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Andrew M Spath

TURBULENCE IN TRANSITION?

LEADER SUCCESSION AND GOVERNMENT-ACTIVIST INTERACTION

IN JORDAN, SYRIA, AND BEYOND

by

ANDREW MICHAEL FREDERICK SPATH

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Turbulence in Transition? Leader Succession and Government-Activist

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This dissertation examines the implications of leadership change on political activism in authoritarian regimes. It asks and answers the question, "Why do some leader transitions induce significant societal activism while others pass without the commotion of contentious activities?" Previous research examines leadership succession as an elite-level event. Instead, this dissertation argues that succession should also be understood as a relational event involving both government and society. Existing research also tends to focus on how emergent leaders are selected and take power, whereas this analysis sees leader succession as a causal event that affects government-activist interaction. The core argument is that authoritarian leader changes often stimulate the public expression of demands and grievances, but the extent to which they do so is influenced by differences in how leaders change and the institutional context in which transitions takes place. This effect arises because the transitional period introduces uncertainty into the relationship

between state and society, an uncertainty that incentivizes societal activism and creates opportunities for activists to test boundaries and express demands and grievances. The dissertation assesses these claims through multiple methods, including (1) cross-national, quantitative analysis of all national leader changes from 1950-2014, and (2) case studies of leader transitions in Jordan (1999) and Syria (2000) that combine qualitative data from interviews and archival materials with quantitative analysis of contentious events coded from newspaper reports in the years surrounding these successions. The findings demonstrate that leader succession creates an environment that invites contentious activism, but that this "succession-contention connection" is moderated by characteristics of the succession itself and the political institutional context in which it occurs.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, with love and appreciation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Research Question

Why are some leader changes met with significant amounts of societal upheaval while others are not? How do activists, dissidents, and challengers react to transfers of power in these contexts? To what extent are authoritarian regimes at risk of unrest and instability when confronting a succession crisis? How does leadership change affect contentious political activism in authoritarian regimes? These are the guiding questions of this dissertation. The purpose of the study is to examine the potential connection between changes in state leadership and the ways societal actors make demands and express grievances toward the government. I answer this question on multiple levels, articulating general expectations about the effect of succession on contentious activism based on cross-national quantitative analysis, and tracing causal linkages through specific case studies of Jordan (1999) and Syria (2000). By doing so, I hope to provide greater understanding of a political event - leadership succession - in authoritarian contexts that receives significant attention when it occurs but little systematic study.

As a function of their decisionmaking power, national leaders are positioned to mold historical developments more than almost any other group of individuals.

But the tenure of all leaders must come to an end, making transitions of authority a ubiquitous and inevitable aspect of all political systems. Leadership successions in authoritarian regimes are trying episodes for governments (Calvert, 1987; Hale, 2005; Herz, 1952; Rustow, 1964). The centralization of power inherent in autocracies places overwhelming decision-making capabilities in the hands of an individual ruler or a small cabal, making the potential impact of leadership change particularly acute (Bueno de Mesquita, 2003; Tullock, 1987). But to understand authoritarian succession, it is important to ask whether leadership change alters the course of domestic political events.

The passage of power attracts significant attention. It attracted mine when I visited Jordan as a boy during the two months leading up to the death of its longtime monarch King Hussein. Like so many others, the leadership transition from Hussein to his son Abdullah was a magnet for media coverage, policy analysis, and scholarly research. Many observers grappled with the void that would be left by the king and the consequences it would have on Jordan's domestic politics and role in the region. When Hafiz al-Asad died less than two years later in neighboring Syria, similar questions about the future orientation of the country elicited a range of answers. Like in so many other contexts of succession, the vast majority of analysis dissected their foreign policy consequences or the elite-level politics of transition. In both cases, the "Who is…?" question over the identity and policy orientation of the new leader was of first concern.

Much country-specific scholarship and commentary asserts the potential for leadership change to produce regime vulnerability and political instability. Robbins Burling's anthropological study of succession observes that "…the death of a president, a prime minister, or a party secretary still brings a period of uncertainty,

a period of maneuver, and sometimes a period of violence" (Burling, 1974, p. 1). Tessy Bakary's analysis of Houphouet-Boigny's succession in Cote d'Ivoire elucidates West African fears of "chaos, interethnic warfare and killing, and the collapse of the entire [system]," a fear that "is commonplace whenever the succession or passing of a charismatic African leader is faced…" (Bakary, 1997, p. 85). Writing prior to the death of long-time dictator Hafiz al-Asad in 2000, Raymond Hinnebusch warned in most concise fashion, "The main immediate threat to regime stability is a succession crisis" (Hinnebusch, 2001, p. 113). Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007) give causal weight to the "post-charisma" transition from Arafat to Abbas, arguing that it "ushered in unprecedented internal conflict" and Palestinian civil war (p. 18). The impending succession of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been deemed a "critical juncture" in which the exclusivity of power that "strengthen[s] Khamenei's hand in the short term… may cause long-term instability" (Nader, Thaler, & Bohandy, 2011, p. 19). Two years before the uprising in Egypt, Bradley (2008) contended that "the short term promises to be uneasy" due to rumor of Hosni Mubarak's ailing health and that the prospect of son Gamal's rise to the presidency "only raised anxiety that a bumpy transition would lead to instability with unknown and undesired outcomes." On North Korea, scholars warned of "the precarious time" of leadership transition and potential for government collapse resulting from "the most difficult challenge that such [autocratic] regimes face: succession" (Bennett & Lind, 2011), while other scholars predicted that "Kim Jong-un's succession will lead to a popular uprising in North Korea."[1] The list goes on.

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[1] See Twitter message of Erica Chenoweth, expert on civil resistance, shortly after reports emerged of Kim Jong-il's death:
https://twitter.com/#!/EricaChenoweth/statuses/148631541386457088.

The guiding supposition from a large body of theoretical and case-specific literature is that the topmost succession in any regime – that which replaces one head of state with another – represents a unique possibility for adverse political conditions, domestic challenges, destabilization, and internal conflict and contention. But these are just a few examples of the conventional wisdom that leader changes in non-democratic regimes are critical moments. With few exceptions, these observational claims are asserted without systematic theorization or general empirical examination. The goal of this research is to test and contextualize the more general claim derived from these observations, that "transfers of power are inherently destabilizing" (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011). How destabilizing is autocratic succession, really? Are all dictatorships equally prone to post-succession unrest and instability? What are the discernible patterns of contention and conflict surrounding the succession?

In Linz's seminal work on authoritarianism, he takes note of the "not too distant passing away of a number of founders of authoritarian regimes" and that it "should allow a comparative analysis of the problem (Linz, 2000, p. 277fn13)." This dissertation takes up that challenge to provide a comparative analysis of leadership change and its effect on domestic politics. It aims to shed light on the susceptibility of authoritarian states to experience changes in domestic political contention during a leadership change. Bringing together insights from studies of leadership succession, contentious politics, and comparative authoritarianism, it considers a "succession connection" (V. Bunce, 1980) that ties leader turnover to confrontational forms of political activism. In particular, two expectations are pitted against one another -- that of a honeymoon period enjoyed by new leaders as activists and dissidents are restrained in their activism, versus a scenario in

which succession is a "focal point" around which opposition groups and political elites are more likely to make claims on government, express grievances, and challenge the status quo. The analysis merely starts there, as this binary formulation oversimplifies the range of possible outcomes in the succession-contention hypothesis. This dissertation goes further, outlining important characteristics that distinguish some successions from others, advancing hypotheses specific to these characteristics, systematically testing them with cross-national data, and tracing the underlying processes of this succession-contention relationship through case studies of Jordan and Syria.

1.2. The Argument in Brief

The central claim investigated in this dissertation is that succession affects the relationship between state and society, and that these effects are observable through changes in the contentious activism of societal actors. To this end, this approach takes seriously the notion that leader successions "involve not only a competition among possible power-holders but an interaction between government and governed" (Calvert, 1987). The basic hypothesis, then, is that changes in contentious activism over time are explained in part by the emergence of new executive leadership in a state. Scholars have theorized a significant role for leadership change in the policies and decisions of governments and, to a limited extent, in the behavior of other political actors including government challengers. But this supposition awaits empirical verification. To sufficiently answer it, we must consider the ways in which succession influences this relationship and how we might be able to observe its impact.

I argue that leader successions are significant events that influence political decisionmaking and behavior. To the extent that these effects have been examined, they are primarily done so at the level of elite politics and decisionmaking. My contention, however, is that perceptions and behavior of politically active members of society, political dissidents, and opposition groups are also influenced by leadership change. To study this dimension, I approach the event of leadership succession as a conjuncture in the life of a regime, one in which there is a before and an after. Those two periods of time may closely resemble one another; they might also contrast significantly. It is only by demarcating the two periods, however, that comparison is possible and that claims related to its role in shaping politics can be empirically observed.

Moreover, I argue that these changes in political contention are best explained by uncertainty and opportunity surrounding authoritarian succession. That is, contentious political activism, unrest, and instability are likely to change during these periods as responses to (1) perceived opportunities for political change under a new leader, (2) new policy orientations and initiatives of new leaders that may have unwelcome material consequences for some segments of society, or (3) attempts to increase information about the willingness of a new leader to tolerate claims-making activity or concede to demands under a cloud of uncertainty. The literature that frames and informs these arguments is the focus of Chapter 2, and causal links between leader change and contentious activism are elaborated in Chapter 3.

Finally, power transfers differ significantly. I argue that two features of succession mediate the way succession affects contentious activism: the impetus of the incumbent's exit and the institutional context in which the transfer occurs.

Regarding the former, some leader changes are a consequence of ordinary political circumstances, like the voluntary retirement, electoral loss, or natural death of an incumbent leader. Other transitions are imposed coercively, whether by a leader's challengers inside or outside of government, that generally take the form of assassinations, coups, and revolts. Transitions following regular leader exits witness less domestic upheaval in the form of contentious activism than do transitions following irregular leader exits.

Second, existing political institutions affect the likelihood of these outcomes. Autocratic regimes are defined by a diverse set of institutional configurations that affect how power is distributed, transferred, and wielded. Prior research shows that these different institutional logics affect political decisionmaking and outcomes, including those related to government-opposition interaction and political conflict. Applying the oft-used typology of monarchic, military, party, and personalist regimes, I argue that these institutional differences mediate the relationship between leader transition and contentious political activism. Moreover, regimes employ different mechanisms for selecting successors and passing power from one ruler to the next. Regimes institutionalize these procedures to greater and lesser degrees. I argue that these procedures for managing leader turnover also modify the association between leader turnover and contentious behavior. In short, institutions matter when establishing expectations for contentious politics in periods of leadership change. These institutional arguments are developed theoretically in chapter three, tested empirically in chapter four, and explained contextually in chapters five and six.

1.3. Mixed Method Study

Few other political phenomena are as universal to politics while wholly unique in their manifestations than leadership change. In general, leaders are rational in their desire to avert the end of their reign. Many go to great lengths to suppress any notion of a life-after-leader scenario among the citizenry. But the impermanence of leaders is assured in every polity. Where institutions or opposition fail to end a ruler's tenure, mortality guarantees it. In short, succession is a universal fact of political life, and its abundance makes it ripe for analysis and comparison.

At the same time, succession is a highly variable occurrence. Factors inherent to the transition itself, as well as the context surrounding the event, differ from case to case. These differences matter for systematically describing and explaining the effects of succession. Some factors may be grouped for comparison, but each transition is composed of elite personalities embedded in institutions sunk in local realities.

Mixed methods facilitate capturing, in a limited way, the simultaneous ubiquity, dependence, and singularity of succession. I approach the succession-contention question at three levels of analysis: 1) a global study of successions in non-democratic regimes since 1950, 2) a region-specific focus on the Middle East, and 3) case-specific explorations of leadership changes in Jordan (1999) and Syria (2000). The tiered design leverages the benefits from multiple levels of abstraction to offer a multi-faceted understanding of the relationship between leader change and political contention.

A global comparison of succession contributes to forming general expectations of whether, and under what conditions, succession influences activism.

Importantly, it presents an opportunity to investigate the interaction of leadership change with other variables on a large scale, a useful endeavor for creating baseline expectations about when and where leadership turnover may have significant societal-level effects. However, cross-case generalizations are inherently abstracted from political processes that are best captured through case studies.

Data sources for measuring changes in domestic-level political contention over time and with global coverage are few. Surveying existing data presents a researcher with a trade-off between breadth and depth of coverage. A variety of independent projects offer case-specific events data, usually hand-coded, that return a relatively larger number of events from national and local news sources. But the resourcing required for this effort and project-specific collection and coding protocols diminish its geographic and temporal scope. Conversely, the Cross-National Time-Series Dataset (Banks, 2012) has wide-ranging coverage over space and time but, because it uses annually-aggregated data from a single source, *The New York Times*, far fewer events are registered in the database. This remoteness impedes understanding the relationship between an explanatory event (succession) and others that occur in proximity to it (political activism).

Individual cases of leadership turnover, on the other hand, provide the necessary context to complicate apparent generalizations, identify other important factors, and explicitly connect the succession event with the suspected outcome of changes in political activism. The regional analysis provides area studies experts a broad view of succession in regional countries vis-a-vis one another.

There are also disadvantages to using the nested design. One consequence of a multi-level investigation is the challenge of defining and applying a singular concept of both the independent and dependent variables at the various levels.

Global comparative analysis requires a minimal definition of leader succession used to identify the occurrence of an event in dichotomous fashion. For a given unit of time, either a leadership change happened, or it did not happen. We can include other measures to help define the event, particularly in terms of the mode of transition, but the concept of succession is abstracted from its substantive content – its eventfulness – at this higher level of abstraction. Conceptually, succession in a quantitative study of a large number of cases is a characteristic of a state in a given year marking the occasion of a singular event. Alternatively, explored at the level of an individual case, succession is not a singular event but a process involving many individual events that are the result of decisions, actions, responses, and embedded in a particular context.

The remainder of the introduction briefly addresses each level of analysis in turn, followed by a roadmap for the remainder of the dissertation.

1.3.1. Global

In *Autocracy*, Gordon Tullock (1987) provided a core text on authoritarianism (with significant attention paid to the issue of succession) based on "anecdotal evidence," writing in 1987 that "there is little empirical research in this book." He continued that this was not because of an aversion to empirical research of course, "but because there is relatively little such research." As he put it, "The basic problem here is the absence of data. By this I do not mean that history does not tell us a great deal about a very large number of autocracies, but that mining of this immense historical record to produce internally coherent statistical series has not been carried out" (x-xi).

We no longer suffer from that problem today. A number of data collection projects contribute information about authoritarian regimes and their leaders that can be leveraged for the quantitative analysis of a large number of cases. The underlying question for these projects is not an easy one - In terms of political institutions, how do we codify the world? The fundamental distinction between democracy and dictatorship is codified in this binary fashion at the country-year level by Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, and Przeworski (1996) and updated by the same group of scholars in 2000 (M. E. Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, & Przeworski, 2000). Moving beyond the traditional treatment of dictatorship as a residual category (non-democracy), scholars made it the object of their scrutiny. They distinguished between different kinds of authoritarianism based on theoretically-informed typologies. Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2009) established as an organizing principle the "characteristics of inner sanctums" where government decisions are made and potential rivals can be monitored. The result was a tripartite categorization of dictatorial leaders according to the nature of these small bodies of elites that surround the leader: monarchs, military dictators, and civilian dictators. Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) disaggregate autocracy according to an alternative organizing principle. For them, the defining characteristic is "control over access to power and influence rather than formal institutions," resulting in a typology of personalist, single-party, military, and monarchic regimes, as well as hybrids combining characteristics of multiple categories. Numerous other datasets have drawn on these distinctions and others for the purpose of empirical study. Hadenius and Teorell (2007) recognize the pervasiveness of electoral authoritarianism and the heterogeneity of these regimes, distinguishing multiparty,

one-party, and no-party forms of electoral authoritarianism alongside dynastic and military regimes.

We also have systematic data on leaders themselves. Most notably, the relatively new ARCHIGOS dataset enumerates the rulers of all states from 1875-2015, the means by which they came to power and left it, as well as a range of personal characteristics (Henk E. Goemans, Gleditsch, & Chiozza, 2009). Svolik (2012) also compiled data on authoritarian regimes and their leaders, differentiating between nominal leaders (heads of state) and executive leaders with primary decisionmaking power. All told, the lack of data identified by Tullock as an impediment to research on authoritarianism is no longer a significant problem.

The obvious result of these data-related developments is that opportunities are now abundant for more general inquiries related to autocratic leaders and the regimes they head. I use these data to explore the succession-contention relationship cross-nationally since 1946. This quantitative analysis, global in scope, is more than a brush-clearing exercise. Multiple hypotheses are investigated to understand under what conditions leadership change is likely to produce contentious political activism, unrest, and instability. Specifically, I investigate institutional characteristics of the regime and the succession itself to make probabilistic statements about these outcomes. Are new leaders more likely to experience dissident political behavior than more seasoned leaders? Do periods of leader turnover systematically differ from non-transitional periods in the amount of contentious dissent they experience? To what extent does the existence of formal succession procedures mitigate the risk? Are some types of authoritarian regimes more vulnerable to post-succession contention than others? The cross-national quantitative analysis of leader succession provides answers to these questions.

1.3.2. Focus on Middle East

The theoretical arguments made in this dissertation are open to empirical scrutiny across the globe, and I expose them to such a cross-national test using quantitative methods. However, a focus on Middle Eastern cases is especially constructive because: (1) the region provides significant fodder for studying political activism during succession periods in non-democratic regimes, (2) the region's authoritarian character is built primarily on weak states with dominant leaders where succession is likely to be particularly impactful, and (3) political activism in the region is getting renewed attention after a long history of blunt approaches or outright neglect. Each is discussed briefly below. By 'zooming in' on this region and particular cases within it, the theoretical, probabilistic, and highly abstract impact of a succession on contentious activism is rendered palpable.

The first reason for focusing on the Middle East is that the region provides numerous cases for studying leadership change in non-democratic regimes marked by long-term incumbency. Contemporary Arab governments, both monarchies and the nominal republics, have shown a distinctive ability to maintain power. For decades prior to the mass uprisings and revolutions since December 2010 collectively called the "Arab Spring" or "Arab Awakening," authoritarian leaders in the Arab world generally left office when they met their natural deaths. This longevity of leadership meant stability at the top that contrasted sharply with the staccatoed leadership of the post-World War II Middle East. The preponderance of coups, assassinations, and other irregular turnovers that marked the middle decades of the twentieth century gave way to consolidated regimes and long-term leadership.

In more recent decades, state power across the region has not reflected the 'for the taking' vulnerability that immediately followed the post-independence period. Writing prospectively on succession politics in Palestine, Glenn Robinson (Robinson, 2000) notes that "If anything, the contemporary Arab World has been marked by too much political stability at the top, not too little." Robinson's denouncement of this abundance of political stability may be surprising to observers who value the constancy of Arab leadership over the political uncertainty and upheaval of the period after WWII and the turbulence of today. Nonetheless, his argument points to the significance of transitions at the top as a generation of leaders have now ceded authority to a new set of presidents and monarchs. In the decade prior to the uprisings across the Arab world in 2010 and after, the Middle East experienced several leadership changes that provide fertile ground for analyzing succession in these contexts (see Table 1.1). The various forms of volatility that characterize the region post-2010 only reinforce the need to bring into more central focus the role of activists, dissidents, and other opposition actors.

Of course, the wave of uprisings across the Arab world has taken a handful of presidential casualties. The set of deposed leaders - Ben Ali, Mubarak, Saleh, Qaddhafi - brought down by popular revolution was unimaginable to many activists, analysts, and academics; but it was imaginable to enough of them for popular mobilization to shake the region. It remains an open question as to whether these events mark a new era in the terms and tenures of Arab presidents. However, as both new and old leaders learn from these events and adjust to new realities, it would be presumptuous to assume that this lapse in long-term incumbency of "Arab leaders for life" is a new rule as opposed to a fleeting exception.

Table 1.1: Arab Leaders and Tenure (Pre-2010)				
Country	Title	Head of State	Born	In Power
Algeria	President	Abdelaziz Bouteflika	1937	1999
Bahrain	King	Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa	1949	1999
Egypt	President	Mohammed Hosni Mubarak*	1928	1981
Iraq	President	Jalal Talabani**	1933	2005
Jordan	King	Abdullah II	1962	1999
Kuwait	Amir	Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah	1929	2006
Lebanon	President	Emile Lahoud**	1936	1998
Libya	-	Muammar al-Qadhafi*	1942	1969
Morocco	King	Mohammad VI	1963	1999
Oman	Sultan	Qaboos bin Said al-Said	1940	1970
PNA	President	Mahmoud Abbas	1935	2005
Qatar	Amir	Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani**	1950	1995
Saudi Arabia	King	Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud**	1924	1996
Sudan	President	Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir	1944	1989
Syria	President	Bashar al-Asad	1966	2000
Tunisia	President	Zine El Abidine Ben Ali*	1936	1987
UAE	President	Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nuhayyan	1948	2004
Yemen	President	Ali Abdullah Saleh*	1942	1978/1990

* Leader has been removed from power in an 'irregular' manner through revolt or revolution.

** Leader is no longer incumbent due to 'regular' exit from power via retirement or natural death.

Consequently, it remains important to analyze the ways that leaders pass power to their successors and how this affects domestic politics.

Second, in the patrimonial and neopatrimonial regimes common in Arab states, authority is centralized in the leader to a high degree. Patrimonialism and its contemporary variants refer to political systems undergirded by the procurement of loyalty and allegiance through the distribution of state resources that are administered by leaders. Whether the regimes typify Max Weber's (1978, p. 231) definition of patrimonialism in which "traditional domination develops an administrative and military force which are purely instruments of the master," or

co-exist with or are subject to constraints of formal institutions and other elites (Stacher, 2011), the leader both wields and represents enormous power. As has been outlined in previous work on contentious politics in the Middle East, this fact has significant implications for political activism and dissent. As Diane Singerman (2004) notes, "when considering the possible emergence of social movements and oppositional politics, it must be remembered that the political climate throughout the Middle East offers extensive power and authority to *anyone* who occupies the ruler's office, whether a king, shaykh, amir, or president…" The point is not to disregard or downplay the role of other "politically relevant elites" (Perthes, 2004a) who play an important role politically. Instead, Middle Eastern cases distinctively highlight the political and symbolic power of the leader in these contexts and the consequent importance of leader change.

Third, a focus on Middle East contexts contributes to the important effort to counter crude approaches to the study of political activism and state-society relations in the region. Until very recently, the Middle East received inadequate attention from scholars of social movements and contentious politics, contributing to underdeveloped perspectives on state-society relations. Authoritarian governments suppressed such activity so strongly while incorporating the trappings of democracy that researchers trained their attention on institutional forms of political participation instead. Consequently, contentious political activism has received short shrift in studies of political participation in the region. All the while, protests, demonstrations, strikes, marches, sit-ins, and other forms of contentious activism existed to varying degrees across societies and over time. According to Beinin and Vairel, "Many discussions of Middle Eastern political participation are based on a binary categorization focusing on elections and riots – 'hot' political

moments with opposing logics and legitimations, but both directly related to the state. This leads to understanding Middle Eastern politics through the prism of 'a culture of rioting' (Badie 1992) or 'a culture of deference' (Hopkins 1995). Until recently… contentious politics aroused little interest" (Beinin & Vairel, 2011). An investigation of the potential for succession to affect contention, and therefore the relationship between government and society, avoids the bias of these contrasting logics. Moreover, it avoids the widespread practice in social movement studies of picking cases of heightened mobilization and thereby selecting on the dependent variable.

Applied to succession politics in the region, this binary focus provides little insight. Either society is generally impotent and has no role in Arab succession politics, or the riotous "Arab street" or "ugly movements" of Islamic activists will rise up to threaten authoritarian stability (Beinin & Vairel, 2011; Tarrow, 1998). These two contrastive images are simply not sensitive enough to accommodate the real, even if not revolutionary, contentious mobilization in seemingly stable autocratic contexts. Such contention that cannot be simply reduced to spontaneous street rioting does sometimes accompany succession episodes. The largely unanticipated events of the "Arab Spring" should remind all observers to be perceptive of political expression, activism, dissent, and mobilization in spite of perceived authoritarian stability. Indeed, the equation yielding authoritarian persistence in the region still holds but for one otherwise-discounted factor: the mobilizational capacity of political activists and other non-state actors (Bellin, 2012). Given the ongoing turbulence in the region, including coups and revolutions and civil wars, it would be unfortunate if these events overshadowed less dramatic and non-revolutionary forms of contention. After all, these less dramatic forms of

opposition activity were the norm prior to the uprisings and, with exceptions, are again today as regimes reestablish the institutions and practices of suppressing dissent.

1.3.3. Case Selection

Beyond the more general hypothesis testing of a "succession effect" at a global level, I focus on cases of succession in Jordan (1999) and Syria (2000). These case studies allow me to ground the theory in specific examples of succession. The case studies illustrate the ways in which a seemingly elite-level event is rendered public with significant effects on societal perceptions and behavior. The case studies are informed by archival research, interviews, content analysis of media, and secondary source research during fieldwork in Jordan and Syria. By emphasizing contextual factors in Jordanian and Syrian leader transitions, the ways in which succession influences (counterhegemonic) interpretation of reality and contentious behavior are made more concrete.

Studies of the political transitions associated with leadership changes in each country could, by themselves, constitute entire dissertations. Prior studies examine succession politics and political development under transitional leaders in both Jordan and Syria (Billingsley, 2010; Lesch, 2005; Ryan, 2002; Satloff, 1994; Stacher, 2011; Ziadeh, 2013; Zisser, 2007). Naturally, the identity of the leader - that is, his unique and individual characteristics, personality traits, and experience - plays an important role in each of these studies. They constitute some of the best knowledge we have on leadership change in these countries. However, there is room to supplement this analysis with research that shifts the focus of succession away from the individual leader. In the country-specific chapters of this dissertation, I

contribute to this conversation by assessing how these transitions affect the claims-making activity of societal actors toward the government. Consequently, I build on the studies of leadership transition and political development in Jordan and Syria through an explicit focus on how new leaders impact the inclinations of activists to express grievances and demands.

How does an autocratic regime so highly personalized in political discourse navigate the reality of succession? What effect does it have on the populace, particularly those seeking to make demands on government, oppose the established order, and change the status quo? How does a new leader draw on his predecessor for legitimacy while at the same time step out of his shadow? And how does this effort influence the perceptions of authority among political activists and subordinate masses?

The chapters on Jordan and Syria tell a story about state-society interaction when the central figure of the state - as both executive and as symbol - is in transition. They do not, therefore, attempt to provide a comprehensive contemporary history of political activism and contentious politics in these cases. Instead, the Jordanian and Syrian cases highlight the potential for activists to perceive an apparent opportunity to assert demands, claims, and grievances as a new leader attempts to connect with citizens and foster legitimacy.

1.3.3.1. Jordan

In 1999, Jordan lost its reigning monarch, King Hussein, who led the Hashemite Kingdom for 47 years through profound political development. His son and successor, Abdullah II, has led the country into the 21st century amid dynamic changes in the region. The potential impact of succession on the relationship

between the state and Jordanian society has not escaped observers of Jordan's politics. Curtis Ryan's (2002) study of Jordanian politics in the 1990s culminates with the succession, on which he writes that "Hussein's death marked the end of an era in some respects, and the beginning of a major transition in the kingdom" (p.1). Marc Lynch (1999) prefaces his important monograph on the Jordanian public sphere noting the social and political significance of succession and speculating over its consequences:

> In the eyes of many observers, [King Hussein's] passing marked not only the end of an era, but potentially also the end of Jordan. Viewing Jordanian politics through the prism of one extraordinary man, they could not envision a Jordan without him… The passing of Hussein from the scene and the ascension to the throne of his son, Abdullah, offers both an opportunity and a danger for the Jordanian public… An inexperienced King, dependent on external supporters and most comfortable with military interests, might move to repress contrary public opinion and reassure his foreign patrons. On the other hand, Abdullah could choose to engage with the Jordanian public sphere, seeking to secure legitimacy, shared identity, and popular support through public deliberation.

Lynch is right, but writing the book (aside from the preface) before the death of King Hussein meant that he could only speculate about the kingdom with Abdullah at the helm. So while these critical questions of succession's influence on state-society relations in Jordan were beyond the scope of these important works, they nonetheless succeed in being "of use to those who now ponder them" (Lynch, 1999, pp. ix-x) as I do in this dissertation. Ryan and Lynch highlight the 1999 succession in Jordan as a momentous event with significant consequences for the kingdom's political future.

They were not alone. Other Jordan observers and analysts wrote about "Abdullah's little revolution in Jordan" where a crackdown on Hamas would

subdue opposition politics in the kingdom.[2] In terms of larger political and economic trajectories, the transition to new leadership "led to a period of extreme political uncertainty in Jordan [with] some confusion over which direction 'Abdullah II would take the Kingdom…" (Greenwood, 2003). Uncertainty was only exacerbated by the fact that Abdullah ascended the throne as a seeming 11th hour change from the long-anticipated succession of Prince Hassan, King Hussein's brother. The shift, in effect, "contributed to a partial reshaping and redefining of the pace and direction" of Jordan's larger political transition. A few have even investigated the politics of succession directly, specifically as it pertains to legitimization of the king's rule in the kingdom (Schlumberger & Bank, 2002) and the simultaneous continuity and change that he represents (Andoni, 2000).

A critical void exists, however, in our knowledge about the effects of succession on the relationship between the state and societal actors in the kingdom. To follow the "Lion of Jordan" would be no easy task. But the question is not only "How does one succeed a leader who became synonymous with the state?" but also "How does the process of doing so affect those who might ask for things from it or seek to change it?"

The historical context of the dynastic transition in Jordan was also remarkable. Internal social tensions over national identity, notably between "East Bank" Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin; a decade-long, top-down, economic and political liberalization project that stopped short of expectations for most Jordanians; political realignments including a roundly detested peace treaty with Israel; boycotted elections in 1997 and postponed elections in 2000; the ousting

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[2] "Abdullah's Little Revolution in Jordan," *Economist,* October 16, 1999

of Hamas leaders from the Kingdom in 1999; all of these add to the political dynamics of this critical period.

Taking this context into account, does a change in the person who occupies the throne influence the way societal actors make claims on the government? By answering this question in the Jordanian context, this case study contributes to theory-building on the more general question of whether and how leadership change affects contentious political activism. The Jordanian case study illustrates via quantitative events data obtained through content analysis that contentious activism significantly differed between the pre- and post-succession periods. Beyond this basic finding, however, is the important task of establishing *how* succession is linked to societal activism.

I argue that two factors link the succession to political activism in the Jordanian case: (1) perceptions of opportunities for activism that are largely induced by the symbolic and rhetorical action of new leaders seeking legitimacy, and (2) policy initiatives of new leaders that affect the collective interests of societal groups. Both of these operate in a broader context of political uncertainty over the current and future boundaries of societal action and expression.

First, the succession is a crucial period for a new leader to convey a compelling claim to authority and attractive future vision. Cultural initiatives, often referencing historical and national symbols, convey messages about state-society relations. These messages often reaffirm national unity, profess government legitimacy, and illustrate a compelling national vision. In short, new leaders seek to influence public discourse during the transition period to garner positive sentiments about themselves and their political program. How do public

representations of the nation serve to articulate these messages during the succession period?

Initiatives championed by King Abdullah II in his first years as monarch like *Jordan First* and *We Are All Jordan* and the *National Agenda* of 2005 are some of the products of this effort. These initiatives convey important messages related to the state-society relationship and remain focal points for official rhetoric today. *Jordan First*, for example, endeavors to "define a new social accord between Jordanians… and reformulates the state-individual relationship" ("Jordan First,"). *The National Agenda* was introduced by King Abdullah II in 2005 and initially defined as a continuation of reform efforts of the 1980s and 1990s. The *We Are All Jordan* initiative includes a 'youth commission', providing an opportunity to explore the ways Jordanian history is discussed by and presented to young people. The monarchy-sponsored 2004 *Amman Message* document went so far as to define who is Muslim and what is 'true' Islam, both drawing on and seeking to reinforce King Abdullah's religious legitimacy.

These initiatives, like many forms of autocratic liberalization, are employed strategically during periods of crisis to shore up support or mitigate the threat of opposition. However, these decisions produce openings for people to act in dissenting ways, as they perceive openings for political expression created by the liberalization rhetoric of the new leader.

Second, a new leader often faces an opportunity to enact new policy initiatives while experiencing latitude to act. As El-Said (2002) notes of the 'Honeymoon Period' after Abdullah's ascension to the throne, the government "seemed capable of inaugurating bold economic measures without being handicapped by past compromises or history of previously failed policies." Abdullah

proved to be committed to market-oriented economic reform at a fast pace, establishing organizations like the Economic Cooperation Council (ECC) and Young Entrepreneurs Association (YEA) to augment these efforts. However, these changes would affect the composition of economic interests in Jordanian society by upending some of the traditional socio-economic structures. These are conditions ripe for heightened activism and assertive opposition as new leadership spelled policy changes affecting the interests of different segments of Jordanian society.

1.3.3.2. Syria

Hafiz al-Asad, more than any other individual, shaped the political and social contours of contemporary Syria. Not only was he the topmost political decisionmaker, but he simultaneously molded the social structure of Syria (Leverett, 2005, p. 225). In the two decades after Syrian independence, continual coup attempts, some successful, fostered instability and uncertainty in Syrian politics. That would change with Hafiz al-Asad's Corrective Revolution (*al-thawra al-tashihiyya*) in 1970, after which he would epitomize stable leadership – though not without political crises – as he held the presidency for the next thirty years until his death in 2000.

Asad's absolute authority in Syria and his permanence in office contributed to a degree of "normalization" in the government-opposition relationship insofar as a standard for acceptable means of challenging the government – and the consequences of deviation from this standard – had emerged. The death of the ruler may signify the demise of such constancy, reducing the amount of certainty about the relationship between the regime and society. As Eyal Zisser explains, "If the secret of Syria's success and viability during the preceding 30 years lay in the figure

of Asad personally, as was widely thought, his departure presumably freed the restraints holding back a renewal of the struggle over Syria which in the past had nearly brought about the collapse of the state" (Zisser, 2007, pp. 15-16).

As Hafiz al-Asad aged, and particularly after his eldest son and likely successor, Basil, died suddenly in a car accident in 1994, conflicting ideas were abundant about what a post-Hafiz al-Asad Syria would look like. In the wake of Basil's death, the plan for succession shifted quickly to Bashar. With the ageing of Hafiz al-Asad, the impending succession was already becoming an event with great political and social meaning. It was the nexus at which regime cohesion and policy orientation would be reconstituted in a new individual. The shock of Basil's death only propelled the issue in the public mind. The question of succession became a focal point in the country, and the government quickly began portraying Bashar as the logical next choice. As Volker Perthes describes, "The regime's propaganda machine [attempted] not only to transfigure and idealize Basil as the embodiment of all the good qualities of Arab youth, but also to put… Bashar in Basil's place" (Perthes, 1995, p. 269).

Hafiz al-Asad's legacy, and the cult of personality created around him, compounded the problem of succeeding the absolute ruler. Bashar was bound to confront the imposing persona of the "national father" in the minds and actions of the Syrian public. As Lisa Wedeen expounds in *Ambiguities of Domination*, the public space was saturated with the cult of personality around Hafiz al-Asad through ubiquitous references to the "forever leader" and compulsory, participatory spectacles. The symbolic power of the cult was "disciplinary," regulating the thoughts, discourse, and actions of society. Through the leader-centered cultural project, the symbolic arena served as a mechanism for creating complicity and

obedience among a Syrian public acting "as if" it unquestioningly revered the infallible leadership of Hafiz al-Asad (Wedeen, 1999, p. 35).

Wedeen argues that the cult operated to decrease the need for costly and destabilizing government repression. She also contends, however, that the cultural project to deify the leader was powerful and effective not because people believed it, but because they were obliged to act "as if" they did. Such an influential part of Syrian daily life under authoritarianism is not easily reversed or dismantled. Bashar would no doubt look to draw on his father's legacy to legitimize his authority. At the same time, however, he would need to create his own basis for power through appeals to the public's calls for economic and political reform. The young, new leader would need to construct a claim to power that balanced the historical legacy of his father and the promise of his own vision for a new future.

Much of the uncertainty immediately before and after the death of Hafez al-Asad surrounding Syria's political future therefore centered on the unknowns of how Bashar would lead. Would he be a bold economic and political reformer? Would he try to mimic his father's leadership style and trajectory? Would he even be capable of holding power with the many political, economic, and social challenges facing Syria at the turn of the century? Flynt Leverett (2005) describes these competing images of the new leader as "Bashar as closet reformer," "Bashar as Loyal Son," and "Bashar as Neophyte" respectively (p. 19-20).

While the dissertation will take a more nuanced approach to state-society relations, the basic distinction between supporters of the status quo on the one hand, and the reformist trend on the other, largely conditioned the lines along which Bashar would need to present his leadership and make his claim to authority. Indeed, the proponents of the status quo and the increasingly active reformists in

society would represent the two poles that Bashar would attempt to balance in the construction of his public image. As Alan George contends, Bashar had to "wrestle with the demand for restraint from his regime's conservatives and with the clamour for reform from the people, and it suggests that he will try to steer a middle road…" (A. George, 2003, p. xi). As a result, Bashar and his new government attempted to construct a particular vision for the future under his leadership that would balance ideas of continuity and change.

These same sentiments of uncertainty, and the way that this uncertainty shaped the calculations of political actors in society, was conveyed to me on numerous occasions in interviews in Syria in 2008. As Hafez al-Asad's health got worse and succession was imminent, and more so after the succession, various political activities did emerge to advocate political, social, and economic reform. Together, these activities would be collectively called the Damascus Spring – a period of increased political activity calling for various institutional reforms and civil and political rights.

The combination of the elder Asad's final sentiments amid ailing health and the early pronouncements by Bashar provided motivation for the reformist challengers in society. As a former high-ranking figure of the Syrian Human Rights Organization told me in an interview, the younger Asad's inaugural address gave great hope to these activists that change was on the near horizon. In the address, Asad affirmed the need for *infitah* (opening), pluralism, and transparency. He professed that these changes were not only preferred, but necessary for future progress. Though not naive to the difference between rhetoric and tangible changes in the economic and political environment, the new leader advocated "forward

thinking" about how to organize civil society and a more open political environment.[3]

1.4. Roadmap

Chapter Two lays the theoretical groundwork for the dissertation in the context of existing research that informs it. I deconstruct the concept of succession, an important exercise for operationalizing the term for the subsequent empirical analyses. Reviewing the existing literature provides a couple of key takeaways. First, it shows that prior research appreciates leadership change as an object of explanation (something to be explained), but not one of causation (something that causes). That is, theoretical and empirical analysis views this event as an outcome to be described or explained without sufficient consideration of its causal potential. Second, leadership change is generally investigated as an elite-level event; *dramatis personae* are to be found exclusively among incumbents, successors, and elite challengers in the context of high-level interactions and state institutions.

In response, I argue in Chapter Three that succession should be understood as a relational event involving both government and society. This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for the subsequent empirical analyses of a connection between succession and contention. Toward this end, a brief historiographical discussion seeks to differentiate between the succession event as 1) an independent variable that bifurcates history into incumbent and successor periods, and 2) a contextualized socio-political process. These alternative conceptualizations of leadership change inform the ways I examine the "succession effect" on different levels (cross-nationally and within-case) and the methods used to do so. I then

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[3] Interview with BI

present multiple causal pathways that explain the hypothesized relationship between leader transitions and increased levels of political activism and mobilization.

The remainder of Chapter Three presents the methodologies involved in this empirical investigation. Each of the empirical chapters of this dissertation is a study of events. However, the means used to study events are diverse and informed by the way that "event" is conceptualized. Some researchers provide in-depth understanding of significant events through narrative description of these moments in history. They emphasize the context and contingency of "critical junctures" deemed to have an important role in changing status quo realities. Other researchers emphasize the study of all events through aggregation and quantitative analysis. These researchers analyze temporal and spatial trends based on series of events, allowing them to discern patterns and trajectories that might otherwise go overlooked. This distinction is outlined by Tarrow (1999), who refers to these approaches as "eventful histories" and "event histories" respectively, and advocates for research that synthesizes them. I show how I have used this suggestion to design a multi-method study of leadership change and contentious activism.

Chapter Four provides a global test of the effect of leadership change on domestic discord on all regimes since 1950. Using multivariate analysis of time series cross sectional data on contentious political events and leader turnover, this analysis provides general findings and expectations about the effect of leadership change on contention. The analysis emphasizes the mediating role of political institutions. In particular, I assert and test hypotheses related to the type of succession, the presence of procedures for selecting a successor, and the institutional configuration of authoritarian regimes.

Chapters Five and Six present case studies of two dynastic successions in the Middle East. The first investigates the 1999 monarchic succession in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from King Hussein bin Talal to his eldest son, King Abdullah bin Hussein. Chapter Six examines the 2000 hereditary succession in the Syrian Arab Republic from Hafiz al-Asad to his son Bashar al-Asad. Process-tracing methods, described in greater detail in Chapter 3, are used to build theory from these two cases. In particular, the cases reveal causal mechanisms that operate within these cases but may also have more generalizable explanatory value.

Concluding the dissertation, Chapter Seven discusses the implications of this research for political science and other areas of scholarship. It also highlights the potential for future research based on the findings of the dissertation.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the literature on leadership succession in authoritarian regimes. General theoretical contributions are emphasized over particulars of individual cases. My intention is to outline the various orientations toward researching leadership change in non-democratic settings, and to outline a debate regarding the causal influence of leader successions. Taking stock of the extant knowledge on the topic reveals an inclination toward describing and explaining successions as opposed to scrutinizing the ways that this event can affect politics. Moreover, studies following the latter orientation disagree over whether and to what extent leader succession affects political processes and outcomes. Finally, I review the literature specific to leadership change in the Middle East, ultimately showing that research on succession in the region maps onto the literature on authoritarian succession more generally.

2.1. The Concept of Succession

There is some ambiguity about the concept of succession. One source of such ambiguity results from the various political transitions to which the term succession can refer. As Peter Calvert's (1987) definition makes clear, "Political succession is, in the broad sense of the phrase, the way in which political power

passes, or is transferred, from one individual, government or regime to another."
A minimalist definition like this one draws attention to the central role of transition
in which power is concurrently lost and gained. The single condition that there is
a transfer of power is necessary and sufficient for categorizing an occurrence of
succession. This condition, however, results in an abstract definition that requires
significant refinement to be useful for comparative analysis. Because succession can
allude to a wide range of political transitions, it requires greater precision in how
the term is used in different contexts.

The distinction in Calvert's definition of succession between regimes,
governments, and individuals offers an initial way to clarify the concept. These
three types of succession are not mutually exclusive and often occur in tandem,
but isolating them conceptually nonetheless helps to increase analytical precision.
First, the most transformational change is regime succession. Munck (2001) defines
a regime as "the choice of procedures that regulate access to state power," or more
simply a system of governance. Studies of regime transition therefore concentrate
on the move from one system of governance to another, of which scholars have
traditionally focused on processes of democratization.[4] Thus, the structures of
government institutions that mediate access to power are the center of the
transition.

Second, the relationship between types of governance and types of
succession is also apparent. Democracies include some sort of electoral succession,
monarchies have procedures for hereditary succession (most often primogeniture),
and autocracies have appointed successors by the previous ruler or a set of political,

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[4] Thankfully, the 'transitions paradigm' has been sufficiently critiqued by Carothers (2002) and
many others, producing more recent bodies of scholarship on "false starts" in democratization
processes, authoritarian liberalism, electoral authoritarianism, and hybrid regimes.

military, and/or religious elites (e.g. Wong & Yongnian, 2002). While regime successions incorporate fundamental changes in the structure of power-granting institutions, government successions indicate a change in the particular political unit — composed as it is of individuals — that wields the resources of the state (whether party, coalition, family, or otherwise). The minimalist definition allows for initial identification of cases, and focusing on transitions of individual leadership effectively contributes to delimiting and selecting cases for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Finally, two characteristics of leader turnover contribute to categorization. First, the catalyst of the leader turnover is a significant attribute of the transition itself. The incumbent leader may lose power for any number of reasons. Retirement or electoral defeat are more benign modes of ouster, while rebellions and coups represent more coercive origins of leader change.[5] The former can be considered 'regular' transfers of power, while the latter are examples of 'irregular' transfers. Here, it is the conditions that actuate a transfer of power that are important. The incumbent's mode of *exit* (as opposed to the successor's mode of entry or the procedures that define this process) is therefore the first characteristic of leader transfer.

The second characteristic speaks specifically to process — the *how* of power transfer. Similar to the dichotomy between planned and unplanned succession in management studies, Govea and Holm (1998) differentiate between regulated and unregulated succession to further distinguish among cases. Their definitions of these types of succession rely on the presence of institutional rules and force as

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[5] There are many other modes of leader exit, to be sure, and these are considered in the empirical analysis in Chapter 4.

important factors in the succession process. These authors argue that regulated successions occur when transition takes place according to a set of pre-established rules, or when the new leader is the product of a bargaining process of "consensus-building among elite groups," thereby legitimizing the process. Regular succession is therefore one in which the incumbent is not forcibly removed. The autocrat "may live out his term in office, or he may retire peacefully (e.g. voluntarily or when his term expires)" (Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2004, p. 134). Unregulated successions, by contrast, are "self-justificatory" and result solely from "the tactical military superiority of the new government against its opponents" in a competitive situation (Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2004). Such a distinction intuitively contrasts the politics of coercion versus consultation during the period of turnover. Here, a successor's *entry* to power is the subject of inquiry.

This discussion yields greater conceptual clarity of the object of inquiry. It highlights the role of leader transitions, differentiating them from government and regime changes. It also identifies characteristics of the transition that contribute to categorizing leader turnovers. Regular successions follow processes in which governing authority shifts hands from an incumbent head of state to a new one according to agreed-upon rules and procedures for exit and entry. Irregular successions follow a coercive logic that both forces an incumbent from power and establishes a new leader in its stead. Yet, despite the conceptual refinement attempted thus far, the definition does not lend itself to causal explanation. The parsimony of such a minimalist definition obscures the contextual, diachronic processes of consolidating power and legitimizing authority in different political systems. With a myopic focus on elites, it provides little analytical leverage for

studying the ongoing relationship between governments and societies in different contexts.

2.2. Explaining Succession

Comparative political scientists have directed significant attention toward regime transitions, but have been far less interested in the more frequent occurrence of leadership turnover within an enduring political system (Betts & Huntington, 1985/86; Carothers, 2002; Hale, 2005). This scholarly bias is understandable as regime change represents a fundamental shift in the ways that polities are governed, a change in the rules of the game. Leader changes should not be discounted, however, especially in nondemocratic contexts in which leaders generally face fewer constraints on their decisionmaking than in democratic ones. Among comparative studies of autocratic succession, a large body of literature has developed around the ways political outcomes are affected by coercion-induced transitions like coups (J. Powell, 2012; J. M. Powell & Thyne, 2011), assassinations (Iqbal & Zorn, 2008; Jones & Olken, 2009), and revolutions (Carter, Bernhard, & Palmer, 2012; J. Colgan, 2012; J. D. Colgan, 2013; Goldstone, Gurr, & Moshiri, 1991; Skocpol, 1994). Systematic investigations of the more common transfers of power that occur within an enduring, autocratic political system are far less common, however. Political successions are not always the dramatic events that coups, assassinations, or revolutions are. Considering the ubiquity and inevitability of leadership succession, this deficiency in comparative studies of non-democratic succession is troubling.

More often than not, succession does not take place by revolutionary or coercive means. From 1875-2004, leaders have exited power through regular means

or non-violent death in office in 77 percent of all cases.[6] Even limited to non-democratic regimes, regular succession accounts for a 56 percent majority of the 935 leader changes in countries scoring less than zero on the polity scale for the year the succession took place.[7] Nonetheless, these more recurrent forms of 'regular' succession, or those in which an incumbent autocrat remains in power until death or voluntary retirement (Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2004), have received far less attention and little systematic investigation. Frequency does not translate to importance, but omitting the more prevalent forms of succession from analysis overlooks potentially important political developments.

Some scholars have begun to investigate leader turnover broadly, agnostic in the scope of analysis to the manner in which a leader is removed from power. These studies consider more commonplace "regular" transfers of power alongside those brought about through dramatic events or extra-legal sources of transition. With leadership change as a common theme, these studies are diverse, addressing such issues as the duration of leadership tenure and survival (Bienen & Van de Walle, 1991; Bueno de Mesquita, 2003; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007; Svolik, 2009), the effects of national institutions and external shocks on succession stability (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011; Frantz & Stein, 2012; Govea & Holm, 1998; Londregan, Bienen, & van de Walle, 1995), the development of practices and procedures surrounding succession (Billingsley, 2010; Brownlee, 2007; Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2002; Schedler, 2006), and the influence of government elites in the process

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[6] Figure calculated using ARCHIGOS dataset and tabulating the frequencies of variable exit_tv and combining category 1 (regular exit = 68.59%), category 2 (died of natural causes = 6.33%), and category 2.1 (retired due to ill health = 2.12%; n = 2,776).

[7] Figure calculated using same method as above while simultaneously limiting the cases to those for which the polity score for a given country is less than zero in the year of the succession. Looking solely at these cases, regular exit accounted for 45% of cases, 10% died of natural causes, and 1.5% retired due to ill health (n=935).

of leader selection (Stacher, 2011). This important scholarship shares the perspective that leadership change is a significant event in autocratic regimes, but also that the fundamental objects of explanation are 1) the process of how a leader is selected, and 2) the process of how power is transferred. The first seeks to understand why some leaders take power over others in what is often a competitive environment. The second investigates the procedures by which executive powers owned by the incumbent are transferred to the successor. The attempt to describe or explain either of these processes establishes succession as the dependent variable.

As a discipline, however, we know very little about the *effects* of succession in non-democratic regimes. Not much has been done to respond to Valerie Bunce's observation thirty years ago that studies of succession generally "reduce succession to the status of dependent variable, a process that needs to be described and explained rather than one which acts on the political environment" (Bunce 1981, 14). It is remarkable that the importance so often attributed to leaders does not also translate into the event that brings them to power (and removes them from it).

Govea and Holm (1998) advance a similar critique of succession studies in comparative politics. In their research on African governments, they take issue with viewing "leadership change as part of a continuing parade of self-serving politicos. In this view, government turnover rarely produces significant policy change, much less the kind of change that the transition literature has covered. The implication is that there is no point to studying succession." The authors advocate a compelling alternative view, arguing that successions are events with significant political implications.

> Political successions provide one of the only opportunities for policy and structural changes. With few opportunities for policy debates, a change in government leadership allows a

window during which policies and objectives come into question. To overlook successions because of the self-centered motives of the players (which makes an assumption about motivations that cannot ultimately be verified) is to miss key events in the evolution of African polities. (Govea & Holm, 1998)

The distinction in these views follows different understandings of leadership change in politics. Counter to the notion that successions merely an outcome of elite politicking, leader transitions also play on the political environment. They influence political processes, policies, and behavior. As such, it welcomes empirical scrutiny beyond what it has received to date.

From a governmental perspective, succession is a set of actions throughout a transitional period to establish the new leadership and endow it with legitimacy. Or as Calvert (1987) puts it, succession "implies not only the acceptance or act of choice of a successor, but a series of decisions to implement that choice." These decisions consistently include changing personnel among the political and military elite to remove possible challengers to the incumbent's preferred or appointed successor. But leaders' efforts to generate legitimacy and make a compelling claim to authentic leadership must go beyond organizational restructuring. Successors must reconstruct relationships in the government *and* with the public as they assume office and the authority it confers to them. The construction of these relationships, between the principal and his agents and between the government and society, is a remarkable task for any incoming leader and fraught with challenges.

Importantly, this view invokes the roles of other actors in our analysis of the succession process. The new leader needs to consolidate power over the state apparatus, legitimize his position at the height of the political pyramid, and justify his symbolic role as national leader. Whereas leader selection in non-democracies

involves building an intra-elite coalition of supporters for a particular candidate, the justificatory process that follows succession features a more significant role for political opposition and societal actors and interests.

2.3. Succession Outcomes

A small but growing body of succession scholarship suggests the utility of an alternative perspective in which succession is understood as an "independent variable" and contingent event. This scholarship hypothesizes that succession facilitates policy changes in different kinds of organizations and regimes, but it yields conflicting conclusions regarding the extent of its impact on political outcomes. Despite the paucity of research in this vein, what does it tell us about the effects of leadership change? What are the focal areas and empirical findings in scholarship that has treated succession as a causal factor? In general, it emphasizes a few outcomes of interests: economic policy and performance, the propensity for international conflict, state repression, and regime transition. Each suggests that leadership change can have material impact on such outcomes.

For example, Bunce (1980, 1981) argues in multiple studies that leadership turnover is an important cause of policy innovation. The empirical support relies on measures of budgetary changes as an indicator of policy innovation. Cross-national and subnational empirical analysis shows that shifts in budgetary priorities, and therefore policy orientations, are strongly associated with the emergence of new leaders.[8] With quantitative data on leaders and national

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[8] Note that Bunce's work elicited a debate with numerous skeptical voices, questioning the conclusions on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Brunk and Minehart (1984) and Roeder (1985) are examples. Moreover, Cheibub (1998) finds no significant impact of leader change on states' imposed levels of taxation.

economies from 1945 to 2000, Jones and Olken (2005) find support for the thesis that leaders matter for economic and policy outcomes. They find that patterns of economic growth and changes in monetary policy follow leadership transitions in rather systematic fashion, and that the size of these changes is statistically and substantively significant. Importantly, institutional context is influential. The relationship only holds in autocratic regimes, especially those in which the leader has fewer constraints on their authority; economic growth in democracies is not associated with leadership transitions. Institutional context is influential.

The importance of institutional context is reinforced by Frantz and Stein (2012), who show that the presence of rules regulating leadership turnover has important implications for economic growth. Succession rules promote stability during the transition, allowing a leader to have a longer-term outlook and thereby encouraging economic policies that benefit the national as opposed to parochial economic interests. The authors also find that succession, by itself, does generate economic uncertainty. Growth rates decline significantly in succession years in authoritarian regimes, registering 3.6% less growth compared to years in which a succession does not occur.

Leaders are back at the forefront of international relations scholarship as well, where explanations of international conflict point to the causal effects of succession. Recent studies of state behavior focus heavily on the decisions of leaders and rely on the Downsian assumption that these leaders try to maximize their chances for staying in power to continue reaping the benefits associated with maintaining the position (Downs, 1957). The leader-centric orientation of this literature informs a variety of arguments connecting characteristics of leadership to international conflict. For example, studies show that leaders are more likely to

initiate conflict and be the target of aggression early in their tenures (Chiozza & Choi, 2003; Gelpi & Grieco, 2001). Others have shown that leader age is a significant predictor of conflict initiation and involvement; as leaders get older, conflict is more likely (M. Horowitz, McDermott, & Stam, 2005). Notably, however, the relationship is modified by the institutional context of leadership (regime type), a recurring theme by this point. In addition to finding support for the association between age and conflict, Bak and Palmer (2010) also show that the relationship is mediated by a leader's tenure. While the likelihood of being a target of aggression increases with leader age, this effect is most pronounced shortly after a leader takes office.

It is not only individual characteristics of leaders that influence conflict propensity. A strand of international relations literature holds that succession, particularly its impact on the amount of time a leader is in office, may be such a transformative factor in conflict behavior. Gaubatz (1991), Chiozza and Goemans (2003, 2004a, 2004b), Gelpi and Grieco (2001), and Wolford (2007) have each found that leaders are more likely to be engaged in conflict early in their tenures. The empirical evidence supports this claim from both sides, challenger and target, of conflict participation. New leaders tend to initiate conflict more than long-term incumbents (Chiozza & Choi, 2003, pp. 269-273; Chiozza & Goemans, 2004b; Gaubatz, 1991) and are also more likely to be targeted by challengers (Chiozza & Goemans, 2004a, p. 435; Gelpi & Grieco, 2001). Numerous studies by Chiozza and Goemans (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2011) suggest that unseasoned leaders are simultaneously on shaky ground domestically and prone to attack from external foes. The rational calculus of conflict initiation changes, however, according to a leader's expectations of transition and life after office. Leaders who anticipate

regular transitions are less likely to initiate because they have little to gain and much to lose from such an action. However, leaders who anticipate forcible removal from office and the associated personal costs are more likely to act aggressively. McGillivray and Smith (2008) use game theoretic reasoning to develop a "leader specific theory" of interstate cooperation. Among their multiple findings, they use experimental and quantitative evidence to argue that leader turnover increases the likelihood of cooperation between previously unfriendly governments. Jones and Olken (2005) also weigh in on the question of succession and conflict with contradictory results. They find no statistical evidence that international or civil conflict are associated with the death of an incumbent leader, though their analysis is limited to only those leaders who died in office as opposed to any regular succession (whether introduced by death, or a term limit, or a resignation, or otherwise).[9]

As a whole, this research provides suggestive evidence that leader turnover itself may significantly alter state policies and actions toward foes and challengers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ways that succession operates to influence international outcomes has implications for domestic politics as well. If relative weakness, or the perception of it by challengers, characterizes new leadership and serves as a compelling causal mechanism for international conflict, then it has implications for our expectations at the domestic level as well. Nonetheless, these explanations are both far less developed and wanting for empirical scrutiny in the literature on domestic conflict and contention.

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[9] This is a part of their estimation strategy to ensure that leader change is exogenous to the economic and policy outcome dependent variables.

Aside from economic and international conflict outcomes, research suggests that domestic political outcomes are also influenced by leadership change. Baturo (2007) shows that presidential succession in electoral authoritarian regimes hamper the chances of government victory in elections and increase the probability of an opposition win. When a leader dies or resigns, a chosen successor is weakened by the fissures and uncertainty among elites that are commonplace in the post-succession period, a factor shown to facilitate democratic transitions. As a consequence, succession enhances the electoral chances of opposition because apparent "fresh" successors on the ballot are less likely to win elections than longstanding incumbents. Of course, the previous argument holds in cases of electoral authoritarianism with a level of competitiveness that could feasibly allow an opposition party to achieve victory through the ballot box. Bertrand (1996) illustrates that getting to that point of liberalization in the context of autocracy can also be facilitated by leader succession. Authoritarian leaders can use liberalization when they face a succession crisis, and they may do so "even in the absence of a threat to the regime from civil society." Liberalization serves multiple purposes for leaders who confront an impending succession by (1) resolving power struggle among elites, (2) testing the popular appeal of potential successors, and (3) increasing the chances of regime survival by making institutions less rigid in their commitment to the status quo. We are left with a picture that it is possible for leadership change to induce liberalization and increase the likelihood of transitions in non-democratic regimes.

However, another body of work is less optimistic about the domestic political outcomes brought by leader turnover. Research suggests that governments may be more likely to use the strong arm of the state when a leader is insecure, as is the

case following a leader change in dictatorships. "Tenure considerations affect a state's willingness to repress" and their responsiveness to institutional constraints (Conrad & Ritter, 2013). As such, violations of personal integrity rights are more likely when leaders lack job security early in their terms (Young, 2009). As their job security increases, so does their bargaining power relative to domestic opponents, and they are less likely to violate the personal integrity rights of opposition. Repression more generally seems to follow the same logic. It is more likely to occur when a leader's job security is in question and becomes less likely as the leader establishes job security (Ritter 2014). These studies support the hypothesis of a succession effect on repression because they rely heavily on leader tenure to construct the measures of job security; where executive leaders are less secure early in their tenures and grow more secure as time in office increases (Cheibub, 1998; Young, 2009). Leader turnover can have dire consequences for dictatorial regimes themselves, influencing their prospects for survival. With frequency analysis, Ezrow and Frantz (2011) suggest that the presence of nominally democratic institutions like parties and legislatures can mitigate the destabilizing effects of succession and make regime collapse less likely.

Consensus remains elusive among political scientists on the relationship between repression and dissent. Despite disagreements over the nature of this relationship, however, the evidence overwhelmingly supports that there is one. It is ironic, then, that significant attention has been given to how leader change and tenure affects repression while little has been devoted to the other side of the equation — activism and dissent. Despite these contributions to our understanding of how leaders are selected and to what degree new leaders make a difference, incumbents, potential successors, and elite-level challengers receive the lion's share

of attention in this research. Such a focus is not surprising. After all, these are the key actors in the dynastic dramas, party positioning, and palace politics of authoritarian succession. As a consequence, this scholarship generally relegates non-elite political actors to the status of constraining forces, passive observers, or targets of action. Notable exceptions, however, suggest that succession has the potential to change political behavior not only of governing elites. It influences perceptions and actions of other players in the game of politics, including potential and actual dissidents and other social actors whose interests are influenced by government policies and decisionmaking.

2.4. Contention and Contingent Events

A vast and diverse literature exists on the interaction between political activists and governments. Most recently, the field of contentious politics brings together various forms of political activism and expression into a circumscribed area of research. Contentious activism can be thought of as the collective and coordinated efforts by groups in society to make demands that involve the government (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Tilly & Tarrow, 2006). It is a form of critical politics that sees "ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontations with elites, authorities, and opponents" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 2). What explains the actions of governments and politically active members of society toward each other?

Various overlapping literatures attempt to answer this question by examining the behavior of governments and dissidents. Some studies explain the behavior of activists as a function of government action (Francisco, 2004; T. R. Gurr, 1970; Khawaja, 1993; Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 1998; Rasler, 1996; Tilly, 1978).

Others look in the other direction, explaining the behavior of governments as a function of dissident action (Davenport, 1995; Moore, 2000). And other research synthesizes these approaches (Francisco, 1995; Moore, 1995; S. M. Shellman, 2006), developing interactive models of iterative behavior in which government actions and activist actions are recurring over time and mutually constitutive.

These studies attempt to explain variation in government and dissident interaction as specific responses to one another's behavior. They provide alternative conclusions as to whether various forms of hostile or cooperative actions generate hostile or cooperative reactions. However, these interaction models are only able to explain changes in how governments and political actors behave toward one another as a function of (and reaction to) the other's behavior.

The tendency to explain government and dissident actions and reactions purely as a function of the other's behavior results sometimes in underplaying the structural opportunities and constraints that shape beliefs, decisions, and actions. Moreover, by modeling sequences of actions and reactions, these models downplay exogenous events, or those events that are outside of the sequence of interactions between the actors. Indeed, limitations of this approach for explaining government and activist behavior are apparent in the way this scholarship has devolved into the basic question of whether (and when) repression deters or escalates dissent (Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 2000).

Other studies see more constancy in the aggregate interactions between the state and its challengers. From this perspective, there is a tendency in authoritarian regimes to regularize contention. Especially in regimes headed by a longtime incumbent, a standard for acceptable means of challenging the government, and the consequences of deviating from this standard, are publicly known and even

internalized (Beissinger, 1996, 2002). In this way, political contention trends toward "normalization" and consistency in which "a given crystallization of state boundaries is backed by the effective authority of the state and is not subject to open challenge from within." Under these conditions, political actors tend to "…adjust their beliefs to the boundaries of the possible, accepting a given institutional arrangement as unalterable and even natural" (Beissinger, 1996, p. 104).

Normalization need not imply invariability, however. The story of domestic politics is one of changes in the relationship between state and society over time. As such, the normalization of relations among political actors may set expectations for political behavior, but these boundaries are contestable. Migdal (2001, pp. 11-12) writes:

> …no single, integrated set of rules, whether encoded in state law or sanctified as religious scriptures or enshrined as the rules of etiquette for daily behavior, exists anywhere. Quite simply, there is no uncontested universal code… in any society for guiding people's lives.

> …all societies have ongoing battles among groups pushing different versions of how people should behave. The nature and outcomes of these struggles give societies their distinctive structure and character.

To be sure, important moments in the historical development of state-society interaction often come in the form of salient events. National elections – events not altogether detached from succession – have generated the interest of scholars who study protest, repression, and citizens' rights. For example, research suggests that cycles of protest are often "synchronized" with electoral cycles in democracies (Van Dyke, 2003) and in electoral autocracies (Beissinger, 2011; V. J. Bunce & Wolchik, 2006; G. Robertson, 2013; G. B. Robertson, 2011; Trejo, 2012). Some literature has found that elections viewed by leaders as threatening to

relationships of power in the status quo, repression is likely to increase (Booth & Seligson, 1989), while others find that national elections decrease repression (Davenport, 1997, 1998). A few of the proposed mechanisms associating elections to protest do not exist in full autocracies devoid of elections, including the mobilizing structures of opposition political parties. But other mechanisms are present, including the inducement to validate the ruler through expressions of the "popular will" and the potential for new expectations for political changes. While more and more authoritarian regimes incorporate the ballot box into their political systems, they do so as a strategic choice designed to ward off critics rather than "democratize." Unlike holding elections, however, leader succession is compulsory. The means by which successions occur may be subject to decisionmaking, but that they occur at all is not.

Turning to leader succession specifically, then, one finds that the succession-contention hypothesis is not new. Richard Betts and Samuel Huntington (Betts & Huntington, 1985/86) investigated this question nearly thirty years ago asking, "Does the demise of authoritarian leaders lead to political instability?" They examined a connection between the demise of long-term incumbent autocrats and incidents of "coups, mass turbulence, guerrilla terrorism, civil conflict, and revolution" in non-democracies. Nonetheless, there is no unified body of scholarship on the issue and the concepts employed are inconsistent. As a result, the impact that succession is thought to have on instability, activism, conflict, contention, unrest, and other domestic political outcomes is a moving target.

Betts and Huntington surveyed 22 regimes with long-term incumbents and frequency distributions of various forms of contention and domestic turmoil. They find that pre-succession instability, incumbent tenure, and societal organization are

associated with post-succession instability. Whitten and Bienen (1996, p. 212) employ a quantitative study of riots and violent deaths, finding that "there is a strong negative relationship between the number of years that a leader has been in power and political violence." The implication is, of course, that leaders are more likely to encounter rioting and violence when their transition to power is new.

Anise (1974) used frequency analysis to compare different types of leader turnover in post-independence Africa, noting that "states which have enjoyed a higher degree of stability are those that have had little or no politically significant leadership succession or regime change" (p. 514). This analysis also asserted the importance of established procedures for government turnover, arguing that these transitions "will tend to be destabilizing unless a routinized and rationalized procedure of recruitment has been developed and generally accepted by the political community" (p. 509). Hughes and May's (1988) survey of African regimes acknowledges that leadership change can be "a major test of the stability and legitimacy of a political system," but underscore that "the capacity for orderly transfer of power within personalist regimes has been under-estimated…" (p. 1-4). Further support in the African context is offered by Carey (2007), who finds that differences in executive selection processes influence the likelihood of violent mass dissent.

As noted in the introduction, there is some case study evidence to support a succession-contention connection. For example, Dittmer (2001) shows in the case of China that mass mobilization during a leader transition "has generally been that of a dependent variable," either corresponding to elite factionalism as party leaders jockey for power or, alternatively, as "the winning party seeks post hoc popular legitimation for personnel shifts and policy innovations." Jo (1986) and Kim (2011)

argue that even in a closed system like North Korea where channels for opposition activity have been completely stifled under long-term totalitarianism, leader change can prompt challenges to the succession from dissident factions with public manifestations. For example, Jo (1986) points to the "dissidence in the course of establishing Kim Chong-il's leadership" and a confrontation when the military was dispatched in Chongchin "to suppress an uprising begun by those factory workers who resisted intense political indoctrination [to legitimize Kimg Chong-il as successor] in the midst of a worsening food shortage" (p. 1104).

Alternatively, other research suggests that leadership change in autocratic contexts reduces contentious political activity. Succession may be marked by a "honeymoon period" in which the new leader is privileged with pronounced support and restrained opposition, granting him the latitude to innovate. Even in the absence of increased support, potential challengers, skeptics, interest groups, and others may simply take stock of what the new leader plans to do based on decisions and rhetoric and refrain from pressuring activities. During this period, "compliance is the norm" (V. Bunce, 1981, p. 25). In the context of Arab Gulf states, Peterson argues that "[t]he lack of established rules for succession... leads to uncertainty or even political malaise" that can hamper political mobilization (Peterson, 2001b, p. 185). Billingsley (2010) argues that this condition has a tendency to "stifle political initiative." These claims provide suggestive evidence that succession is not likely to produce oppositional activism or claimsmaking activity.

Taking stock, we have established a few takeaways from this review of the literature on leader transitions in non-democracies. The first is that research tends to view leader transitions as objects *to* explain rather than objects *that* explain. From this work, an important distinction emerges between 'regular' and 'irregular'

successions based on the institutional context of the transition. Irregular successions, dramatic as they can be, overshadow the more commonplace transitions in the scholarly literature. Second, research on the effects of leadership change emphasizes economic policy and international conflict outcomes with precious few studies looking at domestic political effects of leader change. Nonetheless, these studies motivate additional research in this vein by offering explanatory mechanisms connecting succession to conflict or contention. This research ultimately suggests that we would do well to further examine leader change as a causal factor. Third, as a politically salient event for both governments and those they govern, our knowledge of leader change is incomplete if it is only concerned with its management at the elite level. There is support for the causal influence of executive leadership change on political contention, unrest, and instability at the domestic level, but it is limited and ripe for further study.

In the following section, I review the literature on succession specific to the Arab Middle East. The picture that emerges is one that follows themes found in the broader literature on succession in non-democracies reviewed above.

2.5. MENA Literature

The turn of the century coincided with the beginnings of a transitional moment in the Arab world. There was abundant speculation about how politics would or would not change in countries where "leaders for life" were in their sunset years (Owen, 2012). It was a taboo subject, to be sure, engendering a public quiet on the subject that only added to uncertainty about political life after the leader. Scholarship on succession in Arab states follows (and informs) similar patterns observed in the larger literature. By and large, leadership change is treated as a

process to be described or an outcome to be explained rather than an event that acts on the political environment. Consequently, we know little about the effects of succession in the non-democratic regimes of the Arab world and elsewhere.

Prior to the handful of more recent transitions brought on by revolutionary uprisings, studies of leadership change typically focus on politicking among elites, mechanisms for selecting new leaders, and procedures for transferring power. These studies reveal much about how leader succession transpires in the region. They pay particular attention to the crisis of legitimacy that emerges when a new leader assumes power, especially after the reign of a longtime incumbent. From different theoretical vantage points, they demonstrate the ways in which institutions, culture, and decisionmaking operate to manage these transitional periods.

From an institutional perspective, Middle East scholars underline the role of institutions in the succession process, particularly the ways constitutions and legal mechanisms are used to manage leader turnover. Brown (2005) describes the ways that leaders use constitutional provisions to reduce uncertainty about the succession process and mollify discord over successor selection. In the absence of charismatic legitimacy that supported the rule of prior revolutionary leaders, state institutions represent a prime location for "authoritarian upgrading" (Heydemann, 2007). Institutions become instrumental as leaders seek legal-rational legitimacy to their rule. Jarbawi and Pearlman (2007) illustrate this shift to institutions in the case of Palestine's "post-charisma transition" following the death of Yasir Arafat. Mahmoud Abbas lacked the charismatic and revolutionary bona fides of Arafat and therefore pursued institution-building to "bolster legal forms in order to derive authority that his personality alone cannot command." Moreover, these legal provisions aim to situate succession-related decisionmaking with the leader as he

seeks to preserve his position and future legacy. Billingsley (2010) emphasizes the utility of embedding succession in the constitution for bringing greater legitimacy to a nondemocratic process. Both show that systematizing succession through the constitution in monarchies has been a more efficient process than for the presidential republics that have a "logical incongruity" with dynasticism. Stacher (2011), for example, describes the role of elite-level consensus in guaranteeing the hereditary succession of Bashar al-Asad in Syria, replacing the three decades rule of father Hafiz. This consensus was necessary for a number of institutional manipulations that would allow Bashar's succession, including the minimum age threshold for the presidency and Bashar's ranks in the party and military. Even where hereditary succession is compatible with the monarchism of the Gulf countries, the politics of succession are not so straightforward. Peterson (2001a) reports that these governments have developed processes for the immediate transfer of power on an incumbent's death, but successor selection remains "disconcertingly vague and ambiguous," making for a growing problem "as the Gulf regimes complete their transformation from shaykhly systems to monarchies" (p. 600). He argues that a lack of established succession rules contributes to "uncertainty and malaise" that contributes to greater separation between ruling families and the general populace in these countries (Peterson, 2001b, p. 185).

The issue of legitimacy animates cultural approaches to research on succession in the region as well. Billingsley (2010) moves beyond institutional logic by focusing on foundational characteristics of Arab political life to explain "the appeal and tenacity of the dynastic approach to political succession," asserting tribal and family loyalties and Islam as particularly explanatory factors. He claims that "tribal and family attitudes and Islam are tenacious in their influence over

Arab leaders and pervasive in the attitudes of much of the populations of these countries" (p. 23). It is this focus on prevailing attitudes that leads Billingsley to fall heavily into the trap of a reductive cultural explanation of succession politics. His attention is fixed on how attitudes and values that characterize "Arab culture" influence the decisions of rulers and ruled during periods of succession. He consequently argues that the stability of Arab regimes, and what he sees as a lack of significant activist opposition to the current order, is rooted in values and attitudes derived from tribalism and Islam. Toward this end, he asserts that "dynastic succession reflects mainstream Arab attitudes" (3); that "Arabs have a deep aversion to political instability and, partly with this in mind, they have traditionally tolerated autocratic rule" (2); and that "the issue for Arabs is one of priorities. Democracy… is highly desirable but order, stability and predictability are foremost among people's concerns" (p. 55).

Three problems confront such a view. First, the reliance on attitudes to explain political behavior is founded upon a crude understanding of culture. It implies that culture is a set of shared values and preferences that, in the case of succession politics in the Middle East, promote compliance and constrain activism. The aversion to instability, desire for "order, stability, and predictability," and acceptant attitude toward dynastic succession that Billingsley attributes to Arab culture are highly reductive and crumble at the mention of the many manifestations of political mobilization in the region, even before the 'Arab Spring' uprisings. This approach invites cultural reduction and generalization through which observers draw on "cultural values [to] explain what is distinctive about the behavior of groups or societies, and neglect other distinctively cultural phenomena which offer greater promise of explaining patterns of action" (Swidler, 1986, p. 275).

Second, this view not only assumes that attitudes and values produce agreed-upon ends, but that culture yields uniform means to reach those ends. Alternatively, however, "People may share common aspirations, while remaining profoundly different in the way their culture organizes their overall pattern of behavior" (Hannerz (1969) as quoted in Swidler, 1986). For example, tribalism and the organizational role of Islam in Arab societies have contributed to significant amounts of opposition activity and challenges to authoritarianism whether the ruler is new or old. Of the many examples, strong opposition to decisions by King Hussein and King Abdullah II in Jordan have come from East Bank tribes expressing frustration with economic liberalization or fear of losing their privileged position in the kingdom's larger patronage structure. While the tribal structure in society serves as a bulwark for the regime, that leverage can and does work in the other direction.

Third, alternative cultural interpretations are at least as compelling and lead to different conclusions. Explaining political behavior as a function of cultural characteristics fails in the face of starkly contrasting characterizations of that culture. Charles Lindholm (2002) argues that the "central values" and cultural norms of "egalitarianism, competitive individualism, and the quest for personal autonomy" define the culture of the Islamic Middle East. These shared values have profound consequences for power relationships, including those between state authority and individuals and groups in society. Consequently, Lindholm suggests that the ethos of egalitarian individualism is so profoundly contradictory to the secular hierarchy of government authority that such dominance is inherently objectionable. Citing Dale Eickelman, Lindholm argues that "the very fact that another person is dominant is by definition unacceptable to the one who has been

dominated, since the principle of human equality means that 'in so far as a person is obliged to defer to the wishes of others, his autonomy and social honor are diminished'... [that] impel[s] the dominated to plot continually against the victor" to recapture their honor (Lindholm, 2002, p. 269). In contrast to Billingsley's view of acquiescent attitudes toward government authority, Lindholm suggests that resistance and opposition to authority are expected in the Islamic Middle East. These contrasting views demonstrate the inherent problem with explaining variation in political behavior of governments and activists through an approach that understands culture as attitudinal proclivities and value orientations, usually represented as median or mean values of distributions of answers to survey questions. Each explanation offers a different view of which cultural norms and values are most prevalent and the kinds of behavior they would produce in the Middle Eastern context.

An alternative understanding of culture, one that appreciates its instrumental role in political action, can offer a more useful way of understanding succession politics. As a prime example, Bengio's (2000) study of Iraq under Saddam Husayn reveals the ways in which Husayn sought to create a regime that both entrenched his rule while making it hereditary for passing to one of his sons. In her analysis, Bengio details the ways that both father and sons attempted to shape their public personas and build legitimacy through military, religious, and managerial credentials to facilitate succession. Much of the competition among brothers took place in the public sphere — in public appearances, newspapers and magazines, and other media — as each attempted to bolster their own legitimacy, at times even undermining the other.

Scholars of the region have to some extent debated the potential impact of leadership change. Some focused on the incoming leaders, specifically their political orientations and capacities for governing. Others emphasized the constraining role of regime institutions and entrenched interests. Like the research on authoritarian succession more generally, consensus is elusive regarding the political effects of succession in Arab regimes. To the extent that succession has been addressed as an explanatory event, extant literature offers competing views of the impact of succession in the Arab world. Some scholars have questioned the consequences of these transitions (Billingsley, 2010; Cantori et al., 2002). One side of the argument suggests that because leaders often choose their successors, dynasticism is prevalent, and tenure is long, "political succession cannot be considered political transition" (Cantori et al., 2002). These characteristics of Arab regimes mean that the status quo is maintained at the expense of meaningful political change in spite of (or perhaps because of) the way leader succession occurs. Following an institutional logic, the argument is that the 'stickiness' of regime institutions hedge against radical ship-steering by successor leaders even if they wanted to do so (Pierson, 2004).

By contrast, others argue that leadership change in Arab states is a mechanism of transformation with political and social significance (Byman, 2005; Dunn, 1998; Perthes, 2001). Looking forward at "the coming era of leadership change" in the late 1990s, Dunn (1998) went so far as to argue that a "sort of generational revolution is inevitable… [that] will have an impact on almost every Arab country and on all other issues, from economic development to political liberalization to Islamist politics… which cannot be ignored" (p. 180). Sevier's (2008) review of the political climate in countries with aging dictators like Egypt,

Tunisia, Oman, and Saudi Arabia prior to the Arab Spring was concerned with succession-induced destabilization. In the presence of myriad challenges, "the inevitable moment of succession risks provoking crises that will challenge new leaders to the fullest." One source of such a challenge is domestic opposition in which "succession crises will provide opportunities for Islamists and other radicals to challenge new, inexperienced, and potentially weak rulers." Legitimacy is at the heart of these risks, as successors void of the revolutionary credentials of their seasoned predecessors look to alternative sources of legitimacy. Unable to draw on democratic legitimacy, these leaders can appeal to ideology like Arab nationalism and Islamism, but at the risk of alienating and even rousing ideological competitors. And void of legitimacy, leader changes in the region as elsewhere are ripe for unrest and upheaval. In a prospective study of MENA transitions just before the region experienced revolutionary convulsions, Kristina Kausch (2010) argued that the prospect of dynastic republicanism becoming normalized through impending transitions in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, made "public resistance likely to manifest itself through more radical and possibly violent forms of protest" (p.19).

Byman (2005) illustrates the contradictions in Arab leader succession in which continuity can be a catalyst for change. "The most probable scenarios are variations on current themes… The potential for change, however, is quite large" (p. 80). In this assessment, stability in the character of the regimes and the governments they rule is probable given the presence of underlying structures that support regime maintenance. However, there is notable potential for shifts in government policy and domestic reaction to leader changes even where sons or members of the same ruling coalition are successors. Because "leaders are often out of touch with the population as a whole, and opposition voices have little say,"

consolidation of power is particularly difficult and "current assumptions of regime stability" may not hold following leader changes.

These studies suggest that one leader's exit and another's advent is more than an immediate change of faces. Instead, succession is shown to be a dynamic process that creates possibilities for changes in politics and governance, as well as changes in public perceptions of governing authority and leadership. A change of leadership may not produce regime change or lasting change at all. However, one overlooks important political developments with the assumption that "succession spells certainty" and merely prolongs the status quo (Carapico, 2002).

It is by now clear that there is no clear consensus on whether, how, and to what extent leader succession produces changes in political contention. One need only look at the inferences drawn from two incisive studies of Palestinian succession prior to the death of Arafat to see the disagreement over the causality of succession. Looking at the same political landscape and projecting to the future, Legrain (1999) warns that Arafat's "eventual disappearance raises frightening prospects" in the face of elite competition to fill the void, while Robinson (2000) argues that "the succession itself would likely not be the underlying cause of disorder." The burden of proof lies with the latter view; that is, with the argument that succession is a critical event that affects political outcomes. At the same time, we should be careful not to overstate its effect. Systematic analyses within and across cases help to shed light on the degree to which these transitions are consequential to domestic political events.

The 'Arab Uprisings' and associated leadership changes in the region brought greater attention to the impact of succession on domestic politics. However, this attention has focused predominantly on the irregular transitions

brought on by revolutionary imperatives. The state of knowledge on "regular" transitions remains the same. As many countries in the region maintain a distinctly autocratic character, including matters of elite selection and competition, greater understanding of these institutionalized leadership transitions is needed.

Scholarly perspectives on societal activism in the Arab world have suffered from a profound bias in which political participation is viewed primarily in terms of prospects for regime change and democratization (Albrecht, 2010). Consequently, studies of civic participation typically emphasize either elections or contentious moments of strikes, riots, and protests (Beinin & Vairel, 2011). This binary approach leads to the unfortunate view that Arab societies — or the "Arab Street" – are either weak and lacking political agency or are riotous and irrational (Bayat, 2003). Deficient in Middle East studies is attention to political activism that acknowledges its role in asserting interests and demands without assuming disorder and upheaval (Cavatorta & Elananza, 2008). Likewise, scholarship on political participation in the region fit well within the transitology paradigm. Whether emphasizing formal or informal modes of participation, scholarship inexorably tied these activities to prospects for, or bellwethers of, democratization (Yom, 2005). Few sought to explain the politics of participation for its own sake, separate from the role these activities might play in political liberalization (Albrecht, 2008, p. 16).

My investigation of political activism in Jordan and Syria is part of the effort to remedy this deficiency. In that sense, it complements the work of others who attempt to "shift attention away from questions of democratization and enduring authoritarianism, toward the politics of participation in nondemocratic regimes" (Lust-Okar, 2008b, p. 2). Even before mass uprisings swept the region in

2010 and 2011, scholars were taking more seriously political opposition, dissent, social movements, and societal challenges to incumbent rulers. In a wide-ranging volume dedicated to political opposition in the region, Albrecht (2010) directs attention to the "contentious state-society relations [that] have emerged and prevailed over time, at high levels, in different countries, and in various social, cultural, and organizational forms" despite the heavy hand of state coercion in the region.

Because of persistent government influence, scholars have recognized the growth of Jordan's civil society sector as liberalization managed from the top down (Brand, 1995). It is true, especially from the lens of democratization, that Jordanian civil society is not a panacea for democratic change and may instead function as a tool to monitor and regulate society or stave off challenges during periods of economic crisis (Robinson, 1998; Wiktorowicz, 2000). However, civil society organizations in Jordan have been active in aggregating interests and making demands on the government (Brand, 1995; Odhibat, 1995). Short of producing democracy, these groups regularly expressed demands for more immediate, serviceable things like increased wages and benefits, regulatory changes, and specific resource allocations (Ryan, 2002). Over the 25-year reform period since King Hussein lifted martial law in 1989, the presence of civil society actors has been a persistent feature of politics, but the dynamics of political activism have changed over time (al-Hashahsheh, 2006; al-Qatatsheh & al-Adwan, 2004; Hourani & Abu Rumman, 2004). My research helps to explain why.

2.6. Summary

In sum, much theoretical and empirical work contributes to our understanding of leader change. I have identified three critiques of this research that point to areas for advancement: (1) succession scholarship privileges irregular modes of succession like coups, rebellions, and revolutions, (2) it tends to conceptualize succession as an event to be explained rather than one that affects political outcomes, and (3) to the extent that it is viewed as a causal event, research on domestic politics are far outpaced by studies in international relations and political economy.

Through large-N, cross-national analysis, this dissertation attempts to broaden our knowledge of succession by considering regular and irregular forms of transition and their effects on domestic level outcomes. Through individual cases, I focus on routine leadership transitions that are not born out of coercion but may nonetheless have important political effects. Both approaches emphasize succession as a causal factor. My primary concern is not, therefore, the process of successor selection or the interpersonal battles often associated with succession struggles. It is instead centered on the ways in which succession affects the relationship between government and society.

Chapter Three presents a theory of leader succession and political activism with three points of emphasis: (1) succession is a critical juncture in the relationship between government and society; (2) the transition process produces uncertainty and catalyzes a change in real or perceived opportunities for activists to make claims on the government; and (3) institutional configurations of regimes mediate the relationship between succession and activism. Together, these theoretical components aim to establish the role of societal agency in the succession process.

Chapter 3

Concepts, Theory, and Methods

One leader's exit and another's advent is more than an immediate change of personality. Succession is a dynamic process, pregnant with potential for changes in governance. Personalities and policies generally change when leaders do, as do public perceptions of governing authority and leadership. These are the makings of a unique period of political action and new dynamics in the relationship between governments and societies. Consequently, leadership succession should be understood in two ways: as a process by which authority is transferred from an incumbent to a successor within a specific socio-political context, *and* as an independent variable whose occurrence may impact policies and political behavior. In broad terms, I argue that the relationship between society and the government (both incoming and outgoing) is unique during periods of succession and requires further theorizing and empirical investigation.

This chapter fulfills four important goals. First, following a variable-centric definition, I argue that succession constitutes a critical juncture. Whether the observed consequences of a leader change are remarkable or routine, succession represents a break in any state-society status quo. Second, I draw on political process approach to social movement theory to explain the causal role of leader transitions on political activism. In particular, I argue that leadership change plays

on societal actors' perceptions of opportunities for activism and may motivate changes in the behavior of activists. I show that succession is not only a political process, but also a cultural one; it universally entails acts of legitimation that further influence the perceptions of societal actors who have latent claims, demands, or grievances. Third, I argue that institutional context of succession matters. Regime institutions structure the degree to which succession is a regulated or unregulated process. Moreover, regimes differ in their sources of legitimacy and rely on different modes of rule and system maintenance. As such, I review the institutional contexts that come to bear on the way succession influences contentious political activism. Existing typologies of authoritarianism are helpful for categorizing regimes according to these attributes and testing their importance for explaining political outcomes.

Finally, I explain the multi-method approach to this research that allows for testing general hypotheses and also appreciates contextual specificity. The dissertation is ultimately a study of events. As events are studied in a multitude of ways, a conceptual preface is useful prior to explaining research design specifics in later chapters.

3.1. Authoritarian Succession as Critical Event

Succession is a critical moment for a political system in part because it tests the institutions of the state and their ability to absorb the shock — anticipated or not — of replacing an incumbent leader. Moreover, it creates opportunities for a new leader to enact policy changes and reform governing practices. Succession may indeed contribute to organizational changes in the government, but also changes

in social, political, and economic priorities, policies, and actions. Indeed, the causal view of succession surmises it to be a contingent event. That is, leader succession may produce, and serve as a marker for, important changes in social and political dynamics that would not occur in the absence of this event. This is the "independent variable view" of leadership change — a dichotomous phenomenon. Succession does not occur until it does, at which point there is greater potential for political change.

Of course, the degree of change resulting from succession – and therefore the extent of its impact – varies across the many different manifestations of it. William Sewell differentiates two different types of historical progression that lends to the debate over the role of succession in politics. Historical "happenings" or "occurrences" reinforce conventional social and cultural structures and therefore maintain — or simply become part of — the usual progression of things. Conversely, it is the more important category of "events" that he argues are transformational as they have the capability to "undo or alter the most apparently durable trends of history" (Sewell, 1996). Sewell therefore argues that events "begin with a rupture of some kind… [that] touches off a chain of occurrences that durably transforms previous structures and practices" (Sewell, 1996, p. 843). In Tarrow's words, these events (as opposed to happenings or occurrences) "constitute unpredictable ruptures of normal causality, moments of fluidity in which small and momentary causes may have gigantic and enduring consequences" (Tarrow, 1999, p. 37). In this vein, Arendt (1970) sees events as "occurrences that interrupt routine processes and routine procedures" (p. 7). Such important historical periods allow for a recalibration of political, social, and cultural realities. I return to this distinction in the 'Methods' section as it informs the different types of analysis

used to empirically examine the hypothesis that leader succession affects contentious activism.

This approach to historiography differentiates between two periods of time, those that reinforce or sustain the status quo and those key moments when divergence from the 'normal' becomes likely in their wake. There is a revolutionary quality to this formulation of the term 'event' that the bulk of leader successions do not entail. The magnitude of an event's effect — and whether it yields "gigantic" consequences — is relative to some 'normal' and depends on the degree to which one is zoomed in or out temporally. However, the notion that singular events may create moments of increased causal significance begs the question — do authoritarian leader changes represent such potentially-transformative events? Do they initiate moments rich with potential for altering 'normal' structures and practices?

It is certainly debatable. Many leadership transitions replace the incumbent with a successor cast from the same mold; sometimes biologically in the case of dynastic succession, sometimes politically due to policy likeness, and often both. But, as shown above, leaders and other actors face exceptional incentives and opportunities in moments of leader change. Sewell favors contextualized historical analysis of major events and would likely take issue with a general statement of successions as events. Alternatively, V. Bunce (1981)presents a generalized analysis of succession and argues for a transformational view of the succession event. She argues that changes in policy are likely following a change in leadership because "succession functions as a mechanism for policy innovation… that sets in motion a distinct policy cycle" through which the new leader has greater capacity and incentive to make a mark (pp. 11-24). It is during what Bunce calls the

"honeymoon period" immediately following the transfer of power that new decisions and policy innovation extend the impact of the initial rupture of new leadership.

I argue that successions do constitute critical junctures whose effects must be examined empirically. In these moments, persistent structures are less powerful while the range of choices available to individuals and their ability to exercise willful action increases. Capoccia and Kelemen (2011) conceptualize these junctures as "relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest" and is therefore "qualitatively different from the 'normal' historical development" (p. 348). The definition directly contradicts Sewell's outcomes-based binary between events and other happenings. Certainly some successions contribute to significant changes as Bunce argues, but many others may be interpreted as sustaining the prevailing order. This is an empirical question that varies from one instance to another. What is clear, however, is the increased potential for changes in the status quo as a result of changing leaders, whether or not these changes come to fruition or are observed as being momentous.

This is the important implication of Capoccia and Kelemen's argument. Analysts are mistaken to limit their view of critical junctures to those that transform structures. In their assessment, "Critical junctures are too often equated with moments of change… [but t]his view is not commensurable with the emphasis on structural fluidity and heightened contingency that are the defining traits of critical junctures. Contingency implies that wide-ranging change is possible and even likely but also that re-equilibration is not excluded" from possible outcomes (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2011, p. 352). It makes little sense to limit our consideration

of cases to those in which major transformations are observable, ignoring "near misses" and other events that result in less absolute change. We should not only study those times in which leadership changes result in conspicuous political change, but also those in which we might expect them to but don't, or those in which changes are less apparent.

We can therefore regard successions as critical and contingent events whether or not they lead to transformational outcomes. It is their propensity for bringing political change – and its implications for both elite and societal interests – that that make them historical contingencies. What is important is the incidence of a leader change and the increased possibility of new political, social and cultural structures as a result of the change. As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 makes clear, scholars and analysts pay close attention to successions because they attribute political significance (and the prospects for political change) to the change of leaders. The turnover-as-contingency argument leads to a general hypothesis that leader change increases the likelihood of changes in the level of contentious activism. But why should we expect greater structural fluidity and potential for changes in political behavior and contention during this period? The following section discusses causal mechanisms linking succession to these outcomes. A focus on these apparently significant events that do not give way to transformational change may provide new insights about authoritarian durability and should therefore not be ignored. Moreover, the observed continuity in a regime despite a change in leadership does not preclude provisional or more gradual effects as time passes. Indeed, numerous regional experts have noted that the prospect of hereditary succession in presidential regimes contributed to the uprisings of 2010-11 and the mobilization that preceded them.

3.2. Succession and Contention

A second conceptualization of succession emphasizes its processual, transitional character; the unfolding of events in the context of a succession. As opposed to the binary view of succession whose occurrence is present or not (as is the case in the dominant variable-centric definition), leadership changes are also transitional moments that occur in particular contexts. Recognizing that successions are not merely discrete events but also transitional periods in the life of a regime orients our analysis toward the political context animated by other actors. The effort to implement the succession of an incoming leader "involve[s] not only a competition among possible power-holders but an interaction between government and governed. The fact of succession… involves a renewal of the 'contract' between ruler and ruled" (Calvert, 1987). Leaders are therefore challenged to legitimize their claim to rule in its genesis to consolidate power. This interpretation is more concerned with social and political interaction as the succession occurs than with the fact of its occurrence as such.

With greater appreciation for this interaction, the behavior of incumbents, successors, challengers, activists, interest groups, and others enliven the meaning of succession. On its own, the succession is likely to trigger heightened awareness by political challengers. Political entrepreneurs and first movers who seek to exploit opportunities are looking for information about institutional access, proclivity for repression, and government orientations under the new ruler. Some successions result in changes in policy and political alignments; others are marked by an explicit rejection of political change. Substantive changes in policies are therefore not a certainty, and political challengers are unable to know ex ante the extent to

which the succession itself will change policies of interest to them. At the very least, however, the succession of an autocrat represents a change in the key decision-maker on political issues, the commander of the state's coercive capabilities, and the topmost target of their claims. As Michael Barnett (1998) explains, events may constitute "moments of change, bounded periods of time when a transformation of thought, experiences, and social relations occurs. Recognizing that events can be transformative moments shifts our attention away from structural explanations to the microprocesses upon which structures are built and transformed, away from the language of structural determination and to that of social negotiation." Given this interactive view, what should we expect of government-activist interaction and the claimsmaking activities of societal groups amid leader transitions?

Above, I argued that leader changes are contingent events. Numerous studies cited in Chapter 2 suggest that potential consequences of such an event include increases in political uncertainty, political maneuvering and competition, the potential for social and political turmoil, and even violence. While these studies point to variation in levels of contention and conflict surrounding leader changes, few explicitly articulate the causal link connecting the two phenomena. I now turn to that effort by drawing on Political Process Theory (PPT) and the associated concept of political opportunity structure to explain this proposed causal link. Political opportunity structure represents the "dimension of the political environment that provide[s] incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure" (Tarrow, 1998, pp. 76-77). Leader transitions generally incorporate a number of changes that are typically referenced as openings in the political opportunity structure for activists, dissidents, and civil society

organizations. McAdam (1996, p. 27) puts forward a "consensual list" of four elements of political opportunity, three of which are regularly altered by executive turnover including (1) the stability or instability of elite alignments, (2) the presence of absence of elite allies, and (3) the capacity and propensity of the state to repress. In this section, I explain that political opportunity structure informs the proposition that challengers of the government, in an atmosphere of succession-induced uncertainty, are likely to increase claimsmaking activities during periods of succession. The theory points to a number of causal mechanisms that are operative in succession politics that lead to expectations of variation in contentious activism.

3.2.1. Inexperience and Domestic Contention

Leaders accrue important assets through experience at the helm. Exercising the powers of executive office allows leaders to gain the political skills required for preventing and responding to domestic challenges and opposition to their rule. Chiozza and Goemans (2003) argue that "… the mere exercise of power in office over time enables leaders to acquire the political skills necessary to fend off domestic opposition." In particular, we might infer that the strategic use of coercion and rewards are wielded with greater proficiency by seasoned leaders. As Whitten and Bienen (1996, p. 210) summarize, "The longer leaders are in power, the more likely they are to gain control over instruments of coercion necessary to suppress violence and the more likely they are to control resources to distribute through patronage politics… and learn about their own political systems."

Newcomers to leadership are also less likely to have amassed the same degree of steadfast support and political experience enjoyed by seasoned autocrats. A real

or perceived lack of experience is detrimental to a leader. By virtue of being new to the position, successors have acquired less experience in the role as their predecessor that constitutes a net loss. An authoritarian leader acquires "reliability benefits" as he solidifies support from being dependable to the relatively small number supporters on which he relies (de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995). At this time, the relationship between ruler and ruled is marked by two-way dependence in which each seek something from the other; the leader seeks legitimacy and compliance while elites and societal interests seek to maintain or improve their positions. With more time in office to distribute benefits to loyal patrons and consolidate public authority, the more established these relationships become.

Moments of power transfer, however, generate increased levels of uncertainty that can induce changes in political calculations and decisions, especially in centralized autocracies (Hale, 2005). The transfer of power, especially when an established process for succession is absent, results in a period of vulnerability, or a "legitimacy crisis," in which the legitimacy of the incoming leader will be determined (Pye, 1971). As Patterson (1971, p. 269) explains, "the death of the central authority figure in national political systems, whether it be Louis XVI, Josef Stalin, George V, or the American president, produces a crisis of authority." In succession politics, uncertainty refers to the diminished ability to predict the general orientation of the government, one's future position in it or in the eyes of it, and the consequences of particular actions that involve it. As a result, succession affects the behavior of political actors in and out of government because it produces uncertainty.

Succession-induced uncertainty and the coinciding crisis of legitimacy affects perceptions and behavior in multiple ways: (1) it changes peoples' expectations for

the future, whether at the level of political elites or societal interests; (2) it affects the real and perceived opportunities for political activism, expression, and dissent; (3) it invites boundary-testing activities to reduce uncertainty about the behavioral proclivities and orientations of the new leader. Each of these can occur as a direct result of an incumbent's death, retirement, or removal, but is also influenced by the policies, rhetoric, and behavior of the government under the leader who succeeds him.

3.2.2. Elite Competition and Position Politics

An impending leadership change may influence peoples' beliefs and expectations for their political future. Just the prospect of an impending succession can motivate political elites to communicate and coordinate on the selection of a successor, "bandwagoning" to guarantee their preference, avert uncertainty, and stave off potential challenges (Herb, 1999; Ryan, 2003; Stacher, 2011). Alternatively, leadership transition may encourage challenges to rule. A change in the appointing authority means changes in personnel. Where a particular successor is foreknown, elites compete with one another as they jockey for position under the new or prospective leader. Where the selection process or political context leaves room for challenge, primary contenders for power are likely to come from current or former government elites. The dynamics of high stakes political competition with the prospect of high reward can create discord among powerful political actors. As Gelpi and Grieco (2001, p. 801) put it,

> …[because] leadership transfer is unregulated in most [authoritarian regimes], and transitions are often settled through the use, threat, or implicit threat of force, … autocrats will often be most unsure of their ability to retain office shortly after they gain it. It is at this time that authoritarian leaders are most vulnerable to challenge and least secure in the stability of their winning coalition.

A void in the pinnacle of power removes a constraint on independent action and spurs self-interested behavior below it. Thus, leadership change affects the prospects for future institutional access and positioning for governing elites, triggering their desires for ascending the political ladder (or at least maintaining their present status) and their fears of falling down it. Nothing is more high stakes for political elites than the selection of a new leader and one's position relative to him. As such, succession increases the opportunities for governing elites to act independently and enhances their agency to influence successor selection and the process of power transfer. Henry Hale (2006, p. 309) elucidates this logic in reference to the Soviet case:

> At times of leadership transition… when the power of the [leader] is expected to change hands, one can anticipate a very different dynamic. For one thing, the stakes at such times are extremely high since an outcome of 'winner take all' is a strikingly real possibility. While the incumbent can try to engineer a succession, as did Yeltsin in 1999, even a little uncertainty can encourage elites who fear that they might be left out of the new winning coalition to mobilize a counter-coalition in a bid to gain or retain access to the 'spoils' of [executive] office and to keep them out of the hands of their opponents.

Moreover, the potential for changes in elite positioning and decisionmaking amid leader transitions incentivizes competing elites to mobilize societal support. The opportunity to exhibit leverage during a period of transition provides a compelling reason for societal or opposition elites to be perceived as powerful representatives of a key segment of society. Anderson (1990) and Alexander (1997) describe the ways that "game of political musical chairs" influenced Tunisian politics as the prospect of a transition from the ailing Habib Bourguiba became appeared imminent. Anderson argues that "competition for the succession among party elites fostered a preoccupation with 'position politics' — a concern to be well-

positioned when the music stops — to the detriment of 'program politics'" needed to address economic problems in the country. Political elites sought support from (and the ability to represent the interests of) societal organizations like labor unions and the Islamist trends. With societal support bases, these elites were more valuable to Bourguiba and sought positions closer to him. Consequently, as the country's politics "devolved into a collective wager on his mortality," Bourguiba's pre-succession strategy for preserving his authority and staving off challenges "created new opportunities for protest, and workers, students, Islamists, and others tried to use them to their own advantage" (Alexander, 1997). Raymond Hinnebusch (2001, p. 109) reinforces the idea in the Syrian context, claiming that "…succession may, itself, provide the conditions for such a deepening [of political liberalization], namely competition between rival elites for the support of civil society."

This elite positioning game therefore translates into a change in political opportunity structure for challengers as well. The existence of challengers to rule, whether among political elites or outside opposition, and regardless of whether they intend to contest power or enhance position, creates propitious conditions for political engagement by masses. Tarrow (1998, p. 160) makes the link to societal contention: "When institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities to advance their claims" (Tarrow 1998, 160). As a result, the competition among elites during this transition period "can open up political space for mass preferences to matter" (Hale, 2005, p. 141).

Elite position bolstered by societal interests functions similarly in the transitional period after a new leader is selected. It increases one's bargaining

position vis-à-vis a new entrant. Such a position increases the cost of supplanting that person in the government bureaucracy, and it increases the bargaining power of interest groups and centers of opposition. Contenders therefore have an incentive to mobilize supporters to display strength and broad appeal through public activism. While it confers benefits to the elite patron, the activists themselves expect benefits in return (Hale, 2005). This mobilization includes public displays of contention to show the size and strength of the support base, displays that are less likely to be suppressed during the vulnerable first days of a new leader's tenure.[10]

3.2.3. Political Opportunities

Mobilization and contention in the transition period is not only stimulated through elite-level considerations of position, however. While the fortunes of politically relevant elites are to a large extent determined by managerial decisions of the new leader, the fortunes of domestic opposition, societal interests, and the public more generally are influenced by a leader's policy orientations and tendencies for dealing with dissent. An impending leader transition influences attitudes and expectations of the public that can stimulate action in numerous ways.

First, the prospect of turnover can directly motivate public action if there is significant skepticism over the apparent successor or process of selection. One target of mobilization in the years leading up to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak

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[10] Davenport (1997, 1998) provides evidence that repression decreases amid national elections, though I am unaware of a study that specifically looks at the period of leadership change itself. It is appropriate to be skeptical, of course, that dynamics of succession are automatically consistent with those of elections. Such skepticism reinforces the importance of the current research on succession.

was concern over his presumed successor, his son Gamal, and the practice of *tawrith* (inherited succession) in general (Khalaf, 2011). Bradley (2008, pp. 201-202) illustrates how a mix of uncertainty, illegitimacy, and growing disdain for the Mubarak regime raised the specter of "a bumpy transition" as Hosni Mubarak's ailing health elevated the succession issue. It is worth quoting at length:

> That the short term promises to be uneasy became clear in September 2007, when rumors began to circulate in Cairo that Hosni Mubarak was gravely ill, possibly even dead. Soon vaguely sourced stories began to appear on the front pages of opposition newspapers… The swirl of unsubstantiated rumor and official denial were indicative of a mixture of hope, fear, and most especially uncertainty — for in the absence of legitimate government and regularized routines for succession, speculation and conjecture were the name of the game. Yet however much Mubarak and his regime have alienated the Egyptians, the possibility of his leaving the scene did not generate any sense of elation - or even any relief. Rather, the widespread sense of disgust at his legacy combined with a resignation about what would come in his wake. Everyone took for granted that Gamal would by hook or by crook ascend to the presidency. That such a succession happened in Syria and Morocco, and appeared in the offing in Libya, gave credence to the speculation, despite repeated official denials. Gamal seemed to many woefully unprepared for the task, whether due to his perceived shortcomings or to the failure of the regime adequately to lay the groundwork, only raised anxiety that a bumpy transition would lead to instability with unknown and undesired outcomes. That the devil one knows may be better than the unknown was clear when, paradoxically, it turned out that the health scare was based only on gossip, and the regime moved swiftly to silence its opponents.

As in the case of Egypt, the prospect of succession to a disliked or illegitimate presumptive successor can engender domestic anxiety and the prospect of political instability. To the politically disaffected, such a succession appears to extend a status quo characterized by frustrated political possibilities. It seems to foreclose possibilities of political change, prompting opposition mobilization to carve out political space and extract concessions before a new leader consolidates power. Under these circumstances, the change of leadership itself becomes a grievance around which opposition mobilize. As an explicit target of political

grievances, the succession event provides a focal point for mobilization that otherwise would not have existed.

Second, succession can invite contentious activism if the transitional political environment is perceived to reduce the costs of activism or dissent. Antagonists may view leader turnover as an opportunity to challenge the new leader or assert collective interests with greater impunity for a couple of reasons. The first concerns the likelihood of repression activists face, while the second deals with the target (or audience) of claimsmaking activity.

The suppression of dissent is a recognized factor in the structure of opportunities that condition contentious activism. Kriesi (2004) argues that changing political opportunities must be understood within a larger and more stable structural framework like state strength and a government's usual use of repression. In this view, repression is an element of political opportunity structure that is "stickier" or more constant than others that display greater variation. Beissinger (2002) explains the ways in which a government's disposition for the use of repression becomes internalized by activists and opposition actors. They develop informed expectations about government response to particular contentious acts, expectations that themselves condition their behavior. These "regimes of repression" are "set[s] of regularized practices of repression and the internalized expectations about the ways in which authority will respond punitively toward challenging acts that result from these practices." That is, under a particular regime, there becomes a standard for acceptable means of challenging the government and the consequences of deviating from this standard. Indeed, regulated leadership succession in particular is not likely to generate substantial change in the strength of the state.

It is possible that the "coercive apparatus" of authoritarian regimes displays the same resolve — the same willingness to repress — under different leaders or during the period of transition. However, there is evidence that the propensity to use repression changes, and to a significant degree is influenced by, the political orientation of the ruler. The transformation in the use of repression by Anwar Sadat after succeeding Gamal Abdel Nasser is a clear example. As Karsh (2006) explains,

> In discrediting his predecessor's legacy, Sadat found a staunch ally in the religious opposition in general, and the Muslim Brothers in particular. Brutally repressed by Nasser for nearly two decades, with thousands of members imprisoned and many executed, the Brothers welcomed Sadat's rise to power, and for good reason. A devout Muslim himself, Sadat sought to nail religious colors to his still-uncertain mast as a counterweight to leftist and Nasserist influences. He released thousands of Islamic religious activists from jail, legalized the Muslim Brothers' activities, reinstated many activists in their previous positions, and compensated others for their lost income.

One might infer, then, that claimsmaking groups are especially likely to engage in this probing activity when the previous forms of "normalized politics" and "regimes of repression" are called into question by the emergence of a new autocrat.[11] A new leader is less likely to wield the tools of coercion at the onset of his tenure against the very people from whom he needs to obtain legitimacy and compliance. Activists know that the leader exercises limited control over the coercive apparatus of the state at the onset of his tenure. An event like succession is a significant development in government-challenger relations given the propensity for "equilibrium" standards of state capacity and repression in these

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[11] These related concepts are Beissinger's (2002). Normalized politics refer to a "crystallization of state boundaries" enforced by the state that preclude open challenges. The routinization of this enforcement is termed a "regime of repression" as repressive practices become internalized as "expectations about the ways in which authority will respond punitively toward challenging acts."

contexts. This is especially the case where authoritarian rulers have been in power for decades and have institutionalized their own personalized form of governance. Whether the capacity or willingness to repress changes materially is less important for predicting contentious activism than the activists' perceptions of them.

A second reason that activists or opposition may perceive a greater tolerance for contentious behavior during a leader transition concerns the role of the leader as a target or audience of their activism. Groups with latent demands and grievances may perceive the change of leadership as an opportunity to express their claims toward a new and potentially more receptive audience. It is in a new leader's interest to appeal for public support to facilitate the transition and garner widespread legitimacy, making it a propitious time to make demands for public or private interests. As such, dissidents, opposition, and activists are more likely to make claims on the government when a new leader is attempting to consolidate power through public support.

Whether political challengers recognize these opportunities is therefore an important matter. In response to criticisms accusing theories of political opportunity structure as being determinist, scholars emphasize that structural opportunities must be construed as such by political agents to be operative. Emphasis should be on "elements of opportunity that are *perceived* by dissenters – for structural changes that are not experienced can hardly be expected to affect people's behavior..." (Tarrow, 1998, emphasis in original). Gamson and Meyer (1996) make the point succinctly, "An opportunity unrecognized is no opportunity at all." In the case of succession, we can be sure that activists will be aware of the event itself. Whether it represents an opportunity, a constraint, or a continuation of status quo circumstances is a subjective judgment by individual activists.

However, as a succession event raises the specter of political change, incoming leaders are challenged to deal with this increased potential for changing expectations and heightened political awareness.

3.2.4. Probing, Signaling, Boundary Testing

In this environment of uncertainty, activists and opposition groups face a strategic interest to mollify that uncertainty. Leadership change represents a period of ambiguity over a leader's disposition toward conflictual interaction or the use of repression. The period of succession is one in which claims-making groups and a government headed by a new leader are likely to exchange critical information by testing boundaries, relative capabilities, and proclivities for various tactics of mobilization and repression (Tarrow, 1993). This assessment period is not automatically contentious, but it is ripe for contentious activism as it marks the beginning of a period of interaction among a new configuration of political actors. In terms of a metaphorical game among competitors, the captain of one of the teams — or perhaps the referee administering the game, or both — has just been replaced. Thus, through various forms of activism and mobilization, challengers are able to test the government's willingness to offer concessions or to use repressive tactics. Noting the tendency to include repression as a variable in assessments of political opportunities, Wiktorowicz and Hafez (2004, p. 67) find that "state repression is a palpable and often tragic way for a movement to gauge the tolerance limits of the political system."

Consequently, the succession period presents an opportunity not only to advance claims but also to obtain critical information. It is an occasion for activists and opposition groups to gauge the orientation of the incoming leader and his

government on matters of policy and behavior. These activities occur in the context of a government's disposition toward challengers. As a result, the transition period is an occasion for testing the permissibility of various forms of political expression and the costs associated with different political activities. Dissidents willing to probe the limits of tolerated behavior and expression — "transgressive actions" — provoke responses in ways that "contained contention" do not (McAdam et al., 2001, p. 7). These tests of tolerance reduce uncertainty by increasing information about the government's inclinations for repression. A larger, updated body of this information improves activists' best guess of the likely consequences of the actions available in their repertoire, affecting their behavior.[12]

The fact of succession alone may create these changes, but leaders often contribute to them as well through lofty rhetoric and promises for reform. The possibilities for new political and social realities embedded in the transition add further significance to an event that is already filled with meaning. In this regard, the change of leadership generates a host of concerns associated with conveying a compelling claim to authority and an attractive vision for the future. Turnover in the office "generally taken by members of the society potently to symbolize the society as politically constituted" compels this effort (Potter, 1987). As signals of what is to come (made in earnest or not), these messages are as significant as future policy decisions. Successions are followed so closely for this very reason; they incorporate both practical and symbolic significance. Leadership succession therefore has the potential to be an unsettling time for the state not only in terms of personnel and policy, but also the government's representation of itself as

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[12] In an exemplary study in this vein, Stern and O'Brien (2012) show through a case study of China the value of "viewing the state from below, from the perspective of people who make choices based on their reading of what power-holders will put up with."

justified, legitimate, and even desirable to society. Some theories of political opportunity structure understand activists to be rational entrepreneurs "looking for encouragement for mobilization" and "waiting for signals from the state and the larger society" about when and what forms of activism to pursue (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004, pp. 1463-1470). Activists' experiences with government authority and information garnered through "speeches, regulations, and stories about repression" combine to produce "observable indications of official preferences" that shape contentious political behavior (Stern & O'Brien, 2012).[13]

It is less costly and less risky to seek compliance through the use of cultural resources than through purely coercive means. The goal of such efforts is hegemonic dominance in which power "is not produced or guaranteed by coercion but by the acceptance (even if fragmentary and not fully conscious) of the ruler's definitions of reality by the ruled" (Kubik, 1994, p. 11). As the incoming leader faces the need to consolidate power and legitimize his selection as successor in the face of political challenges, these resources are invaluable. If legitimacy is "the capacity of the system to create and maintain the belief that existing political institutions and procedures are the most appropriate ones for society," (Lipset, 1960, p. 77) then incoming leaders will act strategically to create or sustain that belief. Leaders may change existing social and economic policies and implement new ones toward this end. But along with changes in personnel and policy, new leaders endeavor to foster legitimacy and compliance during the succession period through the strategic use of 'culture' — public proclamations and national initiatives foremost amongst them. Leaders recognize, as Sewell notes, that "symbolic interpretation is part and parcel to the historical event" (Sewell, 1996, p. 861). Succession constitutes a

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[13] Stern and O'Brien (2012) draw on a theory of signaling from Spence (1973).

unique opportunity, and even necessity, for an incoming leader to craft a story of the state or nation that supports their assumption of authority and reinforces it in the minds of citizens.

New leaders are compelled to make these real and rhetorical moves – whether reformist or reactionary – to be seen as leaders for the future according to their vision. Prior to any real changes, symbolic and rhetorical messages convey these intentions, sincere or not. These efforts often entail rhetoric or behavior that is at odds with the status quo ante. They seek to win over skeptics and broaden public support by appealing to societal interests. Reformist language is the means of doing so, affirming a new leader's progressive bona fides and magnanimity. Messages conveyed through these rhetorical and symbolic interventions are liable to enhance the perspective that greater activism is permissible or productive. Demands for political change from below often increase in response to top-down reformism, not decrease. There is no greater guarantee that at least some activists will perceive opportunities than when the very object of their claims indicates that such openness exists.

Empirical studies have investigated this mechanism linking succession and conflict behavior in international interactions, but the explanatory mechanisms apply to domestic interactions as well. For example, Wolford (2007) emphasizes the post-succession period for new leaders, proposing a novel explanation for international conflict participation through a formal model in which leadership change represents "an informational trap" over a new leader's willingness to use force - their resolve. The model asserts that new leaders may differ from their predecessors in their resolve, and that this resolve is private information that generates incentives for action by both the incumbent and his challengers.

Uncertainty over a new leader's resolve persists following succession until it is tried. As a result, the potential for learning through conflict (H. E. Goemans, 2000) is an inducement for challengers "to issue probing demands designed to test the incumbent's resolve" (Wolford, 2007, p. 779). As Fearon explains, "a temporary shock to government capabilities or legitimacy gives coup plotters or rebels a window of opportunity" (James D. Fearon, 2004, p. 290). In response, new leaders face a reputation incentive to appear resolute and willing to engage in conflict when encountering a challenge. The same mechanism of private information and the resulting uncertainty by challengers is operative in a context with domestic contenders.[14]

3.2.5. Causal Pathways Summary

In short, succession is an exogenous factor that enhances the prospects for mobilization. There exists a "liability of newness" for incoming leaders (Stinchcombe, 1965 as quoted in Bienen & Van de Walle 1991, p. 11). Challengers target new leaders because they perceive them to be both vulnerable to challenge and favorable to concessions prior to fully consolidating power and gaining experience. All else equal, autocrats are most vulnerable when they first take power and activists perceive a greater probability of success in the early days of new leadership. Whether from opportunistic government elites, outside challengers,

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[14] Of course, both outgoing and incoming leaders may act strategically to preclude challenges by granting concessions to potential antagonists. But commitments made in a period of temporary vulnerability are dubious. Succession represents an apparent commitment problem that prevents credible gestures toward opposition as a new leader comes to power (James D. Fearon, 2004; Wolford, 2007) and as he consolidates it. From a rationalist perspective, the same logic applies at the level of government-activist interaction domestically. That is, the expectation that the reduced legitimacy and authority from a change in executive leadership would increase the likelihood of challenges.

politically engaged masses seeking more powerful associates to advance their claims, or interest groups with specific claims or grievances, leaders are susceptible to significant challenges when at the beginning of their rule. The greatest threat may come from elite challengers or the dissolution of core supporters in government, and one might argue that publics matter little as a result. However, these elites have social bases of support that they must activate to justify any real challenge. Moreover, political activism need not come in the context of elite competition as activists and interest groups see opportunities to extract concessions during the transition.

The above explanations rely on the notion that time in office – a direct function of a leader's succession to that office, marking its beginning – influences the decision calculus and behavior of leaders and antagonists. On the whole, leader turnover increases the likelihood of contentious activism. Uncertainty abounds, as do political opportunities for societal activists and opposition. Challenges arising early in the tenure of a new leader are explained by their inexperience wielding the tools of power; by a nadir of loyalty prior to consolidating power; by their perceived vulnerability by opposing or claimsmaking actors; and by uncertainty over their reactionary tendencies and resolve and the incredibility of commitments in a vulnerable period. For opposition groups, dissidents, organized societal interests, and others politicized enough to engage in boundary-pushing contentious activism, the succession therefore represents either:

- a continuation of the object of their dissatisfaction and therefore reason to object to it. Here, a leader's early-term vulnerability and inexperience makes the time ripe for opposition challenges.
- an opportunity for something different and therefore a reason to elevate their claims. The prospect of policy change and reduction in

the risk of activism create an opening for expressing interests, demands, and grievances.

- a period of uncertainty over the likely consequences of their activism and therefore a reason to probe the boundaries of the permissible.

3.3. Institutional Variation and Leader Change

Thus far, I have argued that leader turnover is an exogenous factor that alters the relationship between government and society in authoritarian regimes, and that this is observable in the claimsmaking activities of activists, opposition, and societal interests. I have also delineated causal mechanisms that connect the event to this outcome based on concepts of uncertainty and political opportunities. This overarching succession-contention hypothesis does not, by itself, take into account the institutional diversity of authoritarian regimes that have been shown to influence numerous outcomes. To expand our understanding of the ways authoritarian leadership change influences domestic politics, it is necessary to recognize the varieties of authoritarianism that we observe in the world. Domestic political institutions structure the interaction of government and opposition by creating the decision-making context in which they are embedded.

Distinct institutional qualities of dictatorships condition the relationship between government and challengers (Davenport, 2007). These equalities also affect the way leader changes occur (Frantz & Stein, 2012). It is no leap, then, to infer that regime differences condition the way succession affects government-opposition interaction. In other words, because the process of leader change is heavily influenced by institutional configurations, regime type may act as an intervening factor in the way succession affects contention. Institutional differences between dictatorships have explanatory value in numerous other studies of political

behavior. My focus is on the ways that these differences are relevant to leadership change. Finally, I show that these institutional differences produce conditional expectations of the succession-contention hypothesis, affecting the variability of contentious activism we expect to be associated with leader change.

Independent centers of power with the authority to select and replace an incumbent leader are absent in dictatorships. Because of this fact, autocracies are inherently vulnerable to succession crises and the political uncertainty surrounding them. However, these challenges are mitigated, in part, by institutions that govern the transfer of power. In his influential article on dictatorship and development, Mancur Olson (1993) highlights the ways in which rules for selecting new leaders are socially desirable. They reduce uncertainty and the likelihood of succession crises while increasing the long-run concerns of the incumbent leader over short-term interests. Contrasting dynasticism found in monarchies with other forms of dictatorship, he argues that the former give a longer time horizon for governments and expand their "encompassing interest" to provide public goods and govern well relative to leaders with short time horizons.

Indeed, recent research finds that authoritarian regimes are not equally prepared for succession. Ezrow and Frantz (2011), for example, argue that the presence of political parties and legislatures make constitutional transitions more likely, making these institutions valuable for dictators seeking stability in the transition period. Frantz and Stein (2012) take the argument further, linking authoritarian regime type to the manner in which power is transferred between leaders. The presence of institutions that regulate successor selection makes regular forms of power transfer more likely. Conversely, in regimes in which succession mechanisms are not institutionalized, irregular modes of power transfer are

expected. The authors infer that the institutionalization of mechanisms to select successors map directly onto authoritarian regime type; institutional procedures for leadership change are generally lacking in military and personalist regimes, whereas these procedures are generally embedded in single-party regimes and monarchies.

Both studies suggest that the absence of procedures directing the transition is a detriment to domestic stability, but neither tests (in)stability directly. They instead use the mode of leader exit (regular vs. irregular) as an indicator for succession stability. In contrast, Betts and Huntington (1985/86) do measure domestic instability but do not find the institutionalization of succession procedures to be associated with post-incumbent instability. They qualify, however, that other characteristics essential to delineating regime type, including the role of the military and political parties in governance, might be varyingly beneficial or detrimental to domestic political post-succession stability.

Each study provides different explanations and conceptualizations of instability, the dependent variable. For Betts and Huntington, *domestic conditions* account for post-succession civil conflict of varying types and degrees, including various forms of protest, unrest, violent skirmishes, guerrilla terrorism, coup attempts, and revolutions. The other two studies propose that *regime institutions* determine whether power transfers occur via regular or irregular means, which in turn influences the vulnerability of leaders and the likelihood of instability. In this formulation, regime stability is married to the prevention of leaders' early ouster. For Ezrow and Frantz (2011), *parties and legislatures* are the operative institutions. And for Frantz and Stein (2012), it is the presence of *established legal mechanisms* for selecting successors. As Ezrow and Frantz originally suggested

(2011), there is a correlation between the two. All of these studies converge, however, on the notion that the institutional character of non-democratic regimes is a variable that plays a significant role in explaining succession outcomes related to domestic stability and conflict.

The longevity of a single leader in power normalizes his position; in some regimes, this is reinforced by representations of the leader as eternal and everlasting. But succession is a stark reminder to society that leaders do change. Of course, people do not believe in the invincibility of the leader, but are conditioned to accept the permanency of this position. The biological inevitability of succession upon the incumbent's death, however, can prompt the recognition that politics and governance can be different. As a result, not only is the leader obliged to make a compelling claim to authority, but opposition groups may observe the transition as an opportunity to challenge his agenda, basis for authority, or assumption of power.

3.4. Events Analysis: The Empirical Strategy in Brief

Two research design strategies are generally used to test hypotheses explaining variation in contention and activism according to a logic of political opportunities. First, longitudinal case studies emphasize variation in opportunities over time. This diachronic analysis is necessary to examine the claim that succession is a contingent event that affects political activism. Second, cross-sectional comparative analysis emphasizes differences across multiple political structures and seeks general patterns. This cross-national variation is needed to examine whether institutional differences modify this relationship (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 17). The empirical analysis in subsequent chapters

does both. A cross-national examination of leader changes analyzes the institutional differences of regimes and how they produce the *structural contexts* of succession that may influence contentious political behavior. Longitudinal case analysis of Jordan and Syria examine changes in the *interactive contexts* between government and societal activists.[15] The combination of these two methodological approaches leverages different uses of historical data and event-driven methods of analysis. It allows for a convergence between analysis of many cases of leader change and individual ones, and between quantitative and contextual political history.

At its core, this dissertation is a study of events. How we conceptualize 'event' bears on the research design itself. Each of the methodological approaches introduced below follow different conceptual understandings of 'events' and how we might study them. As previously underscored, the 'succession event' might be considered in its most abstract form as an independent variable. Its occurrence and characteristics may have a bearing on a range of outcomes. In line with this high level of abstraction, I first conduct a large-N, quantitative analysis of all executive leader successions from 1950 through 2015. Using country-year data with global coverage, this analysis leverages observations about leader succession in a large number of countries that display significant political, social, and economic variation. Consequently, this analysis forgoes contextual understanding of succession events, instead implementing a generalized test of the hypothesized succession effect on contentious activism that maximizes the number of cases analyzed.

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[15] Kriesi (2004, p. 79) distinguishes between these two types of context and highlights the ways in which the two research design strategies employed here (cross-national and within-case temporal variation) are suited to investigating each.

The results of this initial test provide a first-glance assessment of succession's impact on contentious activism and domestic unrest. It also facilitates exploring general propositions about institutional arrangements, with a particular focus on (1) regime type, (2) the presence of a formal succession procedure, and (3) the means by which the transition occurs in practice. The methods used to conduct this analysis are explained in detail in Chapter 4. Now, I briefly outline my approach to the analysis of specific cases of political activism surrounding leader changes in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.4.1. Case Study Methods

If we "zoom in" on particular cases, the conceptualization of 'event' leads to different forms of analysis. Tarrow (1999, pp. 35-47) draws a sharp distinction between two divergent forms of event analysis. On one hand, the in-depth analysis of singular, transformational events he calls "eventful histories" seek to explain the course of history through exceptional, contingent, and meaningful events. This approach advocates in-depth, narrative-driven explanations and is often concerned with the meaning of these largely contingent events. Analysts and observers generally describe leader changes in this manner. On the other hand, Tarrow identifies an alternative perspective on events that are less significant in-and-of themselves, resembling more typical "occurrences." These are the day-to-day happenings that individually have not have any discernible impact on the overall historical direction of a polity. In aggregate, however, these events may be meaningful for empirical analysis to understand trends, and they lend themselves to systematic cataloging and quantitative analysis to generate "event histories." This approach is exemplified by those who conduct event data analysis, often

concerned with connecting series of events with broader social, economic, and political processes by enumerating large numbers of like-events for statistical analysis.

Together, these approaches, their respective lines of inquiry, and the methods associated with them, inform a multifaceted analysis of the impact of succession on the relationship between state and society. In this dissertation, I combine the "qualitative richness… and quantitative rigor" of these different approaches (Tarrow, 1999, p. 48). I propose a synthesis of these two approaches to the study of events. The benefits of such an approach are numerous. Analyzing relatively short episodes allows one to connect individual events as they occur to more momentous and potentially contingent events like succession; to measure the effects of these contingent events; to supplement quantitative data with data from other sources; and to incorporate narrative history on the meaning of these events and their politics from below. The result is a Sewell-ian thickening of important historical moments complemented by the systematic quantification of political behavior (event "occurrences") that constitute this period (Tarrow, 1999, p. 54).

Employing both approaches to case-specific events analysis highlighted above, I examine political activism surrounding two cases of regular hereditary succession: the 1999 succession of King Hussein by his son and current monarch Abdullah II, and the 2000 succession of Hafez al-Asad by his son and current embattled president Bashar al-Asad. I chose these cases by loosely adapting two design strategies for generating a "controlled comparison" to fit my research aims (A. L. George & Bennett, 2005). The first is a pragmatic approach that takes seriously the tradeoff between the generalization of findings through a large number of cases and the ability to match cases so as to provide control.

As a result, my selection of these two cases incorporates significant points of both congruence and variation. General but important similarities provide greater reliability in the comparative logic of these cases. Jordan and Syria are neighbors who underwent regular successions. Both followed a dynastic form of hereditary replacement of a longtime incumbent ruler. Their respective leadership transitions occurred within the same two-year period, minimizing confounding regional or international effects. And both resulted in the lasting outcome of regime continuance. Both Abdullah and Bashar had "Western credentials" in education or employment and were seen as potential reformers. Despite these similarities and others, the regime types, governments, societies, histories, and political alignments in both contexts differ greatly, providing useful variation.

Second, the diachronic nature of this study with the succession event as a hypothesized "interruption" in a regime provides within-case variation. I therefore utilize a variation of the "before-after" research design that is compatible with both qualitative and quantitative longitudinal analysis. Succession serves as an intervention by cutting the longitudinal case into two distinct periods of government-activist relationships, one representing the incumbent government and another representing the government of the incoming leader (Gerring, 2004). Examining each case before and after the succession event, both quantitatively and qualitatively, contributes to controlled comparison. Individual case studies generally hold constant a number of contextual factors that otherwise vary between countries, especially underlying structural factors like regime type, political culture, and the historical configuration and interaction of key political actors and organizations. As the outcome of interest in these case studies is contentious activism spanning a succession period, the important variation is over time (that

is, within cases more than between them). The government-activist interaction is divided by a leader change, scrutinized separately, and compared; a feature that gives rise to a natural experiment that facilitates within-case comparative analysis over time.

3.4.1.1. Quantitative Hypothesis Testing

For each case, I analyze contentious activism before and after the leadership change. The quantitative analysis assesses the impact of succession on the government-activist relationship through a time-series analysis of contentious activism. Daily incident data of claimsmaking activity provide the basis for establishing whether the levels and trends of activism prior to and after the succession are distinct from each other. The data for the quantitative analysis come from two general sources of event data. First, for the case of Jordan, I draw on manually-coded news articles and press reports from the English and Arabic press. Informed by the literature on systematically collecting events data in this way, I used the print archives of two newspapers in Jordan (one in English and one in Arabic) to carry out content analysis of individual news stories of contentious activism.[16] Second, for Jordan and Syria, I use events data from the Integrated Crises Early Warning System (ICEWS), which codes news stories through a computer automated coding process of news stories (Boschee et al., 2015). Other information on contentious events is often obtained through coding news reports

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[16] There is an ongoing, vibrant methodological discussion on events data analysis and the use of newspapers to produce events data. Void of a universal standard for coding procedures and protocols, there are well-known limitations, warnings, and suggestions on how to collect and analyze this type of data. A few introductory reviews of this literature include Earl, Martin, McCarthy, and Soule (2004); Nam (2006); Olzak (1989); Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhardt (1999); Schrodt (2012); Wilkes and Ricard (2007).

and useful for empirical studies. However, from both sources of events data (manual and automated coding), I focus on obtaining the fundamental characteristics of contentious events: actor, action, target, and timing.

Event data are "day-by-day coded accounts of who did what to whom as reported in the open press," and "offer the most detailed record of political interactions" (Goldstein, 1992, p. 369). The information provided by these reports is well-suited for analysis of the government-activist interactions that are the object of my study. Four crucial pieces of information are derived from event data to provide the information Goldstein describes in his "who did what to whom" formulation. Specifically, this information consists of (a) the initiating actor; (b) their action; (c) and the target of that action; as well as (d) when that action took place. These pieces of information correspond to the (a) subject, (b) verb, (c) object, and (d) timing information conveyed in the text of the press reports and thereby guide the coding process. Of particular interest on the societal side of the equation, these events include protests, demonstration, petitions, boycotts, riots, strikes, and civil disobedience, among others. By coding political events as reported in English and Arabic media, I analyze the frequency of different forms of political behavior among societal actors surrounding the succession period. This analysis therefore tests the basic hypothesis that contentious political behavior changes during periods of leadership succession, particularly in the levels, rates, and types of contentious political interaction.

Statistically, I employ interrupted time-series analysis for the quantitative tests of Jordan and Syria. In this case, the succession event serves as an intervention that bifurcates the single case into two distinct cases (before and after the event of interest). The interrupted time-series analysis works with data

collected at equally spaced intervals on a variable over time. The daily political event data, even if aggregated at the monthly level to increase variation of observations, therefore fits this data requirement. The basic goal of the interrupted time-series analysis is to 1) estimate the trend in the dependent variable prior to the intervention (succession), 2) estimate the trend in the dependent variable after the intervention, and 3) test for changes in the direction and slope of the trend pre- and post-intervention.[17]

3.4.1.2. Contextual Case Methods

The quantification of contention does not preclude a detailed, contextual analysis of interactions between government and activist claimants. My fieldwork also included interviews, participant observation, and archival research that prioritize contextual understanding of these periods. The qualitative, contextual approach serves two purposes. First, field research supplements the statistical event analysis to "thicken" the historical accounts of succession in the context of Jordan and Syria. In particular, field research in Jordan and Syria focused on public discourse surrounding leaders and succession, cultural and political constructs of the event, and presentations and representations of the leadership and government that bears on their legitimacy. The goal of this research was to distill the perceptions of a range of political actors during the succession period —

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[17] With more data and denser time intervals (like days or weeks), more complex versions of time series analysis are available. That is not the case here. There is an ongoing discussion about aggregation of time periods in events analysis demonstrating that aggregation decisions can influence inferences (See, among others, S. Shellman, 2004; Thomas, 2014; Yonamine, 2012). Decisions should be made for theoretical reasons in consideration of data availability and limitations.

particularly how governments attempt to manage the succession and how the societal actors perceive the event in the context of their political interests.

Second, content analysis provides a "cultural perspective" on the succession event. This empirical approach embraces Abrams's (Abrams, 1982, p. 191) view of events, who conceptualizes an event as "a transformation device between past and future…, a happening to which cultural significance has successfully been assigned…, [and] our principal points of access to the structuring of social action in time." I surmise that government decisionmakers will attempt to manage a leadership change by using resources that go beyond the use of coercion and rewards, and that a significant part of this management operates in the cultural arena. At the same time, the message conveyed by the new leader and his vision for the future can be questioned and challenged by political actors in society.

Interviews with a range of actors contributed to this effort. Beginning in the summer of 2008 during three months of fieldwork in Jordan and Syria, and again from August 2012 through May 2014 in Jordan, I conducted interviews with political activists, dissidents, journalists, members and leaders of opposition political parties, local academics, students, artists, and countless street vendors, shopkeepers, taxi drivers, barbers, and others to explore their attitudes, perceptions, and recollections of these issues and events. It provides a narrative account of state-society relations surrounding these leader changes and highlight the causal processes with qualitative evidence.

3.4.2. Conclusion

Together, these methodological approaches yield multi-dimensional understanding of the hypothesized effect of leadership succession globally, and in

Jordan and Syria in particular. My approach purposely avoids the usual way of studying contentious politics that explicitly selects moments of elevated contention as the objects of analysis. That is, research on government-activist interaction tends to focus on moments in which that interaction is particularly contentious. These studies generally attempt to explain why governments or dissidents act in particular ways during these heightened periods of action. In effect, this is selecting cases based on values of the dependent variable. Instead, I select a singular type of event – leadership succession – and observe variance on a number of outcomes including the magnitude, rate, or types of contention. Campaigns of violent or non-violent activism do not direct my attention to particular cases, but instead an event that carries heightened potential for such activity. This study is not, therefore, confined by this selection condition and avoids biasing the general thrust of the study toward contentious outcomes or hostile behavior.

The result is a research design that uses "within-case" process tracing that is strengthened by "across-case" comparisons (A. L. George & Bennett, 2005). This three-part empirical strategy leverages cross-national quantitative analysis and case studies with both quantitative and qualitative components. A combination of time series analysis of event data, interviews with activists and civil society members, and content analysis of public materials is used to produce case histories, establish causation, and test hypotheses about leader succession and political activism. Moreover, the cross-national test of all successions since 1950 provides a general assessment of the "succession effect." Consequently, these methods allow me to investigate political activism during periods of leadership change on multiple levels so as to test general hypotheses and examine how they operate in particular contexts.

Chapter 4

Comparative Succession Effects: A Global Analysis

4.1. Introduction

Some authoritarian leadership changes are brought on by dramatic and sensational events like rebellions, coups, and revolutions. Even when leader changes are not caused by such events, many transitions witness significant instability in a political climate charged by competition and uncertainty. Alternatively, other leader transitions are rather ordinary events void of political mobilization, opposition challenges, and political turmoil. This variation presents a theoretical puzzle for empirical investigation – Why are some leader transitions more vulnerable to domestic opposition and dissent than others? In particular, why do some authoritarian leadership successions induce high levels of contentious political activism like protests, demonstrations, strikes, riots, and other rebellious activity while others pass with little commotion? This chapter answers these questions with a quantitative, cross-national examination of contention and conflict in the wake of non-democratic succession events.

I argue that regime institutions make some governments more likely to experience contentious activism during the succession period than others. Individual leaders do not operate in a vacuum; nor do the processes that bring

them to power or remove them from it. A burgeoning literature on authoritarianism is contributing to new understandings of the institutions and practices found in this diverse set of regimes. Institutional diversity across dictatorships is proving to be an important factor explaining political behavior. These studies show that different institutional contexts condition conflict participation and discord through the decisions of leaders (Lai & Slater, 2006) and their relationships with both domestic audiences (Weeks, 2012) and opposition groups (Carey, 2007).

Datasets have emerged to categorize regimes according to defining characteristics of dictatorships that lend themselves to constructed typologies (Bueno de Mesquita, 2003; Geddes et al., 2014; Hadenius & Teorell, 2007; Lai & Slater, 2006; Svolik, 2012; Wahman, Teorell, & Hadenius, 2013). With significant cross-national and temporal coverage, these data shed new light on the variety of institutions and governing practices in a range of non-democratic contexts. This chapter enumerates general expectations for how leader succession affects domestic political contention under different authoritarian institutional configurations.

Procedures governing the passage of power are central to differentiating between autocracies. Categorizations of authoritarian regime types emphasize the rules governing policy decisions and leader selection, particularly the group or organization from which leaders are chosen. Geddes's (Geddes, 1999a; Geddes et al., 2014) formulation of personalist, single-party, military, and monarchic regimes offers a typology with leader selection and transition characteristics at its core. Rooted in earlier regime classifications (see Chehabi & Linz, 1998; Linz & Stepan, 1996), the leaders' access to office, the benefits it confers on those who hold it, and control over policymaking are central to this delineation. Leader background, particularly the institution from which s/he originated, is a determinative classifier.

Others challenge the focus on decisionmaking as the key factor in the way authoritarian regimes rule (Hadenius & Teorell, 2007; Lai & Slater, 2006). Lai and Slater (2006) emphasize supporting institutions (party or military) that enforce leaders' decisions, as critical to government legitimacy and tenure with further ramifications for the initiation of international disputes. Parties or militaries – the sources of "infrastructural power" of enforcement – are used to "manage factionalism and curb mass dissent" (p. 114). These institutional differences among authoritarian regimes account for some variation in domestic instability and also international belligerence (pp. 113-4). This classification of regimes relies on both the centralization of decisionmaking and the type of enforcing institution, yielding the four categories of Machines (oligarchic-party), Juntas (oligarchic-military), Bosses (personalist-party), and Strongmen (personalist-military) (Slater, 2003). Alternatively, Hadenius and Teorell (2007) and Wahman et al. (2013) develop a typology centered on three institutions of regime maintenance: dynastic, military, and party institutions. Importantly, they recognize the pervasiveness of electoral authoritarianism and the heterogeneity of these regimes, distinguishing multiparty, one-party, and no-party forms of electoral authoritarianism.

The two dimensions of authoritarian power represented by these frameworks and associated datasets – centralization of decisionmaking around the ruler and institutions through which power is wielded or constrained – produce domestic contexts that affect the relationship between government and domestic audiences and their propensities for contentious and conflictual behavior (Davenport, 2007; Ezrow & Frantz, 2011; Frantz & Stein, 2012; Lai & Slater, 2006; Weeks, 2012). These studies seem to cover all dimensions of authoritarianism but contentious

societal activism, instead analyzing repression, international conflict, and the complete overthrow of leaders and governments.

As prior chapters make clear, theory and previous scholarship also demonstrate a higher propensity for unrest and instability when authoritarian succession occurs. However, no studies have systematically assessed the role of authoritarian regime characteristics on the relationship between succession and domestic contention or conflict. Nor has any previous study of leader turnover and domestic contention or conflict had global coverage. Informed by insights from Chapter 3, the following section asserts a number of hypotheses about the relationship between leader turnover and contentious activism in general, as well as the conditioning effects of institutions.

4.2. Hypotheses

For the cross-national analysis of authoritarian succession, I assert general hypotheses that respond directly to two fundamental questions of this dissertation: 1) How destabilizing are different kinds of autocratic succession? And 2) Are all dictatorships equally prone to domestic contention during periods of leadership change? Consequently, the first question provokes questions about the basic relationship between leadership change and the likelihood of contentious action, while the second posits that domestic political institutions condition this relationship. A number of component parts of the second hypothesis are offered to contextualize the relationship based on domestic political institutions by disaggregating authoritarian regimes according to typologies prevalent in the literature. These general and conditional hypotheses are outlined below.

4.2.1. General

Does leadership change represent an exogenous shock that facilitates variation in contentious activism in the period of transition? As explained previously, there is both theoretical justification and support from prior research to answer in the affirmative, though results are inconclusive. The first hypothesis asserts that the period surrounding a leader turnover is marked by an increase in domestic contention where it already exists or its onset where it was absent. The basic empirical question, then, is whether we should expect that "… any process of leadership succession anticipates some instability" (Frantz & Stein, 2012, p. 299).

H1: In general, leadership succession increases the level of domestic contentious activism in society toward the government.

This claim represents the fundamental relationship between leader transition and domestic-level turbulence. But this assertion by itself takes on an element of endogeneity. Because contentious activism can affect the likelihood of, and even directly cause, a change in leadership, differentiating between cases in which unrest is exogenous or endogenous to the succession is key (Ahlquist & Levi, 2011). We therefore return to the conceptual discussion in Chapter 2 that differentiates between regular and irregular transitions. The distinction emphasizes the alternative reasons that leader transition becomes a political imperative and the presence of institutions to govern the process. According to Govea and Holm (1998), regular and irregular successions are differentiated by the employment of institutional rules and whether coercion is a principal factor in bringing about and executing a turnover. Regular successions are those in which a transition takes place according to a set of pre-established rules, or when the new leader is the product of a bargaining process of "consensus-building among elite groups,"

thereby legitimizing the process. Unregulated successions, by contrast, are "self-justificatory" and result solely from coercion — the threat or use of force — to implement the installment of a new leader (p. 134).

It is important to know whether the *type* of transfer impacts contentious activism, unrest, and instability. The little evidence that exists on this specific question is inconclusive. Carey (2007) finds that mass political violence is less likely in regimes that employ institutions to regularize the selection of a successor, but her findings do not address how the transfer of power itself affects conflict because her analysis is not diachronic. (Frantz & Stein, 2012) provide supporting evidence, arguing that institutionalized transfers contribute to stability by impeding efforts to overthrow new leaders. Likewise, Ezrow and Frantz (2011, p. 6)find that parties and legislatures in autocracies insulate the regime from destabilizing forces, and that "leadership transitions are particularly dangerous for dictatorships when they are unconstitutional." Conversely, however, Whitten and Bienen Whitten and Bienen (1996, p. 218) contend that "a leader coming to power in an unconstitutional manner is not statistically significant" for predicting political violence, and Betts and Huntington Betts and Huntington (1985/86, pp. 127-128) find no clear association between "the degree of institutionalization and extent of succession preparations... and the extent of post-death instability."

The seeming inconsistency in findings may simply be a function of conflating two different characteristics of leader transition. Recall that there are two important characteristics of power transfers: (1) the manner of an incumbent's exit, and (2) the process of a successor's entry. Prior research either focuses squarely on one of these factors or blends them into a single variable meant to capture whether (or the extent to which) a succession is "institutionalized" or not. This conceptual

ambiguity can result in confusion over empirical findings. I propose testing both aspects of leader turnover separately.

First, the manner of an incumbent's exit is the crux of determining whether we can call a power transfer regular or irregular. For our purposes, we can refer to this difference as "succession type" with values for regular or irregular forms of succession. Regular forms of succession follow established rules in the country for a leader to be removed from her position. Irregular transitions are those in which a leader's removal from power happens in violation of rules or conventions that govern this process. As such, this distinction is important for dealing with the endogeneity of certain forms of contention in irregular successions. Doing so appreciates that the "type" of leader exit may have a mediating influence on the

Figure 4.1

Leader Change in Dictatorships, 1946-2015
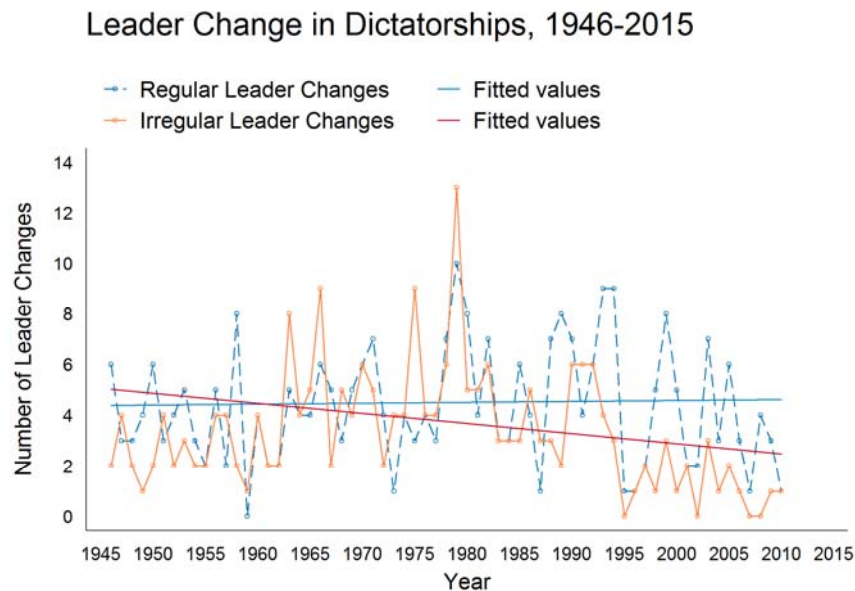
likelihood of domestic contention during the transfer of power. The distinction emphasizes the different reasons that leader transition becomes a political imperative in the first place. In the last couple of decades, regular transitions have become more common in dictatorships while irregular transition less so (see Figure

4.1). Both remain commonplace, however, and represent two very different forms of the succession event.

Hypothesis 2 reflects our ability to assess the effect of regular and irregular successions independently. Our expectations follow the logics of uncertainty and opportunity explained in Chapter 3. Both types of transition increase uncertainty and perceived opportunities for activism, leading to an expectation of greater levels of contention. While we expect a positive relationship in both regular and irregular transitions, those rooted in coercion will generate greater domestic conflict than those emerging through regular means.

> *H2: The "type" of leadership change matters. Both regular and irregular successions increase observed contention, but irregular successions more so than regular ones.*

4.2.2. Conditional

The second important characteristic of leadership change is the manner in which a successor is selected and assumes power. Central to this characteristic of leader turnover is the presence of established modes of leader selection through institutionalized procedures that govern the transfer of power. According to the succession-contention theory, uncertainty surrounding the transition is the operative link between the two. Institutions that regulate the transfer of power reduce that uncertainty by providing expectations for how successors are chosen and assume power. Activists and opposition still have an incentive in regulated transitions to probe the boundaries of sanctioned behavior and express their claims on a new target, anticipating an increase in activism following the passage of power. However, unregulated transfers are not governed by institutions that reduce

uncertainty in the process and therefore increase competition and incentives to challenge. Indeed, based on similar logic, these same institutional characteristics have been shown to affect the likelihood of leader survival early in their tenures when vulnerable to opposing factions or elites (Frantz & Stein, 2012). The presence or absence of these procedures therefore modifies the relationship between leader change and contentious activism. While the first two hypotheses predict a positive relationship generally, hypothesis three predicts that a lack of institutionalized procedures for leader change exacerbates this effect.

> *H3: The presence of an institutionalized procedure governing the transition process and regulating the selection of a successor reduces the effect of leader turnover on contention compared to successions lacking such procedures.*

The propositions made so far assert that succession is an exogenous factor that affects contentious activism and that this is modified by the manner of leader turnover, specifically (1) the reason for an incumbent's exit from power and (2) the presence of established rules governing the process of selecting and implementing the installment of a successor. The relationships hypothesized in these claims are not deterministic. Instead, leadership change is surmised to alter the political context – the playing field among government and real or latent challengers and activists – in ways that make dissent and contentious activism significantly more or less likely during periods of leader change compared to non-transitional times.

Authoritarian regimes differ in important ways. Geddes summarized the need to disaggregate the category, writing that "different kinds of authoritarianism differ from each other as much as they differ from democracy" (Geddes, 1999b, p. 121). I argue that this diversity of dictatorship affects our expectations about the

basic succession—contention hypothesis. It would be foolhardy to attempt an analysis that captures the full panoply of institutional differences among autocracies that is available with cross-national datasets. Instead, I seek to extend prior work on the disruptive or destabilizing effects of leader turnover in non-democracies (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011; Frantz & Stein, 2012). To do so, I employ the same typologies and characteristics of these prior works while using more rigorous methods of hypothesis testing explained in the research design.

Personalist regimes are the most vulnerable to crisis. They are the archetypal "one bullet" regimes and remain so even following a transfer power. When a leader and the state are seen as one and the same, the death of that leader signifies a critical break in the life of the regime itself. Jackson and Rosberg (1984, p. 435) argue that in the context of personalist regimes, "…the prospect of succession is likely to be a catastrophic destabilizing political issue because the regime is tied to the ruler. When he loses his ability to rule or passes from the scene, his regime can be jeopardized." Personalist regimes lack credible succession procedures more than other regimes due to the individualism of the system. Incumbents are wary of appointing successors or granting them powers because doing so may undermine their own authority or prompt early removal. This characteristic of personalist rule is likely to generate a worst-case scenario for domestic stability: "where no established mechanism for the transfer of power exists, leadership succession breeds chaos…" (Jackson & Rosberg, 1984, p. 292). Linz notes the significance of the problem in Mussolini's personalized regime, where "in the absence of an heir apparent no smooth transition could be expected and that any effective legal method to remove leaders in life or after limited tenure could be institutionalized" (Linz, 2000, p. 277 fn13).

Even when incumbents select and cultivate successors, there are few reliable devices for guaranteeing a successful transition. Purging competitors and surrounding a successor with elites loyal to the incumbent and his wishes are common, as was this case in Syria prior to the death of Hafiz al-Asad (Stacher, 2011). But there are no guarantees that these commitments will hold once the incumbent passes from the scene. Because the departure of a personalist ruler creates a leadership void without an established process for successor selection and power transfer, these regimes are most vulnerable to succession struggles as elites inside and outside of the previous government contend to fill the vacuum. Finally, transitions in personalist regimes, void of legal and rational legitimacy, face a more acute crisis of authority. New leaders who hold organizational standing in a party or military derive legitimacy from bureaucratic processes and procedures that create certainty. The personalist leader often lacks such organizational position and seizes power without the support of a professionalized military or strong national party (Geddes, 2004).

> *H4: Leadership successions in personalist regimes are more likely to be met with increased domestic contentious activism than other authoritarian regimes.*

The propensity for post-succession conflict in military regimes arises from deficient procedures for transferring power and the martial composition of their governing institutions. Military regimes tend to change leaders without a clearly defined process, and these leaders lose office more quickly than in other forms of authoritarianism (Ezrow & Frantz, 2011). Because military organizations operate differently in government than in the barracks or on the battlefield, the same hierarchical protocols for rank advancement and promotion are often manipulated

or eschewed, creating uncertainty over who will lead the ruling junta (Perlmutter, 1980; Remmer, 1989).

In military regimes, decision-makers and the enforcement institutions essential to regime preservation are composed primarily of military personnel. Military background and training may create "a perceptual bias in favor of using military force" for dealing with political problems in lieu of alternative strategies (M. C. Horowitz & Stam, 2014, p. 531). Decision-makers and rank-and-file officers may be more supportive of using military force than civilian governments without a learned expertise in exercising violence. The military character of key actors has important implications. Coups d'état are a prevalent form of leadership turnover in military regimes. These challenges from within the institutions of power come from military personnel who wield a credible threat of violence. Those holding power are more likely to respond aggressively to challenges, particularly during a vulnerable period like leadership change, seeing "force as a routine and appropriate policy option" (Weeks, 2012). Consequently, opportunistic gambits for power or greater political positioning (and objections to those challenges) are prone to taking a coercive form.

> *H5: Leadership successions in military regimes are more likely to be met with increased domestic contention than single-party and monarchic regimes.*

In single-party regimes and monarchies, succession is prearranged through institutional procedures that direct the transfer of power. These procedures are commonly standardized in governing documents, whether national constitutions or party charters. Succession therefore operates according to official prescriptions on transferring power that remove uncertainty from the process. Institutions serve

two purposes important for leadership change. First, rules guide the selection of the new leader and how power is formally transferred and allocated to him. The set of potential successors able to vie for power is thereby circumscribed and the final decision is legitimated by a known process. Second, institutions provide continuity for key stakeholders in the regime. They create the norms for identifying members of the ruling group and regulate the distribution of benefits to them (Menaldo, 2012, p. 711). Elites capable of threatening new dictators are less likely to do so when institutions add assurances for sustained benefits under new leadership. Both single parties and contemporary monarchies utilize institutions toward these ends, though in different ways.

Assessing causes of breakdown in party-regimes, Smith (2005, p. 428) suggests that succession may be a "hidden" cause during which "regimes might well be most likely to break down," but finds no support for this theoretical claim in his case studies. Single-party regimes generally handle succession quite well. Succession only registered as a prominent variable in single-party regimes that had, like the Philippines under Marcos, drifted toward personalism through subverting the institutions of the party organization (Smith, 2005, p. 448). But where dictators commit to empowering governing parties with authority over distributing membership and loyalty rewards, challenges are unlikely (Magaloni, 2008). The party-dominant authoritarian regimes are therefore structured for stability more than personalist and military regimes when transferring power.

Succession in monarchies, on the other hand, is a family affair. The defining feature of transitions in monarchies is its hereditary nature in which leadership is conferred by inheritance within the family. These regimes are to different degrees dynastic, with families having varying amounts of power vis-a-vis the individual

ruler. Importantly, hereditary power transfer encourages system maintenance that is reassuring to a broader set of elites. As beneficiaries of patronage and state support, the core concern for these elites is that transition does not jeopardize this relationship. Distributions of power and resources are less likely to be disrupted with hereditary transitions because they maintain standing institutions, bringing constancy to the relationship between the ruling family and the broader set of elites on which it relies. In short, as Montesquieu observed of states without fundamental laws of succession, "a despotic state is… more liable than a monarchical government to dissolution" (Montesquieu, 1977, p. 145).

Further, the formalization of these rules in governing documents hedges against fraternal competition over the throne and uncertainty among subjects that may encourage partisan alignments among different social groups. Billingsley traces the use of constitutions to formalize succession rules among Arab states including monarchies, the only remaining bastion of authoritarian monarchy today. Constitutions are a useful instrument legitimizing the transfer of power as monarchic regimes, like their 'republican' counterparts pursuing dynasticism in the region, move from charismatic and traditional forms of authority to a legal basis of legitimacy. The logic of stability underlies institutionalizing succession in these monarchies, as "the fact that the process is spelt out in clear, public terms is intended to minimize the possibility of challenging the arrangements" (Billingsley, 2010, p. 4). As Montesquieu (1977, p. 146) continues, succession not predetermined in law "produces a thousand revolutions, and renders the throne as tottering as the succession is arbitrary… The right of succession is one of those things which are of most importance to the people to know; the best is that which most sensibly strikes them, such as a certain order of birth. A settlement of this kind puts a stop

to intrigues and stifles ambition." Because institutions specific to succession are generally well-developed in single-party regimes and modern monarchies, we can expect greater certainty and therefore stability surrounding the process.

H6: Single-party regimes and monarchies are less likely to be met with domestic contention in the succession period than the other autocratic regime types.

The above hypotheses respond to disagreement over whether or not the process of leadership succession produces domestic unrest and instability. The first hypothesis questions the general relationship in the context of authoritarian systems. Hypothesis 2 interrogates the effect of different modes of transition (regular vs. irregular) that have been shown in the literature to influence other outcomes. Hypotheses 3-5 specifically address ambiguity over expectations for instability following successions in different kinds of authoritarian regimes. Do non-democratic institutions, which bear directly on leadership change, condition the prospects for turbulence in the transition period?

4.3. Research Design

The empirical relationships between succession and political contention discussed above are tested with time-series cross-sectional data that includes observations of all successions from 1946 to 2014. The temporal scope and sample size varies for individual models based on the data available for all covariates. The unit of analysis is country-year with each observation referring to characteristics of a particular country in a given year. The global scope provides a comparison of a large number of countries that display significant variation across political and economic characteristics, privileging generalizability of the findings. It also includes

a sufficient number of cases for comparisons across regions and regime types. The cross-national analysis is used to test Hypotheses 1 through 5 dealing with the succession effect writ large, how it is conditioned by the mode of succession (regular vs. irregular), and how it is conditioned by regime type. A series of negative binomial regression models are used to test the hypotheses with these time-series cross-national data of events. The rest of this research design section describes the operationalization of the independent and dependent variables, briefly describes and justifies the inclusion of control variables, and discusses a few other methodological matters.

4.3.1. Outcome Variables

Four dependent variables (two pairs of two indicators) measure domestic contention and conflict throughout the analysis. Each pair of variables attempts to capture political behavior into different levels of contention by including one measure of protest actions and another measure of organized, violent challenges. The first pair of variables comes from the recent public release of event data by the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS). The ICEWS data are based on automated coding of events from commercially-available news sources (Boschee et al., 2015). One of the benefits of the ICEWS data is that it includes global and more local news sources. Like most event data of this kind, each observation is parsed into subject-verb-object components that correspond to a statement of "who did what to whom" (King & Lowe, 2003). To ensure that the analysis only includes political behavior on the domestic level, I extracted events for which the source of the action, the target of the action, and the location of the action all refer to the same country.

I also limit the scope of these events to those in which the subject is a societal actor taking an action that targets the government or its agents. As with the Banks (2012) data, I group the events into two categories that represent different forms of contentious action — nonviolent and violent. ICEWS relies on the Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO) coding ontology.[18] Combined with the rich set of source texts, this coding framework makes for a nuanced categorization of event types. The nonviolent forms of contention include activities that generally fall under the categories 'Demand' and 'Protest' in the CAMEO ontology. Common forms of the former include such categorizations as "Demand Political Reform" or "Demand Rights" while the many forms of protest include "Engage in Political Dissent" and "Conduct Strike or Boycott" to "Demonstrate or Rally for Policy Change," among many others. Forms of violent action the whole range of conventional and unconventional fighting and attacks. This first pair of outcome measures offer a fine-grained measure of contentious behavior, but the temporal scope is limited to a roughly 20-year period from 1994-2014. I turn to a second measure of contention, also in the form of events data, to increase the scope of analysis.

The second pair of outcome measures offers a cruder measure of mobilizational activity. As with the ICEWS data, I create a measure of contention at two levels that can be understood as forms of unrest and instability. Unrest captures more traditional forms of contentious activism in which societal interests mobilize collectively to make public expressions of demands or grievances. Instability is contentious behavior of a higher order, rising to the level of organized

[18] For information on the first deployment of the CAMEO coding protocol, see (Gerner, Schrodt, Yilmaz, & Abu-Jabr, 2002). This framework was then developed further for coding domestic events (Schrodt, Yilmaz, Gerner, & Hermrick, 2008).

rebellion or revolutionary activity that challenges the government. Each of these variables is drawn from the Arthur Banks (2012) Cross National Time Series Data Archive and its coding of domestic conflict events as reported in international news sources, primarily the *New York Times*. Eight types of domestic events are separately coded in the dataset, and the two dependent variables in this analysis are aggregate yearly counts of these individual event types. Unrest combines counts of protest demonstrations, strikes, and riots. Instability combines counts of armed activity by irregular forces, assassination attempts, and attempts at rebellion or revolution. The data has significant flaws, not least of which is its sparse coverage of events due to a reliance on limited sources. However, it is useful alongside the more fine-grained ICEWS data for a couple of reasons. It has been widely used in political science research to study civil unrest and instability and therefore offers a good robustness check. More importantly, the data covers a significantly longer time period than the ICEWS data, making possible empirical analysis that covers the postwar period (since 1946). Table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics of each measure, revealing the significant differences in source materials and coding procedures.

Table 4.1. Dependent Variables: Summary Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max
Unrest (Banks)	9,272	1.06	3.66	0	88
Instability (Banks)	9,275	.52	1.50	0	38
Non-Violent Contention (ICEWS)	3,347	78.0	224.53	0	4922
Violent Contention (ICEWS)	3,347	33.54	105.75	0	1245

4.3.2. Operationalizing Leader Change

The primary independent variable of interest – leader succession – is provided by the most recent version (4.1) of the ARCHIGOS Dataset of Political Leaders (Henk E. Goemans et al., 2009). The values for each country-year related to this variable specify whether and when a leader entered or exited power. I use this data in two distinct ways to test hypotheses about the effect of leader succession on contention. First, the occurrence of leader turnover in a given observation, as well as the distinction between regular and irregular modes of succession, is drawn directly from the original ARCHIGOS data without manipulation.

The lack of a succession event in a country-year is common in the data, though there are significant observations for succession events that followed regular and irregular modes of transition. The analysis in this chapter uses leader exits as the basis of identifying observations and characteristics of leader succession. ARCHIGOS includes the variable EXIT categorizing different means by which leaders left office. In my derived coding, I aggregate four values of the EXIT variable to comprise regular successions (SE=1), which occur when a leader loses power through regular means (EXIT=1), dies of natural causes in office (EXIT=2), retires due to ill health (EXIT=2.1), or loses office as result of a suicide (EXIT=2.2). The ARCHIGOS data also disaggregates irregular removal into different types, though the EXIT variable includes a general value (EXIT=3) for all irregular forms of losing office, as well as one that indicates removal from office directly caused by a foreign power (EXIT=4). I use both as an form of irregular removal from power. For Hypothesis 1, a binary variable for leader turnover indicates whether or not a succession occurred, while Hypothesis 2 differentiates between the regular and irregular types of succession. Table 4.2 presents the

frequency distribution of country-years that experienced different forms of leader changes between 1946 and 2015.

Table 4.2. Succession in Country Year by Type (1946-2015)

	Frequency	Percent
No Leader Change	12,040	88.34
Regular Leader Change Only	1,246	9.14
Irregular Leader Change Only	257	1.89
Regular and Irregular Leader Change	86	0.63
Total	13,629	100.00

This dichotomous operationalization (and the typology of leader succession varieties from which it is derived) does not appreciate the timing of a leader exit in a given year. The fact that a leader change in February 1999 is treated the same as a leader change in November 1999 (both coded as a 1 for leader change in 1999) reveals the potential pitfalls of such a measure. The use of a lagged indicator of leader change is similarly compromised. The values of the dependent variables in the following year (2000 in this example) capture unrest and instability a full 10 months to 22 months after a February 1999 succession occurs, but alternatively capture unrest and instability between 2 and 14 months following a November 1999 succession. To deal with this issue, I turn to another method of assessing the role of leader change — an annualized measure of leadership change.

The second approach aims to measure the effect of leader turnover for the twelve months that follow an instance of leader change. It attempts to increase confidence in the causal impact of succession by dividing its influence across the year in which it occurs and the year following the succession. To do so, I replicate McGillivray and Smith's (2008, p. 114) process of coding leader change. I extend their process slightly to distinguish between regular and irregular forms of

succession, a feature they do not include in their coding. In this formulation, the impact of leader change is represented as a proportional contribution to the year of its occurrence (t) and to the year following its occurrence (t+1) measured in months. We can return to the previous examples for clarification. For the leader change that occurs in November 1999, two months of leader change is attributed to 1999 (November and December) and the remaining 10 months are attributed to 2000. For the leader change in February of that year, 11 months are applied to 1999 (February through December) and one month is applied to 2000. For a succession occurring in January, all twelve months of the succession are applied to that year and it does not contribute to the following year.

I then account for two other elements of leader change — multiple occurrences in a year and different modes of transition. I again follow McGillivray and Smith to deal with the issue of multiple occurrences, though I do so separately for regular and irregular transitions. For each of these modes of succession when there are multiple occurrences of either type, I follow the following process. The value for succession year (t) records the month of the first leader change during that year and calculates its contribution to it, as above. For the post-succession year (t+1), I take the last leader change during that year to calculate the number of months it contributes to year t+1. Again, this is done separately for country-year observations in which there are multiple regular transitions or multiple irregular transitions. The measure is then capped at 12 for each mode of turnover (regular and irregular). This constraint on the upper limit means that the maximum amount of each type of leader change experienced in a given year is 12 months. To obtain the final proportional value, the months of regular and irregular succession in each year are divided by 12. This coding makes it possible to examine

the effect of succession for the twelve months after it occurs, dividing its effect on unrest and instability into *year of (t)* and *year after (t+1)* components.

4.3.3. Mediating & Control Variables

The third hypothesis assesses the mediating influence of institutions that reduce uncertainty in successor selection and the transfer of power. To test this hypothesis, I use the measure of "Regulation of Chief Executive Recruitment" (xrreg) from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall, Gurr, & Jaggers, 2015) on modes of executive selection. Three categories represent "the extent to which a polity has institutionalized procedures for transferring executive power" (p. 19-20). As such, this variable refers to a succession-related characteristic of governance, not a characteristic of leader change itself. These categories include *unregulated* recruitment in which succession is not institutionalized, *designational or transitional* modes of transfer in which leaders are designated by elites in the absence of formal competition, and *regulated* modes in which power transfers are institutionalized through competitive elections or hereditary succession. I combine the first two categories (unregulated and designational/transitional) into a single "non-institutionalized" category to be contrasted with "institutionalized" settings.[19] There is a statistically significant association between these institutional categories and the types of authoritarian regimes used to test hypothesis 4.

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[19] Frantz and Stein (2012) use an alternative coding that combines the designational and regulated categories into an "institutionalized" group leaving unregulated observations in a group of their own. Combining these two categories conflates systems characterized by successor selection by elites (an oftentimes competitive process of "position politics" that is driven by personalities and lacks broader institutional systematization) with systems that have fully institutionalized procedures through the ballot box or dynastic precepts that determine how a transition occurs. To my mind, the former are more like unregulated systems than regulated ones.

However, these institutional features do not correspond perfectly to regime type and are therefore measuring a distinct feature of authoritarian institutional context.

Together, hypotheses 4-6 claim that the type of authoritarian regime mediates the relationship between leader succession and contentious political behavior. That is, our general expectations about the vulnerability of new leaders to societal mobilization and unrest requires particular attention to regime structures. I use the categorization of regimes from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (Geddes et al., 2014) to differentiate between personalist, military, single-party, and monarchic regimes. The expectation is that leadership succession increases the likelihood of domestic turbulence across non-democratic regimes, but also that some regime types are more likely to experience conflict than others. From the hypotheses above, leader turnover in personalist regimes are most likely to witness increases in contentious behavior, followed by those in military regimes, and followed last by single-party regimes and monarchies. Variables and data sources used for the cross-national statistical tests are detailed in Table 4.3.

Control variables found elsewhere in the literature to be associated with civil discord and mobilization are included in the model. With little consistency in findings, feelings of deprivation have long animated theories of domestic strife (T. Gurr, 1968). Proxy measures included in many studies, including those in the civil conflict literature, include per capita income (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998, 2002; J. D. Fearon & Laitin, 2003), rate of economic growth (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), and ethnic divisions (J. D. Fearon & Laitin, 2003), each of which are included in the

Table 4.3: Variables and Data

	Variable	**Values**	**Data Source**
Dependent Variables	Nonviolent Contention	Event Count	ICEWS
	Violent Contention	Event Count	ICEWS
	Unrest	Count: Protests, Strikes, Riots	Banks (2012)
	Instability	Count: Revolt, Revolution, Assassination	Banks (2012)
Independent Variables	Leader Change (Year Shares)	$\text{Months}(\text{year}_t)/12$ $\text{Months}(\text{year}_{t-1})/12$	Calculation based on ARCHIGOS 4.1 (2016)
	Succession Event (Exit)	0 = No succession in year 1 = Succession in year	ARCHIGOS 4.1 (2016)
	Succession Type	0 = No succession in year 1 = Regular Succession 2 = Irregular succession	ARCHIGOS 4.1 (2016)
Mediating Variables	Institutionalization of Succession	0 = No Leader Change 1 = Unregulated (includes designational/transitional) 2 = Regulated	Polity IV (xrreg)
	Regime Type*	0 = Party 1 = Personal 2 = Monarchy 3 = Military	Geddes, Wright, & Frantz (2012)
Controls	Population Size	Log of Real Value	Gleditsch
	Economic Development	Log of GDP per Capita	Gleditsch
	Economic Growth	Log of Annual Percent Change	Calculated, Gleditsch
	Oil Wealth	Oil Production Value per Capita	Ross (2008)
	Ethnic Fractionalization	Ratio: 0 = perfectly homogenous 1 = highly fragmented	Fearon (2003)
	Participatory Competitiveness	0 = repressed … 5 = competitive	Polity IV (parcomp)
	Respect for Physical Integrity Rights	0 = no respect … 8 = full respect	Cingranelli & Richards (2010)
	Predecessor Tenure	Predecessor Years in Office	ARCHIGOS 4.1 (2016)
	Media Bias	Total Events Reported	ICEWS
	Intrastate War	Civil War > 500 deaths	MEPV (Marshall 2016)
	Past Contention	Lagged Dependent Variable	

* The in-text results draw on the Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2012) framework and data. Two other codings of regime type were tested and results for each are available in the appendix. First, I included democracies in the empirical tests to provide a non-authoritarian reference category for measuring the effect. Second, I used the Hadenius & Teorell regime type data that, drawing insights from others like Lai & Slater (2006) and Weeks (2012), omit personalist regimes as a singular type. Instead, personalism is a variable characteristic of any authoritarian regime and not a category unto itself.

models. Potential for mobilization and conflict increases with greater numbers of people, so I control for population size as well (Sambanis, 2004). Natural resource wealth, particularly oil endowments, are correlated with the dependent variable and the independent variables in the model. On the former, a large body of research finds that oil wealth is associated with conflict (Ross, 2004), increasing it at low and medium levels but serving as a stabilizing force at higher levels (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998). Oil wealth and autocratic rule are also closely linked, including studies finding that oil wealth enhances authoritarian leader survival (Andersen & Aslaksen, 2013) and the ability of leaders to manage revolutionary threats (De Mesquita & Smith, 2010). As such, I include logged values of oil resources in all models. Dissent and political opposition also occur in a larger political environment that define — often arbitrarily — the costs and consequences of contentious activism. These "regimes of repression" structure the resources and opportunities available to dissidents and activists seeking to assert claims on the government.

In different ways, two variables control for the extent to which a government permits or suppresses political competition and opposition. I use the "Competitiveness of Participation" (parreg) variable from the Polity IV dataset (2015) to measure the extent to which opposition activity is permissible outside of government. It is an ordinal measure with five categories from *repressed* polities in which "no significant oppositional activity" is allowed to *competitive* cases in which "stable and enduring, secular political groups" operate and compete for political influence (p. 25-26). The second variable — the Cingranelli and Richards (2010) physical integrity rights score — observes a range of government behaviors to measure "the extent to which it respects freedom from torture, extrajudicial killing,

political imprisonment, and disappearance." The 9-point scale represents the full range of this measure, from no respect to full respect for these rights.

I also include a dichotomous variable to capture whether a country is experiencing an intrastate war in a given year. Civil war is positively correlated with the outcome measures of contention, particularly the instability and violent contention variables (more so than the measures capturing non-violent protest and contention). Violent forms of contention are more likely to be observed in a climate of civil war than in its absence. Moreover, civil war can also affect leader changes, whether by directly causing such turnovers to occur, affecting a leader's legitimacy and support, or otherwise. The civil war measure is from the Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) dataset that records information about the "systematic and sustained use of lethal violence by organized groups that result in at least 500 directly-related deaths over the course of the episode" (Marshall, 2015). I create a dichotomous measure that includes any observations of civil war and ethnic war.

Event data extracted from newspaper sources can reflect variations in media coverage. Even with a broad sampling of news sources that include international and local publications, some countries may receive a greater amount of reporting than others. Any systematic bias in the extent to which countries are covered in the source material will likewise hamper the results of analyses based on them. I therefore include a variable to account for this potential media bias in the analyses for which the ICEWS data is used to measure the outcome.[20] This variable is the

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[20] It is not feasible to apply the same control to the analyses for which the Banks data was used to measure outcomes. The scope of events coded in the dataset is already limited to domestic contention and conflict, making totals correlate nearly perfectly with the event counts used to measure the dependent variables.

total number of events — of any kind — that were reported to have occurred in each country in a given year in the ICEWS dataset.[21]

Finally, because unrest and instability are sticky (Collier et al., 2003), I expect that contention pre-dating the succession will correlate highly with post-succession values of these variables. Lagged values (t-1) of the dependent variable in each model are included as "past contention" to account for this effect and for serial dependence of the data over time (autocorrelation) that is common to time-series cross-sectional data (Beck & Katz, 1995).

4.3.4. Statistical Models

These hypotheses reflect an interest in relationships over time ('succession effect') and across space (differences in institutional context). I therefore test for a "succession effect" in different regimes using time-series cross-sectional data with country-year as the unit of analysis. As the dependent variables are continuous counts of contentious activity with overdispersion, negative binomial regression is used for estimating the statistical and substantive effects. Estimation with this method is appropriate for a dependent measure composed of discrete integers and left-censored at zero. The results presented here cluster the standard errors for each country. I also estimated the models using country fixed effects, the results of which produce similar findings and are reported in the appendix.

To counter the potential for reverse causation to bias inferences, all time-variant predictors are lagged one year. This ensures that observations of these

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[21] It is no surprise that the United States, China, Russia, India, and Iraq feature prominently in the data. Indeed, there are years for these countries that have more than 30,000 recorded events of any type (not limited to domestic contentious events). Given the wide-ranging values of this variable, it is measured in thousands for the statistical analysis for the purposes of clear presentation in the tables.

explanatory factors precede observations of contention. Finally, the standard regression tables of results are presented for all models. However, for conditional hypotheses (3-6) tested with interaction terms, we are not especially interested in whether model parameters are significant or not, but in marginal effects (Brambor, Clark, & Golder, 2006, p. 70). I therefore provide tables of marginal effects to show the substantive effect of leader change on contention under different conditions (institutional settings). All models are constrained to authoritarian regimes as defined by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (Geddes et al., 2014). Table 4.4 shows the distribution of leader changes across democratic and non-democratic regimes with row percentages in parentheses. Over this time period, democracies are far more likely to change leaders through regular means than irregular ones. In nearly half of the occurrences of authoritarian leader turnovers, the ruler exits power through irregular means.

Table 4.4. Leader Change Exit Type by Regime (1946-2010)

	Regular Exit	Irregular Exit	Total
Democracy	724 (91%)	71 (9%)	795
Autocracy	275 (56%)	217 (44%)	492
Other	48 (80%)	12 (20%)	60
Total	1,047 (78%)	300 (22%)	1,347

Bivariate analysis of leader change and contentious outcomes provides initial evidence of a relationship. For all measures of contentious behavior, both violent and non-violent, mean differences are significantly different between country-years that experience leader changes and those that do not, motivating further analysis. Table 4.5 presents these bivariate results.

Table 4.5. Means of Contentious Outcomes by Leader Turnover

	Mean (No LC)	Mean (LC)	Difference (β)	SE
Nonviolent Contention	73.38	102.07	28.69***	(10.55)
Violent Contention	32.12	40.91	8.79***	(4.97)
Unrest	.92	1.85	0.93***	(.105)
Instability	.45	.97	0.52***	(.043)

4.4. Results

The hypotheses center on how activists and dissidents respond to leader change in autocracies, and how political institutions affect those responses. Each negative binomial model presented uses the year share operationalization of leader change. Traditional regression tables with coefficients are presented, and I interpret the statistical significance of the coefficients of independent variables. However, as I am more interested in the substantive effect of leader change on contention, I focus my interpretation on the marginal effects and present corresponding tables and figures for these effects. In general, these substantive interpretations refer to (1) marginal effects at the means (MEMs) in which an additional month of leader change anticipates some amount of change in contention with all other independent variables held at their mean values, and (2) marginal effects at representative values (MERs) for which the marginal effect is presented over a range of chosen values of the independent variables, in this case, the number of months of leader turnover ranging from zero to 12.

Table 4.6 presents estimates for the general hypothesis (H1) that leader succession increases the level of contentious activism in society toward the government, and the second hypothesis (H2) that irregular turnovers increase contention more than regular ones. The first four models are agnostic to the mode

of leader change while models 5-8 report coefficients for year shares that are regular and irregular modes of transition. Within each cluster of four models, the first two columns report coefficient estimates using the ICEWS coding of nonviolent and violent contention, while the second pair of columns report them using the unrest and instability measures constructed from the Cross-National Time-Series data. The estimates provide support for the general hypothesis, as one additional month of leader change produces statistically significant, positive changes in the logs of expected counts of contentious acts. All models suggest that leader turnover, whether regular or irregular, is a statistically significant predictor of heightened nonviolent forms of contention (odd numbered models). The results also suggest that regular leader changes do not significantly affect violent forms of contention, though irregular modes of transition do significantly increase these violent forms of activism (Models 6 and 8).

The substantive impact of leader change on each dependent measure of contention is summarized in Table 4.7. As regular and irregular modes of succession have different substantive effects, I present them separately. All predicted values refer to a hypothetical case that is (1) not experiencing civil war and (2) is average in the sense that all other variables are held at their mean values.[22] The first row of marginal effects presents the predicted change in the event count for each additional month of leader turnover in a year. The second and third rows present predicted event counts for years not experiencing leader turnover (zero months) and those fully experiencing a leader turnover (12 months). The final row presents

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[22] I also hold the alternative mode of succession at zero months. So, for the marginal effects of regular turnover, irregular turnover months are zero; for the marginal effects of irregular turnover, regular turnover months are zero. Civil war is held at nonexistent for all estimates of marginal effects. All other variables are held at their means.

Table 4.6. Negative Binomial Analysis of Contentious Activism (Hypotheses 1 and 2)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Any Leader Change				Leader Change by Type			
	Nonviolent (ICEWS)	Violent (ICEWS)	Unrest (Banks)	Instability (Banks)	Nonviolent (ICEWS)	Violent (ICEWS)	Unrest (Banks)	Instability (Banks)
Leader Change	0.0862^{**}	0.0934^{*}	0.0789^{***}	0.0379^{**}				
	(0.0293)	(0.0368)	(0.0175)	(0.0127)				
Regular Leader Change					0.0450^{**}	0.0114	0.0607^{**}	0.0188
					(0.0143)	(0.0241)	(0.0226)	(0.0210)
Irregular Leader Change					0.163^{**}	0.207^{***}	0.102^{***}	0.0626^{***}
					(0.0589)	(0.0531)	(0.0301)	(0.0171)
Repression	0.286^{**}	0.396^{***}	0.509^{***}	0.107	0.304^{***}	0.420^{***}	0.512^{***}	0.111
	(0.0875)	(0.102)	(0.0812)	(0.0645)	(0.0844)	(0.0946)	(0.0808)	(0.0639)
Opposition Competitiveness	0.205	0.0373	0.221	-0.270^{**}	0.212	0.0498	0.229	-0.263^{**}
	(0.113)	(0.100)	(0.122)	(0.0995)	(0.111)	(0.0974)	(0.122)	(0.0987)
Population	0.00233	-0.000792	-0.00429	-0.00434	0.00308	0.000431	-0.00429	-0.00435
	(0.00286)	(0.00371)	(0.00657)	(0.00426)	(0.00296)	(0.00362)	(0.00657)	(0.00423)
GDP per Capita	-0.0555	0.0106	-0.107^{**}	0.0172	-0.0534	0.0153	-0.108^{**}	0.0169
	(0.0336)	(0.0330)	(0.0359)	(0.0243)	(0.0332)	(0.0324)	(0.0359)	(0.0242)
Change in GDP per Capita	0.129	0.218^{*}	-0.00395	0.198^{**}	0.158^{*}	0.263^{**}	0.00165	0.205^{**}
	(0.0809)	(0.105)	(0.0781)	(0.0737)	(0.0747)	(0.0972)	(0.0783)	(0.0750)
Oil Production per Capita	-0.00924	0.859^{*}	0.108	-0.00932	-0.0129	0.888^{*}	0.127	0.00561
	(0.332)	(0.425)	(0.376)	(0.318)	(0.331)	(0.415)	(0.372)	(0.315)
Ethnic Fractionalization	-0.0577	-0.166^{**}	-0.0464	-0.147^{***}	-0.0586	-0.161^{**}	-0.0467	-0.148^{***}
	(0.0562)	(0.0635)	(0.0437)	(0.0367)	(0.0545)	(0.0614)	(0.0436)	(0.0370)
Media Bias	0.0192	0.0324			0.0164	0.0270		
	(0.0284)	(0.0224)			(0.0268)	(0.0196)		
Past Contention	0.00778^{***}	0.00575	0.221^{***}	0.376^{***}	0.00768^{***}	0.00602	0.221^{***}	0.378^{***}
	(0.00143)	(0.00404)	(0.0336)	(0.0619)	(0.00140)	(0.00380)	(0.0334)	(0.0622)
Intrastate War	-0.106	0.948^{***}	0.0224	0.942^{***}	-0.102	0.968^{***}	.0227	0.936^{***}
	(0.211)	(0.238)	(0.200)	(0.148)	(0.206)	(0.231)	(0.199)	(0.148)
Constant	0.0175	0.392^{***}	1.344^{***}	-0.256	0.00125	0.351^{***}	1.342^{***}	-0.247
	(0.0783)	(0.104)	(0.133)	(0.246)	(0.0717)	(0.0999)	(0.133)	(0.245)
Observations	864	864	1898	1900	864	864	1898	1900
Log Likelihood	-3794.0	-2857.3	-1805.7	-1388.3	-3786.5	-2843.1	-1805.2	-1387.2
Chi-squared	241.6	254.1	199.3	436.8	252.8	352.8	204.6	446.1

Dependent variables in column headers. Robust standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

the difference in these two values, showing the predicted change in event counts from the minimum to the maximum of each type of leader succession.

Table 4.7. Conditional Marginal Effects of Leader Turnover on Contention by Mode of Succession

	Regular Succession				Irregular Succession			
	Nonviolent Contention	Violent Contention	Unrest	Instability	Nonviolent Contention	Violent Contention	Unrest	Instability
△ per Month of Succession	1.31** (.404)	.093 (.194)	0.028** (.011)	0.004 (0.004)	4.76** (1.82)	1.69** (.476)	0.047** (0.014)	0.014** (0.004)
Predicted Count at 0 months	27.51 (2.53)	7.80 (.892)	0.43 (0.044)	0.214 (0.022)	27.51 (2.53)	7.80 (.892)	0.43 (0.45)	0.214 (0.022)
Predicted Count at 12 months	47.22 (7.88)	8.94 (2.28)	0.89 (0.242)	0.268 (0.07)	194.97 (138.94)	93.05 (59.57)	1.46 (0.523)	0.454 (0.088)
△ Min to Max	19.71	1.14	.46	.054	167.46	85.25	1.03	.24

Marginal Effects at the Means (MEMs). Intrastate war held at zero. Standard errors in parentheses. ** p<.01 for marginal effect.

Comparing the marginal effects of regular and irregular transitions, there is strong evidence that irregular transitions induce greater amounts of nonviolent and violent contention regardless of how we operationalize the outcome. Focusing on the ICEWS measures for illustration, moving from the absence of regular succession to a year that fully experiences it, I find a nearly 20 event increase in the predicted count of nonviolent contentious events. Regular succession has little impact on violent contention, however, as the predicted count increases by just over one event. For irregular transitions, moving from the absence of succession to its 12-month maximum produces an increase of the predicted count by 167 nonviolent events and 85 violent contentious events. These are substantively significant changes considering that, in the entire dataset, the average number of nonviolent events in a year is 78 and violent events is 33.

The substantive effects for the Banks measures may seem quite low. However, relative to the 1.06 nonviolent and .52 violent events we observe on

average in the data, these measures also represent substantively significant effects with the exception of regular successions on instability. The full effect of regular transitions increases unrest by nearly half an event (.46) over the non-transitional scenario, a 43 percent increase. Twelve months of irregular transition increases unrest by one event (a nearly 100 percent increase) and instability by .24 events (an almost 50% increase) compared to a non-transitional scenario. In sum, both regular and irregular transitions have a positive impact on contentious activism. Regular transitions have a substantive effect on nonviolent contention like protests, strikes, marches, demonstrations, and sit-ins, but little discernible impact on violent forms of contention. Irregular transitions have a positive substantive effect on both nonviolent and violent contention, and to a greater degree than regular transitions.

There is mixed support for the third hypothesis — the assertion that the presence of procedures regulating succession mitigate the effects of leader change on contention, while the absence of such procedures exacerbate the effect. The theory argues that procedural context may influence contentious outcomes in the wake of succession, reducing uncertainty when procedures are present and increasing uncertainty when absent. I present the estimation results for this hypothesis in Table 4.8. Country-year observations in which there was not a leader change is the reference category. Coefficients for non-instutionalized leader succession years (absent robust procedures) and for institutionalized successions (with robust procedures) are therefore relative to this reference category.

The evidence from the hypothesis tests shows a statistically significant difference between country-years that do not experience leader changes and those that occur in a non-institutionalized setting for all but the unrest outcome measure

Table 4.8. Effect of Succession on Contention in Procedural Contexts

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Nonviolent (ICEWS)	Violent (ICEWS)	Unrest (Banks)	Instability (Banks)
Leader Change$_{(Non-Institutionalized)}$	0.593**	0.772**	0.370	0.437*
	(0.226)	(0.264)	(0.225)	(0.193)
Leader Change$_{(Institutionalized)}$	0.429	-0.0294	1.093***	0.237
	(0.260)	(0.291)	(0.312)	(0.248)
Repression	-0.0684	-0.155*	-0.0416	-0.157***
	(0.0583)	(0.0668)	(0.0465)	(0.0391)
Opposition Competitiveness	0.133	0.230*	0.0284	0.232**
	(0.0828)	(0.0990)	(0.0799)	(0.0806)
Population	0.276**	0.443***	0.545***	0.110
	(0.0883)	(0.106)	(0.0801)	(0.0678)
GDP per Capita	0.202	0.0517	0.193	-0.332**
	(0.123)	(0.112)	(0.130)	(0.104)
Change in GDP per Capita	0.00315	0.00283	-0.00968	-0.00214
	(0.00393)	(0.00529)	(0.00655)	(0.00428)
Oil Production per Capita	-0.0432	0.0216	-0.107**	0.0323
	(0.0361)	(0.0365)	(0.0362)	(0.0265)
Ethnic Fractionalization	-0.0102	1.243**	-0.187	-0.0896
	(0.380)	(0.473)	(0.364)	(0.346)
Media Bias	0.0195	0.0261		
	(0.0299)	(0.0217)		
Past Contention	0.00741***	0.00581	0.229***	0.367***
	(0.00142)	(0.00312)	(0.0356)	(0.0627)
Intrastate War	-0.137	0.802***	0.0828	0.976***
	(0.223)	(0.232)	(0.204)	(0.162)
Constant	-1.301	-3.599*	-7.083***	-0.184
	(1.494)	(1.479)	(1.194)	(1.008)
Observations	806	806	1779	1781
Log Likelihood	-3477.1	-2582.3	-1613.3	-1272.4
Chi-Squared	240.8	312.3	224.2	406.3

No leader change is the reference category. Dependent variables in column headers.

Robust standard errors clustered by country in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

(though the coefficient remains negative). Leader changes that occur in the absence of transition procedures increase contentious activism. For three of the four outcome measures, power transfers where transition rules are present do not differ statistically from years that do not experience succession. Moreover, the presence

of succession-regulating institutions reduces the extent to which leader change increases contention compared to non-institutionalized transitions. However, the significant positive coefficient for institutionalized leader change in Model 3 suggests that institutionalized transitions may increase nonviolent contention relative to non-institutionalized transitions. The way in which the dependent variable is measured (ICEWS versus Banks) makes a difference in the inferences that we might make about transition rules and non-violent forms of contention.

We can better ascertain the magnitude and significance of differences between institutional contexts by looking at substantive effects (see Table 4.9). In general, these substantive effects demonstrate the same mixed support for the moderating effect of regulating procedures, but with predicted changes in event counts with all other covariates held at their means. For an average country on all other factors, moving from a non-institutionalized scenario of leader change to an institutionalized one anticipates a reduction of seven nonviolent events and nearly nine violent events as measured with the ICEWS variables. Institutionalization puts downward pressure on violent contention with the instability measure, but

Table 4.9. Effects of Procedural Institutionalization

	Nonviolent Contention	Violent Contention	Unrest	Instability
No Leader Change	25.73	7.21	0.377	0.199
LC (Non-Institutionalized)	46.56[b]	15.60[c]	0.545	0.308[a]
LC (Institutionalized)	39.52	7.00	1.12[b]	0.252
∆ (Difference in LC Institutional Scenarios)	-7.04 (13.80)	-8.60** (4.07)	0.578* (0.344)	-0.056 (0.073)

Marginal Effects at the Means (MEMs). Intrastate war held at zero. Standard errors in parentheses. [a] p<.1 [b] p<.05 [c] p<.01 for effect differences from no leader change. *p < .1 **p < .01 ***p < .001 for effect differences between institutional scenarios.

not

significantly. And the unrest measure is higher in institutionalized scenarios than

in non-institutionalized ones. One possible explanation is that transitions void of formally institutionalized procedures require coercion to enforce, suppressing nonviolent activism compared to regulated transitions.

All told, these results indicate that the presence of procedures regulating the transition may not have a straightforward effect on contention. Support for the practical significance of these institutions as modifying the effect of leader change on contention is tenuous. We can more confidently say that these institutions reduce violent forms of contentious activism. The effect on non-violent contention is too muddy to draw a clear conclusion. If anything, more research in this vein is warranted.

Finally, I test the hypotheses related to the conditioning effect of regime institutions on the relationship between leader turnover and contentious societal behavior (Table 4.10). To do so, I interact the leader change variable with the categorical measure of regime type from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (Geddes et al., 2014). To make interpretation of the results more efficient, I present the pairwise comparisons of the conditional marginal effects in Table 4.11. Of particular importance for this research, the results are generally consistent in the finding that personalist regimes are especially vulnerable to succession-related contentious political behavior. For multiple measures of contentious outcomes, the difference is significant when compared with the effect of leader turnover in party regimes and monarchies.[23] Both hypothesis 4 and hypothesis 6 are supported by this evidence. Interestingly, the military regime type does not exhibit a

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[23] When the dependent variable is measured by the ICEWS violent contention and Banks unrest variables, these differences are statistically significant. The ICEWS nonviolent contention measure is nearly so at the 90% significance level. The Banks instability measure shows a significant difference between personalist and monarchic regimes, but not with parties (which show significantly higher values of the instability variable than for the other outcome measures).

Table 4.10. Negative Binomial Analysis of Regime Interactions (Hypothesis 4)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Nonviolent (ICEWS)	Violent (ICEWS)	Unrest (Banks)	Instability (Banks)
Leader Change	0.0435*	0.0141	0.0489*	0.0853***
	(0.0204)	(0.0298)	(0.0240)	(0.0257)
Personal	0.364*	0.506*	0.315	0.494**
	(0.174)	(0.229)	(0.200)	(0.184)
Monarchy	-0.626*	-0.118	-0.486	-0.333
	(0.274)	(0.343)	(0.386)	(0.505)
Military	0.190	0.563	0.865**	0.627**
	(0.176)	(0.422)	(0.265)	(0.217)
LC x Personalist	0.0731	0.125*	0.0740*	-0.0400
	(0.0454)	(0.0541)	(0.0377)	(0.0306)
LC x Monarchy	0.0758	-0.0205	0.0800	-0.0296
	(0.0404)	(0.0833)	(0.0521)	(0.0555)
LC x Military	-0.0347	0.00834	-0.00730	-0.0871**
	(0.0451)	(0.0495)	(0.0380)	(0.0326)
Repression	-0.0458	-0.169**	-0.0414	-0.150***
	(0.0512)	(0.0571)	(0.0414)	(0.0367)
Population	0.368***	0.507***	0.512***	0.115
	(0.0848)	(0.112)	(0.0798)	(0.0720)
GDP per Capita	0.373**	0.256*	0.311*	-0.145
	(0.119)	(0.118)	(0.126)	(0.111)
Change in GDP per Capita	0.000248	-0.00126	-0.00272	-0.00544
	(0.00257)	(0.00375)	(0.00619)	(0.00424)
Oil Production per Capita	-0.0899**	-0.0471	-0.110**	-0.0136
	(0.0325)	(0.0336)	(0.0362)	(0.0304)
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.180	0.856*	0.188	-0.155
	(0.302)	(0.402)	(0.405)	(0.374)
Media Bias	0.00879	0.0150		
	(0.0231)	(0.0186)		
Past Contention	0.00734***	0.00625	0.212***	0.356***
	(0.00151)	(0.00372)	(0.0334)	(0.0611)
Intrastate War	-0.0812	0.926***	-0.130	0.824***
	(0.202)	(0.241)	(0.214)	(0.162)
Constant	-3.183*	-4.855**	-7.857***	-1.121
	(1.427)	(1.695)	(1.288)	(1.149)
Observations	885	885	1943	1945
Log Likelihood	-3872.4	-2938.1	-1819.1	-1478.3
Chi-Squared	337.2	353.5	241.2	442.7

Dependent variables in column headers. Robust standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

systematically different effect relative to the others in terms of nonviolent or violent forms of contention during leader turnovers. These regimes seem not to have a significant mediating influence on how leader change influences dissent or opposition mobilization. We therefore have no evidence in favor of hypothesis 5.

Table 4.11. Pairwise Contrasts of Succession Effect by Regime Type

	Nonviolent Contention	Violent Contention	Unrest	Instability
Personalist vs. Party	2.45*	1.38**	0.033*	-0.0005
Personalist vs. Monarchy	2.46*	1.50**	0.036**	0.012*
Monarchy vs. Party	-0.01	-0.122	-0.002	-0.012**
Military vs. Party	-0.76	0.523	0.04	-0.017
Military vs. Personalist	-3.21	-0.856	0.006	-0.017
Military vs. Monarchy	-0.75	0.646	0.042	-0.005

Marginal Effects at the Means (MEMs) for leader change as year share (months). Intrastate war held at zero. *p < .1 **p < .01 ***p < .001 for pairwise differences.

4.5. Conclusion

In summary, the time-series cross-sectional analysis carried out here supports the general hypothesis that leader change increases contentious political activism. This finding holds across multiple operational measures of this outcome. Regular leader changes increase nonviolent forms of activism alone, while irregular leader changes are associated with higher levels of both nonviolent and violent contention. The evidence is mixed over the hypothesized conditioning effect of institutional procedures that govern the transition process. Significance testing and substantive effects demonstrate a need for further exploration, though the findings generally support the notion that the presence of transitional procedures reduce violent forms of contentious behavior compared to transitions absent these

institutions. Finally, considering the different types of autocracy in the analysis, I find that these institutional contexts do condition the relationship between leader change and contentious behavior for some measures of the outcome. The results are generally consistent with the regime-specific hypotheses — personalist regimes see significantly greater amounts of succession-related contentious activism compared to single-party regimes and monarchies. Military regimes do not exhibit a systematic difference relative to the others.

The next chapter focuses on the particular case of the hereditary succession in Jordan in 1999.

Chapter 5

Jordan

"… life and death are in the hands of God, and when the time comes, none shall delay it nor advance it even by an hour."
– King Hussein bin Talal

5.1. Introduction

Among the hundreds of leader changes examined in Chapter 4, few are as interesting as the Jordanian succession in 1999 that brought King Abdullah II to power. For starters, the new monarch was replacing his father, King Hussein bin Talal, who topped the list of longest-tenured leaders at the time. It was while King Hussein was battling the lymphoma that would end his 47-year reign that he made a last-minute change in the line of succession, revoking the title of Crown Prince from his brother, Hassan, and bestowing it on eldest son Abdullah. Forestalling potential adverse effects of the leadership change upon his death, he wrote a letter to the Jordanian people from his hospital bed in the United States: "Now that I have fully recovered, by the grace of God, it will be merely the batting of an eyelid before I am again in your midst, so that we can resume the work of our nation, with the initiative, resolve, determination, and strength that you have always known from your brother al-Hussein." Three weeks later, back in Jordan, the king succumbed to the cancer. His son, Abdullah II, would not only inherit a crown but

a country with significant social, economic, and political challenges at the outset of the 21st century.

This chapter examines political activism surrounding the Jordanian succession from Hussein to Abdullah II. The purpose of the analysis is to better understand leadership succession by bringing society into our conceptualization of this event. To do so, I shine a light on political activism — the public expression of demands, claims, and grievances toward the government — during the period of leadership change. My analysis complements the work of others who attempt to "shift attention away from questions of democratization and enduring authoritarianism, toward the politics of participation in nondemocratic regimes" (Lust-Okar, 2008b, p. 2). It also adds to the conversation on Jordanian political development, particularly its ostensible "democratic march" over the last quarter century. Prior research has shown the paradoxes of political participation in a country where civil society is used as a mechanism of social control (Wiktorowicz, 2000), and where centers of opposition and dissent maintain an interdependent relationship with the very government they challenge (J. A. Clark, 2013). Scholarship also highlights the 1999 succession in Jordan as a critical moment with significant political consequences. Despite invoking the importance of Jordan's monarchical transition on political life, none of these studies assess the impact of the succession on societal activism directly.

Sitting at the nexus of these two literatures, I ask whether new leadership in Jordan made a difference to political activists seeking to express grievances and make claims on the government. It assesses the dynamics of political activism as the kingdom transitioned from its nearly half-century monarch to a new king. Does a change in the person who occupies the throne influence the way societal actors

make claims on the government? By answering this question in the Jordanian context, this case study contributes to theory-building related to the more general question of whether and how leadership change affects contentious political activism. The chapter aims to: 1) expand the concept of leadership succession to include the role of political activism, thereby establishing its agency during these points of transition; 2) produce an event history of contentious political activism in Jordanian society spanning King Hussein's final years and King Abdullah's initial years on the throne; and 3) explain, in the context of this case, a causal link between succession and societal activism based on mixed signals, policy changes, and perceived opportunities for dissent.

5.2. End of an Era: Hussein's Death as Critical Juncture

Unsurprisingly, the significance of succession was an important theme in the scholarship on Jordanian political development during and after the transition. Multiple scholars suggested that the 1999 succession from King Hussein to King Abdullah II served as a critical juncture in Jordanian politics. After nearly five decades of Hussein's leadership, Abdullah's accession marked the end of an era and the beginning of a major transition in the kingdom. Curtis Ryan's (2002) study of Jordanian politics through the 1990s and culminating with the succession writes that "Hussein's death marked the end of an era in some respects, and the beginning of a major transition in the kingdom" (p. 1). Marc Lynch (1999)prefaces his important monograph on the Jordanian public sphere noting the social and political significance of the passing of Hussein:

> In the eyes of many observers, [King Hussein's] passing marked not
> only the end of an era, but potentially also the end of Jordan. Viewing

Jordanian politics through the prism of one extraordinary man, they could not envision a Jordan without him...

Like others writing at the time, Lynch could only speculate about a future Jordan with Abdullah at the helm whether in the near- or long-term. Uncertainty was a common theme in the commentary on Jordan's father-son transition. The sentiment is exemplified by Greenwood's (2003) discussion of the implications of succession, aptly subtitled "Abdullah's Reign: Continuity or Change?" in which he describes the transition as "a period of extreme political uncertainty" marked by "confusion over which direction 'Abdullah II would take the Kingdom...'" (p. 263). Under conditions of uncertainty, one can only speculate on potential political futures in the kingdom.

The logic reflects what many Jordanian political activists and observers pondered at the time. Abdullah was a relatively unknown entity on political matters, and for good reason. King Hussein's brother Hassan was the presumed heir to the throne, holding the position of Crown Prince since 1965 and occupying the successor role in public expectation. On a few occasions, Abdullah did serve as regent and participate in foreign policy matters alongside his father. These activities did not rise to the level of a public introduction of an intended successor or the kinds of political grooming to which many other soon-to-be-leaders are accustomed. Two weeks separated the appointment of Abdullah as Crown Prince and the death of his father that made him king. So disquieting was the rising prince's inexperience that people expressed rhetorically a willingness to trade their lives in exchange for additional time for grooming under his father.[24] There was little reason prior to the turnover, and little time after, to scrutinize the political

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[24] Anthony Shadid, "Jordan's Jitters," *The Advertiser* (Australia), January 30, 1999

disposition of Abdullah or question the direction he might take the kingdom. To the extent that Jordanians entertained the notion of a post-Hussein politics, he simply was not the person many saw at the helm of Jordan's political future. This included Abdullah himself.[25]

The inherent uncertainty of the turnover obscured what Jordanian domestic politics would look like in the post-Hussein era. Dispatches from the late journalist Anthony Shadid conveyed the feelings of shock and unease that came with the last-minute decision to change the line of succession, and feelings of loss and apprehension in the days following Hussein's passing.[26] There was some concern that the jerkiness of the pre-transition maneuvering would be exploited by latent challengers, leading to unrest and instability. While minimizing this possibility, columnist Oraib al-Rantawi described the "soft whisper in some Arab capitals and bad bets on 'instability' here and 'disorder' there" in the wake of Hussein's death (Jan. 30, 1999).[27] Professional meetings and panels were convened to pore over the consequences of the transition for policy and the kingdom's stability (PASSIA, 1999).[28]

Many experts assessing Jordan's transition reinforced the contingency view of leader turnover. Schlumberger and Bank (2002) see Abdullah's ascension to the throne as "an intervening variable" among other factors — especially economic hardship — that explain variation in Jordanian political stability. They argued

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[25] King Abdullah II wrote as much in his memoire *Our Last Best Chance* (Abdullah, 2011)

[26] See, for example, "Hussein's 'Orphans' Mourn His Passing," *Birmingham Post*, February 9, 1999 and "Jordanians Look Nervously to an Untested Royal Heir," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, July 6, 1999

[27] Oraib al-Rantawi, "*Hein yaktamal nisaab el-taghayyer* [When the state of change is complete]," *ad-Dustour*, January 30, 1999

[28] Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) meeting, "Hashemite Succession and the Stability of Jordan," Jerusalem, January 29, 1999

that Abdullah's consolidation of power and maintenance of social peace was the consequence of strategic choices that were far from inevitable given the significant challenges he faced. Economic and political reforms were anticipated as a direct outcome of the generational change in leadership. Abdullah had political assets when taking the throne that promote a stable transfer, including a constitutional basis, his father's appointment as heir, significant military experience, and youth in a young in society. But these characteristics also impelled him to "carve out his own political identity unique from that of his late father" (Mednicoff, 2002). On the economic side, El-Said (2002) identified the transfer of power in February 1999 as a pivotal moment that accelerated the pace of economic liberalization. The succession ushered in a period of "high compliance" with conditions of economic adjustment programs, a marked shift from previous years that contributed to a reconfiguration of interest groups in the kingdom, not to mention winners and losers.

A big question was how potential economic and political reforms fostered by the transition would affect relations between the government and domestic constituencies, identity and interest groups, and other politicized segments of society. How cautious or aggressive would the Islamists be toward making demands under a new king? How would possible economic restructuring affect tribal support? What would be Abdullah's position toward the plight of Palestinians and the Israel-Palestine issue, and how would Palestinians in Jordan respond?[29] Observers also speculated about how Abdullah would approach the public and respond to dissenting views. Lynch (1999) succinctly contrasted two potential paths as Abdullah took the reins of power:

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[29] All of which constituted the discussion of the PASSIA conference proceedings (PASSIA, 1999).

> The passing of Hussein from the scene and the ascension to the throne of his son, Abdullah, offers both an opportunity and a danger for the Jordanian public… An inexperienced King, dependent on external supporters and most comfortable with military interests, might move to repress contrary public opinion and reassure his foreign patrons. On the other hand, Abdullah could choose to engage with the Jordanian public sphere, seeking to secure legitimacy, shared identity, and popular support through public deliberation.

In the political fog brought by the succession and the ambiguity over its protagonist, the "opportunity and danger" Lynch references is most pronounced for the activists and opposition in the public sphere. The extent to which Abdullah and his proxies would embrace one or the other path was simply unknown; and, consequently, the costs and benefits that might come from the activities of societal interests and activists were likewise an open question.

In short, the transfer of power from Hussein to Abdullah was widely interpreted in Jordan as a causative event, pregnant with social and political consequences for the kingdom's domestic politics. Of course, the transfer of power was not the only factor animating Jordanian politics during this period. A decade-long, top-down, economic and political liberalization project that stopped short of expectations for many Jordanians; political realignments featuring a vexed peace treaty with Israel; boycotted elections in 1997 and postponed elections in 2000; the ousting of Hamas leaders from the Kingdom in 1999; an expanding fissure in the Muslim Brotherhood between so-called doves and hawks; domestic social tensions over national identity, notably between "East Bank" Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin; all of these added to the political dynamics of this critical period. I therefore cannot and do not suggest that the leader transition was the primary determinant of critical politics and activism at the time, or that its causal

influence was direct. Instead, Abdullah's ascension affected the relationship between the state and societal interests through its influence on conditions and factors already present that typically animate political activism in the kingdom.

5.3. The (New) King's Dilemma

What Huntington termed the king's dilemma is a challenge to all dynastic leaders. In short, Huntington argued that modernization and monarchy are incompatible. Traditional rulers are compelled to modernize away from an absolutism that incites direct challengers. But modernization creates new groups with political interests who seek participation in a closed system. The king's options are limited, and steps toward political liberalization to incorporate these groups undermine his centralized authority. As Ottaway and Dunne summarize, "limited reforms introduced from the top often increase rather than decrease bottom-up demand for radical change. The unintended consequence of even modest reforms may be an out-of-control change that wipes out the very ruling elite who initiated the reform" (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2009, p. 18).

Obtaining legitimacy and support after assuming power involve a range of tactics that exacerbate the king's dilemma. Efforts at legitimization require decisions and behaviors that play differently to different audiences, and procuring the support of some segments of society may come at the expense of support from others. Succession in Jordan, as in many other cases of leader turnover, puts in stark relief the traditional bases of monarchism on one hand, and the future-looking reforms toward modernization on the other. In Owen Kirby's (2000) optimistic article in support of Middle Eastern monarchy "Want Democracy? Get a King," he argues that leader turnover can facilitate democratization away from monarchic

authoritarianism because a new monarch may recognize that democratization furthers his claim to rule when he most needs it. However, others like Lucas take a more critical view, countering that young monarchs may be inclined to entertain political pluralism, but "the privileges of the throne offer too attractive a prize" to sponsor a full transition to democracy (Lucas, 2004). So new monarchs generally occupy the mantle of political liberalization with limited intentions to actually transform the fundamental nature of non-democratic politics.

No one faces the king's dilemma like a new king. Few other moments in the life of a regime highlight the exclusionary nature of monarchic authoritarianism more clearly than when a new leader ascends to the throne in manifestly undemocratic fashion. The imperative to modernize is especially pronounced in this moment of anticipation. The new leader must establish legitimacy, often through a range of tactics that aim to shore up support among key constituencies. Schlumberger and Bank (2002) highlight six in the Jordanian context: religious-traditional, allocative (patronage), political liberalization, economic performance, discourse, and charisma. Like other Arab leaders, Abdullah would need to blend these sources of legitimacy to produce a compelling case for public support.

Three things are notable from the way Bank and Schlumberger assess the relative legitimacy of King Hussein and King Abdullah II. First, Abdullah's legitimacy at the time was predominantly supplied by religious-traditional appeal as a member of the Hashemite family and descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, by his rhetoric emphasizing economic development, and by early successes on economic policy. Second, the trajectories of legitimation of each king — and therefore the monarchy — trends in opposite directions. Through most of the 1990s, King Hussein's legitimacy was on the wane and sloping downward. Both

domestic and foreign politics of the decade prior to Hussein's death negatively impacted his support at home. Conversely, King Abdullah's legitimacy, as a relatively unknown political figure, increased gradually after taking the reins of power but was initially based almost solely on religious-traditional conceptions authority. In other words, the leadership transition came at a nadir of monarchic legitimacy in the kingdom. Third, the authors link legitimacy and political stability, suggesting that the absence of the former inherently reduces the latter. It follows from these two ideas that stable political order was least guaranteed (or political dynamism most likely) as the transfer of power occurred. As Shryock (2000) wrote from his extensive fieldwork, "Because Hussein had publicly acknowledged having cancer, however — an exceptional revelation for an Arab leader — Jordanians were forced to ponder the consequences of his death." People put forward "elaborate models of the discord, civil war, and external military intervention that might come to pass in the post-Hussein future" (p. 61).

A decade after the inauguration of its liberalization program via a number of nominally democratic initiatives, the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan would face these challenges of dynastic transition. The transition itself was attached to a number of important processes and outcomes. Many scholars examined the cultural and symbolic realm, including government efforts to legitimize Abdullah's rule by playing with the complex contours of Jordanian national and religious identities (Al Oudat & Alshboul, 2010; Browers, 2011; Kiamie, 2008; Nanes, 2010; Shryock, 2000). Others examined the foreign relations implications of the transition (Ryan, 2004, 2009; Sasley, 2002). And still others, recognizing Abdullah's prioritization of domestic issues over external concerns, examined material changes in political approach under the new king (Lucas, 2003; Ryan, 2002), a kind of "contained

pluralism" based on limited economic reforms and democratic initiatives, and a softening toward dissent (Yom, 2009, p. 155).[30] The subject of societal activism and dissent is regularly invoked in the analyses of this period, but generally in the context of broader political trends that eschew the role of succession itself.

5.4. Political Activism in Jordan

The state-society relations in Jordan are poorly articulated because the state, political society, and civil society are not sufficiently autonomous. The king wields tremendous power in Jordan's constitutional monarchy. The configuration of state institutions guarantees monarchic supremacy over policymaking, providing an automatic answer to the question, "Who decides?" The Prime Minister, cabinet, and Senate all serve at the pleasure of the king and are appointed by him, as are judges. Legislation is approved or vetoed by him, if not ruled by decree. Parliamentary authority is highly circumscribed, so much so that drafting new laws is outside of its purview. The king is also able to dissolve the lower house and reconstitute it through new elections, further neutering the body. As commander-in-chief, the king also sits atop the military hierarchy, bolstered in practice by the tangible military bona fides of both King Hussein and King Abdullah. In short, the king's perch is an encompassing one. He not only sits above state institutions in decisionmaking capacity, but has the capacity to manipulate those institutions in ways that enforce acquiescence and compliance.

The king is not only the center of authority, but with the royal court is the source of state provisions to which societal interests appeal for favor and

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[30] That Abdullah sought to focus his efforts on the home front was a common refrain in interviews.

allowances. One NGO leader described the relations between the state and society as that of a mother bird and her chicks. "The chicks say "chirp chirp chirp" with their mouths open, and the mother bird feeds one or two and they get quiet. Then other chicks start chirping, and they get a little food and get quiet. And it goes like this. This one, 'chirp, chirp'… quiet. Another one, 'chirp, chirp'… quiet."[31] Similarly, and reflecting the patriarchal aspect of monarchism in Jordan, Ellen Lust describes the king as "the 'father' of bickering children" (Lust-Okar, 2005, p. 48).[32]

As a consequence of this concentration of power, the presence of civilian political institutions like parties, legislatures, and elections imply inclusion in decisionmaking authority where there is little in practice. Political parties have long been weak and ineffectual sources of opposition (Lust-Okar, 2001), a condition driven by institutional manipulation, fragmentation, and a narrative of weakness that creates a self-fulfilling prophecy (Martínez, 2017). Instead, Jordanian political society provides an "arena for significant competition over access to state resources," a patronage seeking effort that Ellen Lust refers to as "competitive clientelism" (Lust-Okar, 2008a). It is through this distributional mechanism that the bicameral legislature — its appointed Senate and elected House of Representatives — fulfills an important functional role as an intermediary between the state and citizens. Parliamentarians are expected to use *wasta* (mediation) for the benefit of their voters and supporters. They are expected to access and allocate state resources to their constituents, often in the form of jobs, licenses, university

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[31] Interview with SH.

[32] One reformist likened the activities of some of the stronger societal groups, particular the Muslim Brotherhood and tribes, to "engaging in extortion" by threatening to withdraw loyalty or otherwise defect unless state resources — of material or political value — are provisioned.

positions, interventions in disputes, forgiveness of fines or other obligations, and investments in services and infrastructure.

Jordanian political society, then, is not one where "political alternatives and choices compete and are deliberated by political actors" as expected in democracies (Ekiert & Kubik, 1999, p. 82). Parties in the kingdom are therefore not only weak, but the functional role of aggregating interests into policy recommendations is subordinate to other concerns. However, these institutions do serve an intermediary role between state and citizen in a clientelistic manner, and they participate through formal state institutions. To the extent that they are oppositional and voice societal demands, parties use electioneering and parliamentary debate as outlets for advancing their aims. The Muslim Brotherhood's political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF - *Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami*) is the primary antagonist in this arena, though leftist parties also constitute part of the electoral opposition to a large base of 'loyalist' tribal coalitions and independents.

Alternatively, informal sources of opposition exist outside of these institutions, animating a Jordanian civil society that saw significant expansion in size in the 1990s. Professional associations, the Muslim Brotherhood, student associations, women's groups, advocacy organizations, tribes, and others aggregate and advance their interests through associational activities. Clark (1995) distinguishes between supply versus demand NGOs.[33] Those on the supply side are generally registered as charitable groups and provide services. The demand side groups mobilize citizens around issues of concern and express their interests publicly. It is on this side of civil society that some groups trend more political,

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[33] Wiktorowicz (2002) also applies this distinction to the non-governmental organization sector in Jordan.

engaging in critical politics that at times is expressed in more contentious forms of action. However, even a brief look at Jordanian politics leads one to observe a further divide on the "demand side" of civil society that one university student participating in a youth activism training session called the "dialogue track and the dissident track." In his view, similar to that of many other activists I interviewed, "the government wants a friendly civil society where nothing is critical and everything is constructive."[34] Another activist summarized:

> Ultimately, civil society is not effective because it is not meant to be effective. It has been completely circumscribed by the government and the security system. They hold all the necessary tools to make civil society what they want it to be. These groups bring a lot of money into the kingdom. They use it in a way that is useful for the government — they give young people something to do. For them it's fun. It's something to do. And the government can claim that these initiatives enhance reform and change. But there is no change. This civil society cannot be effective.

Absent strong political parties, professional associations and the Muslim Brotherhood have been the center of organized societal activism with a more dissident bent.

The blurred lines between these formal and informal sources of activism make it somewhat difficult to delineate them fully. The professional associations, for example, are led by elected boards and presidents who line up with the major political parties and trends in the kingdom. They were a focal point for electoral competition during the 25-year period of martial law that imposed restrictions on civil society, banned political parties, and for many years even shuttered parliament. Twelve in total, these associations are legally prescribed and therefore

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[34] Interview with AM

fulfill some state functions, but also enjoy significant autonomy. Consequently, the professional associations "effectively have acted as institutions of the opposition throughout most of their history." Tribes, too, dull the theoretically bright line between civil and political society in Jordan. While tribal groups are more parochial institutions based on kinship, they serve numerous mediating roles between the state and citizens, among others (Antoun, 2000). For one, tribal institutions serve as a site of conflict resolution, structuring consultative interaction with the state and serving as a conduit for concessions. State-sponsored patronage also flows through tribal networks. However, when the relationship breaks down, rural tribal voices in particular have risen to challenge the regime; they have been the center of agitation and riots during Jordan's most critical periods of economic crisis. At the same time, tribes are in many ways incorporated into formal politics at the national level by virtue of their societal reach and legacy, including many positions in the king's *diwan.*

Despite these conceptual challenges, I seek to analyze the contentious activism of societal interests constituted outside of the formal political realm. I therefore do not examine the formal opposition behavior of political parties and electioneering that are the focus of so much other literature on political participation in the kingdom. Party elites within the legal opposition to the government, including the Islamic Action Front, tend to think of themselves as an integral part of the regime itself, not inherently separate from it (Lust-Okar, 2005, p. 83), so my focus remains on societal manifestations of opposition and activism. Nor do I consider the activities of societal groups that are sponsored by a member

of the royal family, or so-called RNGOs ("Rongos"), to be germane to this analysis.[35]

Finally, civil society in the kingdom exists in a variable climate of suppression. In a later section of this chapter, the opening and closing of political space in the kingdom is examined more fully. Like other nondemocratic contexts, forms of bureaucratic and institutional control combine with restrictions on political activities and expression in the kingdom. The acts of contention and dissent I examine are of greater consequence under these repressive conditions than in a free society. Where permission is not forthcoming and costs of acting without it are high, rather benign events are rendered more notable. That this is the case theoretically is only reinforced by the fact that it is the government who deems them especially significant through its decisions to restrict or prevent them in the first place. In the following section, I present quantitative analysis of contentious activism in Jordan, followed by a narrative case study that examines activism surrounding the succession more fully.

5.5. Methods & Data

The Jordanian case represents something approaching a "tough test" for the hypothesized succession-contention connection. That is, it is a case of leader transition relatively unlikely — when compared to others — to feature the succession-contention dynamic. Specifically, the characteristics of succession in Jordan "only weakly predict an outcome or predict a low-magnitude outcome" as it relates to contentious activism (A. L. George & Bennett, 2005). This is for at

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[35] Wiktorowicz (2002) and Debre (2014) explain the way these particular organizations monopolize resources and serve strategic purposes of the government.

least two reasons. First, the dynastic mechanism of primogeniture embedded in the Jordanian constitution creates certainty over successor selection and procedures of transition. The resulting reduction of uncertainty due to these institutions makes heightened contention less likely, as the results reported in Chapter 4 show. Second, Jordanian opposition relies heavily, based in part on historical legacy, on discursive action in the public sphere. Conferences and other forms of consultation are an important element of state-society interaction in the kingdom. However, these modes of discursive action are generally excluded from my analysis as I focus on contentious forms of public activism. There are explicit reasons for this aside from the fact that not all activity in the public sphere is contentious, including most of these consultative gatherings. The biggest problem is that many of these conferences and symposia are organized under royal patronage. The civil society sector in Jordan is large, and a recognizable distinction is made between royal NGOs ("Ringos" or "Rongos" depending on who you talk to) and the more organic civil society groups. Consequently, I did not code these for the quantitative analysis.

I use both quantitative and contextual approaches to examine the question of a succession effect on political activism in Jordan. The former draws on event data analysis of from local English and Arabic newspaper reports of contentious political activism. Qualitative case analysis supported by two years of fieldwork, including archival research and dozens of interviews. These methods add context and facilitate explanation of the causal processes operative in this particular case. The following sections correspond to these methods, explaining the data and methods used and the results of each analysis.

5.5.1. Events Data

Quantitative events data analysis offers a general picture of trends in political activism in the kingdom. In particular, the data charts the political activism reported in Jordan in the years immediately preceding and following the transition from King Hussein to King Abdullah II, splitting the case into two temporal periods. This before-and-after design facilitates a comparison of opposition activity and dissident behavior under both leaders in the period directly surrounding the succession.

Detailed information about contentious events was obtained through standard procedures for systematically collecting and coding newspaper accounts. Informed by the abundant literature on collecting and analyzing events data from news reports (Earl et al., 2004; Nam, 2006; Olzak, 1989; Rucht et al., 1999; Schrodt, 2012; Wilkes & Ricard, 2007), I outline below the basic components of this process particularly relevant for this dissertation.[36] Event data are "day-by-day coded accounts of who did what to whom as reported in the open press," and "offer the most detailed record of... interactions" among political actors (Goldstein, 1992, p. 369). The information provided by these reports is well-suited for analysis of contentious political activism. Specifically, this information consists of (a) the initiating actor; (b) their action; (c) and the target of that action; as well as (d) when that action took place.

Following Ekiert and Kubik's (1999) operationalization of "protest event," I adopt a broad definition of "contentious activism" in order to cover a wide range

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[36] There is no single, consensual standard for coding newspaper data on collective action events. The literature on this topic, however, provides many lessons – and warns of many pitfalls and challenges – that form a set of good practices. To the extent possible within the scope and limits of this research, I tried to apply them throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

of "noninstitutionalized and unconventional collective public action." The events of interest for coding and analysis follow some fundamental attributes: 1) the event is a statement of action reported in a media source and is therefore rendered public; 2) the event was "distinct enough from the constant flow of 'transactions'… to stand out against this background as 'reportable' or 'newsworthy'" (Azar, 1982), 3) the event occurred outside of defined institutional processes of the state and political sphere, 4) the event was "undertaken to articulate certain specific demands" or grievances (Ekiert & Kubik, 1999), and 5) the government was the primary object of the grievances, demands, or claims being levied. These definitional attributes guided the identification of events. I used two sources of events data for the analysis of activism in Jordan before and after the leader turnover. The first, emphasizing the immediate term before and after succession (1997-2001), is a set of manually coded news stories from local Jordanian news publications (what I will refer to as the 'locally sourced' data). The second draws on the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data discussed in detail in chapter 4.

For the locally sourced dataset, the underlying information is drawn from news stories from two Jordanian newspapers: the English-language daily *The Jordan Times* and the Arabic-language daily *Al-Arab Al-Yawm*. Content analysis of both newspapers spanning January 1997 through March 2001 produced a dataset of claims-making events by societal actors for analysis via time series methods. The process is onerous and time-consuming, so I followed a protocol that aimed to balance the need for both efficiency and broad coverage. As a result, I first read every issue of The Jordan Times spanning this period and coded stories that contained events meeting the above definition of contentious political activism.

Following the same coding protocol, I then read and coded stories over the same time period from Sunday and Thursday issues of *Al-Arab Al-Yawm* in the following four sections: Front Page; Jordan Issue (*shu'un Urduniyya*); Jordan Today (*al-Urdun al-Yawm*); Provinces (*Muhafazaat*). When both newspapers reported on the same event, I tagged them as duplicates and dropped one from the final analysis so as not to have duplicate observations that would artificially increase the amount of contentious activism observed.

The fifth attribute of those outlined above — the government being the primary object or target of the action — was particularly challenging for coding in the Jordanian context. The main reason is that many protest activities simultaneously levy claims and grievances against Israel and the Jordanian government. These activities are usually in response to specific incidents in the broader context of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories, the now multi-generational plight of Palestinian refugees, and recurring antagonisms and flare-ups on the Haram al-Sharif over which Jordan has custodianship. To be sure, activists direct their grievances toward Israel. However, many of these activities include explicit, full-throated demands on the Jordanian government that aim to challenge the state's relationship with Israel and the 1994 peace treaty between them. For coding purposes, I do my best to only count those events for which these claims against the Jordanian government are apparent in the story. For cases in which a news story reports on activists directing claims toward Israel or some other non-Jordanian entity alone, I exclude them from the analysis.

I supplement this short-term, manually coded, local source material with the ICEWS dataset. This allows the analysis to extend beyond the four years immediately surrounding the succession to make inferences about the duration of

any observed effect; that is, whether it is transient or enduring. It also serves as a check on the validity of the results obtained from the locally sourced data. With these ICEWS data, I examine the period 1995-2010, applying the same conditions on the data as in Chapter 4. This time, however, I aggregate events monthly instead of yearly to allow for greater variation and precision in the measure of contentious political activism.

5.5.1.1. Basic Analysis of Locally Sourced Data

The original locally sourced dataset of "protest events" includes information on 491 discrete events from January 1, 1997 through March 31, 2001. However, after filtering out events for which the government is not a target of the demands or actions of the claimants, the dataset includes 450 events. The result is a daily events dataset of contentious activism spanning two years prior to the succession and two years following it. Table 5.1 shows a breakdown of the events reported in the newspaper sample by type.[37]

As an initial step, we can compare contentious activism in the pre- and post-succession periods. The hypothesis is that contentious political activity will be observed at a higher rate in the two years following the succession than in the two years before it. Figure 5.1 plots the contentious activities over time with King Hussein's death marking the represented as the bold line intersecting the series in

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[37] Note that for the following analyses, I do not include all event types. As mentioned, I am most interested in collective behavior. While I consider the voicing of demands to constitute action, it is too difficult to discern whether (and which) demand events grow out of collective mobilization as opposed to, say, an organization's media office issuing a statement or a government-sanctioned conference yielding critical remarks. As a result, I do not include "voice" in the analysis unless there is an explicit threat of collective public action if the government does not respond to the demand. As a result, we keep the 40 "threat" events but exclude the 111 "demand" events.

Table 5.1. Event Count by Type

Event Type	Frequency
Attack	8
Demand	111
Protest	279
Riot	7
Threat	40
Petition	30
Strike	53

Reported events in al-Arab al-Yawm and
the Jordan Times (January 1997 –
March 2001)

the center. Linear predictions are also plotted to reveal the trends associated with the observed values of events over time. Prior to the succession (left-hand side), the linear prediction slopes downward and observations of contentious activism are sparser — though not infrequent — than following the leader change. In Abdullah's

Figure 5.1

Jordan Contentious Activism Events (1997-2001)
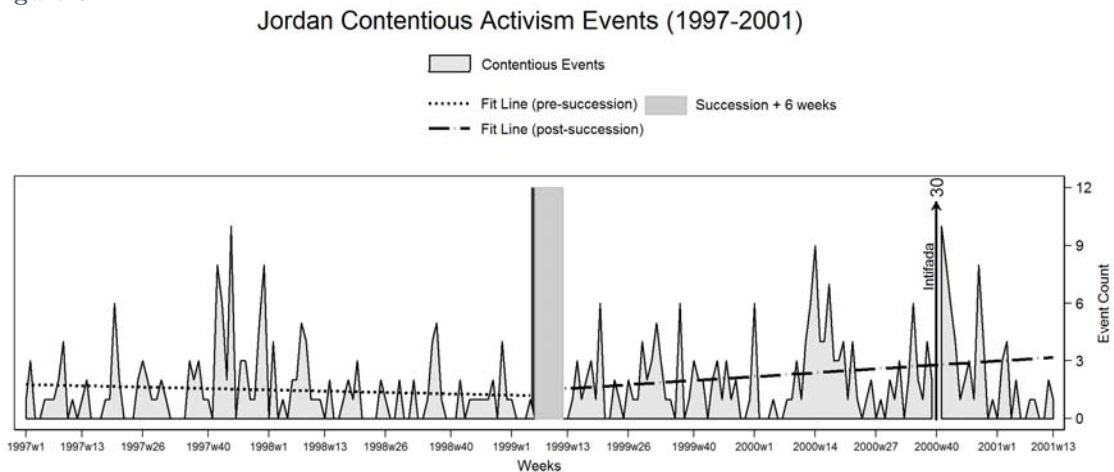
first two years (right-hand side), contentious societal events occur at a greater rate with many weeks witnessing multiple events.

As I expect the direction of the relationship to be positive, I conduct a one-tailed t-test (Table 5.2). Because the onset of the second intifada accounts for a significant amount of contentious activism, I drop those observations from the

analysis thereby making it a harder test of a statistically significant difference in activism between pre- and post-succession periods. Still, the results show that the mean level of reported contentious activism in the two final years of King Hussein's rule is significantly less than that of the first two years of his son's rule. Contentious activism is nearly 40 percent greater in the post-succession period compared to the pre-succession period. The difference is roughly half of an event every week (or one event every two weeks or two events per month). As the weekly average of events across the entire time period is 1.6, this difference is not only statistically significant but substantively significant as well.

Table 5.2. Difference of Means Pre- and Post-Succession

Time Period	Weeks	Mean Count	
Pre-Succession	109	1.339	(.178)
Post-Succession	111	1.848	(.196)
Difference		0.498*	(.265)
t statistic		1.879	

Standard errors in parentheses; * p<.05 (one-tailed t test)
First two weeks of Second Intifada excluded

These figures and the difference of means statistical test are informative. They suggest that the two years before and after the ascension of King Abdullah to the throne represent distinct periods of political activism in the kingdom. However, because we are examining protest events over time, it is important to more explicitly account for the temporal dynamics in the data. This is especially necessary to deal with the serial dependence (autocorrelation) of the dependent variable as contentious activism in time t is likely to affect the amount of activism in time $t+1$. To deal with this issue, I now turn to explicit time series modeling.

5.5.1.2. Intervention Analysis of Locally Sourced Data

I employ interrupted time-series analysis to further quantitatively analyze the hypothesized "succession effect" in Jordan. In this case, the succession event serves as an intervention that bifurcates the single case into two distinct periods (before and after succession). Intervention analysis is a form of impact assessment that works with data collected at equally spaced intervals to test whether a postulated event (i.e. succession) caused a change in a process (contentious activism) represented by a time series. In this case, the time intervals are weekly and the variable of interest is a count of protest events as defined previously. The weekly protest event data, as well as the daily data from which it is derived, therefore fits this data requirement. The basic goal of the interrupted time-series analysis is to 1) estimate the trend in the dependent variable prior to the intervention (succession), 2) estimate the trend in the dependent variable after the intervention, and 3) test for changes in the direction and slope of the trend pre- and post-intervention.

As applied here, events data analysis can answer three important questions: 1) Is there an observable change in the amount of contentious activism observed in the two years after King Abdullah ascended the throne compared with the two years prior to the succession when King Hussein was the monarch? 2) If so, was this change statistically significant? 3) Finally, what was the direction of this change?

Considering the three questions posed for quantitative assessment, the results suggest the following answers. Comparing the amount of reported contentious political activism in Jordan in the last two years of King Hussein's rule and the first two years of King Abdullah's rule, there is an observable change. The

change is positive and statistically significant, even after controlling for the onset of the Second Intifada. The answers to these questions are useful because they tell us whether, according to systematic events data analysis, there is an observable change that needs explanation. In other words, it provides an introductory test of the hypothesized succession-contention relationship that, if supported, encourages further examination and explanation via other methods. The results suggest that further study is merited.

Table 5.3 presents the results from two interrupted time series models: an autoregressive poisson model and a negative binomial model. Both models include lagged values of contentious activism. Each element of the intervention analysis

Table 5.3. Auto-Regressive Poisson and Negative Binomial Models of Contentious Activism Events		
	(1)	(2)
	AR Poisson	NB
Pre-Succession Trend	-0.00719[*]	-0.00715[**]
	(0.00389)	(0.00321)
Intervention	0.658[*]	0.655[**]
	(0.335)	(0.273)
Post-Succession Trend	0.00911[*]	0.00815[*]
	(0.00510)	(0.00464)
Intifada	2.190[***]	2.010[***]
	(0.269)	(0.686)
Iraq Bombings	1.537[**]	1.468[***]
	(0.773)	(0.176)
AR1 Lagged DV	0.187[***]	
	(0.0690)	
Lagged DV		0.0683
		(0.0487)
Constant	0.778[***]	0.655[**]
	(0.244)	(0.259)
N	214	215

Standard errors in parentheses
[*] $p < .10$, [**] $p < .05$, [***] $p < .01$

confirms the visual representation of the data in the previous graph. The trend in King Hussein's waning months was negative, while an increase in the rate of societal contentious activism targeting the government followed Hussein's death and the accession of Abdullah. Substantively, however, the effect is quite small after controlling for weeks in which protests occurred due to other external shocks, specifically the onset of the Second Intifada in 2000 and American bombings of Iraq in 1998. Both of which are statistically and substantively significant as they instigated numerous protests. These events obscure to some degree the succession effect because 1) they both represent heightened levels of contention but occur in separate time periods (before and after the leader change), 2) the controls are for the weeks of the events, not specific protests, and 3) the protests included in the analysis did nonetheless target the Jordanian government with their claims and demands and therefore requiring inclusion.

These results derived from a more rigorous and better specified analysis continue to support the succession-contention hypothesis in Jordan. We observe a change in societal activism when we compare the periods before and after the turnover. Prior to Hussein's death, there was a downward trend, stemming in part from the mobilization surrounding the national elections toward the end of 1997. As the king was ill and receiving treatment for significant periods in 1998, it is also possible that the waning levels of contention in that year (aside from Iraq-related protests) reveal the causal effect of anticipation of the king's death. In the first two years under Abdullah, the average number of weekly events was greater than in the pre-succession period, and activism now trended upward over time. The remaining question is whether this apparent effect lasts beyond the two-year period covered in the data. I address that next with the ICEWS data.

5.5.1.3. Longer-Term Analysis of ICEWS Data

That there is a post-succession change in contentious activism following the father-son transition in Jordan is bolstered by the ICEWS data. It also suggests that higher levels of contentious activism in the kingdom under Abdullah were sustained beyond the first two years. Figure 5.2 presents the time series of monthly contentious events in the kingdom from 1995 to 2010. I cut off the series at 2010 intentionally to omit compression in the graph that results from spikes related to the so-called 'Arab Spring' in the subsequent years. Visually, we can observe fewer events in the last four years under Hussein, though there is a significant spike in

Figure 5.2
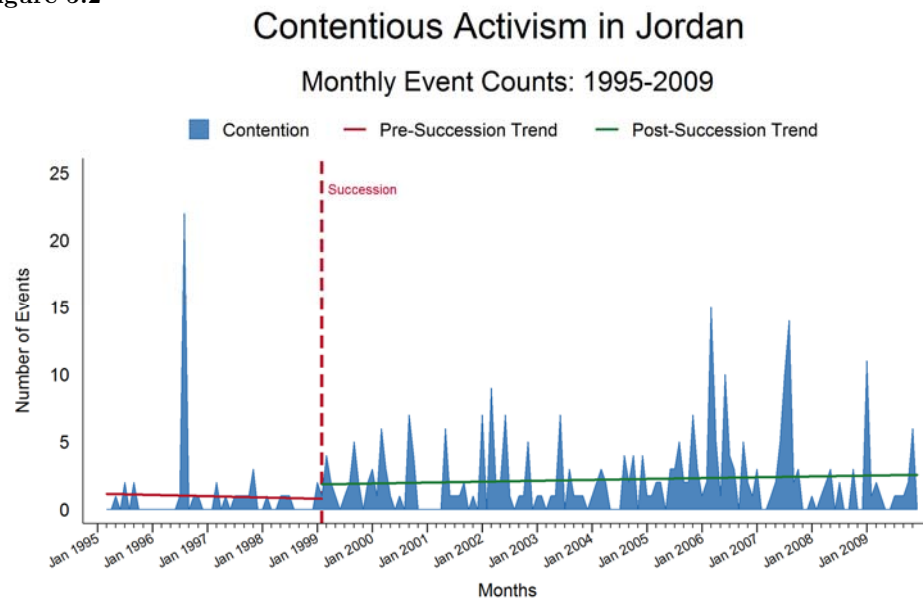
August of 1996 marking the 'bread riots' in response to government subsidy cuts on wheat. Otherwise, reports of contentious activism are very low. Reports of contentious activism are greater in volume and more frequent in the months and years following Abdullah's accession to the throne. While no month in the pre-

succession period witnessed greater than three events aside from the bread riots, multi-event months numbering three or greater are a regular occurrence in the Abdullah era. The temporal distribution of these contentious acts need not imply greater levels of grievance under Abdullah than his father. As argued, the configuration of opportunities and threats structure the decisionmaking context of activists and accounts for, at least in part, the observed differences.

5.6. Succession-Contention Connection in Jordan

What explains the more frequent rate of contentious political activism — observable if not great in magnitude — after the leadership transition from King Hussein to King Abdullah? This section adds historical context to the relationship between the state and civil society actors in the years surrounding the succession period in Jordan. Explaining the dynamics of this relationship demands attention to the broader context of regime behavior in the waning years of King Hussein's rule and the early years of Abdullah's reign. In short, I argue that changes in the structure of opportunities and threats — and uncertainty surrounding these changes — was the driving force behind variation in the rate of contentious activism across the periods before, during and after the succession. There is no doubt that continuity and stability marked the father-son succession in Jordan. Nor did the succession "lead to a fundamental change in the way in which the country is ruled" (Dieterich, 2002). However, these overarching characteristics of the transition should not imply stasis, nor that societal interests ignored the meaning of the transition for their political programs and aspirations.

On the contrary, my research suggests that contentious activism responded to (1) new policies and their immediate or anticipated effects; (2) legitimation

efforts inducing activism; and (3) uncertainty about threats to action. Interviews with participants in civil society organizations, voluntary associations, journalists, professors, students, members of professional associations, and public officials inform such a view. I explain each of these domestic-level mechanisms in the descriptive case narrative that follows.

Of course, one cannot ignore the regional and international political scene. The U.S. sanctions program and air campaign against Iraq, as well as the stagnating peace process among Palestinians and Israelis that gave way to the Second Intifada, were focal points for political discourse and contention during that time. Many of the events that I catalogued and analyzed reflected the public airing of grievances associated with these events. Nonetheless, there are three important reasons not to wholly turn over the causal story that explains changes in contentious activism to these external concerns. First, as noted, the majority of contentious events were not directed at these external scenarios or targets. Second, transnational concerns are an important part of Jordanian activism in general. The targets of many of these claims are not just foreign actors (e.g. the U.S. and Israel), but also the Jordanian government because of its relationship with these actors and policies seen as pliant to them. Third, public frustration around these events spans the succession period. With the important exception of events in solidarity with the intifada specifically, pro-Iraqi and anti-Israeli activism surrounding these events began before the transition and continued after. In the quantitative analysis above, the post-succession increase in activism holds even after accounting for those events and for activism that specifically target foreign entities.

Other observers, analysts, and scholars of Jordanian politics offer full-bodied histories of recent Jordanian politics (A. George, 2005; Joffé, 2002; Lucas, 2005;

Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2009; Ryan, 2002), including those that focus particularly on societal activism, opposition, and the public sphere (Lust-Okar, 2005; Lynch, 1999; Schwedler, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2000, 2002). Instead, my intention is to provide (1) a brief background of political liberalization and regression in the decade prior to the leader change, and (2) a theoretically-motivated analysis of Jordanian state-society relations that identifies links between the succession and political activism.

5.6.1. (De)Liberalization as Pretext

A decade of political to-and-fro preceded the father-son succession in 1999. This ten-year period of state-sponsored reform itself arose in response to societal contention. A prolonged economic crisis, an exclusionary political system, and few permissible modes of political expression gave way to growing unrest in the mid-to-late 1980s. Notable among the discord were student protests at Yarmouk University in 1986 that culminated in a severe crackdown. Starting in March with a protest against rising student fees, numerous small-scale demonstrations at the northern college revealed discontent.[38] As student organizers faced expulsion hearings, additional strikes spread off campus where minor clashes with police occurred. On May 15th, two thousand university students held a sit-in in the university square. The government cracked down harshly with riot police raiding the campus and beating demonstrators. Multiple students died (some disputed the official statement that three died), dozens were injured, and 800 students were

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[38] Other demonstrations were held in solidarity with a Palestinian day of protest against the Israeli occupation, and against U.S. action in Libya.

arrested. The Muslim Brotherhood and Communists bore the blame, and arrests of the Communist leadership, banned under martial law, followed.

Protesters also seized on opportunities to demonstrate offered by the Palestinian *intifada* next door. The government permitted some demonstrations in solidarity with the *intifada*, and opposition groups sought to mobilize disaffection with the government through this opening. At the same time, the government continued to seal off other avenues for political expression, particularly through arrests of societal agitators and the sacking and packing of newspaper editorial boards (Lust-Okar, 2005, p. 102).

In April 1989, well into the unrelenting economic challenges of the 1980s, the government entered an arrangement with the IMF to meet its significant debt obligations.[39] The government enacted austerity measures required by the plan and made cuts to the public sector workforce. With little notice, subsidies were lifted and prices spiked on basic consumer goods, including fuel. Protests erupted immediately, and quickly turned to clashes with security forces and rioting. Southern towns of Ma'an, Kerak, and Tafileh, composing important bases of tribal support for the monarchy, featured some of the most dramatic dissension. Three days of protests and clashes left many casualties, including seven deaths. The turmoil was so threatening to the regime, drawing the ire of a broad range of groups that included traditional East Bank supporters, that it initiated a sweeping set of openings as a strategy for survival.

The process of "defensive democratization" (Robinson 1998) entailed liberalization measures without fundamentally transforming the political system.

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[39] Government revenues fell significantly as low oil prices negatively affected financial transfers and the remittance payments from Jordanian workers in the Gulf.

The regime hoped that creating avenues for political participation and expression would serve as a pressure valve, assuaging the societal consternation over economic austerity without fundamentally transforming the political system. Over the course of a few years, martial law was lifted and new rules for political participation aimed to channel political and economic frustrations away from the street and toward institutionalized bodies. In so doing, the regime sought to use these reforms to maintain the basic contours of political power in the kingdom, not alter them.

Following initial elections in 1989, the King convened a committee charged with "maintaining social peace" via a plan for democratic changes. The committee produced what became the National Charter, a progressive document most notable for the political diversity of signatories, including leaders of Islamist and leftist opposition groups (Robinson, 1998, p. 394).[40] Toward setting a vision for political reforms, the document set the parameters for party establishment and the boundaries for electoral competition. These recommendations were the basis for legal changes that targeted electoral and party politics. Inscribed into law the following year was the Political Parties Law that re-legalized party organizations so long as they accepted the legitimacy of Hashemite rule and complied with full restrictions on foreign influence.[41] Parties grew in number and coalitions formed in anticipation of the first elections contended by political parties since the 1960s. Just prior to the 1993 elections, however, the government revised the electoral law to the detriment of Islamist and leftist opposition parties. The king wanted to

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[40] Aside from many confidantes of the king, signatories also included leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, independent Islamists, leftists of different stripes including communists and Pan-Arabists, and Palestinian members of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

[41] The electoral law was also changed in 1993, establishing the single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system to reduce the influence of Islamists who fared well in the 1989 elections.

capitalize on the Oslo Agreement between Palestinians and Israelis in 1993. It paved the way for a bilateral agreement between Jordan and Israel, and the king moved to limit parliamentary opposition through a new voting system that privileged conservative loyalists.

The Charter also called for press freedoms and openness toward political expression. Newspapers took advantage of the perceived opening by expanding their coverage, running stories and including dissenting voices that were previously deemed off limits. Ironically, the very legislature that reemerged with these democratic reforms quickly curtailed the open press environment. Pro-government conservatives and Islamists bent the long-debated 1993 Press and Publications Law in a restrictive direction. As Jordan sided with Iraq in the Gulf War and joined negotiations in Madrid over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, debates over the law became an avenue for muzzling critical voices in the press. Limits were placed on who qualified as a journalist, and prohibitions were enacted on the kinds of stories and articles that could be published. Islamists sought to inject social morality into the code, while pro-government conservatives sought to place "red lines" on content that undermined the regime. The law and its implementation brought about a chilling effect after an initial opening to press freedoms (Lucas, 2003).

The civil society sector and non-governmental organizations expanded in dramatic fashion after 1989. In the five years after the government first took on its liberalization process, the number of registered local NGOs increased by 67%. The government benefited from the work of charitable NGOs that provided social services, allowing the state to more easily retreat from those public responsibilities. Cultural NGOs, many seeking to tackle political issues now on the table like rights and freedoms, more than tripled in number from 42 to 156 (Wiktorowicz, 2002, p.

82). These groups were another pillar of the steam valve strategy, allowing associational activity around issues of public concern. More than that, the growth in the civil society sector rendered these organized interests visible to the government and facilitated their control. Organizations were required to obtain government approval and comply with a long list of legal proscriptions, outlined primarily in the Law of Societies and Social Organizations (Law 33). The laws, bureaucratic procedures, and sanctions for non-compliance amounted to what Quintan Wiktorowicz described as "administrative repression," stifling functioning of NGOs that may trend too far into the political realm (Wiktorowicz, 2002).

Though the kingdom was experiencing greater political openness and competition than it had seen in decades, the government pressed the brakes on the liberalization process. The political opening was a significant concession to ease domestic grievances. However, it proved to be conservative as the rhetoric of reform outpaced the reality of it. Initial reforms and the growing circumscription around them was not enough to prevent vocal opposition to coming events and decisions.

In July of 1994, the king signed the Washington agreement that preceded the formal Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October. The agreement paid initial economic dividends by writing off and rescheduling three billion dollars of foreign debt. However, opposition groups galvanized to oppose it. A mix of leftist, independent, and Islamist opposition groups formed an anti-normalization Committee, or the 'Popular Arab Jordanian Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalization.' The Committee took quick action in sponsoring a sit-in of a couple hundred people in Amman on the day of the Washington Declaration.[42] Opposition activists were propelled by popular disaffection with the peace

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[42] *Jordan Times*, November 21, 1995

agreement, unrealized gains in political power, and the absence of tangible economic improvement. Activists were granted limited license to gather publicly and demonstrate, primarily through rallies hosted by the professional associations. In line with prior tendencies, however, the regime constricted the space for opposition voices. It monitored, harassed, and detained prominent anti-normalization preachers, newspaper columnists, and editors that expressed opposition in language the government deemed irresponsible (Kornbluth, 2002, p. 87). Undeterred, anti-normalization activists continued to be active. Prominently, they organized a boycott of a trade fair featuring Israeli products and coordinated a four-thousand-strong protest march in opposition to it in January 1997.

Economic adjustment again ignited widespread unrest in summer of 1996. Activists initially mobilized in response to government statements anticipating the reduction or elimination of bread subsidies in accordance with IMF obligations. As parliament convened a special session in July, activists entered the parliament to demand the decision not be implemented. A petition with 30,000 signatories was delivered to the parliament and opposition members of the lower house threatened a vote of no confidence.[43] Nonetheless, the government hiked bread prices in August, more than doubling the rate. As in 1989, demonstrations and rioting rocked the country, drawing a televised response from the king that warning of a harsh crackdown. The army intervened and imposed a curfew that returned relative calm within days (Ryan, 1998).

The king was unwilling to offer political concessions as he had in response to the 1989 riots. With political parties in from the cold, martial law lifted, and public assembly and expression permissible within limits, the king showed no real

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[43] Sana Kamal, "Jordan: Bread Subsidy to Go," *Middle East International*, August 2, 1996: 11

interest in enhancing the democratization process. Instead, he opted for further suppression of the press. Elections were held in 1997, but many opposition parties, including the IAF, boycotted the ballot due to regime unwillingness to amend the election law. There was a general sense by this time that "democracy [was] at a standstill."[44] A survey by the Center for Strategic Studies showed that the average Jordanian ranked the kingdom as 4.91 on a scale of democracy with 10 as fully consolidated, a figure that reflected stagnation in perceptions of democracy relative to the previous three years. As prominent columnist Rami Khouri wrote, "The recurring inability of the political system to exercise effective politics raises important questions about the very nature of the evolving governance system in Jordan."[45]

Meanwhile, many other forms of contentious activism animated state-society relations in the last year of King Hussein's rule. Public sector health service workers carried out work stoppages and strikes.[46] Students at the University of Jordan demanded creation of a student union, attempting a march from campus to the Interior Ministry that was dispersed by riot police.[47] Journalists protested the suspension of 13 weekly newspapers in advance of the elections.[48] Students carried out multi-day strikes, again bringing intervention of security services, for better services at a campus of Balqa'a Applied Sciences University.[49] And multiple

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[44] "Democracy at standstill — poll," *Jordan Times*, June 13, 1998

[45] Rami Khouri, The Opposition, the State, the NCP and the privatisation of politics" August 22, 1997

[46] "Public sector health professionals increase work stoppage to four hours," *Jordan Times*, October 21, 1997

[47] Anti-Riot police prevent students from marching in demand of student union," *Jordan Times*, October 23, 1997

[48] "Restrictions on press spark protests ahead of elections," *Jordan Times*, October 30, 1997

[49] "Students' eight-day strike ended," *Jordan Times*, December 18, 1997

sit-ins and demonstrations between December 1997 and February 1998 protested U.S. military threats and action against Iraq, even after Interior Minister Nathir Rashid announced a sweeping ban of "any marches or movement under any slogan and for any reason anywhere in the Kingdom."[50] Thousands marched in downtown Amman after Friday prayers on February 13th and were dispersed in a violent confrontation with security forces.[51] The next week, riots erupted in the southern town of Ma'an that left one dead and resulted in a days-long curfew and the arrest of prominent opposition figure Leith Shbeilat who was charged with incitement.[52] Later in the year, local employees of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) staged strikes in protest of low pay and poor working conditions.[53] And the fall of 1998 witnessed numerous rallies and demonstrations in support of Iraq as it faced international pressure over weapons inspections, culminating in widespread protests in December.[54] As regional events related to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and Iraqi weapons programs dominated the news and public discourse, contentious activism emphasized these external issues. Demands were expressed more in the direction of international bodies and foreign governments than as tangible claims on the Jordanian government itself.

King Hussein spent much of that year seeking medical treatment outside of the country with Prince Hassan serving as regent. After months at Mayo Clinic, he returned to Jordan in January of 1999 with the official government line being

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[50] "Government bans rallies," *Jordan Times*, February 4, 1997

[51] "Police disperse thousands at illegal pro-Iraq rally," *Jordan Times* February 15, 1997

[52] "One killed, 3 injured in Ma'an riots; Leith Shbeilat arrested," *Jordan Times*, February 15, 1997

[53] "UNRWA employees strike in protest of low pay, work conditions," *Jordan Times*, September 16, 1997

[54] "Demonstrations staged in various parts of kingdom to protest strikes," *Jordan Times*, December 19, 1998

that he was in good health. But the king's stay was brief, though incredibly consequential. King Hussein revoked the title of Crown Prince from his brother Hassan and bestowed it upon his oldest son, Abdullah. Numerous reasons have been cited for the change. Some revolve around disagreements over policy and management of institutions like the military and royal court, others over a perception that Hassan was making changes in anticipation of Hussein's death, and others revolving around future iterations of the succession process, in particular who would succeed Hassan. King Hussein outlined some of them in a public letter to Prince Hassan meant to entrench his decision. After changing the line of succession, the king left again for the United States to receive additional cancer treatment, but to no avail. King Hussein flew back to Jordan one final time to die in the country he ruled for nearly five decades on February 7, 1999. Shyrock (2000) illustrates the genuine feelings of loss that cut across the political landscape and the way it benefited Abdullah's smooth accession:

> … the immense outpouring of grief that accompanied Hussein's death was proof of how deeply Jordanians identified with him. To my astonishment, friends I considered staunchly anti-Hashemite — tribal nationalists who claimed that Hussein was not a true Jordanian, Palestinians who yearned for his overthrow, Muslim activists who denounced him as a Zionist collaborator — praised the king and even wept for him in the days following his death. The mood did not last, but for a time it seemed more powerful than Hussein himself… Among Jordanians, however, collective mourning for Hussein, just like collective loyalty to him, produced no new political coalitions. Instead, it solidified existing alignments of power and smoothed their transfer into the hands of Abdullah, Hussein's oldest son and heir.

The death of King Hussein and the surprise ascension of Prince Abdullah created palpable uncertainty in the kingdom. As the head of one advocacy NGO related,

This transition was two transitions. There was [sic] serious worries and concern about what is next [after] him. This was already the case. Then on top of this is the change in the royal crown position. Prince Hassan was a continuation to the King Hussein Era. But of course this changed. And people wanted to see who is the newcomer on the scene. They didn't know him before, Prince Abdullah. He was behind the scenes at the time. They didn't know much about his political views or his vision for this country. But we knew the details about Prince Hassan… The word vacuum was used much during that period, because it is a transition from a historical leader to a newcomer. That was raising a lot of questions, worries, concern where Jordan is heading from here.

Two distinct perspectives emerged in interviews related to the relationship between the succession and critical politics and opposition at the time. Some recalled the logic of a "honeymoon period" in which activists would "wait and see" what the new king would enact. His rhetoric was resonating with liberals and democrats in particular as even the notion of "constitutional monarchy" was raised.[55] For some, this meant that desired reforms or concessions may be derived directly from the new leadership. More establishment reformers wanted to "let the new king work."[56] "After some time, some of us reformers thought to launch what we called the 'Democratic Current' in the country. I was asked to help bring a platform for this current, a political platform. But I argued that we don't need a new platform. What the king is saying is enough for me. We don't want anything more. What we need really is to bring his interviews and speeches, put them together in a certain format, and that's it. Needs editing, not more."[57]

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[55] Interview with OR

[56] Interview with MS.

[57] Interview with OR

Others expressed a different sentiment. An anti-normalization activist during that time told me that the transition was a "condition to be exploited carefully" for mobilizing support against Israel and the peace treaty, and in hopes of achieving previously-denied changes to the electoral law that could bring a more sympathetic government.[58] Or as Kornbluth put it, "The passing of King Hussein in February 1999 and the entry of young King Abdullah II on the scene changed the familiar structure of forces. Where the late King Hussein was able, when necessary, to act forcefully against his opposition and repress the 'resistance', the new young monarch was naturally weaker and had to first consolidate his rule. This fundamental shift was hugely advantageous for the opposition factions, professional associations in the forefront of the campaign" (Kornbluth, 2002, p. 99). Alternatively, there were concerns about an inexperienced king and a "leadership of the young" lacking organic relations with key tribal constituencies that would fight against continuing neoliberal economic measures.[59] "Reform is a threat to the tribal base of East Bank Jordanians. They are the main beneficiaries of the clientele [sic] system, and so they have very much to lose from privatization and reforming the government."[60] The following section examines these different sentiments and explains changes in the rate of activism based on uncertainty, reactions to policy changes, and the process of legitimation.

5.6.2. Post-Succession Politics and Activism

The first years of Abdullah's reign were, like the last of his father's, a mixed bag of rhetorical and material reforms rooted in a strategy of system maintenance

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[58] Interview with HA.
[59] Interview with AA.
[60] Interview with HH.

and survival. While the soldier-turned-monarch took the throne amid seemingly risky palace politicking that unceremoniously replaced his uncle, Abdullah benefited from religious, traditional, and institutional legitimacy. Each of these reinforced continuity amid succession, and the new king and his regime sought to capitalize on that theme. In interviews and speeches, Abdullah emphasized continuity, selling himself as "an extension of his majesty's outlook and his majesty's beliefs."[61].

The challenges of transition were not lost on anyone, however, especially regarding the relationship between the state and citizens. The top-down, halting process of authoritarian liberalization over the previous decade led to feelings of "reform fatigue" in Jordanian society that called into question its continued effectiveness into the new millennium (Kiamie, 2008, p. 212). Prominent journalist Rami Khouri pointed to one of the "threats" that would challenge the new king, arguing that "citizens' perceptions of their relationship to power in this moment of domestic economic and political stress" must be a top priority for the new king.[62] Ultimately, King Abdullah attempted to simultaneously draw on his father's legacy and step out of his father's shadow with his own initiatives, through rhetoric and action, in the economic and political realms.

My research points to three potential mechanisms that connect the succession to an apparent change in the rate of activism.[63] First, transitional

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[61] "New King at a Glance" *Al Ahram* (416), February 8, 1999

[62] In a column in the *Jordan Times*, Rami Khouri argued, in particular, that the new king should not attempt to perfectly replicate his father, whose unique leadership would prove difficult to emulate.

[63] Interestingly, Schlumberger and Bank (2002) identify three dimensions for understanding King Abdullah's consolidation of power: elite recruitment, economic policy implementation, and the communication of these policies to the broader public. While the factors I identify do not map directly onto these dimensions, they overlap significantly and are informed by them.

politics and policies under the new king had had real and perceived implications for societal groups and activists. Second, the process of legitimation relied on public initiatives and rhetoric that produced an atmosphere conducive to greater activism. Top-down national initiatives underlined topics like national identity, economic stagnation, domestic inequalities, and slow-moving political development elicit overt expression of demands and grievances. Both of these occur in a context of pervasive uncertainty over opportunities for and threats to activism. Uncertainty is a function of each, but also produces an incentive for societal activism as a means to reduce that uncertainty. I do not claim that these factors are necessary or sufficient conditions for increased political activism in the wake of leader change. Instead, there is suggestive evidence from the case of Jordan that these factors are operative. Identifying and explaining them serves a theory-building purpose as they may generalize to other cases. Next, I focus on the politics and policy explanation to build a narrative of Jordan's transition and contentious activism during the period. This is followed by very brief sections on legitimation and uncertainty using interview-based evidence to assert the relevance of these explanations.

5.6.2.1. Policies and Politics

The first factor linking the leader change and activism highlights the material changes in politics and policy after King Adullah acceded the throne. A number of decisions indicated a restart of the stalled reform process. Notwithstanding the transfer of power, King Abdullah indicated that the kingdom would move forward with scheduled municipal elections in July 1999. This decision

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Schlumberger and Bank show convincingly that these are important elements of how the king consolidated power, while I am asserting that these factors help explain behavior of societal activists.

signaled a willingness to extend the path of liberalization despite the leader change and the shadow of the opposition's boycott of the 1997 elections.[64] Sources of societal dissent wasted little time engaging in critical politics. Within three weeks of the accession, opposition groups and independent reformist figures sent a "national plan" for reform to the king with references to unimplemented parts of the 1992 National Charter, particularly the popular election of a prime minister and the creation of a constitutional court.[65] Multiple opposition figures also announced their intentions to form new political organizations and parties in hopes of competing for seats in the municipalities. Opposition parties reengaged in electoral competition anticipating local-level gains, though independents won the day as kinship-based voting remained the standard alongside low turnout (Ryan, 2003, p. 135).

Economic reform was central to the new king's early efforts and future vision. Economic hardship shook the regime on a couple of occasions in the final decade of Hussein's rein, and Abdullah knew that that this remained a vulnerability. In this area, the king established a new center of decisionmaking and authority in the form of the Economic Cooperation Council (ECC). This act of institutional layering allowed the circumvention of "old guard" decisionmakers in favor of the generally young, western-educated technocrats that composed the ECC. As Andoni (2000) notes, "speeding market reforms have fueled a power struggle between the 'old guard traditionalists' and 'the new guard reformists.'" The former are senior bureaucrats, tribal figures, and landholders who face a loss of position and privilege under market-oriented reforms favoring merit-based

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[64] Interview with MR

[65] "Opposition, independents send 'national plan' for reform to king," *Jordan Times*, February 28, 1999

advancement. As Jordan entered the World Trade Organization, the young urbanites with technical expertise who made up the ECC consulted the king on paths for economic opening. The king pushed forward on economic reform via privatization, the sale of state assets, the development of qualified industrial zones (QIZs) manufacturing Jordanian-Israeli free trade goods, and forging free trade agreements with the United States and the European Union. In general, the economic liberalization process is a threat to traditional interests that benefit from public sector employment and state patronage. However, the king was careful to avoid significant layoffs in the bureaucracy and military given the risk of provoking backlash.

Numerous contentious events reflected economic grievances amid these changes. A sampling of these events give a sense of the activism, rather narrow in the scope of interests. Trade unions demanded better compensation and benefits in March; bank employees staged a sit-in in protest of layoffs in April; truckers held a rally for better wages and lower taxes in June, students protested tuition and fee hikes on numerous occasions, including directly petition the king in August. More events like this carryover into subsequent months. Taxi workers went on strike over the granting of new licenses; jobless academics carried out a series of sit-ins and marches, even clashing with police over lack of job opportunities; pharmaceutical industry workers petitioned the government to create a union; members of the Jordan Writers Union engaged in a multi-week hunger strike to demand the government provide more jobs in the sector, specifically calling for King Abdullah's intervention; and so on.

Of course, it is difficult to say how the policies expediting economic liberalization — a function of the succession — impacted these events. Some of the

events specifically target these policies, making the link more direct. For example, investors in the Free Trade Zones appealed to the king for a reversal on tariffs at the same time that workers in the international factories of these "manufacturing cities" held strikes and sit-ins over low pay and poor working conditions. This included protests over the dismissal of garment factory workers in one of the Qualified Industrial Zones, the same industry that months later petitioned the government for protective measures to ward off competition from Asian goods. A demonstration in front of the Labor Ministry criticized the government decision to relocate jobs to a free trade zone in the northern city of Irbid. As a consequence of reduced tariffs on hauling goods, transport truck drivers protested in a partial strike at the southern port of Aqaba by refusing to carry their loads to the Ministry of Supply. Farmers protested the low prices they were receiving after openings in the agricultural markets, boycotting sales and letting their produce go unharvested. The Jordan Contractors Association appealed for regulation of construction and contracting projects as protection against competition under the WTO. And a number of employer-employee disputes led to activism calling for government intervention, including cement workers, phosphate miners, employees of Pepsi Cola, and cable company workers.

The public expression of economic grievances and demands increased significantly as the economic reform program was accelerated. As this acceleration was a function of Abdullah's accession, the causal link between is clear. The new king and his coterie of entrepreneurial advisers were able to avoid more threatening forms of mobilization in the mold of 1989 and 1996 because the reforms did not substantially impact the military, public sector bureaucracy, or rural East Bank

interests. Where they did, like in the cement and phosphate industries, the regime mediated selectively.

Political change did not match the economic liberalization under the new monarch. Many anticipated that leader change would inaugurate political change. A sharp disconnect between rhetoric and reality was apparent, however, in ways that affected political activism. Though system continuity characterized post-succession politics generally, authoritarian backsliding marked the opening years of Abdullah's reign. Conservative figures prevented political liberalization, warning of its risks given a precarious regional situation and domestic economic changes. A crackdown on Islamists in anticipation of vocal opposition to a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement meant greater repression as well, only exacerbated by the failure of such an agreement and the onset of the Second Intifada.

Initial indications were that the government would open political space following Abdullah's accession. The municipal elections were a positive sign. The king issued an amnesty decree that led to the release of many political prisoners, predominantly from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood. The government also removed censorship of foreign publications and eased some restrictions of the Press and Publications Law.[66] In separate meetings, King Abdullah met with the professional associations and the Muslim Brotherhood shortly after taking power that demonstrated a consultative stance toward centers of opposition. It did not take long, however, for the king to close political space. The hidebound security apparatus, especially the infamous General Intelligence Directorate (GID) led by General Samih Batikhi, had no interest in granting opposition groups new openings. Opposed to accommodating the Muslim Brotherhood and opposition

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[66] "Jordan scraps censorship of all foreign publications" *Jordan Times*

groups, Batikhi had extraordinary sway in the new regime given his control over the domestic security portfolio, with some even referring to the kingdom in those early months as "Batikhistan."[67] King Abdullah also appointed "the bulldozer" Abdul Rauf al-Rawabdeh, a conservative figure generally averse to political liberalization, in a move that surprised many of those hopeful for reform. However, Rawabdeh clashed with the more liberal chief of the Royal Court, Abdul Karim Kabariti, and participated directly in a dispute among newspapers and journalists by facilitating protests against the critical *al-Arab al-Yawm.*

Alongside the economically-motivated activism outlined previously, political and social demands also characterized contentious activism during this period. Prisoners exempted from the amnesty decree engaged in hunger strikes, set fire to prisons, and rioted. Societal activists called for changes to the law governing social societies and organizations. Lawyers petitioned for a permanent anti-corruption committee to deal with rampant graft. Human rights activists demanded fairness from the Ministry of Culture in light of perceived discrimination and called for more press freedoms. Student members of the Muslim Brotherhood at the University of Jordan carried out a series of protests over the law governing student elections, clashing with police and motivating rallies of support by the national organization.

More than anything else, anti-normalization activities protesting Jordan's peace agreement with Israel colored the news of public activism. Standing disaffection with the Jordanian-Israeli relations and uncertainty over the new king's intentions for it going forward, only encouraged the anti-normalization activists. Mustafa Hamarneh, director of the Center for Strategic Studies at the University

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[67] As quoted in interview in Schlumberger and Bank (2002, p. 56)

of Jordan at the time, alluded to this uncertainty in an interview, saying that the "…freeze in Middle East peace process has given Jordan a respite from having to court the Jewish state… But conflicting signals from the Kingdom's new leadership about the future of the unpopular relationship have left many Jordanians confused. Officials have said Jordanians could expect a 'change in style' in the kingdom's regional dealings… The problem is that we don't know what the leadership is thinking."[68] As one intellectual who participated in these activities told me, "We had our agenda no matter who is the king. But King Abdullah was new on the scene and it was good to show him that we are against the treaty [with Israel]. What were the benefits? It did not bring the benefit that was promised. We knew that from the beginning."[69] Indeed, the anti-normalization effort directed through the professional associations picked up steam in 1999 and 2000.

The government crackdown on Hamas in August and September 1999 set off a series of protests that lasted through the rest of the year. King Hussein had been tolerant toward the organization and its leadership in Jordan. However, with a potential peace deal approaching, arrest warrants were issued for Hamas leadership figures and their offices shuttered. Multiple members of the organization spent time in jail and carried out hunger strikes, while numerous protests on college campuses, in refugee camps, and elsewhere were held in solidarity with the prisoners and demanded their release. In December, the government deported key individuals, including Khaled Meshaal, to Qatar. As violence threatened to spoil the negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis next door, the summer and fall months of 2000 witnessed a significant increase in anti-normalization activities

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[68] "Analysts, politicians see 'changing realities' in Jordan-Israel ties" *Jordan Times*, April 8, 1999
[69] Interview with AS

prior to the start of the Second Intifada. A march to the King Hussein bridge between Jordan and the West Bank included thousands, protests were held at the Israeli embassy, refugee camps engaged in protests that resulted in confrontations with security forces, and numerous protests called on the king to revoke the peace treaty and allow the Hamas leadership's return to the kingdom. The 'Day of Rage' in early October saw protests give way to rioting and violence, also inside numerous refugee camps in the kingdom. In response, the regime banned protests on the issue, though others continued and typically led to engagements with police and security forces.

In summer 2001, with parliamentary elections scheduled for November, the king customarily dissolved parliament. However, citing regional turmoil, the king postponed the November elections and ruled by decree via "temporary laws" that well beyond their intended use. One official said it was a combination of the intifada, a sense of an impending conflict with Iraq ("you could smell it coming," he said), and the opportunity for unencumbered progress with legislative changes that compelled the king to rule by fiat. One of the most important temporary laws related to political activism. In a new law on public assembly, the government required that any meeting raising a public issue must obtain official approval ahead of time. The governor of the municipality would make the decision and was not subject to appeal. Violations would be subject to forceful dispersion and organizers and participants could face prison sentences.[70] Other laws expanded the definition of terrorism to more efficiently invoke the State Security Court, and in 2002 state employees were banned from joining political parties. Despite these constraints on political participation, or even because of them, quantitative evidence shows

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[70] Sana Kamal, "In the Doldrums," *Middle East International*, August 31, 2001

sustained activism greater than what was observed before the succession. The observed difference in the rate of political activism before and after Abdullah took the throne is even more notable when considering the limitations placed on public assembly in 2001.

These decisions and acts by the regime under King Abdullah may or may not resemble the approach that would have been taken by King Hussein; the counterfactual to his death cannot be known. But these political changes in the early years of the King Abdullah's rule represent policies that defied original expectations of many activists and observers, affecting their motivation for action and the structure of opportunities and threats for exercising critical voice. The point here is that leader change coincides with policy change (or the anticipation of it). These real and perceived changes affect the material interests of societal groups who exercise voice in response. Whether public activism is used to "get attention from the new leader and his people" or to voice demands and grievances in response to policy changes, the political and economic implications of leader change are sufficient to motivate societal activism.

5.6.2.2. Nationalizing Initiatives and Leader Rhetoric

The second mechanism linking the succession and activism is found in the "cultural realm" where official rhetoric and government-sponsored initiatives created an atmosphere conducive to political expression. King Abdullah did the "expected things" to gain legitimacy, including the aforementioned general amnesty of political prisoners and other offenders,[71] as well as linking personal piety to his

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[71] See "Hundreds of prisoners released under amnesty," *Jordan Times*, March 28, 1999 and "Authorities release 20 Al Tahrir members under general amnesty law," *Jordan Times*, March 30, 1999

religious legitimacy by performing Umra in Mecca and visit to Medina.[72] Beyond these acts, the new king was keen to effectuate a rhetorical strategy through nationalizing initiatives. The argument is simply that the rhetoric of "change" in political and economic spheres produced a context in which activists both anticipated reforms and felt they had a role in producing it.

In an interview just before taking the throne, then Crown Prince Abdullah asserted a desire for "comprehensive changes," that spanned economic liberalization and a gradual process of democratization.[73] The new king elaborated on these ideas in the following months, signaling reform-oriented intensions across a range of issues:

> I intend to do my utmost to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to devote my life, as my late father had done before me, to preserve and protect what Jordan has achieved, and to continue the process of nation building, peace building and the advancement of a civil society based on justice, freedom, democracy, human rights and pluralism." (21 October, 1999)

One interviewee noted, however, that "the king speaks differently to different audiences." Indeed, the quote above is from a speech to the Spanish legislature. Most of the rhetoric on democracy in the early years of his rein is to international audiences, not domestic ones. "Anyway, this is not new language. This is the government language of the [19]90s. The language went from father to son, but the son does not articulate it as well." Nonetheless, others did report "some sense that the new king would renew political reforms [and take up] the

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[72] "King performs Umra in Mecca, visits Medina," *Jordan Times*, March 23, 2000

[73] "Abdullah faces internal political challenges first," *The New York Times*, February 7, 1999

election law." There was a "Jordanian feeling that Jordan is experiencing a transition."

The earliest example of a national initiative that influenced the political atmosphere was the *Jordan First (al-Urdun Awalan)* campaign in 2001. It ambitiously aimed to "define a new social accord between Jordanians… and reformulates the state-individual relationship" ("Jordan First"). The political parts of the initiative revolved around a handful of key issues, including creating a constitutional court, drafting a new political parties law and promoting their development, instituting a quota system for women in parliament, establishing anti-corruption measures, and regulating state-society relations with a focus on professional associations. One activist argued that it was purely propaganda.

> These are like propaganda stunts. For example, Jordan First. First you have the large billboards and after like a month you have the committees trying to think out what Jordan First means. It's a joke. Big PR companies that design slogans and all, and after a month or so they try to think up what it means. So it's a propaganda stunt to maintain a certain image that we are dedicated to progress, democracy, lalala.
>
> Then after everything is settled and you involve all these social sectors in it… this is like building consensus over yourself as a leader. And then, after like two months of deliberations, and writings, and documents, and ceremonies, and money spent, and then you have a picture of the head of the committee with this file of work given to the king and the king is smiling and like yeah… to the trash can. To the trash can. All these initiatives are in the trash can. The only value of these initiatives is propaganda for the moment.

Another expressed the same sentiment. "It was propaganda. The Royal Court got a PR firm to promote it… They felt there needs to be a tangible statement about a vision for reform."

However, Al Oudat and Alshboul (2010) argue that *Jordan First* was a "regime security strategy" for a few reasons. For one, it emphasized unity among a fragmented population of subnational identities, whether between tribal groups or between East Bank Jordanians and Palestinians. This matches the notion expressed in an interview with a media activist. "The concept for Jordan First comes from the Egypt First initiative of Anwar Sadat when he was normalizing relations and signing the peace treaty with Israel. Sadat was telling Palestinians that his policies would support Egyptian interests only." This was a break from his predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who championed Arab Nationalism and the Palestinian cause. He went on, "There was a backlash to Jordan First because people saw it for what it was — a statement to the Palestinians that their interests were second to [those of] the native Jordanians." In other words, there was concern that national priorities would not feature the Palestinians of the West Bank or the broader Palestinian cause, and that dissent emphasizing Palestinian identity would not be tolerated. However, as multiple interviewees expressed, the campaign backfired because "people saw that it was a nationalist initiative for Jordanian-Jordanians [East Bank] and criticized it."

A second aim was to reduce popular dissatisfaction with government foreign and domestic decisions by grounding them in patriotism, thereby preempting criticism as unpatriotic. A member of a professional association commented in this vein, "It was a campaign of slogans to distance us from Iraq, to distance us from Palestine." The head of a politically-oriented NGO said, "There was a big gap between the government and the people on Iraq. And the intifada could spill over to Jordan. *Jordan First* would put attention first and foremost on Jordanian internal issues. It was a way to 'Jordanize' the public sphere, and nationalists were

happy about this. For others it was a reform agenda." Some argued, however, that the campaign "did not bring stability; rather, it encouraged more voices opposing the policy together with more radical opposition movements" (Al Oudat & Alshboul, 2010, p. 85).[74]

As to whether this initiative and its effects are a function of the succession, one interviewee summarizes a common sentiment in favor of such a link, "This would not have been the approach of King Hussein if he was around at the time. He had a regional agenda, but this was a national agenda. It was to keep Jordanians busy with this initiative because we knew the Iraq War was coming… King Hussein and the first King Abdullah had ambitious of enlarging the regional role of the Hashemites — the Hashemite agenda. This was the first time the Hashemite agenda was shrinking to a Jordanian agenda."[75] This explanatory link drew different reactions from interviewees. It was dismissed by some who suggested this and other initiatives had no impact on activism because "everyone ignores it." But the evidence above suggests that some regard the initiatives as contributing to dissent and critical discourse by creating a new focal point for contestation. At the very least, it may be an operative path worth exploring in other cases where nationalizing initiatives either signal opening or prompt counter-expression.

5.7. Jordan Conclusion

What were the implications of leadership change for contentious activism in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan? My core concern here was assessing the

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[74] The authors also discuss regional and international aims. For example, the initiative signaled to other Arab states always skeptical of Hussein's expansionist aims that Abdullah would focus on domestic development.
[75] Interview with OR.

influence of succession on the political actions of societal interests and the ways they mobilize publicly to express grievances and make claims on the government. Lying at the intersection of scholarship on leader succession, state-society relations, and civil society, this chapter addressed issues related to societal effects of leader change in the context of Jordanian politics. As an informative case for theory-building, it speaks to these literatures in the context of a modernizing Arab monarchy with an expanding role for societal actors.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence points to an increase in the rate of contentious activism following the father-son monarchic succession in Jordan in 1999. Fieldwork and interviews contribute to a causal argument that links the succession to real and perceived economic and political changes that bear on societal interests, contributing to the expression of demands and grievances. As free-market reforms and political deliberalization unfolded amid the uncertainty of new leadership, dissidents and societal actors publicly expressed their claims on the government. Further, nationalizing initiatives early in King Abdullah's tenure heralded a reformist direction, and civil society actors perceived in this rhetoric a renewal of political liberalization and an opening for greater political participation. When these opportunities were foreclosed by institutional and outright repression, some groups challenged the regime on its apparent bait-and-switch.

Chapter 6

Syria

6.1. Introduction

For more than two decades after Syrian independence in 1946, continual coup attempts, some of them successful, fostered instability and uncertainty in Syrian politics. That changed with Hafiz al-Asad's Corrective Revolution (*al-thawra al-tashihiyya*) in 1970, after which he would epitomize stable leadership by holding the presidency until his death 30 years later. His declining health in the late 1990s and death in June 2000 invited wagers on the country's political outlook, even if public speech on the matter was deemed seditious prior to his death. In and out of Syria, conflicting ideas existed about what a post-Hafiz al-Asad Syria would and should look like. Central to these considerations was whether the near-complete closure of the political system would give way to greater openness and pluralism.

In the wake of Asad's death that ended his 30-year rule stood his son Bashar, an accidental successor who became the only successful hereditary successor of a non-monarchic Arab regime. Unseasoned politically and only thirty-four, not only was Bashar's style of leadership an open question, but his staying power was as well. Writing in the first week of Hafiz al-Asad's death, Jon Alterman (2000)

editorialized a common perception of Bashar Asad's vulnerability, writing that Bashar's "swift, peaceful and orderly political ascent is deceiving. Syria in the coming months is likely to be anything but peaceful and orderly. The younger Asad will have to confront so many overwhelming challenges so quickly, in fact, that he will be lucky to complete his first year in office."[76]

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the death of the ruler may introduce a shock that disrupts such constancy, reducing the amount of certainty about the relationship between the regime and society. The death of Hafiz al-Asad, deemed "surprising" in Syrian media despite standing speculation of his impending demise, not only initiated an elite process of leader transition but also "a new reality" that made some activists consider "ways to push the conversation about the future in a new direction."[77] Others have told the story of Syrian political activism witnessed in the early 2000s collectively termed the 'Damascus Spring,' and they generally attach it on some level to the passage of power.[78] I therefore do not seek to fully recount the state-society relations in contemporary, pre-war Syria. My aim here is to make an explicit connection between the succession event and the political activism that followed. The Syrian succession represents an exemplary case of the link between the transfer of power and changes in societal activism. It reveals the ways in which leadership change can induce changes in contentious political interactions due to an atmosphere of uncertainty and perceived opportunities for societal activism, ultimately standing out as a "mutation in a

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[76] Alterman's analysis captures the idea that despite comparisons of the two young leaders, the political conditions, transitions, and new leaders themselves were quite different. Jon Alterman, "Fathers and Sons: ruling is tough for Jordan's Abdullah. For Syria's Bashar, it's far tougher." *Washington Post*, June 18, 2000

[77] Interview with SA.

[78] See, for example, Hinnebusch and Zintl (2015), Pace and Landis (2009), Lesch (2005), Wieland (2012), Ziadeh (2013), Zisser (2007).

history of continuous inactivity" prompted by the transfer of power (Ziadeh, 2013, p. 73).

The case analysis in this chapter is structured as follows. First, I describe the challenges of the Syrian succession stemming from the peculiar personalism of Hafiz al-Asad. Next, I discuss the ascendance of Bashar al-Asad, the uncertainty surrounding him as a new leader, and the transition itself. In light of these first two sections, I outline theoretical expectations for the case. Then I briefly introduce opposition politics in Syria and present a first-cut look at contentious activism with quantitative data. I then provide a historical analysis of the civil society activism of the 'Damascus Spring' and the state's repression of this activism. Finally, I analyze the period in light of the theoretical expectations and summarize the causal link between succession and activism in Syria.

6.2. Personalist Rule in Syria

The evidence from chapter 4 suggests that the Syrian case, characterized by personalism and manipulable succession procedures, is a good candidate for observing a succession-contention connection. Individualized rule is associated with underdeveloped succession procedures and institutions to enforce them, inviting greater competition among political contenders and challengers. Moreover, when the leader and the state are seen as synonymous, the dictator's departure constitutes a national shock as much as an institutional one. I argue here that the personalism in the Syrian regime under Hafiz al-Asad increased its susceptibility to a shift in state-society relations and an increase in political activism following the succession.

Highly concentrated individual authority is enshrined in the 1973 Syrian constitution, a feature of Hafiz al-Asad's early consolidation of power. The president has vast powers that become all-encompassed when combined with holding the positions of secretary-general of the Ba'th Party, supreme commander of the armed forces, and high commander of the National Progressive Front (NPF) party alliance. He has the power to institute and revoke states of emergency, martial law, and war. He has the authority dissolve the legislature and wield legislative power without it, appoint and dismiss individual members of the assembly, appoint and remove vice-presidents and define their specific powers, and appoint the prime minister and his deputies (Ziadeh, 2013, p. 15).

The elite strata were subordinate to Hafiz al-Asad in such a way that reinforced personalized decisionmaking. Decisionmaking and consultation followed a "hub and spokes" model in which Asad at the center dealt with surrounding elites individually instead of collectively, meaning that orders and information were discharged discretely within the inner circle (Leverett, 2005, p. 27). This idea is reinforced by Ziadeh (2013), who describes Asad's "second golden rule" to maintain stability in which "no member of his regime should become self-sustaining, but must derive his power from al-Asad alone." This system was characterized by a "pyramid-like structure" with three sides (the government administration, the Ba'th Party, and security organs) all leading up to the president at its apex. Such a system meant that the president was "completely and single-handedly the one decision-maker who could set in motion any all-inclusive system at his disposal" (p. 25).

As far as public leadership goes, Asad was the only name in town (to play on a common notion of hegemony) with a personality cult created and reinforced

by enormous structures of symbolic dominance. As Lisa Wedeen (1999) expounds in *Ambiguities of Domination*, the public space was saturated with the cult of personality around Hafiz al-Asad through ubiquitous references to the "forever leader" and compulsory, participatory spectacles. The symbolic power of the cult was "disciplinary," regulating the thoughts, discourse, and actions of society. It therefore operated to decrease the need for costly and destabilizing government repression. Through the leader-centered cultural project, the symbolic arena served as a mechanism for creating complicity and obedience among a dissimulating Syrian public. That is, the cultural project to deify the leader was powerful and effective not because people believed it, but because they were obliged to act "as if" they did.

6.3. Syrian Succession: Establishing Jumlukiyya

What does the personalist nature of the regime mean for the politics of leader change? In many personal regimes, a full-blown succession crisis emerges due to the absence of a designated successor. In the case of Syria, Hafiz al-Asad was able to cultivate a first instance in the modern Middle East of *jumlukiyya*, a republican regime with a dynastic transition of power. As Ziadeh argues, "The regime's pyramidal structure reinforced the hereditary tendencies" (Ziadeh, 2013, p. 26). As regime maintenance was the top priority, it was imperative that challenges to authority not arise during the passage of power. The transition process, at the level of elite politics within institutions of power and in the public mind, were sites of potential challenge.

First, the challenge of succession in Syria was exacerbated by the narrow, individualized concentration of power in the country. As Eyal Zisser explains, "If

the secret of Syria's success and viability during the preceding 30 years lay in the figure of Asad personally, as was widely thought, his departure presumably freed the restraints holding back a renewal of the struggle over Syria which in the past had nearly brought about the collapse of the state" (Zisser, 2007, pp. 15-16). Hafiz al-Asad, more than any other individual, shaped the political and social contours of contemporary Syria. Not only was he the topmost political decisionmaker, but he simultaneously molded the social structure of Syria, in many ways a function of the Alawi-rural Sunni basis of the regime (Leverett, 2005, p. 25). The successor, whether appointed son or someone else, was compelled to maintain these restraints and prevent such a struggle that could threaten his or her power. And there were latent challengers, most notably Bashar's exiled uncle Rif'at who maintained significant linkages and backers in the country.

The social foundation of the Asad regime is concentrated in the Alawi minority community and the rural Sunni populations. The "old guard" of the regime drew heavily from these communities, including a familial network around the ruling family – both al-Asad and Makhlouf (Hafiz al-Asad's wife's family) – and influential Sunnis of predominantly rural backgrounds loyal to Hafiz al-Asad since the 1970s, most notably Vice President 'Abd al-Halim al-Khaddam, Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar', and Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas. These groups and individuals not only support the regime, but constitute its most influential positions, therefore having the most to lose through transformational reforms. Within the institutions of the regime, the old guard was heavily concentrated in the bureaucracy, the Ba'ath Party leadership, and various segments of the security apparatus. Stacher (2011) describes the role of elite-level consensus in guaranteeing Bashar's rise. In the years and months leading up to the transition, potential

competitors were retired, purged, or otherwise sidelined. Remaining elites "bandwagoned" to support Bashar's rise and avert a challenge that could threaten the system. The consensus was necessary for a number of institutional manipulations that would allow his succession, including changing the constitution's minimum age for the presidency from 40 to 34 and fast-laning him through requisite ranks in the party and military.

On the other hand, Bashar would also need to generate some acceptance from broader society, including urban Sunnis and the religious establishment (the 'ulama), not to mention the liberal reformists that had been gaining some strength in the 1990s. Located outside of the core elite and with limited decision-making power existed a liberal reformist tendency. Bashar selected a number of market-oriented technocrats to political and advisory positions. This small set of individuals was composed of intellectuals and independent deputies, many of whom were newcomers. According to Volker Perthes, "They preferred to see themselves as a 'loyal' opposition: They did not openly question the president's legitimacy… and accepted the rules of the game, but they did not hide their desire to ultimately seek a democratic transformation of the system" (Perthes, 2004b, p. 98). The views of these reformists largely corresponded to the interests of the urban entrepreneurial and middle classes, and the reform-oriented segments of society perceived many of these placements as a positive sign. In the late 90s, Bashar also headed a number of highly-publicized and widespread anti-corruption drives, serving the dual purpose of eradicating leading challengers but also serving symbolic displays of transparency with Bashar as its champion.

Second, aside from institutional positioning, the problem of succession was compounded by Hafiz al-Asad's legacy and the cult of personality around him.

Bashar was bound to confront the imposing persona of the "national father" in the minds and actions of the Syrian public. And the imperative to build performance legitimacy by capitalizing on his image as a modernizer through economic and political reforms was bound to confront entrenched interests. Such an influential part of Syrian daily life under authoritarianism is not easily reversed or dismantled. Bashar would no doubt look to draw on his father's legacy to legitimize his authority. At the same time, however, he would need to create his own basis for power through appeals to the public's calls for economic and political reform. The new president would need to construct a claim to power that balanced the historical legacy of his father and the promise of his own vision for a new future.

The task of replacing one leader in the public imagination with another was compounded by the fact that Bashar was not always the heir apparent to the Syrian presidency. Basil, the eldest son of Hafez al-Asad, was widely recognized as the likely successor and was primed for the role until his accidental death in a car accident in January 1994. Basil's rise through the military, presence in the public eye on political matters, and authoritative personality were likely to facilitate his impending claim to power. From the beginning of the late 1980s, the regime produced symbolic artifacts to suggest dynastic succession to Basil without providing a full-scale endorsement of Basil's leadership credentials that would compete with the current president or contradict the slogans of his invincibility. Nonetheless, posters and banners referenced the president as "Abu Basil" (father of Basil) in the state-wide referendum of 1991 and after.

In the midst of Basil's death, the funeral, and the subsequent period of national mourning, the plan for succession shifted quickly to Bashar. With the ageing of Hafiz al-Asad, the impending succession was already an event with great

meaning; it was the nexus at which regime cohesion and policy orientation was reconstituted in a new individual. The shock of Basil's death only propelled the issue in the public mind. The question of succession became a greater issue of concern in the country. The effort to alter the expectations for succession away from Basil and onto Bashar was clearly underway within a year of Basil's death as the government quickly began portraying Bashar as the logical next choice. As Volker Perthes describes, "The regime's propaganda machine [attempted] not only to transfigure and idealize Basil as the embodiment of all the good qualities of Arab youth, but also to put… Bashar in Basil's place" (Perthes, 1995, p. 269). The task was both challenged and facilitated by the dearth of political substance associated with Bashar. He previously had little political ambition or military experience, instead practicing ophthalmology in England before returning to Syria upon Basil's death. Lisa Wedeen (1999, p. 61) describes the public imagery and symbolism meant to replace brother with brother in the role of successor:

> By 1996, laminated pictures, buttons, and other paraphernalia regularly showed Asad flanked by his two sons. Sometimes the three are dressed in military fatigues, signifying that the young eye doctor, like his dead brother and aging father, has the requisite military credentials... A mural painted on the walls encircling the home of an Asad family member near Basil's tomb explicitly reasserts the regime's dynastic ambitions in the face of Basil's death: an Arab woman, whose folkloric garb and gender make her synecdochic for the nation, hands the reins of Basil's horse to Bashar.

Prior to taking the presidency, Bashar was obliged to follow a script that was largely written for him. Ironically perhaps, the image of 'Bashar the future president' was not a feature of the script. He was constrained by the culture of leadership asserted by his incumbent father. Despite signs of a hereditary transition

being planned, the elder Asad wanted to avoid anointing a successor. It was necessary not to elevate Bashar as the new leader too early, conflicting with the cult of Hafiz al-Asad. Doing so could undermine the incumbent's own rule, contradicting the regime's disciplined articulation of his "forever leader" status and allowing premature opportunities to challenge the dynastic passage of power in a republican regime. At the same time, it was not lost on many Syrians that Bashar was being cultivated for the presidency.

Behind the scenes preparation of Bashar produced an enigmatic quality around him as potential successor, allowing for the divergent audiences within Syria to read into his impending transition their own hopes for the future. Bashar's political presence was scarce before taking office as he was kept relatively concealed while his father's inner circle groomed him for taking the reins of government. On matters of political direction, however, it was not until after Bashar took the presidential office that he began to articulate his own, though varied, vision for the future.

6.3.1. Openness and Uncertainty in Succession

Much of the uncertainty immediately surrounding Hafez al-Asad's death centered on the unknowns of how Bashar al-Asad would lead, and his capacity for maintaining his inherited position. Would he be a bold economic and political reformer? Would he try to mimic his father's leadership style and trajectory? Would he even be capable of holding power with the many political, economic, and social challenges facing Syria at the turn of the century? Flynt Leverett describes these competing images of the new leader as "closet reformer" versus "loyal son" versus "neophyte" respectively (Leverett, 2005, pp. 19-20). The prevailing notion

among activists was described by one Syrian analyst in Damascus as "hopeful ignorance."[79] Zisser describes the precariousness of the moment, writing that "the termination of Hafiz al-Asad's prolonged rule prompted uncertainty over the country's future reminiscent of the insecurity during the period of the formation of the state by the French in the 1920s" (Zisser, 2007, p. 6). These unknowns added confusion to the political environment that altered the expectations of some political actors about the regime's repressive resolve, internal cohesion, and overall stability. While the executive and coercive institutions remained solid, the uncertainty over its cohesiveness and future orientation made for a precarious moment. As Wieland notes, "the fear of unrest between political, social, and religious groups was not unfounded at the time. Moreover, the somewhat sudden death of Hafez al-Asad left a tinge of uncertainty as to whether the way for Bashar had been paved sufficiently…" (Wieland, 2012, p. 62).

Bashar would need to establish his claim to authority and signal a direction for the regime within this climate of uncertainty. The distinction between regime conservatives and reformists, while oversimplifying, largely conditioned the lines along which Bashar would need to present his leadership and make his claim to authority. Indeed, the proponents of the status quo and the increasingly vocal reformists in society would represent the two poles that Bashar would attempt to balance in the construction of his public image. As Alan George contends, Bashar had to "wrestle with the demand for restraint from his regime's conservatives and with the clamour for reform from the people, and it suggests that he will try to steer a middle road…" (A. George, 2003, p. xi). As a result, Bashar and his new government attempted to construct a particular vision for the future under his

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[79] Interview with MD.

leadership that would balance ideas of continuity and change. This dual narrative exacerbated the uncertainty in the short term over the boundaries of permissible activity.

To prevent high-ranking members of the "old guard" or other conservative figures with their own bases of power from challenging his succession, Bashar followed a strategy emphasizing continuity immediately prior to the succession. "Asad's symbolic heritage built up over the course of three decades would be shaken if there were any break in continuity, even if for only a few days. Thus, the catchwords 'change under the wing of continuity' and 'renewal under the wing of stability' immediately became current" (Ziadeh, 2013, p. 26). Before the death of Hafiz al-Asad, and in the interim period between his death and Bashar's official succession, Bashar generally sought legitimacy "as a loyal 'keeper of the flame' rather than as a bold reformer" (Leverett, 2005, p. 29). The referendum on Bashar's succession to the presidency in July of 2000 yielded him 97 percent support. The Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), the state-run media network, suggested that the referendum affirmed the Syrian people's desire for Bashar to "follow the march" of his father (A. George, 2003, p. 1). As much as the threat of backlash from the "old guard" of the regime limited the new president's ability to meet reformist expectations, so too did the legacy of his father constrain his space to maneuver.

Themes of continuity were balanced, and perhaps overtaken, by the change-oriented messages come from both the outgoing and incoming leaders. The elder Asad's rhetoric took a distinct turn in his final public statements, while the younger Asad's inaugural address gave "great hope" to the activists that "change was on the near horizon."[80] Hafiz al-Asad's speech (11 March 1999) at the outset of a new

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[80] Interview with BI

term as president just preceding his death was notable in its focus on domestic concerns over foreign policy issues, its acknowledgment of government "wrongdoings," and its call for "an increased sense of public service" toward modernization of the state. The speech directly advocated increased citizen participation, stating explicitly that "expanding the circle of decisoinmaking and freedom of discussion and participation is the guarantee to achieve the democratic process." The remarks received significant media attention. They were especially meaningful to the politically attentive, inviting participation typically prevented by the security state. According to Ziadeh (2013, p. 39), it "introduced a new atmosphere of public debate on reform, corruption, and the need for change… [and] gave the green light to the continuation of unprecedented public criticism of the Syrian government, [but] was cautious." Bashar was also becoming more conspicuous in these months immediately preceding the turnover. He attended lectures of the Economic Sciences Society that included relatively critical discussion of prevailing government reform and development programs. In these final months, Asad aimed to solidify his son's succession by garnering public support for a future vision that contrasted starkly with what he had previously offered. With these signals, the outgoing leader "stimulate[d] the Syrians' appetite for open debate, a right of which he had deprived them for so long, … to reorganize his domestic affairs in preparation for his approaching death and need to secure the succession" (Ziadeh, 2013, p. 39).

For his part, Bashar maintained this appeal to public participation in his inaugural speech on July 18, 2000, asserting the "desperate need for constructive criticism" and "critical thinking" to deal with the country's challenges. The content of the speech was widely cited as a clear indication of coming political change and

foregrounded the previously-developed theme of continuity amid transition. In the address, Asad affirmed the need for *infitah* (opening), pluralism, and transparency. He professed that these changes were not only preferred, but necessary for future progress. In Bashar's own words, "… society will not develop, improve, or prosper if it were to depend only on one sect or one party or one group; rather, it has to depend on the work of all citizens in the entire society. That is why I find it absolutely necessary to call upon every single citizen to participate in the process of development and modernization…" Bashar's speech also invoked the concept of democracy itself, calling for a "democracy specific to Syria" that would bring about "our own democratic experience that is special to us" as opposed to one drawn from Western models. The speech quite clearly signaled a new openness to societal organization and participatory politics.

Bashar also maintained a strong secular disposition during the transition. He did not substantially appropriate greater Islamic symbolism to garner support, or at least dampen opposition, of Sunni Muslims as his father had previously done. Prior to the revolt by the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s, the elder Asad performed the Hajj; he regularly prayed at Sunni mosques; and he sought support for the Alawi sect via a fatwa by the prominent Shi'a leader Musa al-Sadr acknowledging Alawis as being of the Shi'a sect of Islam and therefore legitimate Muslims. In the 1990s, Asad also permitted a state-wide, religiously-influenced education campaign by the Grand Mufti of Damascus, head of a Sufi order and advocate of interreligious dialogue (Zisser, 2001, pp. 3-10, 196-203). Hafiz al-Asad used these symbolic, culturally resonant acts to bolster his religious credentials with the Sunni majority. But such a strategy would prove less appealing and inappropriate to Bashar throughout the succession period. The challenges he would

face in the first years of his presidency came more from liberal reformists pressuring for change than from the Islamists, who were still wary of overt organizing and claims-making after a long history of swift and brutal repression under Hafiz al-Asad's regime. The Brotherhood did operate in exile but posed did not pose an immediate threat. There was little upside to Bashar invoking religion in the succession process.

Gestures to religion would not only contradict the secularism of Ba'athist ideology and therefore the regime's "old guard" and hardliners; it would also contradict Bashar's appeal to the urban middle-class and youth who saw promise in Bashar as a modern, secular, and technologically-inclined leader. Younger segments of society were particularly hopeful for reform. At 34, Bashar himself was young. A London doctor with a modern look, he headed the Syrian Computer Society (SCS) and was known to advocate improvements in technological infrastructure and internet access across the country, a position that conflicted with some established officials in the security services. That image was serving him well. His inaugural speech nodded to youth as a source for change as well, stating that the modern thinking required to modernize the state would come from "young people [who] have strong minds that are still lively and creative." Other common elements of discourse typically invoked were also less likely to resonate in Syrian society after the change of leadership. References to the "Corrective Movement" of the early 1970s, the persistent threat of foreign domination, and the pan-Arabist ideals of the Ba'ath party were now relics of a previous generation of leadership. In general, by the time of the succession, the symbols and historical events typically evoked in public discourse have less meaning to the exceedingly youthful population (Perthes, 2004b, p. 4).

The early messages from the new leader ultimately mixed notions of continuity and change. Against a preceding backdrop of political stagnation and complete suppression of critical politics, any indications of political openness represented a palpable shift. That the parting signals of the outgoing leader and early rhetoric of the new one were so uncharacteristic of the closed regime made them especially actionable. Nonetheless, prevailing uncertainty over just what these signals meant in practice influenced the ways activists mobilized in the period that followed.

6.4. Activism Emergent

The father Asad's absolute authority and permanence in office contributed to a degree of normalization in the government-opposition relationship. A near-complete suppression of opposition forces followed turbulent years from 1976-1982 in which the regime engaged in violent conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood-led insurgency, culminating in the 1982 bombing of Hama. Political arrests since the outset of the regime increased significantly during this period, precursing the continued and widespread use of imprisonment against activists and political opponents throughout (and after) Hafiz al-Asad's rule.[81] The "regime of repression" yielded a standard for acceptable means of making claims on the government, as well as consequences for deviating from it. The Syrian regime, particularly the intelligence and security services, established a particularly suffocating standard that was demarcated over time through interactions between the government, political organizations, and societal groups. The surveillance state penetrated civic

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[81] On arrests and imprisonment in the broader context of human rights in Syria, see Violate Daguerre (2002), *Democracy and Human Rights in Syria* (Paris: Eurabe Publishers)

organizations and sites of opposition, rendering them impotent in the face of state-driven political and economic life. When challenges to government authority did arise, red lines were constricted and reinforced with violence and repression.

The transfer of power changed that. As Hafez al-Asad's departure was imminent, and more so after the succession, various political activities emerged to advocate political, social, and economic reform. The combination of rhetorical inducements to political participation, signals of openness to critical politics, and uncertainty over their limits and sincerity motivated a flurry of activism. Cautious optimism amid the uncertainty of transition led a number of first movers to express desires for gradual and nonviolent political change. With the entry of new national leadership in Syria, activists began to express these desires publicly and collectively in what has been termed the 'Damascus Spring.' The critical discourse and contentious activism of the period featured collective initiatives from across a range of social and economic sectors. This broad-based participation was "another trait that distinguished the period from previous opposition movements. Activism emerged from below, for the majority of the activists were intellectuals and not politicians" (Ziadeh, 2013, p. 73).

Events data from the ICEWS dataset offers a first-cut look at contention before and after the succession period. Figure 6.1 presents a time series of contentious acts from 1995 through 2009 as reported in local and international media. The pre-succession period identifies very few events, attesting to the complete suppression of societal centers of opposition to the regime. After Bashar al-Asad's accession, the frequency of events in which the government is the object of societal claims is noticeably higher. By no means did the change in leadership open the floodgates of political activism. However, relative to the years preceding

the leader turnover, the amount of mobilization and critical politics at the outset of Bashar's tenure resembled a new bid for a Syrian glasnost. The remainder of this chapter recounts that period and analyzes it in light of the succession-contention theory.

Figure 6.1

Contentious Activism in Syria
Intensity: 1995-2009
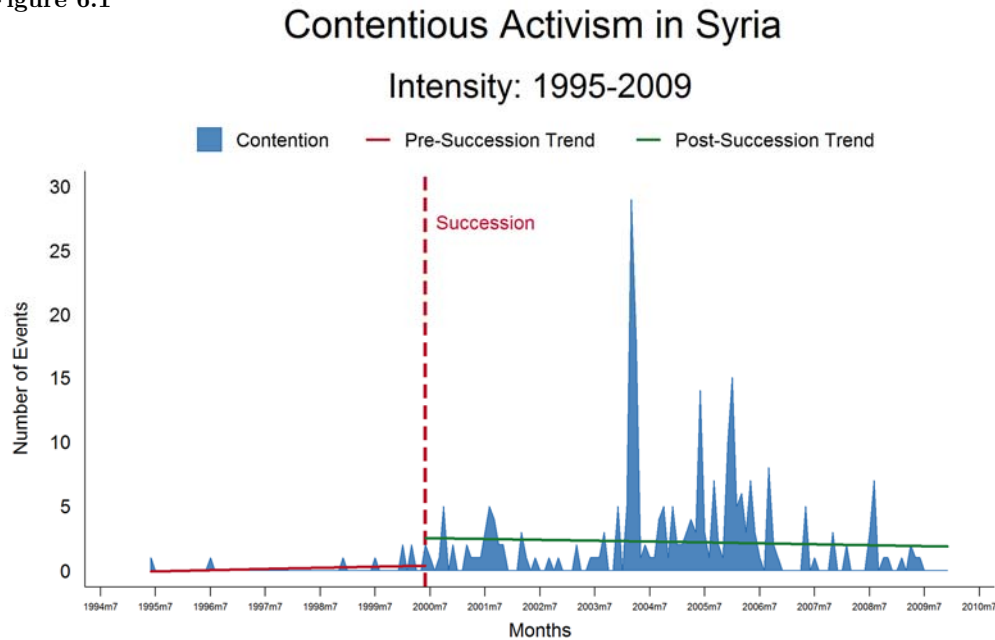
In May 2000, for example, a group of intellectuals led by the journalist/activist Michel Kilo began organization the 'Committees for the Revival of Civil Society' that aimed to generate public discourse and debate about the absence of political freedoms in Syria. Kilo and others argued publicly that economic reform would fail without political reform as well.[82] Some challengers found an alliance with the independent politician Riad Seif who created the forum 'Friends of Civil Society,' whose mission statement professed that the state must

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[82] See, for example, "Without political change, Syrian economic overhaul doomed," *Daily Star*, August 1, 2003

be balanced by civil society in order for future political and economic development to take place, and that the revival of civil society could only take place through guaranteed freedoms of speech and expression (Lesch, 2005, pp. 86-89). More than 20 of these forums would existed by early 2001 in cities like Aleppo, Tartus, and Ladhiqiyya, as well as a handful in Damascus alongside Seif's, like Khalil Ma'tuq's 'Cultural Forum for Human Rights' (Zisser, 2007, p. 82).

Led by prominent societal figures, the increased political activity was deliberative in nature. Despite a perceived opening for activism and claimsmaking, a strategy of overt and antagonistic challenge to the regime made little sense in the highly repressive security state. The "red lines" surrounding political expression and activism may have been blurred amidst the change in leadership, but they by no means disappeared. Trying not to overplay their hand, the reformists developed a less conflictual and more educative approach. Indeed, Kilo describes the strategy of the civil society movement as a cultural project by which it

> could work in a different way, offering knowledge, ideas, experiences, reflections and emotions to [that part of] society which is now outside politics: to help society restore itself politically through a cultural project that we offered. That was the project with which the civil society movement started (A. George, 2003, pp. 33-34).

That summer, two new non-governmental organizations were also created. The 'Syrian Human Rights Organization' and 'Defense of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights' became active proponents of human rights and focused their efforts on the release of political detainees. In late September, just a few months after Bashar took power, the 'Statement of 99' was issued by prominent intellectuals and human rights activists. This was a significant incident in Syria as even the political forums created in preceding months required the permission of

the government. The 'Statement of 99' petitioned for political rights and argued that other changes acknowledged by the regime to be necessary (i.e. economic reforms) were impossible without political change. As such, it re-oriented the discourse of reform to focus on more expansive changes in political life. The statement demanded a number of changes, calling the government to:

- End the state of emergency and martial law being applied in Syria since 1963,
- Issue a public pardon to all political detainees and those who are pursued for their political ideas and allow the return of all deportees and exiled citizens,
- Establish a rule of law that will recognize freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and freedom of expression,
- Free public life from the laws, constraints and various forms of surveillance imposed on it, allowing citizens to express their various interests within a framework of social harmony and peaceful [economic] competition and enable all to participate in the development and prosperity of the country.[83]

The state-run media did not cover the story. However, it originally appeared in the Lebanese daily newspaper *al-Safir*, was reported on numerous other television networks in the Arab world including *Al Jazeera*, and the transcription of the statement was circulated among various intellectual and political circles. The impact of this statement brought attention to the increasing activism in Syrian society, advanced the effort of framing the post-sucession period as one of reform, and furthered these hopes and expectations. The reformists were capturing public attention and discourse surrounding post-succession Syrian politics.

Asad's government responded in November 2000 with a presidential amnesty decree that released about 600 political prisoners. The move was

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[83] "Statement of 99," *al-Hayat* (London), September 27, 2000

implemented as a concession to the reformists, but amnesty also has symbolic power. The act of granting amnesty "exemplifies the exercise of human social power over individual human beings. It relieves the sufferings of some prisoners so as to signify the potential for beneficial changes in the ritual rejuvenation of the society accompanying the change of [the] political leader" (Potter, 1987, p. 239) (Potter, 239). The state-dominated media landscape was also an area of modest liberalization. Particularly noteworthy was the Popular cartoonist Ali Ferzat's weekly satirical magazine *al-Dumari* (The Lamplighter) getting a publication license in December 2000 and selling out its 75,000 copies almost immediately (Lesch, 2005, p. 89). These concessions in many ways only motivated further action, showing apparent fruits of the activists' efforts.

In December, the 'Statement of 1000' was signed, reaffirming the principles of the 'Statement of 99' but pushing the boundary even further. The statement overtly opposed the existing political order and called for democratic elections and the end to the B'ath's domination over the state (A. George, 2003, p. 186). This statement marked an observable split between reformist challengers as some, like Riad Seif, wanted to continue increasing direct contention aimed squarely at the regime while others, like Michel Kilo, wanted to proceed more cautiously so as not to engender a harsh reaction by the regime (A. George, 2003, p. 42). The Muslim Brotherhood, outlawed since the violent clashes between the government and the group in the 1980s, was also present in the critical politics of the time. It composed the "Covenant of National Honor for Political Activity" in London in May 2001, a statement that argued for the formulation of a covenant of national honor for which political activity would be based including political pluralism and democratic elections. Upon the establishment of a convention to draft the final version of the

covenant in which many diverse political actors were invited, the Brotherhood was unable to generate much attention or participation. The Islamist framework did not resonate well with many of the activists at the forefront of the burgeoning civil society movement inside the country. As Zisser notes, "the Brotherhood's attempt to get onto the reform bandwagon reflected the inherent danger to the regime in the policy of openness that it encouraged. This danger was focused on the feeling extant both inside and outside Syria that the regime was projecting weakness and the feeling that it could even be challenged" (Zisser, 2007, p. 86).

6.5. Initial Repression

By 2001, Bashar had allowed sufficient time to observe the activities of political challengers when political space was open. He had anticipated this opening would legitimize his rule and appease some of the oppositional sentiment. However, after less than a year after taking office, he realized that the move was becoming a risk to his own grip on power. The government responded by employing a variety of repressive tactics, some of which were decidedly cultural; they were public actions through mediums of communication to influence the perceptions and expectations of the Syrian populace for the purpose of ending the reformist's "cultural project."

As a professor in Damascus related, the regime began "to fear that the movement was no longer requesting political rights, but demanding [the] destruction" of the current political order for an entirely new one. This concern was evident in Bashar's interview published in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper on February 8, 2001 in which he draws on ideas of shared history as a "cultural

society" to challenge the reformists by articulating his own conception of civil society:

> What is important is not to view them as the alternative to the institutions of the state. Civil institutions must not precede the state institutions in the building process, but on the contrary, they must follow them, assist them, lean on them and not build upon their ruins... These intellectuals confuse the civil society with the institutions of the civil society. The civil society is a cultural society that is the essence of many cultures, which have existed for thousands of years. Syria has a past culture that has lasted more than 6,000 years. To say that we want to build a civil society means that we want to do away with all this past and to begin a new history. That is not realistic... Already in my inaugural address I said that we are not here to shatter and destroy the system, but rather our aim is to develop it.[84]

Others in the state bureaucracy, like Vice President Khaddam and Defense Minister Tlas, were also becoming worried that the public's perception of the state as weak would only spawn further activism (Zisser, 2007, p. 87). Tlas warned in a most clear and concise manner of the impending repression, "We will not accept that anybody takes power from us, because it comes from the barrel of the gun, and we are its masters" (Perthes, 2004b, p. 104). Therefore, beginning in February of 2001, the regime began its campaign to repress the political activities of these challengers. Within the government, even the "modernizers" largely abandoned more liberal notions of modernization and adopted a more authoritarian view of modernization. Official language and discourse signaled the constricting political environment. In telling fashion, the state-controlled media replaced the post-succession "reform and renewal" (*al-islah wal-tajdid*) slogan with benign alternative

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[84] *"Muqabalah Ma' al-Ra'is Bashar al-Asad"* (Interview with President Bashar al-Asad), *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, February 8, 2001.

of "modernization and development" (*al-islah wal-tatwir*) (Perthes, 2004b, pp. 98-99).

A number of other tactics were used by the government to simultaneously repress the dissent and regain control of the discourse of reform. A law was passed in February that required all forums and meetings to be registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, not only was registration necessary for holding such a meeting or maintaining a forum, but it was also incumbent on the ministry approving it (Lesch, 2005). The government was highly selective in the forums and meetings it did allow, while rejecting most of the forums that requested permission. Even when the forums did receive permission, or attempted to meet without it, security officers would show up and prevent the meeting from taking place. This strategy was a major blow to the reformist movement because these meetings had become the basis of organization and communication in a society with highly controlled communication networks. In September 2001, a new government order impeded the operation and creation of private newspapers. Decree no. 50/2001 granted the executive branch, specifically the prime minister and the minister of information, the ability to regulate publishers, printers, distributors, and businesses from disseminating material they deemed illegal. Breaking this law resulted in heavy fines and the possibility of a prison sentence of up to three years (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Scores of activists were also arrested, including the key organizers of the various groups associated with the forums and the 'Statement of 99'. A few of the most prominent include Mamun al-Homsi, a deputy of the People's Assembly who undertook a hunger strike and was arrested for trying to "change the constitution by illegal means" (Human Rights Watch, 2002), immediately followed by the arrest

of Michael Kilo; Riad al-Turk, head of the Communist Party Political Bureau that was illegal in Syria, charged with "express[ing] views that encroach upon the constitution, violate the general law, and defame the state"; and Riad Seif, who continued to hold his forum without permission and was charged with contributing to disorder and undermining the state. Notably, and in contrast to court proceedings under Hafiz al-Asad's government, the criminal trials were handled in a relatively open manner. As Zisser tells it, these trials

> were held in a relatively free atmosphere… [Defense] attorneys maintained a media campaign against the arrests… and demanded that their clients be released… Western diplomats were allowed to be present at the court sessions… The openness displayed by the Syrian regime in its treatment of the affair was attributed to its desire to avoid exacerbating the tension in its relation with the intellectual community as well as its awareness of existing limitations in its struggle against its enemies (Zisser, 2007, p. 92).

But the open trials also served the alternative, symbolic purpose. Showcasing the prosecution of the most prominent figures of the opposition presented a strong message to Syrian society that, despite the expectations that accompanied the succession, any political change would be a government-driven process.

These modes of repression, operating as practical means of suppressing opposition but also as symbolic demonstrations of power, brought about the end of the initial wave of political mobilization of the 'Damascus Spring'. Bashar generally succeeded in selling his own presidential succession but also invited political activism that the government deemed too threatening. To this point, the activism primarily challenged authoritarian relics of the regime, not Bashar's presidency. In future iterations, however, challenges to the government would target the president more directly.

6.6. Pressing Further

Despite the repression that stunted the early 'Damascus Spring' mobilization, dissidents and activists continued to make claims on the government. Collective action built on the initial, succession-inspired activism by leveraging the awareness of broad-based demand for change. As a result, Syrian Kurdish groups elevated long-held claims while groups in exile, including the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, further developed institutions around which they could coordinate.

Part of this second push featured the mobilization of Syrian Kurdish interests. Activism around Kurdish recognition and rights was at times expressed independently, and at other times in the context of broader national concerns with political change. Gauthier (2009) explains the amplification of Kurdish communal claims following the transfer of power and, especially, the alliance of Kurdish and American forces in Iraq. She illustrates that in addition to a sense of empowerment from the American-Kurdish alliance next door, "a relaxation of tensions, however relative and ephemeral, brought about by the change of president in Damascus… has been perceived by Kurdish political activists as an opportunity to bring their community's issues to the fore and adopt a more assertive opposition strategy" (Gauthier, 2009, p. 105). This perceived opening for asserting demands for citizenship rights and recognition was exhibited in a number of events.

The first, for example, was a public march and demonstration organized by the Yakiti Party in front of the national parliament in Damascus on International Human Rights Day in December 2002. A few months later, additional Kurdish groups participated alongside non-Kurdish opposition in a silent march featuring children in front of the UNESCO building in Damascus. On the anniversary of the

December 2002 march, Arab and Kurdish activists collaborated in a significantly larger demonstration that reinforced the notion that communal demands were in addition to society-wide, multi-ethnic ones. Trials of dissidents in military courts also brought out activists, gathering to protest the arrests and detentions in front of the court buildings. In May 2003, a few hundred activists demanded that martial law be lifted, security agencies be reformed, and political prisoners be released as a means to relieve the country of American pressure (Ghadbian, 2015).

Moreover, student protests at the University of Aleppo in January and February of 2004 over issues related to student unions and government employment obligations for students. Gauthier summarizes the importance of these events, noting that their regularity, creativity, and diversity "combiner to make these protests an undeniably new phenomenon… represent[ing] an organized and enduring union of democratic forces" (Gauthier, 2009, pp. 108-110). On March 8, 2004, on the anniversary of the Ba'th Party revolution, a demonstration in front of the parliament in Damascus featured a diverse set of activists. They advocated an end to the state of martial law. Security forces broke up the protest and arrested nearly 100 people. Just a few days later, unrest shook the city of Qamishli over a number of days following a clash between the fans of two Syrian football clubs. The intervention of security forces left multiple casualties, prompting numerous marches and protests. A back-and-forth of protests and security interventions in different towns and produced many more casualties over days (Gauthier, 2009, pp. 110-112).

The regime's behavior throughout this period confused more than it clarified. It sent mixed signals that made identifying clear lines for permissible activism difficult. As Carsten Wieland described it, "The regime blew hot and cold"

(Wieland, 2012, p. 147). Riad al-Turk was released from prison in November 2002 due to health issues. Government responses to student demonstrations yielded arrests, but crackdowns were not as harsh and punishments were meted out selectively. Michel Kilo was encouraged to publish critical articles in Syrian newspapers by a member of the regime and spoke on Syrian television advocating something of a fresh start for Syrian national politics. The concessional behavior of the government was again signaling openness, making the limits for political dissent and activism ambiguous.

In response, dissidents pushed boundaries to both test the regime's resolve and to reassert their demands. The "Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change" of October 16, 2005 was a full-bodied call for "comprehensive and complete democratic transformation." It grew out of coordination efforts between opposition groups in exile, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, and the civil society movement inside the country. The Muslim Brotherhood had reoriented its official platform away from an Islamic state and instead toward a civil state with democratic institutions. The document represented a consensus of all major opposition groups, a particularly notable feat given significant fractures and political differences among them. It called for a "modern state" based on "a new social contract which leads to a modern democratic constitution that makes citizenship the criterion of affiliation, and adopts pluralism, the peaceful transfer of power, and the rule of law in a state all of whose citizens enjoy the same rights and have the same duties, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, sect, or clan, and prevents the return of tyranny in new forms."[85] Aside from the diversity of its

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[85] For the full text, see "Documents on Democracy: Syria" *Journal of Democracy* 17(1), January 2006, pp.181-184

signatories, the force of the document was also in the combination of its extensive political demands alongside a pluralistic vision that rejected singular dominance of any particular identity or ideology.

The document represented a more formal and effective articulation of the early ideas of the Damascus Spring, and revealed the maturation of the movement over the time. Other efforts to mobilize dissent in the years that followed. For example, following the assassination of Rafik Hariri in Lebanon in 2006, a joint petition among opposition activists in both countries called the Damascus-Beirut Declaration advocated for Lebanese sovereignty and Syrian non-interference. Yet, Bashar al-Asad's government was by now fully embracing the autocratic legacy of the regime. It continued to repress through surveillance and arrests. It cracked down following the Damascus-Beirut Declaration. Moreover, the organizational manifestation of the Damascus Declaration that eventually formed in 2007 was stamped out through arrests of a dozen prominent members (Wieland, 2012, p. 154).

Ghadbian (2015) and Wieland (2012) identify three phases of government-activist interaction, two of which I have discussed here. A third, in the final years of the decade and just preceding the uprising that began in 2011, is an account of civil society in retreat as Bashar al-Asad's regime reverted to comprehensive closure of political space.[86] However, the rest of Bashar al-Asad's first decade in power saw additional dissident activity in different, creative, and more muted forms.

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[86] A number of authors detail the decline of activism in the latter part of the decade amid heightened repression (Ghadbian, 2015; Pace & Landis, 2009; Wieland, 2012). Other studies show the transformation of political activism into less overt forms in this climate of suppression, leveraging cultural and artistic expressions of dissent (Salamandra & Stenberg, 2015). Numerous others connect this earlier period of activism to the 2011 uprising in Syria, notably Abboud (2016) and Hinnebusch and Zintl (2015).

Dissidents had little space to maneuver. But as Salamandra and Stenberg's (2015) edited volume displays quite clearly, the critical politics waged by artists, writers, and human rights advocates were "chipping away at the wall [of fear], moving it incrementally to widen the range of public discourse" (p. 3).

6.7. Conclusion: Lasting Implications

The succession event had a dramatic effect on Syrian politics as the new leader sought to consolidate his power and legitimate his rule. In the pre-succession period, public images and symbolic displays of authority sought to transition public expectations for succession from Hafiz to Bashar (and for a time, via brother Basil). During the succession itself, Bashar sent an ambiguous message about his vision for the future to facilitate the process of consolidating power. On one hand, the message played to the desires of the reformists who sought greater political and civil freedoms in addition to economic reforms. On the other hand, the message also played to the "old guard" that sought to maintain their personal privileges guaranteed by the status quo. In the post-succession period of political contention among the government and activists, the government countered the dissidents with tactics meant to redefine the "red lines" surrounding political expression and alter the expectations of reform in society.

Bashar al-Asad's speech before the People's Assembly in 2000 when he accepted the presidency of Syria only served to support the hopes of reform-oriented activists. They saw an opportunity in the succession, and Bashar's proclamations about the need for political and economic change lowered the perceived cost of political activism toward these same goals. The power of these early signals to stimulate activism should not be underestimated. Even if

government intentions were not to induce the kind of critical politics or public participation that followed, its own mixed signals leave facilitate that interpretation. Longtime Syrian politician and presidential adviser Bouthaina Shaaban suggested there were misunderstandings of Bashar's speech among activists. "I think in certain ways some people probably understood it to mean do whatever you like, anyway you like, anytime you like, and I don't think that is what it meant to be" (Lesch, 2005, p. 90).

As political first movers began to mobilize others, the regime remained silent and allowed political organization and activism without using the repression that would have been expected from Hafiz al-Asad. The release of political prisoners immediately following the signing of the very public 'Statement of 99' signaled to the political activists that their political activities were not only being tacitly accepted, but also given approval. This perceived affirmation propelled further political activism by signaling an opening in political space to previously prohibited forms of political mobilization. In addition, this also contributed to the perception that the regime was weakened by the initial activities of the political challengers. This, in turn, made continued political contention strategically sensible.

Activists were without a 'normalized' relationship with government because they lacked a precedent for how to understand its non-confrontational disposition in the face of challenge. The regime's reluctance to repress the political activity was perceived by the activists as an opening up of the political space that encouraged, at a minimum, the continuation of their claims-making activities.[87] Moreover, the lack of repression engendered moderate rather than violent means of contention. Yet, despite the use of more moderate means of activism, the

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[87] Interview with HK

continuing growth of the aggressive activists became an important element in the regime's calculus.

With an extremely short history of government-activist interaction in the new, post-succession political context, new information only began to shift expectations. The information dissidents received initially was that previous red lines had been relaxed and the tolerance for critical public expression and contentious activism was now higher. The government signaled in rhetoric and behavior that it was less enthusiastic in repressing critical voices. As such, activists perceived and exploited wider boundaries for contentious activity than was the norm under Hafiz al-Asad. But they did so in different ways. Some perceived state weakness and identified it as an occasion to augment their what they felt were "modest" initial claims. Others, however, wanted to move more cautiously so as not to elicit a harsher government response or jeopardize the moment entirely, including relations with moderate allies in government. Multiple interpretations of regime rhetoric and behavior revealed the way mixed signals not only prompted mobilization, but also the kinds of mobilization different activists pursued.

The growing strength of the reform movement posed a threat to the regime. However, it was not merely its strength, but also the content of its stated goals. In Asad's own words, the substantive orientation of the movement became cause for concern. The harsher language of the 'Statement of 1000' and the creation of political parties outside the extant political institutions were perceived by government members as direct challenges to its authority. The intention to replace existing structures of governance in Syria, and the immediacy for which it was advocated, is what caused the government to respond with its wave of repression.

This is not to say that repression would not have taken place otherwise, but the stated aims of the movement were undoubtedly ominous for the governing elite.

The repression began as relatively abated, selected repression through the policy that all forums and meetings need to be registered and obtain permission from the government. This move increased the cost of continued contentious activism and struck a major blow to the movement. At the same time, Asad and other high-ranking government officials began a campaign to discredit the movement through media and direct threats. However, these forms of repression did not deter some activists from continuing their contentious activities. Activists and dissidents continued their political activities in the face of this repression. While it increased the costs of their activities by disrupting their mobilizational structures, they prolonged their claims, sometimes using new tactics. The government again asserted itself through increased repressive activity in the form of arrests, travel bans, and censorship. These were forms of selective repression that served to discourage further mobilization and more extreme tactics.

The interactive relationship between the government and activists did not result in reverting to the same dynamic under Hafiz al-Asad. The effects of the Damascus Spring following the success of Bashar al-Asad had important effects on shaping, and even undermining, the definition of "normalized politics" in Syrian state-society relations going forward. Ziadeh (2013, p. 66) captures the dual importance of the opportunity presented by the leadership succession and the agency of attentive societal actors:

> The Damascus Spring would have been impossible without the presence of two elements causing a socio-political movement at a historical moment. First is a change in political leadership while maintaining a totalitarian system based on a strictly hierarchical order in which the president is considered the sole executive director

of the system and its institutions. The other is the willingness of a society — known historically for its diplomacy, vitality, culture and participation — to revive itself through overcoming barriers to have its voice heard and taken into account. The political elites wanted to introduce legal and economic reforms to improve Syria's external image without opening space for political alternatives. But while the new opposition front seemed at first to be short-sighted and piecemeal in its demands, it gradually became more mature and visionary.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the role of authoritarian leader transitions, examining their effect on political activism through a multi-method investigation of a hypothesized succession-contention connection. Toward that end, I have sought to answer three overarching questions: Do leader turnovers represent a period particularly susceptible to societal challenges and activism? What explains variation in political contention and activism when power is passed from one leader to another? And why do some leader transitions witness significant political contention while others pass without the commotion of claimsmaking activities? The findings suggest that leader changes often stimulate the public expression of demands and grievances and that institutional differences mediate this effect. I have argued that this effect is observed, at least in part, because authoritarian succession introduces uncertainty into the relationship between state and society and that the politically conscious find opportunities for action in these transitional moments. This brief concluding chapter reviews the findings from the quantitative and case study analyses, offers suggestions for future research, and adds some concluding thoughts.

7.1. Summary

The second chapter engaged in conceptual discussion of leader succession and examined existing work on this political event. It sought to establish the significance of this dissertation research by identifying two points that characterize existing work. The first is that studies of leader turnover treat it as an object of explanation but rarely investigate its explanatory potential. The second observation is that leader change is almost exclusively considered an elite-level event, ignoring the fact that leader changes are events filled with meaning and importance because of they are embedded in societal contexts. Combined, these two observations motivate a reassessment of leadership transition as both causal (succession as independent variable) and relational (succession as an event in the context of state-society relations).

Chapter three addressed these theoretical gaps by presenting an argument that links leadership transitions to heightened levels of political activism. I argued that multiple causal pathways can explain mobilization during this period. Ultimately, each of these causal arguments are attributable to two overarching causes: (1) succession-induced uncertainty, and (2) perceived changes in political opportunities for claimsmaking behavior and the likelihood of realizing hoped-for outcomes. Moreover, in line with more recent scholarship, the argument considers institutional variation among dictatorships. I argued that dictatorships are not equally prepared for succession, drawing attention to the existence of procedures regulating leader transitions and the ways they exit office. These arguments established the basis for empirical hypothesis testing in chapter four.

The other purpose of chapter three was to present the methodological approach guiding the analyses in chapters four through six. At its core, this dissertation is a study of events. The methods employed reflect different

understandings of events and therefore event analysis. Consequently, my multi-method approach to this dissertation combined (1) cross-national, quantitative analysis of the leader changes (event as independent variable) with (2) quantitative analysis of contentious events throughout two succession periods (events as occurrences of activism) embedded within (3) case studies of political mobilization surrounding leader transitions in Jordan and Syria (event as process in particular contexts).

Chapter four engaged in hypothesis testing of numerous propositions raised in the third chapter. Time-series cross-sectional analysis of all national executive leader changes from 1950-2014 offered a general analysis of the hypothesized connection between leader succession and both nonviolent and violent forms of contentious politics. The hypotheses centered on how activists, dissidents, and other challengers respond to leader change in autocracies, and how political institutions affect those responses. In short, the analysis lends support to the general hypothesis that leadership turnover increases contentious political activism in authoritarian regimes. Regular leader changes increase nonviolent forms of activism alone, while irregular leader changes are associated with higher levels of both nonviolent and violent contention. The findings related to the mediating effect of political institutions were inconsistent across different measures of the dependent variable (unrest and instability), though point to the ability of succession procedures to limit post-succession violence. Moreover, the results indicate that personalist forms of rule witness significantly higher amounts of post-succession contention relative to other authoritarian regime types.

Jordan's hereditary leadership change in 1999 is the focus of chapter five. Spanning five decades, the rein of King Hussein ended with a dramatic flourish of

palace intrigue as the line of succession switched from brother to son with constitutional justification. However, shifting the lens from elite politics to a state-society relational view of the succession highlights its political significance for societal interests amid a stagnated liberalization process. Political mobilization continued apace from the new participatory politics and growth of the civil society sector in the 1990s. However, the analysis of events suggests an increase in political activism in the first years of Abdullah's reign. It is hard to say, causally, how new leadership factored into the political behavior of the activists who participated in these acts of public voice. Changes in elite configurations and economic policies following the succession were motivating factors for some of the observed change in contentious activism. However, the post-succession period did not represent the marked change in state-society relations — constituting its own distinct period of interaction — that was observed in the Syrian case. The quantitative, archival, and interview-based evidence points to heightened political awareness and activity within society being spurred by desires and anticipation for political change under new leadership. The extent to which Abdullah's accession influenced these critical activities remains unclear relative to the Syrian case.

Chapter six highlighted the societal activism of the "Damascus Spring" following the dynastic accession of Bashar al-Asad to the Syrian presidency. As a particularly clear case of political mobilization in response to leader turnover, Syria illustrates the ways in which uncertainty about life under new leadership and perceived opportunities for change can spur activism. Multiple phases of activism attempted to push the government toward greater freedoms and pluralism in the first decade of Bashar al-Asad's rule. Critical voices attempted to create political space in society where there was almost none and injected a level of dissent into

Syrian politics not witnessed by many of its citizens. Despite indications of reformist intentions under new leadership, however, challenging authoritarianism only brought out the repressive tendencies of the state.

7.2. Implications

This dissertation adds to our collective understanding of leader turnover and contentious politics in authoritarian settings. The relevance of the arguments and results of this study are bolstered by an apparent resurgence in scholarly and public interest in leaders and authoritarianism. Several implications are worth noting in conclusion.

First, this study offers basic empirical support for the commonly-held assumption — reflected in popular media and commentary on the demise of authoritarian rulers — that leadership change makes governments susceptible to challenge and that societal interests are often keen to exploit this event. This is borne out by the cross-national statistical analysis and case-based historical analysis. Few studies have analyzed whether and how dissident political behavior is affected by leadership change in the absence of more comprehensive regime change.

Second, this research reinforces the growing literature examining how institutional differences among authoritarian regimes affect political outcomes. International conflict behavior features prominently among these studies, but domestic-level differences related to the use of repression and the allocation of foreign aid also attest to the importance of disaggregating authoritarian institutions. The findings in this dissertation assert the role of these institutional differences in mediating the relationship between the universal event of leader

change and the political behavior of societal interests. To my knowledge, no studies have systematically assessed the role of authoritarian regime characteristics on the relationship between succession and domestic contention or conflict. Nor has any previous study of leader turnover and domestic contention or conflict had global coverage.

My analysis also adds new insights into the political considerations of dissidents, opposition actors, and societal interests vis-a-vis national leadership. It takes a "state reflected in society" approach that emphasizes "how the politically active receive and interpret signals about the limits of the permissible" during a transitional period in the governing apparatus (Stern & O'Brien 2012). I hope to have reoriented the concept of leadership transition away from a purely elite-level event toward a relational one that appreciates the role of societal actors and interests in this event — a society-amid-succession approach. Such a reorientation calls for identifying the ways in which links between rulers and ruled are affected when the dominant party in that relationship undergoes fundamental change.

Finally, I hope that the case analysis of Jordan and Syria complements scholarship on the Middle East that recognizes activism and dissent for what it is, not for what is says (or doesn't say) about prospects for democracy. My examination of political participation amid leadership change in these two countries seeks to embrace the "post-democratization era" in Middle East studies, "free of the biases of the democratization paradigm" (Heydemann 2002, 60). Political participation in the region is worthy of study and support whether or not it is a harbinger of democratization or regime change. Such work counters the false dichotomy of social mobilization in the region between a riotous and revolutionary "Arab street" versus an inert or empty one. The public expression of demands and

grievances captured in my analysis reorients us toward informal political participation. These events may not pose a risk to the regime or threaten structural changes; they often do not aim to do these things anyway. At the very least, however, they elevate claims of consequence to groups and interests, seeking government responsiveness in the absence of democratic institutions.

7.3. Limitations

As in any study, there are numerous limitations to this dissertation research. First, data limitations impede some of the analytical weight attributable to the statistical analyses. There are numerous challenges related to this issue, many of which were discussed in the empirical chapters. Particularly notable are concerns over data aggregation and the unit of analysis when examining political events in time. The cross-national analysis in chapter four used country-year measures of the variables of interest and applied a "year share" measure of succession that lack the desired temporal variation. I offer a potential avenue for dealing with this limitation in the next section.

Endogeneity is also another concern with the statistical analysis. I have argued throughout the dissertation that contentious activism is more likely in the wake of leader changes in authoritarian regimes. However, contentious activism can also prompt leaders to vacate their positions or lose them by force, whether through their direct actions or by empowering rival factions of the incumbent. The use of various estimation strategies for the cross-national analysis attempted to mitigate these concerns, including establishing a clear temporal order of the hypothesized effect with a lagged succession variable and conditioning the effect on potential confounding variables. The evidence from the case study analysis, both

quantitative and qualitative, also establish that activists were attentive to the potential for leadership change to affect the opportunities and threats they faced in exercising political voice. While lacking the generalizability of the statistical analysis in chapter four, these case studies demonstrate the causal links between succession and activism.

Another limitation of the study lies in the inability to sufficiently account for state behavior. The cross-national analysis in chapter four used various estimation procedures to control for the political environment confronted by activists. However, it was unable to model concessionary or repressive behavior. Future research will benefit from more explicit attention to the actions of state agents during the transition process. My efforts to emphasize societal interests in the transition process captured some of these dynamics in the Jordanian and Syrian contexts. Going forward, however, a more interactive model of state-society relations will better capture the relational understanding of leadership change that I theorized here.

7.4. Future Research

In spite of these limitations, or in light of them, this dissertation offers numerous opportunities for future research. The most obvious avenue for future research is the application and scrutiny of the theory to cases of succession that represent different values of the dependent variable (that witness different types and amounts of contentious activism). There is a steady stream of relevant cases in contemporary dictatorships, and speculation about turbulence in these transitions is abundant. Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov died last year with expressed concern over this "moment fraught with uncertainty" leading to "a new power

vacuum invit[ing] civil unrest" or bloodshed from the "Islamist threat." While this has not come to pass, "rare public protest in Uzbekistan" raised demands on the government in succeeding months. At 93, Robert Mugabe's impending demise is already causing political fractures manifest in street demonstrations and protests in Zimbabwe. Protesters and political challengers have turned the succession itself into a point of concern. Chinese president Xi Jinping has upended typical procedures for designating a successor, "unleash[ing] forces that open up a wide range of political futures" that could "inject instability into the delicately balanced system." All tenures end, and the variation in how that happens and how people respond represents opportunities for testing and expanding on the arguments in this dissertation.

While this dissertation demonstrated a probabilistic link between leader turnover in dictatorships and contentious activism, a number of questions remain about this relationship. New studies building on these initial findings might explore the conditions under which we would expect different types and amounts of activism. I began to answer this question from an institutional perspective, but limited to broad categories of regime type and the presence of succession procedures.

There is also much to be gained from additional research on the mechanisms linking leader change and activism. This dissertation asserted the plausibility of multiple causal pathways and traced them through individual cases. Which mechanisms function in different contexts, and how they do so individually or jointly, are open questions. Answering them would reveal more about the role of societal actors and interests in a seemingly elite-level event experienced in all political systems.

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