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Governance and Government in the Arab Spring Hybridity Reflections from Lebanon

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1. Introduction

The international community increasingly accepts that peace, security and development are decisively shaped by 'good' governance and institutions (World Bank (WB) 2011; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2008). This observation is only reinforced by current developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) presented as the Arab Spring.[2] Dynamics in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria have nothing so much in common as their mix of socio-economic dilapidation and political-institutional despondency. Corrupt, unrepresentative and increasingly ineffective state institutions have provided much of the seeds for the current developments.

Yet, there is a pivotal aspect of governance that has been under-represented in the analysis of and response to the Arab Spring. This is the deceptiveness of the equation of governance with government. Analysts and policy-makers have construed the Spring as the bankruptcy of authoritarian government, but overlook the significance of the revolutions as an indication of resilient non-state governance. This disqualifies opportunities to build on existing and emerging non-state or semi-state governance arrangements.

The aim of this paper is to offer an alternative frame for engaging with the Arab Spring. With reference to Lebanon, a country on the brink of being sucked into the upheavals, I propose that studies of the Spring would benefit from focusing on 'twilight institutions' and 'mediated stateness' in 'hybrid political orders' rather than on 'fragile governments' in 'failing states.' As a sensitizing exercise, the paper does not seek to present a detailed empirical analysis.

The paper consists of four sections. Section 2 discusses the state-centered discourse that dominates analyses of the Arab Spring. In section 3, I juxtapose this state-centered perspective with a governance-oriented view on the Spring that is explicated in section 4 with illustrations from Lebanon. Section 5 concludes and offers a research agenda.

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[2] The term 'Arab Spring' heaps together diverse and different phenomena and suggests a (positive) normative evaluation. For the sake of readability, however, I will use it to broadly connote the uprisings in the region.

2. State fragility as dominant discourse

Both policy-oriented and academic scholars see the Arab Spring as an opportunity to reevaluate political relations with MENA countries, a sentiment partly driven, it seems, by a desire to move beyond 'Iraq' and 'Afghanistan' (de Vasconcelos 2012:7). In line with this, while many analysts underline the economic causes and consequences of the Spring (Malik and Awadallah 2011; Khalaf et al. 2011), the majority of analyses adopts a political-institutional approach. Concepts like 'governance' and 'institutions,' seem to provide the main explanatory utility for the 'Spring watchers' (Janssen et al. 2012:24; Joffé 2011:508).

The Arab Spring is overwhelmingly hailed as a break-down of authoritarian resilience (Aerts et al. 2012; Lynch et al. 2012:1). In tandem, the developments in the MENA region are often construed as a wave of democratization (de Vasconcelos 2011; Dadush and Dunne 2011:132). El Kasm (2012) muses that "the collapse of traditional authoritarian structures now creates a democratic opening for public debate" and Ghanem (2011:33) is certain that "the transition to deeper democracy is inevitable."

The attempt to understand the developments in the region, appears to be dictated by a fixation on the role of the state and the nature of the political system. This is not surprising considering that many of the grievances voiced by protesters were political. Also, there is ample attention for the relations between state and society. Such attention is signalled by reference to citizenship (Meijer 2012); the "reawakening of political culture" (Amery 2011:140); and the social contract (Sakbani 2011). Yet despite this attention for civil society, the presentation of the Arab Spring as a failure of government is inherently state-centric. Sakbani (2011), for instance, calls the Spring the result of "a catalogue of [state] failures." This, I argue, is related to its drawing on the fragile or failed states paradigm.

The notion of the 'fragile' state (risking to degenerate into a 'failed' state) has gained currency in academic and policy circles over the last decade as a conceptual response to the post-Cold War rise in intra-state conflict (Leenders 2010:173). Fragile states are described by the OECD (2008:14) as unwilling or incapable to guarantee security, development and human rights. Naudé et al. (2012) see fragile states as affected by conflict; politicization; institutional weakness and multiplicity; and vulnerability to shocks.

The fragility paradigm's underlying conception of the state prioritizes military (Weber 1964:154), territorial (Giddens 1985:20) or legalistic (Akinrinade 2009:14) sovereignty. This generates an emphasis on the exclusiveness of the state in several roles and functions, as the idea of the state on which the fragile state concept draws is intrinsically entrenched in European histories of state development. States are expected to have certain characteristics – recognized boundaries; a monopoly of violence; an effective taxation structure – and fulfil

certain functions – guaranteeing security; services; and political representation (Milliken and Krause 2002). Countries in which the state does not meet these criteria are defined based on this apparent deficiency. They are described as 'failed states' (Ghani and Lockhart 2008); 'weak states' (Rice and Patrick 2008); 'quasi states' (Jackson 1990); or 'fragile states' (McIouglin 2010). Underlying these concepts is the supposition that anarchy ensues in the absence of a 'strong' state and that state fragility undermines international security (Berg Harpviken 2010; Rabasa et al. 2008). The response to this "love affair with the concept of the sovereign state" has been an emphasis on state-building (Richards 2005:17). In all, the fragile state concept is problematic for various reasons (Overbeek et al. 2009:24). It is extremely broad; teleological; unable to distinguish between causes, effects and characteristics; and too closely associated with normative policy (Duffield 2007; Chandler 2006).

In line with this state-centrist paradigm, the bad governance that ignited the Arab Spring and that analysts focus on is governance by governments – which explains a preoccupation with state sovereignty (El Kasm 2012) and hegemony (de Vasconcelos 2012). Following the fragile state logic, analyses have strong normative undertones, with sometimes barely suppressed surprise that "they are like us after all" (de Vasconcelos 2012:11) and celebration of the MENA's chance to "rejoin history" (Sakbani 2011).

Others note that 'stability' (as bulwark against civil war) has been used to blackmail populations into unfavorable social contracts – with the support of Western states (Haseeb 2011:119; Hollis 2012; Dadush and Dunne 2011). Amery (2011:141) stresses that the fragility of the MENA does not only lie in its current governing, but in the legacies of its colonial governing. This is also recognized by Shelly (2011:170) in his dissecting of the Orientalist logic in Arab Spring analyses (see also Jahshan 2011:122) and by de Vasconcelos (2012) who sees the Spring as the ultimate refutation of a 'clash of civilizations' (see also Dabashi 2012).

Nevertheless, in line with fragile state thinking, an implicit prescription of state-building as the natural reaction to state failure is apparent in many accounts of the Arab Spring (de Vasconcelos 2011:3; Janssen et al. 2012:35). Sakbani (2011) sees "the abandonment of the concept of the modern citizen state and the descent into a pre modern norm of state based on family, region, tribe, sect or party" as the key cause of the revolutions and, hence, the building of such a 'modern citizen state' as the core response to them. Yet what is now construed as the inevitable break-down of untenably fragile states has long been regarded as the key to state stability and resilience: the very 'adaptive authoritarianism' that is now seen as cause for downing the system and democratization has long been seen by Middle East scholars as the very reason for the absence of failed states in the region (Leenders 2010:184; Bellin 2012).

This observation that Spring analysis is overly state-centered seems to be contradicted by the vast attention for the role of 'civil society' in the Arab Spring and its envisioned leadership in the post-Spring era (Keane 2011). Cannistraro (2011:40) distinguishes between traditional opposition parties; intellectuals; social movements; and "disparately associated Muslims." The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and youth movements and their 'new media communication' has been discussed at large (Aerts et al. 2012; Jahshan 2011:125; Anderson 2011). Diwan (2011) and Sakbani (2011) refer to the mobilizing role played by the "Arab street." Labour movements have been lauded for providing similar mobilizing capacity as evidenced in the accounts by Anderson (2011) for Tunisia and Joffé (2011:520) for Egypt.

These notions of civil society nevertheless display a singularity of governance; an incapacity to comprehend governance – the provision of security, welfare and representation – by non-state organizations. Ghanem (2011:130) illustrates this tendency to, instead of acknowledging existing governance arrangements, see state and non-state governance as incompatible:

> [there is] the inevitable need to overcome this contradiction: between modern state structures and primordial and tribal structures; between nationalism and internal religious and clan splits and affiliations; […] between national ideologies and transnational ones, Islamic, Arab, or otherwise; between democratic procedures and pseudo-democratic, authoritarian structures and state machinery. The basic duality did not work, and it cannot work anymore.

Thus, whereas NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), unions, youth and women's movements and political parties are usually included in 'civil society,' non-state armed governance actors – defined here as those organizations with the means and ambition to provide a constituency with security (through regulating internal use of force and offering protection from external threats), welfare (social services) and political representation (Arjona 2010) – are not.[3] There are several reasons for this. First, the very notion of non-state governance is an anomaly to the Weberian state concept. Non-state governance is often associated with conflict – as apparent in the 'rebel governance' terminology (Mampilly 2011). Also, many of these actors are Islamic and seen as incompatible with 'modernity' or democracy (Jahshan 2011:123; Fisk 2011).

3. Hybrid governance as alternative perspective

Governance – the organization of the provision of security, welfare and political representation – matters for explaining the origins of the Arab Spring. Insecurity in the form

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[3] Non-state governance is often associated with NGOs, businesses and security companies (or even gangs). These, however, engage in governance with the consent of the government and tackle one domain of governance – security, welfare or representation. Non-state governance actors, do not seek the state's permission to engage in governance. They are also active in all three governance domains.
Arab Spring developments are also often analyzed through Social Movement Theory (Leenders and Heydemann 2012). Where social movements tend to focus on specific issues and tailor their institutional capacity to mobilization, however, non-state governance actors encompass security, welfare and politics and invest more in structural institutions for governance.

of arbitrary justice and intelligence agencies operating with impunity has provided fuel for the protests (Bellin 2012:134). Crumbling public services have been a major trigger (Lynch et al. 2012:10). And corrupt and unaccountable political representation has perhaps been the most blatant instigator of the revolutions (Bellin 2012:136). As such, it makes sense to assume governance matters for the future (and aftermath) of the Spring as well. The question is who will be doing this governance.

The dominant analyses discussed above suggest governance belongs to government. I do not argue that this emphasis on reinventing political systems and reinvigorating state institutions is undesirable. Rather, I suggest it is incomplete. I propose that an exclusive focus on a sovereign state and a depoliticized civil society stalls the development that the protesters in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria – however diverse and diverging – demand. This is because such a focus is too entwined with the fragile state perspective that highlights what is not there and what is not working. What scholars and policy-makers need is a perspective that allows the identification of actors, mechanisms, resources and capacities that are there and that are working. El Kasm (2012) tellingly proposes "a structural redefinition of Arab governance," but a redefinition grounded in "pragmatism."

Boege et al.'s (2009) hybrid political order concept could be one such perspective. Boege et al. argue that while institutions and governance are necessary for peace, security and development, these need not be *state* institutions and governance. they define hybrid political orders as countries that do not have a single focal point of governance. A state apparatus represented by a government can play a significant role in socio-political life, but it is not the only (or even most important) actor involved in governance. Other organisations that are active in security, welfare and political representation (and are therefore armed, have a social service structure and a political representation) exist. This highlights the state as one of several reference points for governance – in clear opposition to the dominance the state is awarded in Weberian assessments (Migdal 2001). The multiplicity in governance stipulated by the hybrid political order thesis emphasizes state-society interaction. It is developed in concepts like the 'mediated state' (Menkhaus 2008) and the 'twilight institution' (Lund 2006) that give substance to the relatedness and simultaneity of state and non-state governance.[4]

The idea of hybrid political order approaches governance from the perspective of what is, rather than what should be (Kraushaar and Lambach 2009:4). As such, it shows how crucial

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[4] Menkhaus (2008) suggests that states in hybrid political orders often opt for a pragmatic form of engagement that allows them to govern through, rather than against, non-state actors. Lund's (2006:689) concept of twilight institutions renders visible that the idea of a powerful state with an intention and a higher rationality – however divergent from the incoherence and incapacity characterizing 'real' states – is a construct both the government and non-state governance actors depend upon to legitimize their governance.

civil society actors are under-represented in analyses on the onset of the Arab Spring and visions for the future governance of the MENA. Joffé (2011:514) observes that "in every case where a liberalised autocracy was instituted, there was a common thread. This consisted of the fact that autonomous organisations emerged, not formally controlled by the state, that could address predominantly social concerns and, on occasion, political concerns." The invisibility or misrepresentation of such organizations in many analyses offers a partial explanation for the surprise by which the Spring took many scholars (Aerts et al. 2012; Gause 2011).

Two categories of societal actors involved in the Arab Spring especially have gotten less attention than they deserve: informal organizations (*Observatoire de l'Afrique* 2011) and organizations (able of) competing with the state for governance primacy. In the first category, governance by tribal organizations is most apparent. This is often associated with lack of 'modernity' and paternalistic and clientelist authority (Leenders 2010:180). Indeed, such governance should not be romanticized. Yet developments in Libya and Syria have demonstrated that these societal structures also "provided safety and security as well as access to goods and services" – it was not for no reason that "it was along such networks that Libyan society fractured when the regime's capacity to divide and rule began to unravel at the beginning of the protests" (Anderson 2011). Janssen et al. (2012:27) describe how Syrian traditions of inter-sectarian cooperation formed the foundation for "the largely self-sufficient, self-governed communities that have arisen following the emergence of the FSA [Free Syrian Army] and the retreat of the state from areas that it can no longer control." These communities have in some cases been institutionalized in Local Coordination Committees (LCCs) that have formed fledgling "grassroots social services systems" and "have already shown the ability to work with armed groups, to the extent that around 40 units of the FSA have signed codes of conduct with their local committees" (Janssen et al. 2012:27). In an exceptional recognition of non-state governance pertinence, Janssen et al. (2012:27) consider these LCCs the "most likely starting point for any international involvement" in Syria. This is in line with earlier work by Leenders (2010:186) highlighting the contribution of "tribes and tribalism" to Middle Eastern states, as a "practical and symbolic counterweight to state coercion." If tribes can contribute to more legitimate governance during authoritarianism, they might do so after. If they can be mobilized for instigating resistance – Leenders and Heydemann (2012) show how, in Syria, it was exactly in those areas where clan-based and tribal social structures were most resilient that the revolution has started – they might be mobilized for governance.

In the second category of under-appreciated non-state governance organizations, the most important actors are perhaps Islamic organizations. These have received ample attention as a

potential threat to nascent democracy, but have not always been acknowledged as governance actors in their own right. Joffé (2011:517) describes how Islamic movements – such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Lynch et al. 2012:151) and Tunisia's An-Nahda (Totten 2012:25) – "require and therefore create bureaucracies or take over existing administrative structures." Mosques, charities and schools, can in such a context provide security, welfare and representation parallel to state institutions. Joffé (2011:517) goes as far as suggesting that "liberalised autocracies, ironically enough, set up the conditions for their own demise by creating space for the evolution of autonomous precursor movements" (see also Leenders 2010:189). From a hybrid political order perspective, it is insufficient to see such schools and charities as a mere collection of CSOs. Under the overarching agency of a broader movement, they are elements of a more comprehensive governance network.

Research in other regions, predominantly sub-Saharan Africa, has shown that there are indeed many local governance constellations in situations of 'fragility' that add up to patchwork systems of security, services and justice (Raeymakers et al. 2008; Clements et al. 2007). The hybrid political order perspective allows analysts to locate such non-state governance with reference to the Arab Spring and consider the (possible) constructive contributions of non-state actors to post-Spring order. As it is, these actors are too often dismissed as backward 'spoilers,' which is not only unsatisfying academically, but unwise with regard to the situation on the ground that demands getting socio-economic development on track.

4. Lebanon as illustration

Lebanon serves to illustrate the added value of the hybrid political order perspective for analyzing the role non-state governance actors might play throughout the Spring.[5] It has not witnessed a 'Spring of its own' – and is unlikely to (Haseeb 2011:114) despite several protests against Lebanon's sectarian system in February and March 2011 (Cannistraro 2011:41). Yet Lebanon is heavily affected by the revolution-turned-civil-war in Syria (Stel 2012b:25). There is intense fighting in North Lebanon between Sunnis and Alawites instigated by the Syrian conflict (Farell and Safwan 2012). The refugee flow from Syria has strained the Lebanese economy and, in some cases, societal stability (Dettmer 2012). Occasional raids by the Syrian army to attack Syrian insurgents operating from Lebanon have upset life in the large border region (International Crisis Group (ICG) 2012:iii). Moreover, the affiliation of Lebanon's two

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[5] Lebanon's representativeness vis-à-vis the rest of the MENA region is contested. On the one hand, Lebanon's eminent thinker Samir Kassir was one of the first to write about his wish for a 'spring of the Arabs' in 2005 (Diwan 2011) and Lebanon's 2005 Independence Intifada is sometimes claimed to be the preliminary inspiration for the eventual Arab Spring in other countries (de Vasconcelos 2011:33). On the other hand, Lebanon's relatively 'weak' coercive state apparatus makes it an exception in the region.

political camps with the rival Syrian and regional powers – March 8 with the Syrian regime and Iran and March 14 with the Syrian rebels and the Saudi-American axis[6] – has resulted in an extremely apprehensive political sphere, as evidenced by a series of kidnappings in mid 2012 and the shock bombing that killed general al-Hassan (Samaha 2012; Botleho and Abedine 2012).

The political struggle over government control between March 8 and March 14 can be seen as the meta manifestation of the local governance offered by these movements. The political parties constituting Lebanon's opposing political blocks are much more than political parties. They are non-state governance actors, each with their own – more or less sophisticated – armed organization (Harik 1994), administrative system (Baylouny 2010), welfare structure (Cammett and Issar 2010), international contacts (Hirst 2010) and politico-ideological program (Hamzeh 2001). While Hezbollah is often singled out as 'non-state sovereign,' (Stel 2009) it can convincingly be argued that all Lebanese political parties constitute non-state governance entities substituting for, but also undermining and co-opting, state governance. In line with the stand-off between 8 and 14 March, Hezbollah and Future are arguably the most important political actors, certainly concerning the Arab Spring (ICG 2012).

In short, in Lebanon it is the unilateral behaviour of non-state governance actors – March 8, specifically Hezbollah, and March 14, represented by Future – that is likely to determine Lebanon's role in the Arab Spring, much more than the conduct of the Lebanese state or government. Yet despite, or perhaps because, of Lebanon's 'weak' state, observers are often pre-occupied with state sovereignty, lamenting the prevalence of 'states-within-the-state' (de Vasconcelos 2011:33). Following the limitations of the fragile state discourse, these preoccupations with the weakness of the state and the failure of governance obscure the strength and relevance of non-state organizations behind the state that do much of the governance on the ground.

As such, it is misleading to look towards the official disassociation stand declared by the Lebanese state to determine how Lebanon will fare in the Arab Spring. Rather, it is Lebanon's non-state actors that will determine Lebanon's positioning. The ICG (2012:i) notes that "Lebanon's two principal coalitions see events in Syria in a starkly different light – as a dream come true for one; as a potentially apocalyptical nightmare for the other." In light of the state's inability (ICG 2012:27)[7] it is the governance capacity of Lebanon's primary non-

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[6] After the end of the Syrian occupation in 2005, Lebanese politics has been dominated by a polarized competition between two coalitions. March 8 is led by Hezbollah and Amal, both Shiite parties, and the Christian Free Patriotic Movement and is considered pro-Syrian. March 14 is led by the Sunni Future Movement and various Christian parties and is regarded pro-Western.

[7] For an overview of Lebanon's state apparatus and political system, I refer to Stel (2012a:9-12).

state governance actors that matters. This particularly regards their management of foreign alliances (Hezbollah's support for Assad and Future's implication in the Syrian insurgency); their appetite to seize the Syrian events as an opportunity to settle domestic struggles (ICG 2012:16); their ability to maintain territorial control, especially near the borders (ICG 2012:5); and their capacity to control their 'rank and file.' The ICG (2012:6) warns that "already, both Hizbollah and the Future Current have proven unusually ineffective at containing grassroots violence originating from elements they traditionally can control – such as the Meqdad family or Tripoli's Islamists."

The power of non-state governance actors is a two-sided sword and risks polarizing and escalating socio-political dynamics. It is this negative component that has gained attention by analysts of the Arab Spring (Dabashi 2012; Cannistraro 2011:39). Yet rather than focusing on what is not there – a strong democratic state able to govern satisfactorily and thereby steer Lebanon away from Spring conflicts – it would be useful to apprehend how the governance capacities of non-state actors that are there might be geared towards constructive engagement in the Spring by containing tit-for-tat sectarian retaliations; providing relief for refugees (and deescalating their presence); and opening up alternative diplomatic channels. I do not contend that Lebanese non-state actors can provide a or the solution to the current spill-over crisis, but their potential in this regard, however flawed or partial, should not be discarded either.

5. Conclusion and research agenda

In recent scholarly conceptualizations of the interconnectedness between peace, security and development, a key role has been reserved for notions of governance. The Arab Spring has compellingly reinforced this realization. Yet a key predicament of the analytical focus on governance and institutions is that it often statist. This preoccupation with the state frequently follows from adherence to the fragile state paradigm that takes its guidance from European, Weberian state exemplars. With reference to the Spring, the fragile state perspective then focuses on the failure of the state to the detriment of attention for existing governance and functioning institutions beyond the state. The hybrid political order perspective offers an alternative conceptual frame that is better suited to tease out governance dynamics that are informal or non-state. As such, it is perhaps more responsive to the pragmatic need voiced by many in the MENA region for reviving welfare and socio-economic development.

This does not mean current studies on official political systems and formal state institutions are not useful or that the analyses of the causes of crumbling authoritarianism should be abandoned. But they could be appended with accounts of the capacities of non-state actors involved in the Arab Spring whose power should not only been seen in terms of mobilization,

but also as a potential for governance. How governance activities of these organizations have enabled them to help steer the revolutions and how it might help to follow-up on the uprisings deserves further scrutiny. The (potential) relations and ties between state and non-state governance activities and institutions merit consideration. We need to get more insights on 'what is there to work with,' beyond degenerated state apparatuses.

The aim of this paper has been to offer an alternative sensitizing frame for engaging with the Arab Spring. Hence the thoughts presented were painted with broad strokes and the suggestions for further research posed below should be taken generically. Clearly, the focus on the role of non-state governance actors in and after the Spring might be more relevant for some countries than for others.

While the Tunisian An-Nahda movement's "organisational capacity was stripped to nearly nothing by years of repression," it could nevertheless be interesting to further explore the grassroots service, security and representation structures of this Muslim Brotherhood-inspired organization to investigate if and how they can prop up the current reform process (ICG 2011c:8). Egypt's Brotherhood, too, can be approached more structurally as a governance organization in its own right (specifically with reference to its extensive social welfare structures), so as to better understand (the duality of) its contribution to state governance in the form of the political party it has established (ICG 2011a:25). In Libya, beyond the need to link studies on clan institutions more directly to Arab Spring developments, it is worthwhile to look into societal institutions co-opted by Qaddafi. His 'Men of the Tent' and Revolutionary Committees seem too tainted to play a constructive role (ICG 2011d:10-11). But the position of the Social People's Leaderships, that "transformed the tribe from an informal institution into a formal partner" and that have at times operated to help resolve socio-economic problems or mediate sensitive societal issues could be of a different nature (ICG 2011d:12). In Yemen, while the "spectre of descent into tribal warfare" is real, the reservoir of tribal governance capacity should not be ignored and the position of tribal-based movements both within the protests – an estimated fifty per cent of the protesters at Sanaa University were tribesmen – and after them is eminent (ICG 2011b:ii, 4). In Syria, apart from the LCCs, regional (Kurdish) governance structures and their (lack of) support for the revolt as well as the institutional resources of Islamic organizations offer handles for discussing post-war governance (ICG 2011e:12-17).

Such research might demonstrate that it could very well be the combined governance by and beyond the government that holds the key to the MENA's (post-)Spring development.

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