need for contentious challenges—whether amid elections or outside them—to dislodge entrenched incumbents. We have every reason to believe that absent the January 25th Movement, Egypt would likely have continued to see stilted elections adorn persistent autocracy, under Mubarak and his successor.

Elite Defections (or Lack Thereof)

Based on the tentative (and now-canonical) conclusions of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, a transition away from authoritarianism in Egypt was and remains unlikely.⁵ Events to date strongly support that prognosis. Egypt's popular uprising did not paralyze the security apparatus and failed to produce widespread elite defections or divisions. A mix of popular revolt and military intervention pushed Mubarak out of office but did not transform the regime.

4. Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2008).

5. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

After tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled into downtown Cairo on January 28, civilians hailed the military for its neutrality and, conversely, some soldiers expressed solidarity with protesters. But the chain of command remained unbroken, up to the regime's peak, and the military did not undertake an outright coup against Mubarak. Rather, they remained united behind the president, himself a war hero and Air Force veteran. Details of Mubarak's final days remain ambiguous. If any orders to fire on demonstrators were issued, they were clearly not obeyed. At the same time, it appears the SCAF and Mubarak struck an accord that avoided his ignominious flight into exile (as in Tunisia) but sustained overall military supremacy.

Other Arab uprisings have produced high profile and potentially pivotal elite defections (such as in Yemen and Libya). The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt, though, did not see its senior or even mid-ranking leaders break away during the eighteen-day political crisis. To be sure, a number of figures were dismissed by the regime early on, including the NDP's organizational chief, Ahmed Ezz, who had taken credit for the party's electoral landslide in fall 2010. Subsequently, several regime apparatchiks, including the former interior minister Habib al-Adly, were charged with crimes ranging from massive embezzlement to use of lethal force against protesters. Their fate remains uncertain.

Rather than defecting to the opposition, ruling party politicians stood by and watched events from the sidelines. According to interviews with former high-ranking NDP officials, the party's leadership last convened in their Cairo HQ on January 26.⁶ Soon after, top

6. Interviews conducted by Stacher with former NDP officials in Cairo, March 20 and 21, 2011.

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party figures closed ranks and refused to concede to any of the protesters' demands. This was the beginning of a series of miscalculations that paralyzed the party as the crisis unfolded. One former official recounted that he watched the "so-called revolution" on TV from his home. He and a colleague independently averred that Ahmed Ezz's departure on January 29th incapacitated the NDP, for Ezz took with him the party's entire contact list as well as the internal communications network used during previous presidential and parliamentary elections.⁷ Without access to the over 400 people that Ezz employed, the party's members were left to clarify their positions as individuals, without a unified message. Thus, aside from a few pro-Mubarak protests around Cairo the NDP's cadres remained inactive.

In other areas, cosmetic alterations underscore the continuity in post-Mubarak Egypt. The reviled internal police apparatus of State Security has been redubbed National Security, and is headed by General Hamid Abdalla who has a long pedigree of loyalty to Mubarak, including serving as director of the rescue police force in Cairo, Helwan police chief, and assistant to the Interior Minister in southern Egypt. During the uprising, the Ministry of Interior conspicuously withdrew from the streets, to foment fears of chaos and perhaps partly to give the military a wide berth. Since al-Adly's arrest, though, policemen have resurfaced. There are virtually no signs of political rebellion by the security forces against the top elites. Some protests by police have pointed to the need for higher salaries, a message reported sympathetically by state-run media.

7. For information on the communication technology that the NDP employed during elections, see Joshua Stacher, "Egypt: The Anatomy of Succession," *Review of African Political Economy* 35:2 (2008): 308-309.

In sum, the Egyptian experience in 2011 has confirmed existing theories about the need for elite defections in transitions from authoritarian rule. Elite cohesion, especially in the repressive apparatus, casts a shadow over the continuing efforts by the January 25th organizers to inaugurate a more democratic regime.

Opposition Coordination

While elite unity may haunt post-Mubarak Egypt, one of the most surprising and hopeful aspects of the January 25th Revolution was the ability of a previously fractious opposition to unify, command popular support, and achieve its central demand. As Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar have noted, "Opposition... parties are weakened by their inability to form stable coalitions and overcome collective action problems. These divisions result from real differences in their policy preferences, their expected benefits from regime change, and institutional rules that make coordination unlikely or reward some opposition elites while punishing others."⁸ Egypt illustrates how opposition coordination can be a temporary product of context and situational politics as opposed to the restricted instances of electoral authoritarianism. The fervor of revolution can produce fortuitous if unlikely bed-fellows.

Nowhere was this political harmony more demonstrable than the battlefield camaraderie between Egypt's liberal activists and their peers from the Society of Muslim Brothers (SMB). On the eve of the January 25th protests, the organizers of the Police Day Protest could not forecast the turnout. Meanwhile, the SMB's leadership dismissed the protests and eschewed participating in them. Such disunity

8. Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 412.

had been a source and product of years of lackluster demonstrations. From the numerous Kefaya protests in 2005 to calls for a general strike sponsored by the April 6th Movement in 2008, Egyptians had not heeded the call for contentious collective action.⁹ Although sporadic protests followed the murder of Khalid Said by two plain-clothed police officers in Alexandria in summer 2010, there was no reason to expect that January 25th would draw more than a few hundred protestors.

The SMB judged the protests a fool's errand that would simply provide the security services a fresh pretext to detain and harass its members. After all, the group had weathered high levels of state repression after winning twenty-percent of seats of parliament in the 2005 elections.¹⁰ Individual members, however, were allowed to attend on their own volition. Many did so, including youth organizer Mohamed Abbas and former parliamentarian (2005-2010) Mohamed al-Baltagy. Their involvement, beginning January 28, proved pivotal to the survival of the tent city that had arisen in Tahrir Square (Liberation Square) and symbolized the demonstrators' determination to outlast Mubarak.

Many participants in the January 25th Revolution cite the Brothers' organizational contributions.¹¹ The SMB set checkpoints to screen out state moles, provided most of the medical doctors who attended to those wounded, and collected supplies of rubble to repel assailants. On February 2, when NDP-paid agents rode on

9. Samantha Shapiro, "Revolution, Facebook-Style" *New York Times Magazine* 22 January 2009. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/magazine/25bloggers-t.html>.

10. Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, "Boxing in the Brothers," *Middle East Report Online* August 2007. Available at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero080807>.

11. Interviews by Stacher, Cairo, March 18 and 19, 2011.

horse and camel back to rout the Tahrir protesters, they triggered a sixteen-hour struggle for control of the square. During the melee the SMB scrambled to establish lines of defense and helped the non-SMB demonstrators, adept at social networking but unseasoned at street fighting, hold their ground. It was, in a sense, an alliance of adversaries. The youth fought alongside the Brothers to defend the Square.¹² One Egyptian liberal who participated in the demonstrations described the Brothers' actions as "heroic."¹³

The honeymoon between the SMB and liberal youths passed before Mubarak's resignation. When vice president (and security services chief) Omar Suleiman called for a meeting between the state and opposition on February 6, the SMB's leaders rushed to the table—despite objections from the protesters in Tahrir who refused to negotiate until Mubarak was gone. The transitory nature of the SMB-liberal coalition showed that historical lack of electoral coordination was a strong predictor of *strategic* alignment among opposition forces, even as tactical positions changed amid the revolution and proved critical to its outcome.

An Egyptian *Abertura*?

Current relations between the Egyptian armed forces and civilian political movements augur a protracted struggle by those seeking democracy. Because the army arrived in the streets on January 28 and played a backstage role in Mubarak's exit, Egyptian officers presided over the political arrangements that followed. Headed by the previously innocuous defense minister, Field Marshall Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has, since February 11, been the country's executive body. It looks set to maintain that role at least through 12. Interview by Stacher, Cairo, March 20, 2011. 13. Interview by Stacher, Cairo, March 18, 2011.

presidential elections slated for the end of the year. There are initial parallels between the posture and prerogatives of the Egyptian military in post-Mubarak Egypt and the influence of the Brazilian military as documented by Alfred Stepan in his classic *Rethinking Military Politics*.¹⁴ Rather than heading for a 1985-style scenario, in which elections bring a handover from military to civilian control, the interplay between the SCAF and Egyptian society bears more resemblance to Brazil in the early 1970s. In short, the January 25th Revolution may have triggered Egypt's *abertura* rather than its transition.

In terms of military contestation and military prerogatives, Egypt currently places at the low-high corner of the space mapped by Stepan.¹⁵ While the SCAF has permitted "opposition," in the form of general dissent in newspapers and limited street demonstrations, it has tolerated little "contestation."¹⁶ Amnesty International has reported on Egyptian men and women detained and tortured by the military during and in the weeks after the protests against Mubarak.¹⁷ In late March, the SCAF's ministerial body issued a law banning disruptive protests under threat of a half million Egyptian pound (\$85,000) fine and jail time. Meanwhile, the military's prerogatives remain wide-reaching and effectively unchallengeable. Even under the nominal republicanism of Mubarak, the military's budget was

outside of legislative oversight and the armed forces were a taboo subject for the country's otherwise feisty media. After February 11, the sectors of defense and intelligence have stayed in the hands of officers and the military's extensive involvement in the economy has not been disrupted. Indeed, it may grow over the coming months, particularly if the armed forces acquire Egypt's lucrative natural gas rents. The anti-demonstration law was clearly overkill. Large swaths of the Egyptian public seem comfortable with the military's provisional rule. A March 19 referendum amending the constitution gave a proxy approval rating for the SCAF: the measure passed with 77% amid record turnout, orderly voting, and overt endorsement of the military's stewardship. Banners extolling the armed forces ("The People and the Army are One") abounded near polling stations.¹⁸

This situation of "unequal civilian accommodation" bodes poorly for a rapid shift from persistent authoritarianism to fledgling democracy. Egypt's military expresses a mix of the old (external security) and new (internal security) professionalisms described by Stepan, and gives little sign that it embraces "democratic professionalism." Coupled with the limited civilian push for military disengagement from politics, this posture may portend continued military dominance.¹⁹ A major indicator of the country's course will come with campaigning for the presidency. Should the SCAF field its own candidate, such as recent prime minister Ahmed Shafiq or Armed Forces Chief of Staff Sami Anan, the Egyptian electorate may end up swapping one civilian-garbed military 18. On the referendum, see Joshua Stacher, "Egypt Without Mubarak," *Middle East Report Online* 7 April 2011. Available at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero040711>. 19. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, 15, 131–132, 135–136.

14. Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

15. One could also locate it outside the space for new democracies and with cases such as Honduras and Guatemala that Stepan discussed in passing.

16. *Ibid.*, 50–51, 110–112, 123.

17. Amnesty International, "Egyptian Military Urged to Halt Torture of Detainees," 17 February 2011. Available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/egyptian-military-urged-halt-torture-detainees-2011-02-17>. Amnesty International, "Egyptian Women Forced to Take 'Virginity Tests,'" 23 March 2011. Available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/egyptian-women-protesters-forced-take-virginity-tests-2011-03->

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ruler for another. One hopeful sign of retrenching the military's involvement in politics is the sense of civilian self-empowerment that accompanied the January 25th Revolution. Still, it remains to be seen how liberal forces will translate their courage and innovation into political power through parliamentary and presidential polls, and the constitutional revision process scheduled to follow them.

America's Role

Beyond the domestic balance of forces in Egypt, international pressures could push the military toward or away from a scaled back political role. The Brazilian military emulated its Uruguayan counterpart, withdrew from politics, and avoided becoming isolated like Chile and Paraguay. By contrast, the Egyptian military operates in a region still replete with dictatorships.²⁰ Even amid the revolutions of this year, civilian sovereignty in the Arab Middle East is, at best, incipient. Political observers may rightly shift their gaze to the United States, Egypt's principal patron since the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. On this score, however, one should not expect decisive pressure by Washington toward democratic professionalism. Traditionally, US interactions with the Egyptian military and security services have privileged stability over popular empowerment.

Comparative politics has a strong and growing literature addressing the question of under what conditions the US bolsters or subverts authoritarianism. Richard Snyder found that close ties to a superpower patron could help bring about radical revolutionary outcomes (Iran) or ease moderate oppositionists into power (the Philippines).²¹ With respect to the Middle East, Eva Bellin

20. *Ibid.*, 65.

21. Richard Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," *Comparative Politics* 24:4 (1992): 384-385.

noted that US support for friendly incumbents has been steady, one of several factors helping to explain the "robustness" of authoritarianism in the region.²² Finally, in their global analysis of competitive authoritarian regimes, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have produced the most detailed conceptual apparatus to date on this subject.²³ Their articles and book highlight the role of linkage and leverage in explaining how US and western powers helped to promote transitions to democracy in sites like Serbia and Mexico.²⁴ Although Mubarak's regime was hegemonic, exclusionary, and far from competitive, the variables of linkage and leverage draw attention to the diverse effects of US involvement.

At least in the conventional meaning of the terms linkage and leverage, during the post cold war era there has been no authoritarian government more linked to and more leveraged by the United States than Egypt. Historically the largest non-democratic recipient of US economic and military aid, Egypt has facilitated Washington's top strategic aims for decades, helping project US forces to the Persian Gulf, facilitating peace talks among Arabs and Israelis, and lending its weight to the fight against Al-Qaeda. Even during the height of George W. Bush's democracy agenda in 2003-2005, the US depended on Mubarak's regime for expedited passage through the Suez Canal (critical when Turkey demurred on overland

22. Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36:2 (2004): 144-145, 148-149.

23. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "International Linkage and Democratization," *Journal of Democracy* 16 (July 2005), 20-34; Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Linkage versus Leverage: Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change," *Comparative Politics* 38 (July 2006), 379-400; Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

24. Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 128, 178.

access in the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom); hosting of the biennial Operation Bright Star (one of the largest multinational military exercises in the world); overflight through Egyptian airspace (averaging over twenty per day); the "extraordinary rendition" of dozens of Al-Qaeda suspects; and monitoring of the border with the Gaza Strip upon Israel's disengagement. It is not that US officials did not consider democracy when working with their Egyptian peers, pronouncements about the need for political reform resonated in top-level speeches from the foreign policy establishment. Ultimately, though, in the vital US-Egyptian security relationship, Mubarak and his lieutenants were often given a free pass.²⁵

The US-Egyptian alliance, during and after Mubarak, offers an exemplary case for understanding the varying effects of external powers on democratic change and authoritarian persistence. With respect to Levitsky and Way's framework, it invites a broadening of the main explanatory variables. Their cases of high linkage and high leverage experienced "consistent and intense democratizing pressure," in part because geostrategic importance was understood to vitiate the West's leverage.²⁶ But the US does wield leverage over countries that play a role in American interests and such leverage, as noted by Snyder and Bellin, has often advanced continuity rather than change. Whereas *Competitive Authoritarianism* corrects for a "democratizing bias," the US-Egyptian relationship cautions us also against a "democracy promotion bias,"

25. For more of the place of democracy promotion in the US-Egyptian relationship, see Jason Brownlee, *Security Before Democracy: Norms, Interests, and Power in the US-Egyptian Alliance* (forthcoming).

26. Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 53, 372. See also their argument for "low" leverage vis-à-vis Egypt and Pakistan on page 41, which Jason Brownlee thanks Lucan Way for bringing to his attention.

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the assumption that intense ties with America favor domestic challengers over incumbents.²⁷

US relations with developing countries can display both regime-subverting leverage/linkage and regime-supporting leverage/linkage. With respect to most Arab governments, the second phenomenon has prevailed. Rather than bolstering regime critics, as occurred in parts of Latin America and Eastern Europe, successive US presidents used their influence with Egypt to elicit security and diplomatic cooperation. This pattern is likely to persist.

In the midst of the January 25th Revolution, the White House adopted a wait-and-see stance. After initially dubbing Mubarak's regime "stable," the administration called on Mubarak privately to facilitate a transition, but only gave the demonstrators public support after they had prevailed.²⁸ The significance of Egypt, and US anxiety over the political conditions there, rose through spring 2011. As Arab

27. *Ibid.*, 3.

28. David E. Sanger, "Obama Urges Quick Transition in Egypt," *The New York Times*, 2 February 2011. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/02/world/middleeast/02prexy.html>

revolts continued and war commenced in Libya, Egypt was described as one of the "anchors" of Middle East stability, the region's "strategic cornerstone," the "most important Arab country and the touchstone for change in the Arab world."²⁹ Given these stakes, the question that follows for students of the post-Mubarak era is: in what direction will the US apply its significant leverage upon and linkage with the SCAF regime or its civilian-headed successor?

Conclusion

During the March 19 referendum eighteen million Egyptians (41% of the electorate) voted in an orderly process that exceeded the country's physical capacity to handle voters (some waited in line for hours to cast their ballot and polling stations were held open two additional hours). The 77% "Yes" outcome was both an endorsement of the SCAF and a stunning defeat for the youth activists and liberals who had driven the January 25th Revolution and campaigned for

29. "anchor," Jake Tapper on *ABC: This Week*, 27 March 2011; "strategic cornerstone," David Gregory on *NBC News: Meet the Press*, 27 March 2011; "most important..." Editors, "Egypt's unfinished revolution," *The New York Times*, 24 March 2011. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/25/opinion/25fri2.html>.

"No." Days after the referendum, one disheartened Egyptian human rights advocate tweeted about the state of his country's politics: "Broad protests led to changes in the political system and could lead to a revolution in the future. That is the correct definition of what happened with January 25."³⁰ With one eye on the lessons from other regions, we plan to follow closely the course of those changes, which have opened a more uncertain but not yet less authoritarian period for Egypt.³¹

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30. Negad El Borai, 23 March 2011. Available at <http://twitter.com/#!/negadelborai>.

31. Deborah Yashar's concept of "democratizing moments" is worth invoking and reflects the promise of the January 25th revolutionaries. Deborah Yashar, *Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reaction in Costa Rica and Guatemala, 1870s-1950s* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997): 17.

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Soviet region. Yet the relationship between democratic reversals and scholarly access for fieldwork received little to no attention in comparison to the linked democratic and scientific openings that followed the collapse of the USSR, with the consequence that regime closure threatens to produce scientific closure.

Scientific closure occurs in three ways: first, competitive authoritarian regimes limit access to the region and the ability to apply common fieldwork techniques, particularly (though not exclusively) for Western scholars. Second, as opportunities diminish for the application of methods which require relatively open political environments, scholars prefer to relocate to more

congenial environs rather than engage in theoretical retooling. This is not to say that research output declines but that research produced by fieldwork and direct experience with the region declines even as interest in the region remains high. In other words, the expectation of authoritarianism becomes a deterrent to fieldwork. Third, the consensus about a regime's