



## Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

School of Social and Political Sciences  
Government and International Relations  
Room 269, Merewether Bldg, H04  
University of Sydney, NSW, Australia 2006  
Phone: +61 2 9351 2054  
Fax: +61 2 9351 3624  
[govt.dept@sydney.edu.au](mailto:govt.dept@sydney.edu.au)

# GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT/ESSAY COVER SHEET

Surname: Hudson

First Name: Antonia

Student Number (SID): 309223474

University Email Address: ahud9747@uni.sydney.edu.au

Phone Number: 0420830027

Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutorial Day & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **Sultanism in Ruins**

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*The Case of Egypt (1981-2011)*

Antonia Hudson

Honours IV 2012

Department of Government and International Relations

The University of Sydney

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The 2011 Egyptian revolution ousted President Hosni Mubarak after nearly thirty years in power. An agency centred approach dominated the discourse that followed the revolution. This dissertation contends that this literature is inadequate because it fails to consider structural factors at play in Egypt. Sultanism is a valuable heuristic tool by which to elucidate the role of the nature of the regime and its breakdown. The characteristics of the sultanistic category include: 1) fusion of regime and state, 2) personalism, 3) dynasticism, 4) constitutional hypocrisy, 5) narrow social base, and 6) distorted capitalism. These features have important implications in shaping relationships between key actors that determine paths out of sultanism. In addition, while analysing Egypt, this dissertation simultaneously performs an immanent critique of sultanism. The application of sultanism to Egypt reveals the need for two particular revisions to the theory: 1) the integration with the insights of 'gray zone' theory, and 2) consideration of the regional political climate. Thus, this dissertation puts forward a meaningful framework by which to assess the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the theory of sultanism.

## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **Posing the Problem**

Revolution is a rare event in history, but in 2011 revolutions launched the Middle East and North Africa into a tumultuous period. The phenomenon, popularly labelled the “Arab Spring”, saw clashes between coercive forces and civilians, and the death of protestors in the name of freedom, as the people of the region stood up against some of the world’s most entrenched dictators, including Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak became president of Egypt in 1981 and remained in power for six terms, approaching his 30<sup>th</sup> year in 2011. The Egyptian regime had been heralded as robust, having ridden the wave of democratisation that followed the end of the cold war (Bellin, 2004; Brownlee, 2002; Ottaway, 2010). Thus, raising the question of what circumstances and forces were in play in 2011 to successfully take down the longest serving ruler in Egypt since the founder of modern Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha?

### **Available Answers**

Attempts to unravel the puzzle of the Egyptian revolution have been overwhelmingly focused on the role of actors in the mass uprising of 2011. The existing analyses fail to consider the implications of the structure of the regime in the events. There is a wide body of literature surrounding the role of regime type in the breakdown of non-democratic rule, from which the theory of sultanism stands out as an insightful approach to understanding regime durability and weakness. Sultanism is an ideal type categorisation of a non-democratic regime based on unrestrained personal power of the ruler. Its



configuration of distinctive characteristics has clear relevance to the case of Egypt and stands to illuminate a new perspective on the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to demonstrate that existing analyses of Egypt and the ousting of Mubarak are inadequate and the application of the theory of sultanism can foster a better understanding of the events of 2011, and, furthermore, that the case study of Egypt introduces new and unique developments which may serve to refine and improve the theory for future study.

### **Argument in Brief**

This dissertation applies a revised theory of sultanism to shed new light on a regime that, contrary to many predictions, collapsed. The theory of sultanism as developed first by Max Weber (1978), then by Juan J. Linz (1975) and Alfred Stepan (1996), and Chehabi (1998), is particularly useful for an understanding of the Egyptian regime under Mubarak and the processes that led to his ousting. Secondly, the example of Egypt has important implications for the theory of sultanism. The purpose of this dissertation is to use both the theory and the case study symbiotically, by applying the theory to illuminate the process that culminated in the ousting of Mubarak and drawing on the insights of this application to reassess the theory. The ultimate goal is a greater understanding of the Egyptian revolution and to refine the theory of sultanism so as to reflect the dynamics introduced by the Egyptian context.

## **Organisation of the Dissertation**

Chapter one establishes the theoretical underpinnings of sultanism, which sets up the analysis of Egypt under Mubarak, in chapter two. Finally, this dissertation reviews both the literature on sultanism, and its application to Egypt, in order to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of the theory, proposing revisions that appear necessary given the events of 2011.

In chapter one the distinctive features of the sultanistic ideal type will be discussed. These include: 1) fusion of regime and state, 2) personalism, 3) dynasticism, 4) constitutional hypocrisy, 5) narrow social base, and 6) distorted capitalism. The dynamics of the key structural relations that shape paths out of sultanism will be highlighted. The combination of the different elements of sultanism are entrenched in a selective system of rewards balanced by repressive control. The following chapter will seek to establish how such a system operated in Egypt under Mubarak.

Academic literature has previously made fleeting associations to the Egyptian regime as sultanistic, including Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 31) and, Jason Brownlee (2002, p. 11). In studies that have analysed the case of Egypt more closely, such as Maye Kassem (2004), and Eva Bellin (2004), the term sultanism has been used interchangeably with patrimonialism or personal rule. Furthermore, such literature sought to explain the durability of the Egyptian regime under Mubarak. Never has the theory of sultanism been systematically applied to the Egyptian regime under Mubarak, let alone to understand its

breakdown. This will be achieved in chapter two outlining the sultanistic tendencies within the Egyptian regime and the role of this in the ousting of Mubarak in 2011.

In the final chapter the relationship between theory and example is reversed and the case of Egypt is used to further refine the theory of sultanism. Progress has been made in this vein of study by authors who have sought to employ sultanistic theory such as Fared Guliyev (2005). Egypt provides a new opportunity to dissect the theory of sultanism. From the Egyptian example it is clear that a sultanistic regime can operate with a higher level of pluralism than is considered possible in sultanistic literature. This dissertation asserts the need to consider how limited democratic reforms can be integrated with a sultanistic system of patronage to maintain sultanistic rule, and their role in regime breakdown. Furthermore, the regional influence on the Egyptian revolution cannot be ignored. The regional climate interacts with the three key relationships to determine the structural margins within which actors could manoeuvre. Thus, the Egyptian revolution must be viewed in light of these revisions.

The conclusion of this dissertation synthesises the arguments put forward, connecting the theory of sultanism to the case of Egypt, and the revisions to the theory this application reveals. Furthermore, it discusses areas for future study that are highlighted by this study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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Not only did the 2011 Egyptian revolution inspire millions of people in the Arab world to rise up, but it also ignited an explosion of literature from political bloggers, activists, journalists, writers and academics that sought to understand and explain the surprising event. The literature on the ousting of Mubarak, and authoritarian breakdown more generally, can be categorised into two main streams; the agency centred or voluntarist approach and the structural approach. The agency centred literature has dominated the political discourse since the 2011 revolution, whereas structural approaches to the breakdown of the Egyptian regime have been rare, despite a rich body of literature.

### **Agency Centre Literature**

Amongst the actor centred approaches that have dominated analyses of the Egyptian revolution there are a number of different perspectives, the most popular being the story of the young frustrated youth that brought a regime to its knees through the power of social media. This defined popular perceptions of what was termed “The Arab Spring”. Published works also subscribed to this view, reflected in titles that include: *Egypt Unshackled: Using social media to @#:) the System* (Campbell, 2011), *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater than the People in Power – A Memoir* (Ghonim, 2012), *Tweets from Tahrir* (Nunns & Idle, 2011), and, *The Instigators: How a small band of digital activists risked their lives and helped bring down the government of Egypt* (Wolman, 2011). In these approaches Facebook and Twitter are portrayed as the key to unlocking the mass discontent that had been simmering in Egypt. They follow a narrative

about creative and daring individuals who used social media in a novel way to reach their political ends.

In contrast to this position some authors insist that the role played by the dissatisfied worker's within the labour unions made the revolution a success. Authors, such as Marwan Bishara (2012), Joel Beinin (2011), Claxton-Dong's (2011), Juan Cole (2011), seek to reassert the agency of workers into an understanding of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Bishara (2012) states that 'the participation of the workers and the unemployed... transformed youth protests into a national upheaval that couldn't be defeated' attributing the success of the revolution to the working class. These contributions purport the labour movement to have been the 'major player in [the] dramatic events' (Cole, 2011).

Another argument put forward is that the Muslim Brotherhood, and other similar Islamists groups were the driving force during the revolution. Shadi Hamid (2011) asserts that the Muslim Brotherhood played a role 'behind the scenes' providing 'significant support, offering food and medical services to protestors, protecting them from regime thugs, and generally keeping order', pointing to the Brotherhood's rise to political prominence since the overthrow of Mubarak as evidence of the success of their strategy. John R. Bradley (2012) takes this perspective a step further accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of 'hijacking' the protests. Similarly to Hamid, Bradley states that 'the Islamists, were organised and disciplined, and while never likely to instigate revolution, were sure eager to exploit the consequences'. Clearly this perspective is highly disparate to the aforementioned accounts, which identify other individuals and

groups as responsible for the revolution. However, common to each perspective is an exclusive focus on the agency of actors in the revolution.

### **Structural Approach**

Samer Soliman's (2011) contribution provides a strikingly different perspective on the events of 2011 grounded in a structural approach, as opposed to an agency centred perspective. Soliman (2011, p. 172) asserts that the revolution was 'a natural outcome of long-term structural changes in the Egyptian political economy... the exhaustion of the semi-rentier/caretaker state is fundamentally altering the contours of Egyptian politics'. The singularity and persuasiveness, of Soliman's (2011) structural analysis of the Egyptian revolution highlights the need for stronger attention of the structural perspective.

In the study of non-democratic regime rule and transition, there is a rich literature upon which to draw. Theda Skocpol (1979, p. 16) clearly explains the necessity of the structural approach to the study of revolutions, stating that 'consensual and voluntaristic conceptions of societal orders and disruptions or change are quite naive. They are belied in the most obvious fashion by the prolonged survival of blatantly repressive and domestically illegitimate regimes'. The case of the Arab Spring and the example of Syria, where the population continues to struggle against the oppressive rule of Bashar al-Assad, clearly demonstrates that mass protests by civilians is not a sufficient condition for achieving a successful revolution. Thus, Skocpol (1979) asserts that in order to understand successful social revolutions it is necessary to not only explore the structural conditions within society that created an environment ripe for the

expression of mass discontent, *but also*, the structures within the state and the international sphere that enable a successful overthrow of an authoritarian regime.

Numerous studies have sought to establish a systematic relationship with the structure of different regime types and the nature of breakdown in authoritarian regimes. Within such studies, some authors focus on the phenomena of personal rule, which Gulyev (2011, p. 575) surmises, 'involves confusion by a public official between his public and private roles' at the regime level. The different strains of the well established study of personal rule employ various labels to describe such systems including 'personal rule regime' (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; Jackson & Rosberg, 1984; Sandbrook, 1985), 'prebendalism' (Joseph, 1987), 'kleptocracy' (Andreski, 1968; Acemoglu, Robinson, & Verdier, 2004), 'predatory rule' (Lewis, 1996), 'neopatrimonial regime' (Me'dard, 1982; Remmer, 1989a; Remmer, 1989b; Snyder, 1992; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997), '(neo)sultanistic regime' (Linz J. , 1975; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Linz & Chehabi, 1998; Snyder, 1998). These multiple terms denote the variations between regimes based on personal rule, but they all evolve from 'Weber's concept of patrimonialism... a type of traditionalist domination which develops from patriarchal structure through an extension of the chief's family household' (Gulyev, 2011, p. 577). Authors such as Kassem (2004) and Bellin (2004) have engaged with such literature, but in order to explain the longevity of the Egyptian regime not its demise.

Among this literature there is disagreement over how such regimes breakdown. Barbara Geddes (1999, p. 26) suggests that 'personalist regimes are more likely to end in popular uprising'. Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle (1994, pp. 460-461) reach comparable conclusions about neo-patrimonial regimes in Africa, positing that 'transitions in Africa seem to be occurring more commonly from below'. In contrast to this perspective, Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillippe C. Schmitter (1986, p. 19) propound that for all regime types 'there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence – direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself', between regime 'hard-liners' and 'soft-liners'. Collier and Mahoney (1997) reject the notion that collective action is 'limited to an "indirect" role' placing the greater importance on the labour movement in South American regimes. Thus in the various studies of transition from non-democratic regime there is little consensus.

A gap in the literature surrounds the case of Egypt. Recent analyses have neglected the structural factors that contributed to the downfall of Mubarak's regime. Accounts of non-democratic regime transition have been well developed, but are yet to be applied to the Egyptian case. Thus, both understandings of the Egyptian revolution in 2011, and the process of regime break down stand to be advanced in this study.



## **METHODOLOGY**

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To understand the events in Egypt in 2011 a pluralistic methodology must be used. A pluralist methodology investigates from multiple angles, which is necessary in order to access information about a regime that is not open. Furthermore, this dissertation employs the category of sultanism, which is yet to be applied to Egypt, a difficult task that requires at least three methods. The exploration of sultanism necessitates an appreciation of the ideal-type approach to interpreting real world examples. Furthermore, sultanistic theory proposes a combined structural-voluntarist approach to understanding transitions from sultanism. However, viewing the interaction of sultanistic theory with the case of Egypt encourages an immanent critique of the theory. Evidence is drawn from a variety of sources both primary and secondary as well as qualitative and quantitative. Although, access to Arabic language material has only been possible through translation, a substantial body of evidence is available in English.

### **Sultanism: an Ideal Type**

As a descendent of Weber's category of sultanism, the contemporary theory employs the Weberian methodology of using an ideal type as a tool by which to conceptualise reality. An ideal type is not designed to reflect reality, but instead is 'deliberately accentuated' (Eliaeson, 2000, p. 250). As Weber (1978, p. 21) states 'the more sharply and precisely the ideal type has been constructed, that is, the more abstract and unrealistic..., the better it is able to perform its function in formulating terminology, classifications, and hypotheses.' Weber's use of ideal-types is grounded in his perspective that 'many ends or values toward

which experience show that human action may be oriented, often cannot be understood completely, though sometimes we are able to grasp them intellectually'; ideal types are the tool by which we 'grasp' reality 'intellectually' (Weber, 1978, p. 5). Thus, the purpose of ideal types is to 'synthesise meaningful, characteristic aspects of individual phenomena in order to explain the occurrence of social events' (Hekman, 1983). In applying an ideal type to Egypt, this dissertation revitalises sultanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to take account of the particular case of Mubarak's Egypt. The complexities and uniqueness of the Egyptian example reinvigorate the ideal type of sultanism.

### **Combined Structural-Voluntarist Approach**

Secondly, sultanism advocates a combined structuralism-voluntarist approach to studying transitions. Although the case of Egypt does not yet represent a complete transition from sultanism, it does involve the breakdown of sultanistic rule, which is the first step in the path out of sultanism, and thus benefits from insights provided by transition literature. Snyder (1998) identifies sultanistic regimes as situated at the intersection of structural and voluntarist literatures. Thus, he seeks 'to combine the strengths of both literatures by uniting a focus on structural factors with a focus on political action and historical contingency' in his framework for analysing transition (Snyder, 1998, p. 50). Snyder's approach is grounded in Anthony Giddens' (1984, p. 25) theory of structuration which states that:

analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of

situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction.

Following from this Snyder (Snyder, 1998, p. 51) states that the study of transitions from sultanism require a mapping of 'institutions and social structures that are the strategic contexts in which... actors operate in order to pinpoint precisely how much room, if any, exists for strategic manoeuvring'. Included in Snyder's framework is consideration of 'the strong elements of contingency that characterize most democratic transition' (Whitehead, 2002, p. 43). Although, the necessary conditions for transition may exist, it is the unpredictable and unintended consequences of both structure and agency, which determines whether transition will be initiated (Snyder, 1998, p. 52).

### **Immanent Critique**

While utilising sultanistic theory this dissertation is also engaged in a critique of sultanism, specifically, this dissertation performs an *immanent critique*. The purpose of an immanent critique is not simply to criticise, but to evaluate from an internal perspective (Azmanova, 2012, p. 145), or, as Terry Eagleton (1991, p. 131) explains, 'rather than passing judgment ... from the Olympian height of absolute truth, [an immanent critique] installs itself *within* the present in order to decipher those fault lines where the ruling logic presses upon its own structural limits'. An immanent critique of sultanistic theory is realized, in this dissertation, by occupying the category of sultanism from within, and viewing the Egyptian case, in order to detect contradictions that require amendment.

## **Evidence**

Essential to this dissertation is a pluralistic methodology involving a variety of sources of evidence. To substantiate claims made in this dissertation, a number of sources were utilised. First, a combination of primary sources such as newspaper articles from both the time of the revolution as well as throughout Mubarak's rule. In addition the dissertation draws upon insights of political observers of the Egyptian regime and its breakdown, including bloggers, activists, and academics. Secondary sources studying the nature of the Egyptian regime serve to illustrate various aspects of the regime and provide a wealth of both qualitative and quantitative material.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEORY OF AN IDEAL TYPE

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### **The Genesis of Sultanism**

The central theory underpinning this dissertation is that of sultanism as outlined in Linz and Chehabi's *Sultanistic Regimes* (1998). This work builds upon previous developments of the term sultanism by Linz, in coordination with other authors such as Stepan (Linz, 1975; Linz & Stepan, 1996). The theory of sultanism was originally outlined by Weber (1978), who places it within his category of traditional authority. Weber (1978, p. 226) states that 'authority will be called traditional if legitimacy is claimed for it and believed in by virtue of the sanctity of age-old rules and power. The masters are designated according to traditional rules and are obeyed because of their traditional status'. Relations between the master and the administration in traditional rule are 'primarily based on personal loyalty which results from common upbringing... personal loyalty, not the official's impersonal duty, determines the relations of the administrative staff' (Weber, 1978, p. 227). Patrimonialism marks the transformation of traditional authority from a 'group right' to the personal right of the master following the creation of an administration and military as his 'personal instruments' (Weber, 1978, p. 231). The core feature of a Weberian patrimonial state is the conflation of "private" and "official" spheres, where political power is seen as the private property of the ruler (Weber, 1978, p. 1029). According to Weber (1978, p. 231) sultanism represents an extreme form of patrimonialism. Thus, 'where domination is primarily traditional, even though it is exercised by virtue of the ruler's personal autonomy, it will be called *patrimonial authority*; where it indeed operates primarily on the basis of discretion, it will be called

*sultanism*' (Weber, 1978, p. 232). Although distinguished from patrimonialism by the erosion of traditional limits to the ruler's discretion, sultanism is categorised as traditional rule because it is based on personal ties. 'The concept of personal [sultanism], therefore, is a "diminished subtype" construct as it negates the traditional basis, one of the central attributes of the root concept' (Guliyev, 2011, p. 577). Sultanism is essentially portrayed by Weber (1978) as a system in which the personal power of the ruler is both created and maintained through the selective distribution of rewards and repression to ensure loyalty. This idea constitutes the nucleus of more recent developments of Weber's original term.

Linz first reinvigorated the term sultanism in "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes" (Linz, 1975), and further developed the theory with Stepan (1996), with this theoretical study culminating in the seminal work *Sultanistic Regimes* by Linz and Chehabi (1998). Linz and Chehabi's (1998) work draws on Weber's concept of rulership based on a particular system of patronage to describe a particular sub-type of non-democratic regimes. Weber's model is reformulated to accommodate for translation of such a regime into a modern context. Thus, although referred to as sultanism for simplicity's sake, the new sub-type of is more accurately labelled neo-sultanism and, like Weber's theory, neo-sultanism is an extreme form of neo-patrimonialism. In (neo)sultanism the traditional basis of power is replaced with a legal-rational base (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 5). This reflects the changing basis of power in a modern context, in which no regime can legitimately operate by any other system. Thus, where Weber's (1978) sultanism is characterised by the deterioration of traditional limits to the rulers discretion,

a (neo)sultanistic regime is instead marked by the 'decay or incomplete development of modern legal-rational authority' (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 5).

Weber's (1978) concept is further elaborated so as to set up a framework by which regimes may be analysed. The typology is clearly set out by Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 7):

It is based on personal rulership, but loyalty to the ruler is motivated not by his embodying or articulating an ideology, nor by a unique personal mission, nor by any charismatic qualities, but by a mixture of fear and rewards to his collaborators. The ruler exercises his power without restraint, at his own discretion and above all unencumbered by rules or by any commitment to an ideology or value system. The binding norms and relations of bureaucratic administration are constantly subverted by arbitrary personal decisions of the ruler, which he does not feel constrained to justify in ideological terms. As a result corruption reigns supreme at all levels of society. The staff of such a ruler is constituted not by any establishment with distinctive career lines, like a bureaucratic army or civil service, recruitment based on more or less universal criteria, but largely by people chosen directly by the ruler. Among them we often find members of his family, friends, business associates, or individuals directly involved in using violence to sustain the regime. Their position derives from their purely personal submission to the ruler, and their position of authority in society derives merely from this relationship. The ruler and his associates do not represent any class or corporate interests. Although such regimes can in many ways be modern, what characterises

them is the weakness of traditional and legal-rational legitimation and the lack of ideological justification. (p. 7).

A combination of certain features that extend from this description distinguish sultanistic regimes from other forms of non-democratic rule, these being: 1) The blurring of regime and state, 2) personalism, 3) constitutional hypocrisy, 4) a narrow social base, and 5) distorted capitalism. These features paint a picture of an ideal type system of domination.

### **Characteristics of Sultanism**

#### *1. Blurring of Regime and State*

The first feature of sultanism explored by Linz and Chehabi (1998, pp. 10-13) is the high degree of conflation of the regime and state. In sultanistic theory a state is considered to consist of the fixed structures that 'extract, manage and distribute resources within the borders of a country' through apparatus of both coercion and administration (Guliyev, 2011, p. 587). By contrast, a regime is conceptualised as being 'the pattern of rules which regulate access to, distribution and exercise of state power' which derives from a states control over resources (Guliyev, 2011, p. 587). Although conceptually distinct, the boundaries that demarcate state from the regime disintegrate under sultanistic rule (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 10). Proponents of sultanism assert that a sultanistic regime comprises of a state where the coercive and administrative apparatuses are at the behest of the regime with a single figure as the central authority (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 52; Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 11). The theory of sultanism expounds that sultanistic regimes undergo a restructuring of the state



and its institutions around the ruler so that regime and state become virtually indistinguishable (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 52; Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 11). Furthermore, advocates of sultanism deem this intertwined relationship as critical to the existence of a sultanistic regime, as it enables the selective distribution system of privileges to function (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 11). Thus, the blurring of regime and state is an essential feature of a sultanistic regime. Linz and Chehabi acknowledge that sultanistic regimes may pursue the melding of regime and state while maintaining bureaucratic features to placate international powers, and to create an illusion of the regime's necessity to the domestic population (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 11). However, 'the sultanistic state is characterised by an absence or perversion of legal-rational norms' (1998, p. 11). Particular attention should be paid here to Linz and Chehabi's emphasis on the *perversion* of legal-rational norms. The state apparatus may demonstrate the criteria of modern bureaucracies, but in reality it is 'under constant attack by the sultanistic practice of regulating all relationships through individual privileges and bestowals of favor' (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 11). Specifically, sultanistic theory describes the fusion of regime and state as entailing the manipulation of bureaucratic institutions and hierarchical structures that exist, including a rationalised administration, a strong armed force, and technocrats, in order to strengthen the ruler's hold on power (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 11-12).

## *2. Personalism*

Champions of sultanism state that sultanistic regimes outwardly display the highly personalistic nature of rule in two main ways: 1) a cult of personality

around the ruler, and 2) the introduction of dynasticism (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 13).

A key aspect of sultanistic regimes described in the literature is the lack of charismatic attributes or a driving ideology, highlighted further by the purely clientelist nature of patronage (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 13-14). In other words, support does not derive from those who subscribe to any impersonal ideological goal or from faith in the leader, but merely the promise of material benefit from loyalty (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 13-14). Thus, authors assert that a sultanistic ruler is thereby unencumbered by the need to maintain charismatic appeal or justify his actions ideologically (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 52; Linz & Chehabi, *Sultanistic Regimes*, 1998, p. 11). However, according to the mainstream sultanism literature, in the vacuum created by the absence of charisma and ideology, sultanistic rulers typically feel the need to fill the space in the form of a cult of personality (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 13-14). Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 13) purport that 'sultanistic leaders crave charisma and surround themselves with the trappings of charismatic leadership precisely because they know they lack it'. Thus, sultanistic regimes are described as embarking upon a concentrated effort to present the ruler as being a popular and divinely talented leader, which, in fact, convinces no-one but the ruler himself, not the staff of the ruler and certainly not the population (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 14-15). Linz and Chehabi (1998, pp. 13-15) explore how the cult of personality surrounding a sultanistic ruler can manifest in a number of ways including: grand titles for the ruler, publication of prolific texts supposedly authored by the ruler, monuments in their honour, the general veneration of the ruler in the media, portrayal as a

saviour, great leader, or “father of the nation”, and the plastering of the rulers name on billboards, buildings, prizes, and even maps with cities named after themselves. Furthermore, sultanistic literature identifies the trend of sultanistic rulers to create pseudo-ideologies, named after themselves, projected in an attempt to legitimize the regime, however, they are not accepted by the population and serve only to advance the personal interests of the ruler (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 14-15). In this way, an extreme cult of personality around the ruler appears in sultanistic regimes in an attempt to make up for the inadequacies of the ruler.

An additional symptom of the high levels of personalism identified by sultanistic theorists is the prevalent trend of dynasticism (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 15). Dynasticism manifests itself in two manners: 1) hereditary succession, and 2) concentration of family members among the upper echelons of the regime (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 15-16). Linz and Chehabi (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 15) emphasise that there is a strong tendency in a sultanistic regime for the introduction of hereditary succession where the ruler's successor is chosen from amongst his family members, such as a son or a nephew. This is demonstrated in many of the regimes Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 15) identify as sultanistic such as Haiti and Nicaragua. An extension of this trend, highlighted in sultanistic theory, is the elevation of family members to prominent positions within the regime. Not only are sons groomed as the heir to the sultan’s throne, but also, his immediate and extended family, are also promoted to powerful political and economic roles (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 15-16). The family of the sultanistic ruler thus plays a central role in the regime and, furthermore, can wield their influence to push for

increasing sultanisation of the regime for their personal benefit (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 17). Dynasticism is an important feature of a sultanistic regime in that it is a reflection of extreme personalism, which has far-reaching consequences for the system of power. Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 16) go as far as to assert that 'it is the combination of personalism and dynasticism that is specific to sultanism', thus positing personalism and dynasticism as a defining feature.

### *3. Constitutional Hypocrisy*

Sultanistic theory identifies constitutional hypocrisy as a core feature of sultanistic regimes (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 17-19). Constitutional hypocrisy, as described by Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 17), is the illusion of democracy created by a seemingly modern democratic constitution. However, sultanistic 'constitutions pay lip service to constitutions that provide for elected chief executives and parliaments, and in some cases even multiparty systems' but hold little or no political purchase (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 18). Thus, although such trappings of electoral procedure may exist in a sultanistic regime, opposition is prevented from obtaining power or influence and is violently repressed (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 18). In reality, power is held, undemocratically, by the sultanistic ruler and his circle of regime cronies (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 17). Authors of sultanistic theory highlight that sultanistic rulers may portray themselves as champions of democracy whilst simultaneously representing the greatest obstacle to change (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 18). Examples of such a contradictory dualism explored in *Sultanistic Regimes* include: elections in Trujillo's Dominican Republic; defeat of opposition parties through bribery and fraud in Somoza's Nicaragua; the charade of multi-candidate presidential

elections in Batista's Cuba and the Philippines under Marcos; and, in the most extreme case, a pseudo-opposition called the Mardom Party creating a fictitious two party system in Iran under the Shah (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 18). Thus, the notion of competitive elections of any type in a sultanistic regime is only nominal, not authentic, and merely represents a democratic façade (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 18). Sultanistic theory asserts that this or 'cynical acting out of electoral procedures' is a performance to placate international powers (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 19). However, such practice can reveal cracks in the regime's power. Sultanistic proponents subscribe to the view that the installation of outward democratic institutions without inward democratic foundations can push regimes into democratic transitions (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 19). Alexis de Tocqueville (1955) states that rulers 'cherish the illusion that they can combine the prerogative of absolute power with the moral authority that comes from popular assent. Almost all have failed in this endeavour and learnt to their cost that it is impossible to keep up such appearances for long when there is no reality behind them'. Thus, limited democratic pretences are common among sultanistic regimes but ultimately such practises are incompatible with sultanistic rule (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 19). Constitutional *hypocrisy* is an apt term to denote the contradiction between democratic appearance and reality in sultanistic regimes

#### *4. Narrow Social Base*

The sultanistic ideal type requires that the ruler hold power without the inconvenience of having to rely upon the support of any distinct social base (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, pp. 19-20). Authority is maintained through the juxtaposition

of rewards and repression (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 19). As stated by Linz and Chehabi (1998, pp. 19-20) 'the ability of sultanistic rulers to stay in power depends upon their freedom from the need to forge alliances with civil society and to build coalitions'. The interests pursued by a sultanistic regime are only those of the ruler, 'support is based not on a coincidence of interest between pre-existing privileged social groups and the ruler but on interests created by his rule, rewards he offers for loyalty, and fear of his vengeance' (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 54). Sultanistic rule therefore requires freedom from social support, as the violent nature of its rule does not foster domestic popularity. Sultanistic theorists point out that such a system of power domination, that is unrestricted by the need for social backing, is often made possible by external powers (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). The US, for example, has repeatedly been the financier of sultanistic rulers such as those studied in *Sultanistic Regimes* including the Shah of Iran, Marcos in the Philippines, Somoza in Nicaragua, and Trujillo in the Dominican Republic (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). By providing them with access to economic and military resources, a super-power patron creates independence for sultanistic regimes from their populations based on the liberation from the need to extract resources from them (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). Thus, sultanistic literature describes a political system where the ruler's domestic support is derived from his family and his immediate extended circle of cronies who are loyal to the ruler for their individual self-interested reasons (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 20). Sultanistic theory states that a sultanistic regime has sufficient support from those who are direct or indirect beneficiaries of the clientelist system to function without any collective social support group (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 20). Furthermore, dominant authors of sultanism state that the

spread of those who benefit from the regime is usually very socially dispersed thus they cannot form a singular social base, as the only thing that connects them is loyalty to the ruler, as opposed to socio-economic prerogatives (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 20).

##### *5. Distorted Capitalism*

Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 21) further note that clientelist structures in sultanistic regimes extend into the economic sphere as well as the political. Therefore, sultanistic theorists propound that a product of sultanistic rule is a distorted capitalist market (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). The core tenants of capitalism include private property, perfect competition, and no barriers to entry into the market; these features are not possible within a sultanistic system (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 22). Mirroring the political system in a sultanistic regime, the illusion of market capitalism may be created through the existence of capitalist institutions and involvement in the international market yet, like the political realm, true market functions are hindered by the personalistic and informal nature of sultanistic rule (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 22). Characterised by the arbitrary bestowal of favour, sultanistic economies are infected at all levels with corruption and bribery (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 19) assert that the unpredictable nature of such a system is incompatible with successful economic development and growth. Effective competition requires meritocratic advancement, as opposed to personalistic selection criteria that is characteristic of a sultanistic system of patronage (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). Authors of sultanistic theory indicate that the emergence of monopolistic economies is common among sultanistic regimes (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21).

Furthermore, advocates of sultanism highlight the economy is also largely used to serve the rulers own purposes (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). Following the trend of state and regime fusion even the treasury is treated as the private property of the ruler (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21). Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 22) state that '[the ruler] and his collaborators, with his consent, freely appropriate public funds, establish profit-oriented monopolies, and demand gifts and pay-offs from business for which no public accounting is given'. Founders of sultanistic theory conclude that although sultanistic rulers may oversee periods of growth, sultanism ultimately stunts economic development (Linz & Chehabi, 1998, p. 21).

### **Implications for Transitions from Sultanistic Regimes**

Sultanistic regimes have sparked the interest of academics for being both exceptionally durable, but also being prone to revolution, a rare event in history (Snyder, 1998, p. 50). Snyder (1998, pp. 49-51) highlights that sultanistic regimes include 'numerous nondemocratic holdouts—regimes that have resisted the wave of democratization that has swept the globe during the past two decades' with 'the cases of Mobuto Sese Seko in Zaire until 1991 and François Duvalier Haiti [that] exemplify the remarkable longevity and stability of some sultanistic regimes'. However, nothing is permanent and all the cases of sultanism explored in *Sultanistic Regimes* have been catapulted out of sultanism along various trajectories (Snyder, 1998, p. 60). Thus, the process of transition, which encompasses sultanistic breakdown, as well as transformation from sultanism into other forms of rule, is also a key focus of sultanistic studies.



### *Transition Paths Available from Sultanistic Regimes*

The distinctive nature of sultanistic regimes dictates the transition paths available from sultanistic rule. The structure of domination creates a unique context, which can both constrain and enable relevant actors in sultanistic breakdown (Snyder, 1998). Studies of transition from sultanism have emphasised the implication of sultanistic rule for various groups seeking change (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 65; Snyder, 1998, p. 53). Linz and Stepan (1996, pp. 57-60) make several conclusions of the ramifications of Sultanism for democratic transition, establishing how the combination of sultanistic qualities strictly limits the number of paths out of sultanistic rule. The conclusions made by Linz and Stepan (1996) are based upon their assessment of constraints sultanistic regimes impose on proponents of change. Snyder (1998) explores how these constraints play out in the dynamics of three variables, which are based on the relations between the key actors. In both these assessments of sultanistic breakdown there is an emphasis on the interplay between structure and agency; Linz and Stepan (1996) devote a chapter to “Actors and Contexts” and Snyder (1998, p. 51) constructs ‘an integrative framework that combines structural and voluntarist perspectives in the analysis of transition from sultanistic regime’.

### *Key Structural Relations*

Snyder (1998, p. 53) identifies ‘three critical relationships [that] capture the varied structural dynamics of sultanistic regimes’ that have important implications for transitions from sultanistic regimes. The relationships include: 1) ruler-state relations 2) ruler-society relations 3) foreign power-domestic

actor relations. The characteristics of sultanism dictate the nature of each of these three key relationships (Snyder, 1998, p. 53).

### *1. Ruler-State Relations*

Ruler-state relations in sultanistic regimes are characterised by the fusion of the public and private (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 54; Snyder, 1998, p. 53). Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 59) assert that this dynamic renders a hierarchical military impossible and thus eliminates 'extraction from rule by a hierarchically led military' from the pool of possible paths from sultanism. This perspective is grounded in the belief that, in the sultanistic ideal, the military retains no autonomy independent of the ruler and are, therefore, incapable of acting against him (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 65). Snyder's (1998) analysis is grounded in historical examples of regimes with sultanistic tendencies and thus differs from Linz and Stepan (1996). Within the sultanistic category, Snyder (1998) allows for a certain level of insulation of state institutions from the sultanistic regime's gravitational pull. Furthermore, given the system of patronage, founded upon the juxtaposition of fear and rewards, that maintains sultanistic power, the ruler is highly dependent on the loyalty of the coercive apparatus (Snyder, 1998, p. 53). Thus the autonomy of the military is a key variable in transitions out of sultanism (Snyder, 1998, p. 55). Snyder (1998, p. 55) identifies two paths for ruler-state relations; 1) the ruler could remove the army from the role of repression and co-opt them with other benefits, which reduces the political power of the military but also separates their fate from the sultanistic ruler, or alternatively 2) the sultanistic ruler could bring the military so deep within the folds of person power, and intervene every level organisation, so that their

loyalty is unquestionable, as their fate is tied to his. The first option may reduce the chance of internal threats to the ruler in the short term but in the long run it frees the military to be able to stand against the ruler (Snyder, 1998, p. 55). By contrast, in the second strategy a sultanistic ruler's exit from power is likely to be violent with the armed forces supporting him against opposition (Snyder, 1998, p. 55). Thus, Snyder (1998, p. 55) concludes that this relationship plays an important role in determining whether a sultanistic regime is overthrown from below or from the top. Thus, in contrast to Linz and Stepan (1996), Snyder's (1998) interpretation provides for the possibility that the military could act to overthrow the sultanistic ruler if they have sufficient autonomy.

## *2. Ruler-Society relations*

The dynamics of the sultanistic ruler's relationship with society is also crucial in shaping the transition from sultanistic rule (Snyder, 1998, p. 55). In the ideal type of sultanism, as outlined by Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 57), the relationship between the ruler and society is defined by the 'lack of rule of law and civil liberties'. Furthermore, under sultanism 'neither civil society nor political society has enough autonomy to enable a publicly organised democratic opposition to develop sufficient negotiating capacity for it to be a full player in any pacted transition' (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 65). A pacted transition, otherwise referred to as *reformapactada-rupturapactada*, is where moderates within the regime and opposition moderates negotiate the exit of the regime (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 65). Combined with the ideal sultanistic ruler's relationship with the state, where 'there is absolutely no room in the "household" staff of the sultan for a moderate

player who publicly negotiates the demise of his employer' (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 65). Thus a pacted transition is not possible in a truly sultanistic regime according to Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 65). However, Snyder (1998, p. 55) acknowledges that in reality 'sultanistic regimes vary in how far the patronage network penetrates civil society'. The differing degrees to which regimes are exclusionary can have catastrophic consequences for the ruler (Snyder, 1998, p. 55). Snyder (1998, p. 56) asserts that the more exclusionary a regime's system of patronage the greater space is left for the establishment of opposition groups. Thus, in this case the narrow social base that is characteristic of sultanistic regimes can play a significant role in destabilising them (Snyder, 1998, p. 56). Maximalists as well as moderates on both sides are important in Snyder's (1998) assessment of transitions from sultanism. The interplay of these four key groups can affect whether a sultanistic ruler is overthrown following revolution, or forced out by moderates (Snyder, 1998, p. 57). Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 60) conclude that revolutionary upheaval is the most likely transition path from sultanism. Relations between the ruler and society are integral to determining the nature of sultanistic removal.

### *3. Foreign Power-Domestic Power Relations*

Finally, the relationship between of foreign powers and domestic actors is emphasised in analyses of transitions from sultanism (Linz & Stepan, 1996, pp. 57-60; Snyder, 1998, pp. 58-60). Linz and Stepan (1996) repeatedly emphasise the potential for international powers to tip the scales in favour of democracy in a number of transition scenarios. Firstly, they state that 'the best chance for democratic transition is if the revolutionary upheaval is led by internationally

supported, democratically inclined leaders who set a date for elections and allow free contestation of power' and, secondly, that a 'foreign patron can sometimes force the sultan to step down' (Linz & Stepan, 1996, pp. 58-60). The deciding influence of international powers is for the most part due to sultanistic regimes' dependency on foreign patronage for the maintenance of sultanistic rule (Snyder, 1998, p. 58). Snyder (1998, pp. 58-60) goes further in his exploration of the implications of foreign power involvement, extrapolating the interaction between foreign powers and various domestic actors. If a foreign patron's support for a regime is removed in a time of revolutionary upheaval or, worse, switched to the proponents of democratic change, this can alter the cost-benefit analysis of the relevant domestic actors (Snyder, 1998, p. 58). Furthermore, the relationship between the foreign patron and a sultanistic ruler can contribute to the cause for breakdown in that it can encourage a narrow patronage systems that can weaken regimes (Snyder, 1998, p. 58). Although foreign powers can play an integral role in transitions from sultanism, it is clear that 'the impact of these forces is mediated by the configuration of domestic actors' (Snyder, 1998, p. 58).

### *Importance of Interplay*

Each of the three critical relationships has profound significance in transitions from sultanistic rule (Snyder, 1998, p. 58). However, the consequences cannot be fully understood by studying the relationships individually. The importance of each relationship, in establishing the structural boundaries for action, lies in how they intersect. This is a core tenant of the combined structural-voluntarist framework put forward by Snyder (1998), who states that:

the actors who participate in transitions from sultanistic regimes are defined in a way that highlights their ability to shift strategic postures with the margins of manoeuvrability allowed by structural constraints... these margins of manoeuvrability are specified by analysing three critical relationships—ruler-state (especially ruler-military), ruler-society, and foreign power-domestic actor—that define the structural contexts of transitions from sultanism’ (pp. 59-60) .

Here, Snyder (1998) explains the reciprocal nature of both the structural relationships within sultanistic regimes and the space those structures create for relevant agents to act. The process of transition from sultanism is a dynamic and multifaceted area of study, which requires such an holistic approach.

## **Conclusion**

Sultanism represents a rich typology of non-democratic regime type. The unique combination of characteristic, illustrate the system of power that operates in a sultanistic regime. Furthermore, Linz and Stepan (1996) and Snyder (1998) explore from transitions from sultanism in great depth. The disparities in conclusions between Linz and Stepan (1996) and Snyder (1998), stem from Snyder’s inclusion of empirical examples. Thus, following the Egyptian revolution, the theory of sultanism is ripe for review. As the cases of sultanism are rare events, the 2011 Egyptian revolution provides and excellent opportunity to apply and assess the theory with both understandings of the case study and theory, standing to be improved.

## CHAPTER TWO: MUBARAK AS A SULTANISTIC RULER

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The dissertation now moves on to an analysis of the political system in Egypt under Hosni Mubarak from 1981 to 2011 through the lens of sultanism. The system of power by which Mubarak ruled, bears striking resemblance to the ideal type of sultanism. Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 31) fleetingly refer to Egypt as having ‘developed along sultanistic lines’, and authors such as Brownlee (2002), Kassem (2004), Bellin (2004), situate the Egyptian regime within the category of personal rule, but there has been no attempt to systematically analyse the Egyptian regime according to the characteristics of a sultanistic regime.

Sultanism appears to be a highly useful analytical tool for understanding the Mubarak regime. Each of the five key features of an ideal sultanistic regime bears resemblance to the nature of Mubarak’s rule. For nearly thirty years Mubarak managed to maintain his grip on power through balancing the carrot and the stick making him the longest standing Egyptian ruler in the twentieth century (Soliman, 2011). Yet, in 2011 the last bastion of Mubarak’s power crumbled in the face of over one million protesters gathered in Tahrir Square. Thus, the value of sultanistic theory to the study of the Egyptian case also lies in the framework for analysing transitions from sultanism laid out by Snyder, which sheds light on Mubarak’s sudden decent from prominence to incarceration. The three key relationships, ruler-state, ruler-society, and foreign powers-domestic actors, played a significant role in the events in Egypt. This is an area of study that has been neglected in the literature that has emerged since 2011 which has been overwhelmingly focused on the agency of the Egyptian people. Thus, this section

assesses the nature of three key relationships in Egypt and their implications for the breakdown of the Mubarak regime.

### **The Egyptian State: A Synonym for the Mubarak regime**

The conflation of the state and regime was apparent in the Egyptian political system under Mubarak. The Egyptian state includes the coercive and administrative apparatus, as well as the judiciary. Egypt was a contemporary sultanistic regime and the resemblance of a modern bureaucratic state was upheld through seemingly formal state institutions (Brownlee, 2007, pp. 82-83). However, such institutions did not operate in the same way, or for the same purpose, as their counterparts in democratic systems. Instead, Egyptian state institutions merely represented a simulacrum of democracy. The distinction between state and regime was blurred as a result of the institutions of the Egyptian state submitting to the control of the president (Brownlee, 2007, pp. 82-83). However, this relationship was not as clear-cut as in an ideal type sultanistic regime as Mubarak at times had to take steps to wrest power from state institutions. Different institutions had varying degrees of independence from him.

#### *The Military*

The power dynamic between the regime and the military is of particular importance. Before 2011, the military seemed synonymous with the regime (Harb, 2003, p. 270). The military coup by the Free Officers in 1952, that put Nasser into power, left a lasting legacy on Egyptian politics with the leaders of the regime being chosen from amongst the military's ranks (Harb, 2003, p. 278).



However, the political role of the military was redefined by Sadat, and even further under Mubarak (Kassem, 2004, pp. 39-40). The Egyptian regime transformed from a military regime to a primarily civilian led system (Harb, 2003, p. 270). That is not to say that the military made a complete exit from the political scene but that their representation in parliament and impact on legislation and decision-making decreased (Harb, 2003, p. 287). However, it was the personal rule of Mubarak that characterised the relationship between the military and the regime. Unlike a traditional sultanistic regime, as outlined by Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 12) in which the military is 'deprofessionalized as rulers aim at converting them into their private instruments for power', Mubarak was thought to have achieved their 'complete subordination' to his authority while also allowing for their re-professionalisation and economic independence (Harb, 2003, p. 270; Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, pp. 44-45). The removal of the military from their dominant position within the regime's ranks and thus the diminishing of their direct political role in decision making was achieved through a trade off of political power for economic privileges (Kassem, 2004, p. 42; Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012). As a consequence, the military remained loyal and accountable only to Mubarak as president and commander in chief and he protected their economic privileges (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 45). The dynamics of this relationship are explored later in this dissertation, as they are crucial in understanding the outcome of events in the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

### *The Administration*

The administrative arm of the Egyptian state was rendered a personal instrument of Mubarak under his sultanistic system of rule. The state

administration was a hierarchically organised institution with Mubarak at the pinnacle of the pyramid (Bernard-Maugiron, 2007, p. 279). As president, Mubarak appointed and dismissed all the cabinet members including the prime minister. Under the president, the cabinet 'determines the general policy of the state; directs, coordinates, and follows up the work of the ministries; issues administrative regulations; and prepares draft laws and the draft general budget' (Bernard-Maugiron, 2007, p. 279). Presiding over the administration gave Mubarak significant powers, which he could manipulate to his benefit (Bernard-Maugiron, 2007, p. 279). Mubarak's dominance over the state administration is most evident through his personal power to appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers, thus promotion within the administration was based on loyalty to Mubarak as opposed to merit (Bernard-Maugiron, 2007, p. 279). This is reflected in the discrepancies between the qualifications of many ministers and the departments of which they were in charge. Aswany (2011, p. 11) expressed his indignation when Aisha Abdel Hady was appointed Minister for Manpower without ever having completed preparatory school stating that 'Aisha Abdel Hady understands that she was not appointed minister because of her competence or her capacity to do the job, but only because the president and his family approve of her'. A high rate of turnover in the top ministerial positions is typical of sultanistic regimes and was prevalent under both Nasser and Sadat, but did not appear to the same extent during Mubarak's rule, with some ministers holding the same position for over 20 years (Bernard-Maugiron, 2007, p. 279). However, as Kassem (2004, p. 28) explains, this did not represent 'a shift from the underlying principles of his predecessors, as much as a shift in tactics to maintain the same objectives'. The key goal of such a trend is to

prevent any single other figure within the regime from gathering enough support to pose a threat to the ruler. Ministers that remained in office did so by keeping a low profile and submitting entirely to the president (Kassem, 2004, p. 28). Mubarak clearly engaged in a sultanistic dominance over the state administration to such a degree that it became his personal instrument of power.

### *The Judiciary*

The judiciary represented the most challenging state institution during Mubarak's rule. The defiant nature of the judiciary is exemplified by their bold actions: the declaration of both the 1987 and 1990 parliamentary elections as null and void due to the unfair candidate selection process; the implementation of judicial supervision of elections in 2000; and the 2006 Judges' Uprising in 2006. As a result, the judiciary was a significant source of resistance to Mubarak's sultanistic rule. When Nasser came into power 1952, he set up a judicial system that crippled the independence of the judiciary (Brown, 2012, p. 3). Under both Sadat and Mubarak this system was relaxed to provide for greater judicial autonomy while imposing controls to limit the power of the judges (Brown, 2012, p. 3). The implementation of Law 73 of 1956, in 2000, enforced judicial supervision of polling booths during elections. However, while the judiciary did represent a thorn in Mubarak's side, its influence was negated by the structure of domination under Mubarak (Kassem, 2004, p. 37). President Mubarak retained significant powers of appointment such as Supreme Constitutional Court Judges including the chief justice, as well as the public prosecutor, attorney generals, and Court of Cassation judges (Kassem, 2004, p. 36). Mubarak used these powers to reign in overly strident judicial bodies

(Brown, 2012, p. 5). Furthermore, executive influence over the judiciary was compounded by control of the judiciary's budget (Brown, 2012, p. 4). Until 2006 the executive had direct control of the judiciary's budget under the Justice Minister. Following pressure from the Judges Club, responsibility for the budget was transferred to the judiciary but required parliamentary approval, meaning that in effect little changed (Stacher, 2011, pp. 9-10). Brown (2012, p. 4) asserts the regime was able to influence judges by monetary measures such as rewarding compliant judges with higher salaries, benefits and retirement packages'. In contrast Brown (2012, p. 5) states that vociferous judges faced a 'mixture of harassment, character assassination, stonewalling, and mollification of judges' material complaints'. The result was that, in the latter years of Mubarak's rule, judicial independence declined (Brown, 2012, p. 6). The demands made by the judges in 2006 were part of a wider movement labelled the Judges' Uprising, which sought to secure judicial autonomy from the executive (Stacher, 2011, p. 9). However, new laws introduced in response to the judges' demands sought to placate judges by making cosmetic changes that 'suggested that the judges' demands had been met, [but that]... arguably curtailed the judges' ability to resist executive influence' (Stacher, 2011, p. 9). Although the Egyptian judiciary was the least pliant segment of the state bureaucracy and sought to wrestle independence from Mubarak, the structure of power in Egypt meant they could not escape sultanistic domination because as Kassem (2004, p. 37) states the 'president is in a position to circumvent rulings perceived as obstructive to regime objectives'.

Therefore, Mubarak's Egypt conformed to the sultanistic category in that it maintained a high level of integration between state and regime rendering the state institutions as his personal instruments of power.

### **Hosni Mubarak: "The Father of Egypt" or the Mubarak Dynasty?**

Mubarak's rule over Egypt was characterised by the high level of personalism that is symptomatic of sultanism. A cult of personality emerges in sultanism due to absence of charisma or ideology as a factor to gain allegiance and obedience. This dynamic is clear in the Egyptian case. When compared with his predecessors Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak is evidently lacklustre in both charisma and ideology (Hinnebusch, 1991; Osman, 2010; Hashim, 2011; Soliman, 2011; Eltahawy, 2012).

That is not to say Mubarak was a man without any commendable attributes, Soliman (2011, p. xiii) recognises that he was 'well known for his discipline and hard work', yet Mubarak held no extraordinary qualities that are associated with charismatic authority as outlined by Weber. Mubarak himself was surprised when he was appointed vice president by Sadat, having never held grander ambitions than becoming the Egyptian ambassador to London (Al Jazeera, 2012). In contrast with his predecessors Mubarak was no great statesman. Nasser was known for his grandeur and Sadat for his appealing nature, by contrast, Mubarak is described by Soliman (2011, p. xiii) as 'barely [able to] face the public except with the aid of a prepared written text'. Commentators on Egyptian politics are quick to denounce him as "bland", and "unexciting" (Eltahawy, 2012; Osman, 2010, p. 169) As a reflection on his uninspiring character Mubarak, was

popularly dubbed 'vache qui rit' after a bland tasting cheese widely distributed in Egypt (Hashim, 2011).

Mubarak also failed to have a set of ideological values from which to garner support and commitment. Nasser and Sadat both espoused wildly different ideologies. Nasser's rule was characterised by his grand, national socialist project, which sought to redress issues of inherited inequalities (Hinnebusch, 1991). Sadat reacted strongly against Nasser's socialism instead propounding a vision of a capitalist Egyptian economy, labelling Nasser's ideals as extreme and detrimental to the nation (Hinnebusch, 1991). Both actively pursued economic goals associated with their ideologies: Nasser implemented a revolutionary programme of redistribution, state-control and national self-sufficiency, whereas Sadat introduced the process of economic opening (*Infitah*) to kick start capitalist development (Hinnebusch, 1991). Mubarak treaded a more cautious line, initially adopting moderate approach to both nationalism and capitalism (Hinnebusch, 1991). However, the result was, as Osman (2010, p. 169) proclaims, that 'Mubarak's imprint is missing; while Nasserism and Sadat-ism evoke impassioned feelings.... their successor remains without a 'following'; he stirs no passion or excitement'. Eltahawy (2012) states that 'When Mubarak does die, he will be remembered as the most bland of those military men turned dictators... the legacies most associated with him are a network of bridges and highways and "stability"'. Thus, Mubarak's rule was defined by the absence of any motivating mission.

### *Cult of Personality*

To compensate for the shadow cast over Mubarak by those whose footsteps he followed, the regime bombarded the Egyptian population with a barrage of messages of Mubarak's greatness; state media outlets produced 'millions of words and images... devoted to Mubarak's deeds and presence since 1981' (Osman, 2010, p. 169). Aswany (2011, p. 37) describes the period when Mubarak fell ill in 2010, stating that 'the regime's scribes... wrote that country itself had fallen ill with the same disease, as if President Mubarak was the incarnation and embodiment of all of Egypt'. MacFarquhar (2011) reports that in Egypt the Mubarak family had 549 schools named after them with 388 of those after Hosni himself as compared to a combined total of 314 schools personally named after his three predecessors. Furthermore, the Egyptian population were confronted with Mubarak's image with his portrait plastered across billboards round every corner (MacFarquhar, 2011). Thus Egypt clearly adhered to the trend in sultanistic regimes of compensating for the rulers inadequacies by projecting an image of his greatness. Yet such tactics merely gave the illusion of greatness, and one that did not fool the Egyptian population (Al Jazeera, 2012).

### *Dynasticism*

Personalism was demonstrated in the progressively dynastic tendencies of the Mubarak regime, including the growing prominence of family members and the positioning of Mubarak's son to take over his father's throne (Al Jazeera, 2012). At the beginning of his rule Mubarak placed a great emphasis on keeping his family out of the public eye and separate from the political sphere (Al Jazeera, 2012). Yet overtime Mubarak's family became more prominent. Firstly,

Mubarak's wife Susan moved into the limelight. Al Jazeera (2011) reported that 'although once low-key, the former first lady has recently become known for being a powerful player in the behind-the-scenes decision-making processes of her husband's near 30-year rule'. Observers note that she asserted her importance by surrounding herself with the political elite and gradually became more exalted by politicians (Al Jazeera, 2012). Her profile increased both domestically and internationally. She established the 'Reading for All' program that successfully provided millions of Egyptians with below cost books, but every book had her image on the back cover instead of the authors (Al Jazeera, 2012). On the international stage she was the recipient of multiple prizes from international organisations including the United Nations (Al Jazeera, 2011). However, Mona Makram Abaid (Professor of Political Science) stated that '[Susan Mubarak] travelled the world, making speeches, receiving whatever prizes she could... but none of it was spontaneous. It was all done for the purpose of furthering her personal glory' (Al Jazeera, 2012).

Mubarak's sons Alaa and Gamal also entered the economic and political arena. Alaa kept a lower profile than his brother and remains distanced from politics. However, he sought to assert his influence in other areas, in particular the Egyptian economy (Al Jazeera, 2012). Alaa Mubarak allegedly entered into 'dubious' business partnerships, abusing his privileged position, to secure the smooth path of the deals with which he was involved, earning him the title 'The Facilitator' (Al Jazeera, 2012). However, it is the rapid ascension of Gamal Mubarak that exemplifies the dynastic tendencies of the Mubarak regime. Although publically denied, it was clear that Gamal Mubarak was being groomed



to inherit his father's position of President (Brownlee, 2007; Zahid, 2010; Al Jazeera, 2012). Gamal began his a career as an investment banker in London until he returned to Egypt in 1996 and, following a series of non-governmental and diplomatic roles, he joined the general secretariat of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in 2000. Within two years Gamal had risen up the ranks of the NDP to become the head of the newly created Policy Secretariat. The Policy Secretariat, allegedly as created especially for him, paved the way for Gamal's succession (El-Din, 2003). During his time in the party Gamal and his circle of business elite, labelled as the 'New Guard' asserted their growing presence. The removal of Youssef Wali in his long held position as the party's general secretary, and the 2004 cabinet reshuffle that saw a growing number of the new guard in the top ministerial positions, indicated that moves were being made within the party to ensure Gamal's smooth transition into the role of president (Brownlee, 2007, p. 47). Finally, Zahid (2010, p. 138) asserts that 'Gamal's appointment as Deputy Secretary-General of the party was further evidence of his grooming and of the influence which he had come to exercise over the NDP and the political world in Egypt'.

All of these moves were part of the long term, highly orchestrated, plan to groom the regime, the country, and overseas powers, to accept and even support the re-introduction of hereditary succession in Egypt (Zahid, 2010, p. 130). The Party was prepared for his succession by the growing numbers of Gamal's camp in the key party positions (Zahid, 2010, p. 135). Furthermore, the policy secretariat, which became 'Egypt's supreme policy-making body' (El-Din, 2003), served to create 'a launch pad for the President's son to enter the political scene, from

where he could present his economic political strategy for the future of the country' (Zahid, 2010, p. 132). Opposition party *al Ghad*'s Ayman Nour as asserted that 'the Egyptian government was preparing Gamal's succession by turning the NDP, with its hold on patronage and government bureaucracy, into his personal vehicle to power, and that the influence and power of Gamal had become so extensive over the previous year, that he was effectively running the country by proxy' (Williams, 2005). Gamal also embarked upon a charm offensive in the United States (US) leading delegations to Washington and meeting with senior US officials (Zahid, 2010, p. 132). Finally the military was courted to 'not only accept, but even endorse a hereditary transition' (Brownlee, 2007, p. 51). This was achieved by aligning the military's interests with the preservation of the status-quo (Brownlee, 2007, p. 51). Thus, despite not coming from a military background, as the son of Mubarak, Gamal represented the candidate that could best safeguard the military's access to the economic privileges they were accustomed to, particularly as he was in favour with the US, who provided over one billion dollars in military aid to Egypt every year (Brownlee, 2007, p. 51). By 2011 it was clear to domestic and international audiences that Gamal Mubarak would likely be Egypt's next president.

### **Egyptian Constitution: Riddled with Contradiction**

Within the Egyptian constitution there were both provisions for democratic systems such as multi-party parliamentary and multi-candidate presidential elections, but also, the legalisation of sultanistic rule. The rapid rise of Gamal Mubarak through the ranks of the NDP is just one of many examples of the constitutional hypocrisy rampant in the Egyptian political system. The

constitutional framework by which Mubarak governed was riddled with contradictions that fortified his hold on power. Mubarak inherited a constitution that accommodated a nominally multi-party parliamentary election from Sadat. However, this system was already highly flawed, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood was barred from forming an official party. Furthermore, by 2011 Mubarak had introduced a numbers of changes to the constitution that were blatantly duplicitous (Kassem, 2004, pp. 26-27).

### *Individual Candidacy*

In 1990 the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled the 1987 and 1990 elections to be unfair to independents because the system of proportional representation and party lists, meant that independents were unable to run for elections (Abaza, 2012; Bernard-Maugiron, 2007, p. 280). Mubarak, abiding by the court's ruling, dissolved the parliament and drafted a new electoral law, which brought back the individual two round majority vote system (Younis, 2010). Thus, from 1995 independent candidates seemingly had equal opportunity in the parliamentary elections. However, the independent candidate system was manipulated by the NDP. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, the NDP performed poorly, only winning 172 seats or thirty nine percent (Brownlee, 2002, p. 9). However, 181 NDP members that had not made the party ticket ran as independents, were successfully elected, and almost all rejoined the party after the election (Brownlee, 2002, p. 9). On top of that 35 other independents also swelled the NDP's ranks giving the party an 88 percent majority, which was, as Brownlee (2002, p. 9) states, 'a margin comfortably above the two-thirds needed to pass legislation and rubber-stamp the president's decisions'.

### *Judicial Supervision*

To circumvent the 2000 amendment to Law 73 of 1956 that enforced the full judicial supervision of all polling stations, the regime included changes to article 88 of the constitution. The changes limited judicial supervision to membership in the electoral commission that oversaw elections thus removing their physical presence from polling stations (HRW, 2010, p. 14; Stacher, 2011, p. 10; Brown, 2012, p. 6).

### *Multi-Candidate Presidential Elections*

In 2005, after four terms in office, President Mubarak announced the introduction of direct multi-candidate presidential elections, a seemingly significant step in the democratic direction. However, the laws regulating who could stand for election were designed specifically to prevent any legitimate threat to Mubarak from being able to compete (Brownlee, 2007, p. 48). To be eligible candidates either had to be the leader of a legally recognised party with 5 percent of seats from the upper and lower house, or an independent with the backing of 250 elected representatives (Brownlee, 2007, pp. 47-48). Thus, as Brownlee (Brownlee, 2007, p. 48) states, the complete dominance of the NDP in the government meant the constitution itself 'posed insurmountable barriers to subsequent participation by even the most well-organized of the country's opposition movements'. Thus, in the 2005 multi-candidate presidential election Nu'man Gum'a, and Nur won 2.93 percent and 7.57 percent respectively, while Mubarak secured an overwhelming 88.57 percent of the vote (Brownlee, 2007, p. 48). The Egyptian constitution mirrors that of democratic nations in that it now

allows for presidential competition, yet this does not translate into legitimate democracy as a consequence of the conditions for candidacy that are also written into the constitution.

### *State of Emergency*

For any other potentially destabilizing concerns that were not covered by the constitution there was the state of emergency. The state of emergency, although not existing in every case of sultanism, is at the heart of the sultanistic system of power in Egypt. Emergency rule as outlined in Law No. 162 of 1958 has been in place since the 1967 war apart from a few months (HRW, 2010, p. 4). The state of emergency vested extreme power in the hands of the president (HRW, 2010, p. 4). It enabled him to: try civilians in military court, detain people indefinitely solely on the basis of suspicion rather than evidence and without trial, ban demonstrations and dissemination of politically controversial literature, and legally allowed rule by presidential decree (HRW, 2010, p. 4). Thus, the state of emergency facilitated the arbitrary use of violence against opposition that is essential to the maintenance of sultanistic regimes.

### *Fraudulent Elections*

The abuse of the state of emergency for political gain was most apparent during election periods. A common feature of Egyptian elections was the arrest of members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2000 approximately 1,600 Muslim Brotherhood members were arrested in the months leading up to elections, and in both 2005 and 2010 there were about 800 Muslim Brotherhood members arrested (HRW, 2010, p. 7). A significant number of opposition candidates

suffered from arbitrary persecution during the election period made legal by the state of emergency (HRW, 2010, p. 7). Excessive use of violence by security forces was another typical occurrence at any Egyptian election. Activists, journalists, women, and passers-by alike, were physically intimidated, arrested and prosecuted by police, and attacked by thugs allegedly hired by the regime, under the provisions allowed by the state of emergency (HRW, 2010, p. 7). The 2005 elections were condemned as especially violent, with 12 people killed and 500 injured, a significant increase from the 8 deaths and 64 injuries reported in 2000 (EOHR, 2007, p. 16). The 2007 constitutional reform included provisions for the formal conclusion of the state of emergency but instead, the regime was given expanded powers to arrest and try civilians, as terrorists, in the military courts (Brownlee, 2007, p. 50).

It is important to note that while the constitutional hypocrisy in Egypt is in line with sultanistic theory, because within the constitution the image of democracy is upheld, there are also the provisions that facilitate sultanistic rule. However, the case of Egypt, involves a greater level of democracy than is permitted within the sultanistic category as outlined in orthodox formulations of the theory. The mechanics of this are explored later in the dissertation.

### **Co-opting the Business Class or Privatised Patronage?**

#### *Co-opting the Business Class*

The social base of the Egyptian regime has undergone significant reshaping under each of the country's presidents (Hinnebusch, 1991). The presidency of both Sadat and Mubarak witnessed a narrowing of the social base that had been

established under Nasser (Hinnebusch, 1991). Sadat sought to win the support of the business and agrarian bourgeois, which was reflected in their growing numbers in the regime's elite as compared to the free officers that had dominated Nasser's regime (Hinnebusch, 1991). Under Mubarak, the attention of the regime focused on the business class (Hinnebusch, 1991). This trend saw a growing number of businessmen in the NDP (Hinnebusch, 1991). Gamal Mubarak is seen to have been a considerable driving force in the push towards recruiting businessmen (Brownlee, 2007, p. 46). The removal of socialism from the constitution in 2007 indicated a shift towards prioritising the interests of the business class over those of other social groups (Arafat, 2009, p. 69). The introduction of liberal economic reforms since 1991 including a sales tax, stamp tax and income tax, removal of subsidies and other price distortions, reduced funding to health and education services, and restrictive fiscal and monetary policy has furthered the gap between rich and poor in Egypt (Zahid, 2010, pp. 45-55).

### *Privatised Patronage*

However, Mubarak maintained a sultanistic relationship with the business community at large and remained unhampered by any need to accommodate them as a class (Arafat, 2009, p. 72). Rather than co-opting the capitalist class as a whole, Mubarak treaded the sultanistic line of large rewards for a select few (Arafat, 2009, p. 72). The 'aggressive economic reforms... almost exclusively benefited Mubarak and NDP insiders' (Stacher, 2011, p. 1). Christopher Hayes (2012) also asserts that 'privatisation in Egypt concentrated wealth in the hands of a few insiders'. The proportion of the capitalist class that shared the spoils of

the regime was small and limited to a select few that had close ties to the regime (Arafat, 2009, p. 69). Furthermore, the relationship between such individuals and the regime is based on the self-interested motives of access to privileges, which ensured their loyalty to Mubarak (Arafat, 2009, p. 72). The majority of the business classes had no influence on the regime and the elite's interests lay in the continuation of Mubarak's sultanistic rule (Arafat, 2009, p. 72). Hence, the narrow social base of the Egyptian regime is a reflection on the exclusive system of patronage that is central to sultanistic rule.

### **Corrupted Liberalisation: Obstructions to the Egyptian Market**

#### *Economic Reforms*

Egypt's move towards a capitalist economic system, as opposed to the socialist system established by Nasser, first began with Sadat under the policy of *Iniftah*. Mubarak continued Sadat's work although more temperately (Hinnebusch, 1991). However, it wasn't until 1991 in the face of serious economic crisis that Mubarak embarked upon a determined restructuring of the Egyptian economy (Zahid, 2010, p. 45). With international debt at critical levels the Egyptian regime had little choice but to accept an International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt relief package in the form of a 'reduction of up to US\$20 billion of debt reduced annual interest payments by US\$12 billion over the next 10 years' on the condition that the regime implement the IMF's prescribed structural readjustment programme (Zahid, 2010, p. 44). Certainly the liberalisation was pushed through with more determination than previously, yet initial progress was slow (Zahid, 2010, p. 45). Due to the nature of sultanistic rule as a highly repressive regime, Egypt's liberalisation project was not completed as directed by International Monetary



Fund (Zahid, 2010, p. 51). Facing the dual concerns of growing socio-economic disparity and domestic unrest the Egyptian regime was unwilling to let go of some lucrative state owned enterprises to the private sector (Zahid, 2010, p. 50). Zahid (2010, p. 50) outlines two reasons for such resistance to full-scale privatisation: 1) 'to the Egyptian state, the movement of capital into private hand was viewed as weakening its economic power', and 2) 'such a movement was perceived as weakening the state's ability to co-opt, thus its political power'. Since a sultanistic system is founded upon the distribution of rewards to garner loyalty, the maintenance of the Mubarak regime's material resources was crucial to its survival.

That said, privatisation did occur, and with gathering speed. However, the process of privatisation was considered 'uneven at best' with the regime facing accusation of collusion with prominent business figures (Hayes, 2012). The lack of transparency in the system meant that state owned enterprises could be sold to private investors or friends at prices not representative of their value and then sold on again for a large profit allowing key individuals to amass enormous wealth (Hayes, 2012). As Hayes (2012) asserts 'cronyism privatisation effectively subsidised the elite-dominated private sector at the expense of the vast majority of the population'. Thus, capitalist functions of the market were obstructed by the sultanistic system of patronage. Access to prime economic opportunities were granted through clientelist relationship within the regime and the increase of businessmen among the NDP represented attempts to buy into the system of patronage operated by Mubarak (Arafat, 2009, p. 73). Success

in the Egyptian economy, as in the state institutions and the government, was not based on meritocracy but a clientelistic structure of loyalty to Mubarak.

### *Mubarak's Personal Wealth*

This manipulation of the market for personal gain was also characteristic of the Mubarak family themselves. Samer Soliman is quoted in the New York Times as saying 'the corruption of the Mubarak family was not stealing from the budget, it was transforming political capital into private capital' (MacFarquhar, Rohde, & Roston, 2011). Rather than accessing the public treasury directly as is typical of sultanistic rulers and their family's, the Mubarak's instead abused their privileged, and unsanctionable position, to pick the best deals and investment opportunities for themselves (Inman, 2011). The family's wealth is estimated to have been between anywhere from \$2 billion to as much as \$70 billion (MacFarquhar, Rohde, & Roston, 2011).

The Egyptian economic system clearly demonstrates that it is not a properly functioning capitalist market, but rather a form distorted capitalism, that is symptomatic of sultanistic rule and its inherent system of patronage.

### **2011: Ruptured Cracks in the Egyptian Sultanistic Political System**

This part of the dissertation explores how the Egyptian revolution fulfils the predicted pathways out of authoritarianism as outlined in mainstream sultanism literature. The conditions in Egypt created by the intersections of the three key relations have strong correlation to Snyder's (1998) framework. Snyder's (1998) emphasis is on transitions from sultanism. The case of Egypt does not yet

represent a complete transition, but rather the disintegration of sultanistic rule. However, breakdown is a core component of the initial stage of transition and thus stands to gain from examination within Snyder's (1998) framework.

### *The Three Key Relationships*

Sultanistic theory emphasises the importance of the ruler's relationship with the military in the path out of sultanism. This dissertation asserts, in Egypt, it was the military's act of forcing Mubarak to step down, rather than remaining loyal to him and violently oppressing the Egyptian protestors, that definitively shaped the direction of the Egyptian revolution, and as yet this has received little academic attention. This section of the dissertation seeks to understand what developments led to this decision, made by the key actor of the Egyptian military, within the framework set out by Snyder (1998). In line with Snyder's (1998, p. 51) framework, the dissertation explores how the military had the 'ability to shift strategic postures within the margin of manoeuvrability allowed by structural constraints' the boundaries of which can be found 'by analysing three critical relationships... that define the structural contexts of transitions from sultanism'. The military's decision will be studied within the context of the ruler-state, ruler-society, and foreign power-domestic actor relations.

#### *1. Mubarak and the State*

Firstly, the Mubarak's relationship with the state, which encompasses the military, is essential to understanding its breakdown. As aforementioned, in the context of 2011 it seemed that Mubarak had successfully ensured the subservience of the state apparatus to his rule (Harb, 2003, p. 270). Mubarak can

be seen as following the first survival strategy in relation to the position of the military; the removal of the military from any political role including transferring the task of public repression to a paramilitary force as opposed to the regular military, thereby diminishing their political influence and the potential possibility of a military coup (Snyder, 1998, p. 55). In the case of Egypt, Mubarak strengthened the State Security and police forces, designating them the role of surveillance and repression, apart from in extraordinary circumstances where the military were called in (Kassem, 2004, p. 41). Furthermore, Mubarak continued on from Sadat's initial moves to extricate the military from the political domain by reducing their number in parliament with greater vigour (Kassem, 2004, p. 40). During Sadat's time 20 percent of political appointments were filled by military personnel, which was then further decreased under Mubarak to only 10 percent (Kassem, 2004, p. 40). To compensate for their diminished political power Mubarak bestowed the military with growing economic influence and privileges (Kassem, 2004, p. 40; Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 44). These privileges are legally enshrined in Law 32 of 1979, which led to the establishment of the Civil Service Authority that oversaw the transfer of civilian run sectors of the economy to the control of the military (Kassem, 2004, p. 40). The military's assets were not limited to military industries but came to incorporate 'civilian consumer goods and established agriculture and infrastructure business' (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 41). Furthermore, the details of the economic activities of the military were kept from public scrutiny as they are 'exempt from public reporting and oversight' (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 42). Thus the military was removed from their political role eliminating the direct threat of a military coup. However, by reducing their role in the

repression of opposition, Mubarak allowed the military to maintain a clean reputation with the Egyptian population, of which, 12 percent are conscripted into its ranks (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 44). Additionally, trade-offs made by Mubarak, whereby, the military had greater economic independence rather than political influence meant that the military had significant economic autonomy from Mubarak (Kassem, 2004, p. 40). All the while Mubarak relied upon the military's loyalty to prop up his regime, which was ensured as he safeguarded their economic privileges (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 45). With a pristine reputation among the Egyptian people and economic independence the fate of the Egyptian military was not tied to Mubarak's fate (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, pp. 44-45).

## *2. Mubarak and the Egyptian Society*

Mubarak's relationship with society also had significant implications in the creation of the situation that faced the regime in the eighteen days following January 25 2011, which culminated in the ousting of Mubarak. The Mubarak regime was highly repressive and sank deeper into violent measures of controlling the population (Brownlee, 2002, p. 6; Zahid, 2010, p. 41). Despite Mubarak's limited penetration of the business elite through the party system, an enormous proportion of Egypt's 80 million inhabitants were excluded from Mubarak's system of patronage, thus, Mubarak's penetration of civil society was very shallow (Arafat, 2009, p. 72). However, the space for the development of opposition in Egypt was still low because of the process of political deliberalisation that occurred under Mubarak, particularly in the last decade of his rule (Zahid, 2010, p. 65). Repression, protests and strikes occurred with

increasing frequency throughout Mubarak's rule, however, they lacked the organisational capacity to pose a real threat to the stability of Mubarak's rule and were shut down by Mubarak's coercive apparatus (Brownlee, 2002, p. 11). Thus the Mubarak's sultanistic rule created a political climate that combined high levels of resentment towards the regime, and to Mubarak in particular, with little, or no, room for expression of discontent. However, the political deliberalisation that occurred was not all encompassing and still allowed for certain media freedoms including relatively uncensored internet activity. Thus despite the repression of political activist meetings and demonstrations, an online opposition movement flourished and was able to set in motions a series of events that would eventually bring the regime to its knees (Ghonim, 2012). There is not room in this study for and in depth analysis of the origins of the mass uprising that erupted in Egypt in 2011, which is a topic of study in its own right, but what is important in relation to sultanistic theory is how the flaws in the system of patronage were exposed in this time of crisis. This is best demonstrated through the military desertion of Mubarak.

### *3. The United States' Relationship with Egypt*

Sultanistic theory identifies foreign powers as being able to affect the outcome of transitions from sultanistic rule. In the case of Egypt the US can be seen as potentially influencing the trajectory of the Mubarak regime in three ways. Firstly, by encouraging the Egyptian economic liberalisation through incentives, such as reward packages, the US contributed to the growing socio-economic disparity between rich and poor that fuelled unrest (Zahid, 2010, p. 41). Furthermore, aid to the Egyptian regime helped it to maintain its narrow system

of patronage that alienated the majority of the population, with Egypt receiving the second most financial aid from the US after Israel. This was exacerbated by the blind eye turned by the US to the violations of human rights that occurred at the hands of regime forces (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). Second, much of the aid received from the US was channelled into the military thus providing another source of revenue and independence from Mubarak (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012). And finally, in the time of revolution with the world's attention focussed on the events in Egypt the US government encouraged the regime and the military to refrain from violence, and though not condemning the Mubarak regime the US did not declare outright support for his cause, despite their interests lying with Mubarak remaining in power (Gardner, 2011, p. viii).

#### *Revolution: A Sleeping Giant Awakens*

These three relationships set the stage in 2011 by marking the boundaries in which actors could manoeuvre. An essential point made by Snyder (1998) is that 'actors do not always take advantage of structural opportunities' (p. 52). We can see that the structural capacity for the military to turn against Mubarak had been in place for a significant duration of his rule. However, it was not in their interests to utilise their independence from the regime until the context of mass social upheaval emerged. The 2011 uprising in which over one million Egyptians took to the streets calling for the deposition of Mubarak was the ultimate test of loyalty for the military and one that did not go Mubarak's way. Despite ensuring the unyielding support of the military in times of relative calm the sheer size of protests in 2011 altered the terms of the cost benefit analysis that the military effectively made in its choice to support Mubarak against the population to ensure

its economic privileges (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 45). Thus, when crisis reached a peak the military turned against Mubarak. However, their actions since Mubarak's ousting have demonstrated that they were not acting in the name of the people and in support of democracy but rather in their own-self interest (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 45). In the context of 2011 the military generals perceived that the best way to protect their economic privileges was to sacrifice Mubarak (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 45). Their blatant attempts to hold on to power and restrict the influence of the newly elected president are all aimed at continuing their privileged position by taking away the ability of any new democratic powers to remove their influence (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, p. 45). The military effectively lay dormant as a political actor ,and the true extent of their power was not revealed until their hand was forced by revolutionary upheaval.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that the ideal type of sultanism is a useful category by which to understand the Mubarak regime and its demise. However, as a case study Egypt also highlights areas where the typology is in need of revision. This is explored in the next chapter of this dissertation.



## CHAPTER THREE: SULTANISM REVISED

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The picture of the Egyptian regime and its breakdown, as depicted in the previous chapter, using sultanistic theory as an illustrative tool, is substantial but not complete. Some essential features of the regime and the events of 2011 are missing from the analysis. Without consideration of these features an understanding of the Egyptian revolution remains unfinished. An examination of these features points to deficiencies of sultanistic theory in the Egyptian case, and nominates areas that require revision. The proposed areas for revision of sultanistic theory are the phenomenon of democratic institutions in a sultanistic regime, and the role of the regional political climate. More important than the features themselves were their implications for the events of 2011. As Snyder (1998) outlines, the actors in the 2011 revolution were limited in their scope of action by the structural constraints produced by Mubarak's sultanistic system. The integration of democratic reforms with sultanistic rule was particularly important in determining the ruler-society relations that had developed in 2011. In addition, the regional political climate was important in each of the three key relationships that determine the structural contexts of transitions. Thus, the revisions to sultanistic theory proposed in this dissertation had significant consequences for the Egyptian regime in 2011, which are hereafter explored in detail.

### **Egypt: A Sultanistic Grey Zone Regime**

Diamond (2002) accuses Linz's (1975) *Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes*, in which he first formulated the theory of sultanism, of failing to discuss

'anything like the "competitive authoritarian" regime type... and for good reason. This type of hybrid regime, which is now so common, is very much a product of the contemporary world'(Diamond, 2002, p. 24). Guyliev (2005) concedes that in his more recent works with Stepan (1996) and Chehabi (1998), Linz went to a greater effort to accommodate the transition literature with a fivefold typology of non-democratic regimes, including sultanism. However, the regimes described in *Sultanistic Regimes* did not survive past the 1980's at the latest, and thus are modern, but not recent political systems. At time of the most recent mainstream contribution to sultanistic literature of sultanism in 1998 the world was witnessing a new trend in non-democratic states. The optimism of the "third wave" of democratisation in the 1990s, as labelled by Samuel P. Huntington, touted the belief that the introduction of democratic institutions such as multi-party elections, expansion of civil society, and free press, marked political systems as in transition towards democracy, was shattered by the stagnation of democratic progress in the majority of these countries that proceed well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2002, Thomas Carothers called for the 'The End of the Transition Paradigm' propounding that regimes that were once applauded for moving towards democracy had instead entered into the 'gray zone' (Carothers, 2002, p. 9). Similarly, Diamond (2002, p. 23) asserts that regimes in the gray zone 'are in fact electoral democracies, however "feckless" and poorly functioning, but many fall below the threshold of electoral democracy and are likely to remain there for a very long time'. As Ottaway (2003, p. 7) highlights, these systems, semi-authoritarian regimes as she identifies them, are 'not failed democracies or democracies in transition; rather, they are carefully constructed and maintained

alternative systems'. It is this aspect of 'gray zone' regimes that orthodox sultanistic theory fails to conceive.

The sultanism literature recognises that regimes with sultanistic tendencies may also have some level of pluralism, institutionalisation, liberalised economies and political participation. However, such features are not explored in depth and are simply generalized as merely representing a façade. Proponents of sultanistic theory view such features as incompatible with the nature of sultanistic rule, describing them as being 'constantly under attack' by sultanistic practices. They fail to comprehend how such institutions can represent an extension of sultanistic power and serve to consolidate sultanistic rule, rather than weaken it. Furthermore, Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 25) purport that 'authoritarian regimes are more institutionalized, and the limited political, and even more important, social pluralism they tolerate creates a variety of structures that support the regime... thus contrasts [sultanistic regimes] with authoritarian regimes', and that pluralism is the 'critical difference' between sultanism and authoritarianism (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 53). This dissertation rejects such a distinction. This section of the dissertation explores how the limited introduction of democratic institutions in Egypt, rather than weakening the regime, were manipulated by Mubarak to enhance his sultanistic rule. Egypt was frequently referred in the gray zone literature as a prime example of a stable political system that is neither entirely authoritarian nor on a path towards democracy (Diamond, 2002; Carothers, 2002; Ottaway, 2003). Ottaway (2003) identifies Egypt as 'the perfect model of semi-authoritarianism', or, more specifically, 'institutionalised semi-authoritarianism'. This categorisation of Egypt appropriately explains the

democratic institutions of the Egyptian political system and how they existed without any actual democratic progress, but instead to create a stable non-democratic rule. However, it does not adequately investigate how these qualities interacted with the system of patronage in Egypt. Carothers' (2002, p. 12) description of a dominant-power subtype of gray zone also has application to the Egyptian case in that it encapsulates a system where 'one political grouping—whether it is a movement, a party, an extended family, or a single leader—dominates the system in such a way that there appears to be little prospect of alternation of power in the foreseeable future'. However, in failing to specify what group holds power in such a system it ignores the nuanced differences between single party, monarchical, patrimonial, or sultanistic regimes and the dynamics of power within them.

This section of dissertation, therefore, proposes to refine the theory of sultanistic regimes to incorporate the insights of the gray zone regime literature, while addressing the failure of such literature to integrate analysis with an investigation of the unique system of patronage that operates in sultanistic regimes. The Egyptian case represents a system of sultanistic rule, which incorporates democratic institutions to strengthen its monopolistic hold on power. A similar exercise was done Gulyev (2005) in relation to the Azerbaijani political system. However, Gulyev (2005) sought to refine Ottaway's (2003) theory of semi-authoritarianism with the two key features of sultanism, dynastic succession and informal institutions, to produce a new model of "sultanistic semi-authoritarianism". Thus Gulyev's (2005) major focus of critique was Ottaway's (2003) association of the Azerbaijan system as "The Semi-

Authoritarianism of Decay”. Guliyev (2005) pays less attention to the problems in sultanistic theory, in comparison to his critique of semi-authoritarianism. In this dissertation the key attribute of sultanism that appears in the Egyptian case is that the system of patronage was one of a balance of rewards and repression in combination with core characteristics discussed in the previous chapters and the capability of such a system to manipulate formal democratic institutions to maintain non-democratic power. Furthermore, diverging from existing literature, this dissertation explores the consequences of Egypt’s gray zone features for the ruler-society relationship in an attempt to understand the role of democratic reforms in the demise of Mubarak’s leadership.

### **Gray Zone Characteristics in Egypt**

Within the Egyptian political system under Mubarak, as described in chapter two of this dissertation, there existed pluralist elements that exceed the level accepted by sultanistic theorists as consistent with the category. These include: 1) rule of law, 2) economic privatisation, 3) civil society and press freedoms, and 4) both multi-party and multi-candidate parliamentary and presidential elections. However, rather than undermining the sultanistic nature of the Egyptian regime these features are defined by their sultanistic foundation, structured by a sultanistic system of patronage. Furthermore, for nearly thirty years these institutions helped to maintain Mubarak’s sultanistic rule over Egypt.

#### *1. Rule of Law*

A key feature of sultanistic regimes identified by Linz and Chehabi (1998, p. 25) is the absence of rule of law. However, in Egypt, rather than a complete dearth of

proper legal procedure, the regime relied upon the state of emergency to simultaneously operate a modern legal system and apply arbitrary use of power and violence to political threats. For ordinary matters that posed no threat to the regime, the judiciary functioned just as it would in a democratic country. However, as previously examined, the state of emergency legalised the trial of civilians in military courts (Kassem, 2004, p. 40). Reflecting the fusion of state and regime in Egypt, the Military Courts were loyal to Mubarak and thus sentenced political threats unfairly (Kassem, 2004, p. 40). The state of emergency allowed for blatant abuse of human rights and highly repressive measures for which there was no real accountability for such violation of international standards, as the repressive forces were tried in the military courts, which were biased (HRW, 2010). Thus, the Egyptian regime exploited this loophole to uphold the appearance of rule of law, while also being able to arbitrarily detain and imprison anyone that was perceived as a danger to the stability of the regime (Ottaway, 2003, pp. 44-45). The case of Egypt demonstrates that the existence of the rule of law in some areas is in fact possible and beneficial to sultanistic regimes.

## *2. Economic privatisation*

The depth of economic liberalism undergone in Egypt exceeded that thought possible by authors of sultanistic theory, but as demonstrated in chapter two the process of privatisation was manipulated to benefit Mubarak. A capitalist economic market is identified as impossible in a sultanistic system where the state is reluctant to give up sectors of the economy and reduce its ability to control the distribution of economic resources (Linz & Chehabi, 1998).

Privatisation in Egypt was initially resisted on this basis (Zahid, 2010, p. 50). However, the liberalisation of the Egyptian economy was characterised by a sultanistic system of patronage. Privatisation was used to create a new form of patronage (Arafat, 2009, p. 72). As previously discussed, access to the best deals were given to those with ties to the regime to ensure their loyalty (Arafat, 2009, pp. 72-73; Hayes, 2012). This process still produces a system of distorted capitalism but for differing reason than the ones outlined in sultanistic literature. Contrary to orthodox sultanistic theory, Egypt demonstrates that sultanism is compatible with economic liberalisation. Therefore, the Egyptian case is in compliance with the notion of sultanistic regimes being characterised by distorted capitalism and also with gray zone development in the economic sector.

### *3. Civil Society*

The degree to which Mubarak permitted civil society to exist in Egypt was far greater than considered, by the main theorists, to be possible in a sultanistic regime. In line with theories surrounding gray zone regimes, Mubarak did allow civil society groups to proliferate under his rule with the number of organisation reaching approximately 30,000 by the end of 2008 (Hassan, 2010, p. 326). Such a number is promising if one subscribes to the 'contemporary civil society discourse, which implies that the multiplication of voluntary associations is the guarantee of a vibrant civil society, which in turn is the main constituent of democracy' (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 108). However, civil society did not flourish to the extent the numbers indicate. Very few of those 30,000 organisations were active, with those that were, being composed mostly of religious and

development associations as well some sports, youth and social clubs (Hassan, 2010, p. 326). In addition there were 115 trade and industry chambers, 24 professional syndicates and 22 worker's unions (Hassan, 2010, p. 326). Furthermore, civil society groups were regulated by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, a state institution that was under the control of Mubarak as a result of the sultanistic fusion of regime and state that incorporated state institutions with Mubarak's system of patronage as his personal instruments of power (Hassan, 2010, p. 326). Legally the Ministry of Social Solidarity was able 'to censure the activities of NGOs, dissolve them, and confiscate their funds' severely restricting their freedom (Hassan, 2010, p. 326).

However, it is undeniable that Egypt witnessed the relative growth of civil society. The emergence of more civil society groups introduced a new dynamic in the drive for democracy that emanated from such groups, a process which Abdelrahman (2004, pp. 108-109) labelled the 'privatisation of repression'. Abdelrahman (2004, p. 109) explains the 'the very organizations of civil society that have been engaged with the state in a struggle for democracy are contributing to the harassment of other elements of society with whom they disagree on the form of society and State they want to achieve'. Tension between the Islamist and secular intelligentsia developed with the expansion of civil society (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 109). Mubarak took the opportunity to play on the 'often aggressive reaction of the Egyptian secular intellectuals towards the Islamists, and their extreme intolerance of the Islamist's increasing presence in civil society organizations', such as the professional syndicates, in order to undermine Islamist civil society under the guise of protecting the secular nature



of Egyptian society (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 15). In reality, Mubarak manipulated relations between the two groups to minimise the Islamist's influence, as they represented the most popular and cohesive threat to his sultanistic rule of Egypt (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 116). Islamists did not garner support from liberals, who feared that democracy driven by Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood would result in a restructuring of the state around Islamist principles, a prospect they abhorred (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 116). Thus Mubarak manipulated this fear in the secularist groups preventing them, as moderates, from organising against the regime with maximalists, the Islamists, a scenario which is conducive to the breakdown of sultanistic rule, as outlined by Snyder (1998). Furthermore, this dynamic was also used by Mubarak to facilitate the introduction of the hereditary succession of his son Gamal into the position of president, by presenting him as a figure for moderates to gather behind (Brownlee, The Heir Apparent of Gamal Mubarak, 2007). Ottaway (2003, pp. 49-50) states that

Egyptians who neither support the present regime nor Islamist organizations believe that change must come from the top... as a result of the emergence of a new generation... Curiously, the most frequently expounded version of this democracy-through-the-next-generation scenario casts Gamal Mubarak... in the role of the main protagonist. The idea that democratisation in Egypt could be revived by a dynastic succession in a republication setting is oxymoronic at best. (pp. 49-50)

International powers also bought into this drama, choosing to support Mubarak and stability, in fear that change could bring Islamists to power (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). Thus the expansion of civil society was managed under Mubarak in such

a way that it both prevented collusion between moderate and maximalist opposition groups, paved the way for his son to take his place, and ensured US support of his regime, seemingly strengthening his sultanistic rule.

*Shattering the of the Democratic Illusion*

Marina Ottaway, in 2003, described the regime as ‘a particularly resilient, almost institutionalized, semi-authoritarianism that has already lasted more than twenty years’ (pp. 7-8). How then did such a seemingly ‘stable’ regime in ‘equilibrium’ breakdown? Having discussed the features of gray zone regimes that were integrated with sultanism to maintain sultanistic rule for nearly thirty years, it is important to consider how the system failed in 2011. This can be achieved through considering how the system affected the key relationships as outlined by Snyder. The gray zone elements of sultanism had a formative role in ruler-society relations.

As previously established, the system of institutionalised modern sultanism successfully created the image of democratic progress without creating any possibility for a transfer of power away from hands of Mubarak. Yet it seems that in the late 2000’s and evidently in 2011 that this illusion was shattered (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). After several experiments with various levels of democracy such as the 2005 elections, in which 88 seats were won by the Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak’s regime severely reduced pluralism in Egypt (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). Although, the introduction of limited levels of democracy in Egypt had not curbed the power of Mubarak or his ruling party, the NDP, it had allowed for greater success for the Muslim Brotherhood than the

regime had anticipated (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). As Ottaway (2010, p. 378) states 'in 2005, the government assumed that it could hold the Muslim Brothers to small number of seats. They won 88 instead'. As the most organised and popular opposition force in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood was seen by the Mubarak regime as the most potent threat to the stability of status-quo (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). Thus, political reform was retracted in reaction to the danger posed by an emboldened and empowered Muslim Brotherhood. However, these actions had the unintended of consequences that 'Egyptian reformers and regime opponents today no longer believe that change can be brought about by engaging in the formal, legal political process and winning seats in parliament' (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378).

Signs of moves away from democracy became increasingly obvious in 2007 with the constitutional reforms which rendered the Supreme Constitutional Court's decision regarding judicial supervision of elections redundant, which facilitated the largest win to date for the NDP in the 2008 election. Furthermore, the change in attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood from reluctant tolerance to complete persecution was apparent in the 2010 elections, in which they failed to win a single seat. This downward turn in policy undid much of the work Mubarak had done to uphold a limited level of faith in the possibility of change from the top that existed among the Egyptian moderates. This is reflected in the rise of protest movements in the past six years, particularly as 'political reformers have moved from the realm of formal, legal, political activity to direct action, in the hope of generating sufficient power to force change' (Ottaway, 2010, p. 379). These included: the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya) in

2004, waves of workers protests, the young activists of the April movement (AY6) who began protesting in 2008, the National Association for change that rallied around prominent figure Mohammed El Baradi and his demands for democratic change in 2009 and, finally, the activity of the 'Kulena Khaled Said' group, whose actions culminated in the January 25<sup>th</sup> protest that sparked the mass uprising in 2011 that finally brought an end to Mubarak's sultanistic rule of Egypt. Thus, the changes in the structure of rule in Egypt under Mubarak that defined ruler society relations and successfully maintained his rule for nearly thirty years by channelling the efforts of opposition groups into avenues the regime could control and manage, was eventually thrown out of balance in 2011, with severe repercussions for the regime.

### **Regional Climate as a Structural Consideration**

Another factor which orthodox sultanistic theory neglects to explore is the wider international context in which a sultanistic regime breaks down. Just as government actions, in regard to democratic reform, shaped the nature of relations between the ruler and society in Egypt, the regional climate had implication for each of the key relationships outlined by Snyder (1998). This dissertation contends that external factors beyond simply foreign power relations, such as the regional political climate, can shape the structural margins within which the key actors are able to manoeuvre. The regional climate is considered to be the political trends that appear within the Middle East regional and sub-regional system. Noble (1991, p. 36) define this system as encompassing 'Egypt, the Arab states of west Asia, and the three non-Arab perimeter powers: Israel, Iran, and Turkey'. As with the three key relationship that mark the

structural boundaries that limit actors described by Snyder, the regional political climate interacts with each of these factors; ruler-state, ruler-society, and foreign power-domestic actors. This was made evident in case of the ousting of Mubarak. Country studies in *Sultanistic Regimes* (Linz & Chehabi, 1998) consider each instance of sultanism and their downfall independently, but the fall of Mubarak was not an isolated event. The regional climate in which the Egyptian revolution occurred had significant consequences for the three key structural relations and thus the outcome of events. One cannot understand the breakdown of the Mubarak regime without considering the situation that emerged in neighbouring Tunisia and the surfacing protests in the region. As Noble (2004) criticised Watzl's systemic approach to the study of international relations for being excessively 'unlevel in character with its almost exclusive focuses on the dominant (major power) system and neglect of other system levels' (p. 30), this section makes the same accusation of Snyder's assessment of influences on sultanistic break down. It is important to note that international climate here is viewed as a contributing factor as opposed to a necessary condition for revolution against a sultanistic regime.

### *Historical Context*

When considering events in the Middle East, the regional climate is of particular importance. Scholars have long been interested with the dynamics of the region and the notion of an 'Arab System' (Noble, 1991). Salloukh and Byrnen (2004, p. 1) state that 'historically, several sets of factors... all created a situation in the Middle East where by ideologies, events, and political movements reverberated across borders to an extent not seen in other parts of the developing world'.

Certainly the events of 2011, that threw the regions into turbulent waters, indicated the interconnectedness of the region, but the trend emerged much earlier than 2011. A key factor that had previously defined the region was the resistance to the third wave of democratisation and the uninterrupted rule of dictators (Salloukh & Brynen, 2004). This trend moved research to focus on “Arab Exceptionalism” with authors such as Eva Bellin (2004) seeking to explain the robustness of Middle Eastern regimes. Thus the dynamic of authoritarian consolidation seen in Egypt was mirrored in other states around the region. That is not to say that the political systems within the region are totally analogous, as they vary in the nature of rule and structure of domination. However, trends that emerged in the region led some academics such as Salloukh and Brynen (2004, p. 11) to conclude that ‘the forces of change in the region can no longer be contained’, a prediction that came true in late 2010 and early 2011.

#### *Political Context in 2010-2011*

The event that is marked as the initiation of the “Arab Spring” is considered to be the self-immolation of fruit-seller Mohammed Boazizi on 17 December 2010. Acting out of frustration, the young jobless graduate set himself on fire. In the face of unrelenting protests the Tunisian leader, Ben Ali, fled to Saudi Arabia on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the January 2011, signalling his departure from power. In this period protests had been building around the Middle East including Egypt, such as the riots that broke out in Algeria on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, and throughout January there were reports of unrest in Libya. There were also copy-cat actions by protestors of self-immolation, such as Mohsen Bouterfif on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January in Algeria, and a similar incident in Egypt on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January.. When protests

occurred with full force in Egypt on the planned date of January 25<sup>th</sup> the unrest spread to Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine in a matter of days, with more protests to follow around the region. Thus, the stage was set for events in Egypt to unfold.

### *Interaction with Snyder's Three Key Relationships*

The turbulent context of the Egyptian revolution is reflected in the key relationships outlined by Snyder including the relationship between: 1) the ruler and the state, 2) the ruler and society, and 3) foreign powers and domestic actors. As previously established, popular belief in the potential for democratic reform to be led by the regime was beginning to wane, reflected in the increase of the demonstrations taking place in Egypt. Several domestic factors led to this trend away from state controlled forms of expression and toward civil disobedience. The regional context of late 2010 and the beginning of 2012 served to push more Egyptians into seeing civil disobedience as not only a viable way of creating change but also the only method that would achieve meaningful results (Ottaway, 2010, p. 378). The successful removal of the Tunisian dictator Ben Ali demonstrated to the Egyptian people that direct action against a regime could be successful (Ghonim, 2012). Thus, the Tunisian revolution and broader political climate in the Middle East in 2011 contributed to the changing perception of the regime in the eyes of Egyptian society, moving those in the moderate camp to a more maximalist perspective and altering the existing relationship between the ruler and society. The relationship between the ruler and the state in particular the military was also affected by the regional political climate by presenting an example of what could happen in Egypt. Deteriorating

stability in the region indicated mounting pressure of the despotic rulers of the region. This altered the relationship between Mubarak and the military in that the cost of supporting him appeared to increase and his capacity to protect the interests of the military diminished, thus eroding the basis of their mutually beneficial arrangement (Kurtzer & Svenstrup, 2012, pp. 47-48). Finally, the approach of the foreign power towards the situation in Egypt was significantly affected by fear of the region sinking into chaos. Foreign power relations with Egypt had long been shaped by regional concerns. The Middle East marks an area of vital strategic importance to the US. Both calls for democratic reform and support of Mubarak's sultanistic rule were driven by the desire to safeguard the US's security interests in the region (Gardner, 2011, p. 193). Post 9/11, the US encouraged the growth of democracy in Egypt in the belief that democratic governments could prevent the growth of Islamic extremist yet at the same time they helped to prop up Mubarak who represented a strong ally in the region, especially in relation to Israel (Ottaway, 2010, pp. 377-378). During the 2011 revolution the US was clearly hesitant to either condemn or back Mubarak (Gardner, 2011, p. 193). They feared the potential for the Muslim Brotherhood to take power in Mubarak's place, which could have negative consequences for their interests in the region (Gardner, 2011, p. 193). The US administration only issued a concrete statement concerning the situation after two weeks, this was because they were torn between their two approaches to the region, of promoting democracy and ensuring stability. Furthermore, the US treaded the fine line of appearing hypocritical in their attitudes towards other strategically important countries in the region such as Bahrain (Gardner, 2011, pp. 193-194). However, the primary goal of the US administration was to prevent the worst



case scenario; the creation of theocracy hostile to the US government like that of Iran. Thus, although support for Mubarak was removed, the US stood behind the army in hope that they could manage the transition to democracy in alignment with the US's interests (Gardner, 2011, p. 195). It can be seen that the regional situation was an important consideration for the US and their relations with domestic actors, which shaped the outcome of events.

The failure of sultanistic theory to assess the importance of regional factors in transitions out of sultanistic rule represents a weakness of the theory in application to Egypt. The Egyptian revolution and the structural margins within which actors could manoeuvre were clearly affected by the regional political climate. Therefore, this dissertation suggests an amendment to sultanistic theory is made to include the regional political climate and its consequences for the three key relationships outlined by Snyder to improve the usefulness of the category for future study.

## **Conclusion**

The case of Egypt both confirms the value sultanistic theory as well as calls for its revision. To ensure a more comprehensive understanding of Mubarak's sultanistic system of rule and how it broke down the theory must be amended to incorporate the 'grey zone' characteristic of the regime and the dynamics introduced by the regional political climate. The proposed revisions are essential in understanding the structure that existed in 2011 and that both enabled and constrained the relevant actors in the breakdown of Mubarak's rule.

## CONCLUSION

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The 2011 Egyptian revolution sparked a plethora of both journalistic and academic reflection on the breakdown of the Mubarak's regime. However, the vast majority of this literature focused on understanding the actions of the protestors and the dynamics introduced by communications technology, in particular, the social media. While certainly important, this literature is inadequate in a comprehensive understanding of the events. Among contributions to the study of the revolution an understanding and exploration of the role and of the nature of the regime was scarce. The structure of the Egyptian regime had been the focus of many studies before the revolution but their purpose was to explain the longevity of the regime. As a result, a gap in the literature emerged, calling for an assessment of how the structure of the regime under Mubarak, contributed to its collapse. The first task of this dissertation was to investigate this phenomenon.

The lens chosen through which to examine the nature of Mubarak's regime was sultanism. The theory of sultanism became popular within studies of non-democratic regimes during the late 1990s to describe a particular regime type. A sultanistic regime was formulated with prominent contributions to the theory made by Linz and other authors (Linz & Stepan, 1996; Linz & Chehabi, 1998), as an extreme form of patrimonialism, characterised by the core features of; fusion of regime and state, personalism, constitutional hypocrisy, a narrow social base, and distorted capitalism. Furthermore, it was argued that sultanistic regimes influence the configuration of relationships between the ruler and society, the

ruler and the state, and foreign powers and domestic actors that establish the structural context within which agents are confined, thus determining the outcome of transitions from sultanism. This framework is an excellent analytical tool for understanding the Egyptian regime and its breakdown.

This dissertation asserts the value of the sultanistic theory. Application of the theory to the case of Egypt reveals a number of strong correlations. This dissertation embarked upon an analysis firstly, of the Egyptian regime in relation to the characteristics of sultanism, and, secondly, through the configuration of relationships that shape transition, which include: 1) the ruler-society relationship, 2) the ruler-state relationship, and 3) the foreign power-domestic actor relationship. The Egyptian regime under Mubarak conforms to the key elements of sultanism. The Egyptian state had been rendered Mubarak's personal instrument of power marking the fusion of regime and state. Mubarak led Egypt as a highly personalistic ruler. Loyalty to his person was not due to ideology or charisma, but instead because of the promise of reward. His image was venerated in the media and his family was highly prominent in the regime, in particular, his son Gamal, who was being groomed to assume the presidency after his father. The Egyptian constitution was riddled with hypocritical features that touted democracy while also inhibiting it. Mubarak elevated members of the business elite to senior positions within the regime. However, this relationship was, in fact, a characteristic of the sultanistic system of patronage. The business class as a whole did not benefit from the process of liberalisation, which instead brought massive wealth to the small elite that had ties to the regime. The interest of these businessmen was in the continuation of Mubarak's rule as

opposed to being aligned with their class interests. Finally, although resembling a capitalist economy, the Egyptian economy was undermined by sultanistic practices, which produced a system of distorted capitalism. The combination of these characteristics places Mubarak's Egypt firmly within the category of sultanism.

Snyder's (1998) framework for examining transitions from sultanism has a strong heuristic value in the understanding of the ousting of Mubarak. The sultanistic characteristics of the regime, and how these characteristics shaped the three key relations, inform an understanding of the structural context in which the Egyptian revolution occurred. In the case of Egypt, the structure defined by these three relationships had clear consequences in both constraining and enabling actors. The outcome whereby Mubarak was forced out by the military in the face of millions of protestors emerged as a result of the contextual limits of the unique case. Thus the case of Egypt re-asserts the utility of the sultanistic category, which successfully sets out a framework that illuminates the events, which occurred in Egypt in 2011.

Despite the strengths of sultanistic theory, the application of the theory to Egypt also highlights the shortcomings of the model. From the failings of sultanistic literature to explain dynamics of the Egyptian revolution emerge areas where the theory can be improved. The two areas of revision proposed by this dissertation are: 1) the integration of sultanistic literature with the insights of 'gray zone' theory, and 2) consideration of the regional political climate in the

shaping of structural constraints actors face in transitions. A study of the Egyptian revolution is incomplete without these considerations, and, therefore, sultanistic theory is meaningful with such revisions. Firstly, authors of sultanism do not adequately deal with the notion that sultanistic regimes can incorporate democratic features to prop up their regime rather than moving into transition. Egypt represented a sultanistic regime that survived for nearly thirty years with a level of pluralism not considered compatible within the sultanistic category. Pluralism in Egypt did not make it less sultanistic, instead it integrated with the sultanistic system of power to fortify the regime.

The introduction of controlled democratic reforms created hope amongst the population of the possibility of reform from the top, which limited the level of dissent in society. However, the sharp turn away from pluralism by the regime in the late 2000s shattered the little faith held by the population that the regime would instigate tangible democratic reform. This marked a significant shift in the nature of the ruler-society relation, leaving no other option for opposition than civil disobedience, which manifested in protests on the streets of Cairo in 2011. The inclusion of democratic features in a sultanistic system, that had once enhanced sultanistic rule, failed to convince the Egyptian population in 2011. Thus, the revision of sultanistic literature to include the insights of 'gray zone' regimes is proposed after the events of the Egyptian revolution.

A further amendment to the theory that has emerged from the case of Egypt is the consideration of the regional political climate in determining the structural constraints for action. The 2011 Egyptian revolution was not an isolated event, but situated within the context of what was labelled the “Arab Spring”. The regional political climate contributed to the structural constraints in Egypt in 2011 through its interaction with the relationships outlined by Snyder (1998): events in Tunisia pushed more people into seeking change through civil disobedience; protests raised the cost of repression for the military and diminished Mubarak’s ability to safeguard their economic privileges; and finally, the regional climate played a strong role in determining the action taken by the US in relation to Egypt. Thus this dissertation proposes that the regional political climate be considered within the sultanistic framework for assessing the structural constraints of actors in transitions from sultanism.

Sultanism serves as a valuable theory by which to understand the Egyptian regime and its breakdown. It is an appropriate category with which to describe the system of power in Egypt under Mubarak. However, Egypt’s incongruences with the established literature highlight areas for revision. The new lessons learned from the study of the Egyptian case are 1) how the integration of ‘gray zone’ characteristics within a sultanistic system can be utilised to prop up a regime, and 2) the importance of the regional climate in determining the structural context of transition. The dynamics of the breakdown of the Egyptian regime cannot be fully understood without these considerations. The theory is made meaningful in the Egyptian context by revision.

There are several avenues of further research that stem from this dissertation. Primarily, the revisions to the category of sultanism, established in this dissertation, put forward a new approach to the study of sultanistic breakdown. Such studies have the potential to further review the revised typology. Furthermore, an in depth analysis of the case of Egypt, in a study that has a wider scope than this dissertation, would finesse the proposed revisions. A key purpose of this dissertation was to reinvigorate the category of sultanism. If the dissertation invokes debate through discussion of the revised typology, then this will serve to further the development of sultanism in modern political science.

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