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Authoritarianism and Political Violence

The inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence

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“If tyranny were a man who wanted to talk about himself, he would say: ‘I am evil, my father is injustice, my mother is offense, my brother is treachery, my sister is misery, my father’s brother is harm, my mother’s brother is humiliation, my son is poverty, my daughter is unemployment, my homeland is ruin, and my clan is ignorance, my country is destitution. As for my religion, honor and life they are money, money, money!’”¹

¹ Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, 2013 (in Sassoon 2016: 5) translation of the quote is from Sami A. Hanna and George H. Gardner (1969)

Introduction

Political violence has been a widespread phenomenon across the globe. Overtime, the concept itself has evolved shaped by the appearance of new forms of violence directed against political targets. Often associated with revolutionary movements at the end of the 19th century and later on during the Cold War, this phenomenon has been analyzed in recent decades to explain conflict dynamics in poor or failed countries (Howard 2014). However, since the 9/11 and the various attacks in European countries, political violence research has been mainly reduced to terrorism studies by most journalists and academics around the world without a real and relevant consensual definition, contributing to a conceptual increase at the expense of analytical benefits. As a consequence of terrorism studies and the classical democracy-dictatorship dichotomy, the majority of scholars have focused on acts of political violence happening in Western democracies and therefore have neglected political violence within dictatorships.

Drawing upon the field of democratization and political regimes, the emergence of authoritarianism studies has created new paths of research in order to differentiate the variety of dictatorships. By providing many typologies of dictatorships, this growing body of literature has exposed the wide variety of institutional designs existing among authoritarian regimes and the different mechanisms by which they operate. However, political violence within authoritarian regimes has long remained neglected because considered either as an inexistent or natural phenomenon in this type of regime. Indeed, conventional wisdom suggests that acts of political violence should be sparse in authoritarian regimes both because these regimes have a wide repertoire of action to prevent any political dissent (e.g. Piazza and Wilson 2013) and because violence is unlikely to trigger policy change (e.g. Eubank and Weinberg 1994; Pape 2003; Kydd and Walter 2006; Conrad and Conrad 2014).

For many dictatorships such as North Korea or Belarus, this assertion holds true. Nevertheless, how can we explain that Egypt under Mubarak or Saudi Arabia ruled by the Al-Saud dynasty experienced high levels of political violence whereas authoritarianism as Eritrea led by Isaias Afwerki or Libya under Muammar Gaddafi only few?² It is from this observation that we decided to study the inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence.

² According to the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017), from 1982 to 2010, Egypt under Mubarak experienced around 468 attacks and Saudi Arabia 61. Unlike these two dictatorships, from 1994 to 2010, Eritrea under Afwerki experienced 9 incidents and Libya under Gadhafi only 7 for the same period.

In this context, starting from the 2000s, a growing literature in comparative politics has gained momentum and argues that the variation of the institutional design of dictatorships influence political outcomes. Nevertheless, only few studies have been undertaken in order to understand by what factors political violence arises in authoritarianism. Among them, two theses embody this field of study. The first follows the mobilization-repression argument and outlines that regimes having wider range of coercion and co-optation strategies can more easily counteract any dissent (Gupta 1993, Rasler 1996, Davenport 2005, Johnston 2012, Piazza and Wilson 2013). The second thesis stands that some authoritarian regimes generate more audience costs³ than others and this can lead to create incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence (Conrad and Conrad 2014). Following this assumption, the task here is to identify key features in authoritarian institutional design that facilitate the creation of audience costs and thus incentives to political violence.

The research question investigated in our study concerns this last approach: *to what extent does the type of authoritarian regime influence the likelihood and form of political violence?* Thus, our interest relates to the peculiarities of authoritarian institutional designs which generate audience costs and trigger political violence. To carry out our task, we use the authoritarian classification dataset from Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (START 2017). We select and analyze six different types of authoritarian regimes part of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), namely Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia between 2000 and 2010 as units of analysis. The reasons behind our choice of MENA countries are twofold. First, it is a region that has experienced the most stable modern dictatorships as well as types of authoritarian regimes that no longer exist anywhere else (e.g. dynastic monarchies). Second, it is the world's deadliest and bloodiest region in terms of acts of political violence. Thus, by comparing and focusing on the levels of audience costs within our six dictatorships, we seek to determine the effect of the institutional design on the variation of violence politically motivated.

The main interests and objectives of our work reside in four points. First, we evaluate the relevance of a variable whose importance is widely emphasized in the literature (e.g. Fearon 1994; Weeks 2008, Conrad and Conrad 2014) but which has never been confirmed empirically for the purpose of our study: the role of authoritarian institutional designs and their production of audience costs on the likelihood of political violence. Second, our research is, to

³ Following Weeks (2008: 35), we define audience costs as “the domestic punishment that leaders would incur for backing down from public threats”. See also Fearon (1994).

our knowledge, the first qualitative research linking audience costs and the variation of political violence within authoritarian regimes. In this respect, it represents a novelty in the fields of study of both authoritarianism and political violence. Thirdly, because none study uses a comparative method to analyze audience costs in MENA countries, we investigate in depth the nature of authoritarian regimes in which different levels of political violence arise. Using a typology proposed by Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999)—single-party, military, personalist, hybrid, dynastic monarchy and non-dynastic monarchy—we use an approach of rational choice to analyze the incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence depending on whether the type of authoritarianism generate audience costs. Lastly, the comparative analysis of our dictatorships from the MENA with regards to their variation of institutional design might represent new research avenues for future analyses in order to understand why certain type of non-democratic regimes have been more targeted by acts of political violence.

In other words, the ambition of our work is to understand and explain why certain type of autocratic regimes in the way they are organized can create incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence. Drawing upon several hypotheses, we will analyze the levels of political violence with respect to the various institutional designs existing in the dictatorships of Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. The approach adopted for this analysis followed the idea that those violent political non-state actors are rational in their behavior, a necessary assumption supported by the majority of scholars⁴ to be able to analyze a phenomenon such as “political violence” that is too complex to approach as a whole otherwise. Thus, for the sake of methodological feasibility, we use a comparative method based on a multiple-case study as a more successful analytical approach to analyze the variations of political violence among our cases in order to test empirically our hypotheses.

This focus on audience costs in authoritarian regimes and the extent to what it might influence political violence can nonetheless raise a number of criticisms. Shultz (2012) and Potter and Baum (2014) state that audience costs are the “dark matter” of international relations—hard to observe, but central to our theoretical models. Indeed, the majority of literature on audience costs has focused on explaining international political outcomes by reaffirming the democracy-dictatorship dichotomy (e.g. Fearon 1994, Gaubatz 1996, Schultz 2012, Dorossena and Mo 2001, Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff 2002) and not domestic ones such as levels of political violence. However, we believe that the logic behind

⁴ See Muller and Weede (1990) for an explanation on cross-national political violence variations with a rational action approach.

audience costs can also be applied to domestic political outcomes occurring in authoritarian regimes, a hypothesis confirmed by quantitative research of Conrad and Conrad (2014). Indeed, unlike the implicit widespread assumption that all dictatorships are similar (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi 2000), we argue that variation of levels of political violence in different authoritarian regimes can be explained by the degree to which those regimes generate audience costs.

Thus, our comparative method based on a qualitative analysis might provide a new way of analyzing audience costs and assess their influence on domestic political outcomes. A further criticism to our work could also be linked to the originality and novelty that it represents. Indeed, a qualitative comparative study of our six MENA countries focusing on audience costs and political violence has never been undertaken and therefore, available data and information are scarce. In addition, the study of political violence as a broad category including not only terrorism, represents nowadays a challenge because almost all existing databases focus mainly on terrorist acts and have neglected other types of political violence. Nevertheless, for the purpose of our study of the MENA region, we firmly believe that considering terrorism into a broad category of political violence is an acceptable way to overcome this problem.

Our research consists of six parts. The first part presents a review on the current state of the literature between political violence and terrorism studies. The literature review presents then a brief overview of previous research done on the link between audience costs, regime type and authoritarianism in the MENA. Following this, we approach the typology of political regimes that we mobilize in our study. The theoretical framework in which we are inscribed and the hypotheses that we propose to analyze are then exposed. Our fourth part deals with the methodological aspect of our research: our qualitative comparative method and selection procedure, the operationalization of our variables and the approach taken to carry out our investigation. The next part consists of a presentation and analysis of our six MENA dictatorships and a discussion of the main results that result from our analyzes. Finally, our conclusion addresses a more general reflection on the implications of our results and how our study opens new perspectives of research on the phenomenon of political violence through the production of audience costs in authoritarian regimes.

Literature Review

Our review of the literature is divided into five parts. The first part gives an outlook to the academic debate about political violence. This section allows to better understand the evolution of this concept through time and the impact of terrorism studies. The second part of the review presents alternative explanations on the link between authoritarianism and political violence. More specifically, this part discerns the previous work done on the topic and outline alternative causes leading to political violence in both democratic and non-democratic regimes. Moreover, this part also provides valuable insights into the current debates existing in this area of study. The third and fourth parts present the research done about audience costs and allow to better understand the role and significance of audience costs in both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Finally, we conclude the literature review by revisiting the existing research on the political violence in our region of interest: The Middle East and North Africa. At this stage, we are confronting several bodies of the academic literature addressing the issue of political violence. However, only few studies have linked autocratic regimes with audience costs and political violence. Thus, this literature review is aimed at situating clearly our work in the current literature by showing to what extent it is innovative.

Debate around the Phenomenon of Political Violence

Over the past decades, studies on political violence have been numerous and always strongly affected by the context of international relations. During the Cold War, academics started to demonstrate why states or non-state actors used political violence and the possible interconnection between both. In this regard, the classic book *Why men rebel* (Gurr 1970) is one of the first books that explain why people engage in political violence and how regimes respond to it. In this book written during the wave of political insurgencies, his main hypothesis is that “the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity.” (1970: 24). This book with the “deprivation thesis” and the idea that inequality is a major determinant of political violence paves the way for the emergence of a new body of literature⁵ (Wang and al. 1993). The end of the Cold War and the rise in the number of civil wars as well as different types of violence led to the study of political violence through the focal of civil wars, rebellions and revolutions with the idea that political violence was mainly collective. Hence, the idea of collective political

⁵ See M. I. Lichbach (1989) for a complete literature review on the topic.

violence in Post-Cold War conflicts explained by rational choice theories emerged during the 2000s notably in the book of Conteh-Morgan (2004). The virtue of this book relies on the fact that it provides a framework of multidisciplinary and competitive explanations of factors contributing to violence. Following this logic of rational choice, Weinstein's book "Inside rebellion" (2007) provides valuable insights to the field because it shows that the level of violence used by rebel groups is linked to the natural resources environment and their organizational structures. According to him, rebel groups based on economic endowments are more prone to use indiscriminate violence because they lack mechanisms for discipline whereas groups based on social endowments establish structures that facilitate cooperation and discipline (Weinstein 2007:14).

Along this body of literature focusing on countries in conflict, one of the first books analyzing political violence in democratic states through a comparative study is the one of Donatella della Porta (2006). Using a comparison of social movements in Italy and Germany, she shows that the structure of political opportunity and the role of the police is crucial in understanding why some groups, in the 1960s, decided to use political violence whereas others integrated the political process. Similar to this idea, many authors have been interested in explaining the outcome of political violence through the repression-mobilization nexus by focusing on the state repression (Davenport 1995; Davenport, Johnston and Mueller 2005). Their findings highlight that "extreme levels of state violence generally provoke a 'backlash' of mobilization (i.e., an increase)", part of the problem of the so-called "dictator dilemma" (Francisco 2005: 60).

In the late 2000s, the field of study on political violence experienced a shift from political violence to terrorism studies. Indeed, the field of study has been marked by a double research context, namely, on the one hand, the intensification of scientific work aimed at understanding the conditions favoring terrorism, context marked by the waves of attacks since the 2000s, but also the will to find theoretical explanations for such acts because of a lack of consensus in the specialized literature. The emergence of terrorism studies has led to a cleavage between terrorism and political violence studies and the predominance of the former on the latter. By then, the conception of terrorism as the only, or at least, predominant form of political violence has been widespread in the existing literature (Gupta 2009, Rosenfeld 2011, Lowe and al. 2013).

As a consequence, the rise of the main body of literature has been the studies focusing on the link between failed states and to what extent those states promote terrorism. According to those authors, a general assumption shared in the existing literature is that failed states are breeding grounds for terrorism, the reasons being that these countries represent safe havens for terrorist groups in addition to facilitating their growth and recruitment activities (Crocker 2003; Diamond 2002; Fukuyama 2004; Hamre and Sullivan 2002; Mallaby 2002; Sanderson 2004). Although mainly based on qualitative and case studies analysis, Piazza (2008a) also finds evidences through a quantitative analysis that failed states effectively contribute to transnational terrorism. In addition to those theories, many authors have also written on the link between poor economic conditions and likelihood of terrorism and civil wars. This has led to a debate between those in favor of a causal link (Kahn and Weiner 2002, Alesina and al. 1996, Collier and Hoeffler 2004) and other challenging this assertion (Krueger and Laitin 2003).

In this regard, Howard's book (2014) represent a relevant innovation in this field of study because she tries to explain what are the explanatory factors for terrorism and domestic political violence in failed and failing states by comparing four different regions. Unlike many authors using macro-analysis on factors contributing to political violence (Martin 1987; Huntington 1993; Sorli, Gleditsch and Strand, 2005; Tikuisis, 2009), Howard (2014) focuses on micro-level dynamics and the "psyche" of an individual living in failed state conditions. She reaches similar conclusion than Gurr (1970), "there is an insidious pattern of deprivation in failing states and failed states that is pushing ordinary citizens to support poverty in the world. The use of political violence and, in many cases, terrorism against the state" (Howard 2014:17).

As underlined, the literature on terrorism and political violence is quite variable in terms of the quality of bodies of work and the assumptions accepted by researchers. Indeed, as highlighted by Della Porta (2013:xi), "in the scientific domain, although much had been written on terrorism, it had been mainly treated as an isolated pathology, whereas political violence had rarely been addressed within social movement studies". Consequently, for the purpose of this study, we take the same path than a significant proportion of research that has placed heavy emphasis on social psychological explanations of violent actions and therefore we embrace the idea that non-state actors resorting to political violence are rational (Lake 2002, Horgan 2008). In this respect, Della Porta's book *Clandestine Political Violence* (2013) provides a relevant contribution by producing a theoretical summary bringing together several large bodies of work. Indeed, this book present a comprehensive relational and dynamic explanatory model of political violence gathering environmental condition, group dynamics and individual motives

(Guittet 2015). By comparing four clandestine groups, she provides valuable information on the mechanism of radicalization, persistence of violence and its decline (Della Porta 2013). Drawing upon these successive theoretical contributions, our work takes the latter approach as we consider political violence as a broad category including a variety of violent acts.

Alternative Causes leading to Political Violence in Dictatorships

Over the past decades, studies on the link between political regimes and political violence have particularly interested researchers in order to understand why and by what mechanisms certain political regimes are subjected to more political violence than others. However, due to the re-emergence of a certain type of political violence in the last decades, namely terrorism, researchers have concentrated mainly on the study of terrorism in democracies at the expense of other types of political violence in other political regimes. In this sense, one of the most robust results in the literature demonstrates that democracies experience more political violence than non-democratic regimes because they are more tolerant of political opposition (Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001, Weinberg and Eubank 1998, Braithwait and Li 2007, Lai 2007, Piazza 2008b, Conrad & Conrad 2014). Nevertheless, other authors have counterbalanced this assertion by showing that democracies, by co-opting potential political challengers through political participation, reduce the threat of political violence (Crenshaw 1981, DeNardo 1985, Eyermann 1998, Li 2005). Alternatively, Regan and Bell (2010), using the concept of anocracy to categorize regimes in the “grey zone” between democracy and autocracy, have been able to explain that higher levels of violence arise in countries transitioning from democracy to anocracy and vice versa, confirming therefore the argument of “More Murder in the Middle” (MMM) (Davenport and Amstrong 2004: 541).

Unlike democratic regimes, the link between political violence and authoritarian regimes has long been neglected in this field of study. Indeed, the vision of authoritarianism as a highly repressive regime and thus more able to have the instruments to counterbalance any manifestation, has long led researchers to think that they were experiencing less political violence than democracies (Wilson and Piazza 2013: 941). Nevertheless, as early as the 2000s, several authors began to find institutional similarities between democracies and certain types of authoritarian regimes (Gandhi 2008, Geddes 2003, Geditsch and Ward 1997, Peceny, Beer and Sanchez-Terry 2002, Pickering and Kisangani 2010; Weeks 2008a, 2008b, Wright 2008). Hence, although the majority of studies on terrorism and political violence focus on institutional variation in democratic states, a growing literature in comparative politics started to study to

what extent do dictatorships vary in their institutional design and how it affects political outcomes (Conrad and Conrad 2014).

Following this logic, many authors have found out that authoritarian institutions affect state repression and international treaty commitment (Vreeland 2008, Powell and Staton 2009). Others have discovered causal links between authoritarian institutional designs and autocratic political survival (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). In this respect, one of the most robust findings being that the astute management of the accountability group such as the winning coalition (Mesquita 2003:51), the Selectorate (Shirk 1993, Roeder 1993, Mesquita 2003:42) or the authoritarian elites (Geddes 2003) by the leader, directly influence the political lifetime of the incumbent. Moreover, dictatorial institutions have also found to generate international outcomes by affecting the ability to signal credible foreign policy intentions (Fearon 1994, Weeks 2008), or the encouragement of foreign investments (Wright 2008).

As part of this academic field, Goodwin's book *No Other Way Out* (2001) represents a classical book in which the author focuses on revolutionary groups and explains how the actions of specific types of authoritarian regimes sometimes unintentionally channeled popular resistance into radical and violent directions. His main hypothesis is that the formation of revolutionary groups is "facilitated and even encouraged by that subset of violent and exclusionary authoritarian regimes that are also organizationally incoherent and militarily weak" (Goodwin 2001: 26). Other authors as Gupta et al. (1993) or Davenport (2005) argument that regime type influences the relationship between repression and mobilization while others highlight that repression has both instantaneous and lagged effects (Rasler 1996). More recently, Johnston (2012), drawing on previous work on the mobilization-repression nexus (Davenport 1995; Davenport, Johnston and Mueller 2005), analyzes state violence and oppositional protests in high-capacity authoritarian states. His findings point out that there is a "dark dance" between state and opposition and the ways how states' apparatuses are organized directly influence social control and can allow the opening of free spaces of speech and innovative actions to keep oppositional sentiments awake (Johnston 2012: 56).

Given the number of existing studies, the main weaknesses of the existing literature should be addressed here. First, because of the classical dichotomy of regime types, this field of study has been the victim of a division of labor between, on the one hand, researchers dealing only with democratic states and those, very few, dealing with dictatorships. As pointed out by Conrad and Conrad (2014), the majority of studies aforementioned have focused on the

distinction between democracies and dictatorships and therefore replicated the dictatorship-democracy dichotomy. Consequently, to our knowledge only four academic papers have been published on the topic. In a study of 2011, Young and Dugan argue that the more a political regime has veto players, the more it will experience terrorism. Indeed, based on Tsbelis's veto players theory (1995, 2000, 2002), they explain that "the more veto players present in a political system, the more likely the system is to experience deadlock and so given the inability of societal actors to change policies through nonviolent and institutional participation, these systems will tend to generate more terror events". (Young and Dugan 2011: 19). Although this study presents valuable information, it focuses only on democracies and lack explaining the underlying assumptions that dictatorships should be sparsely targeted by terrorists (ibid.).

A second further criticism can be made to the extent that only few studies exist on the variation of attacks within dictatorships and in addition, those studies mainly analyze terrorism at the expense of other types of political violence. In that respect, in a paper of 2012, Aksoy, Carter and Wright find evidence that terrorist groups are most likely to emerge in dictatorships with opposition political parties but no elected legislature. The reason is that elected legislatures can channel the mobilizing capacity into support for the government but in the absence of legislatures, political opponents are likely to resort to terrorism (ibid. 813). Similarly, Piazza and Wilson (2013) in a quantitative paper using Geddes' autocratic regime data (2003), reach the conclusion that single-party authoritarian regimes consistently experience less domestic and international terrorism than other regime types because they have a wider range of coercion and co-optation strategies that they can use to counteract grievance and dissent (ibid. 945–946). As far as we know and regarding what has been said previously, there is no consensus in the literature on the explaining factor leading to political violence in dictatorship. For that reason, we believe that audience cost theory might represent a new and relevant explanation.

Debate around the Phenomenon of Audience Costs

There has been a substantial literature in international relations trying to find the reasons why states go to war. The traditional liberal hypothesis built on Montesquieu's work (1989) that trade facilitate interstate peace has led to analyze other factors among which the impact of regime type, relative capabilities or alliance commitments, that can either foster or impede war. An important number of political scientists have underlined that international anarchy coupled with states' uncertainty about others' motivation is a powerful cause of international conflicts (Herz 1950; Fearon 1994, Glaser 1992; Jervis 1978; Waltz 1959, 1979). In this regard,

Fearon's article (1994) constitutes an important step in the literature because it aims to answer why do wars occur by suggesting that "domestic political structure may powerfully influence a state's ability to signal its intentions and to make credible commitments regarding foreign policy" (ibid. 587). By creating the concept of audience costs, Fearon's hypothesis is that during international crises, state leaders are accountable to the public and to their electorate and thus they may suffer unfavorable domestic political consequences in case they make threats and then back down (ibid. 1996). According to Fearon (1994), crises occur because at some point, audience costs create a lock-in effect in which leaders are blocked into a position where they cannot back down without enduring a domestic political backlash and therefore the only remaining possibility is to wage war.

The work of Fearon (1994) has been largely debated among scholars. Although some academics have found mixed statistic results (Snyder and Borghard 2011, Trachtenberg 2012, Levy 2012), domestic audience cost has been a central concept in international relations in order to explain military disputes (Fearon 1994, Schultz 1998, 1999 and 2001; Smith 1998, Partell and Palmer 1999), models of alliances (Gaubatz 1996, Smith 1996, Schultz 2012), economic sanctions (Dorossena and Mo 2001, Martin 1993), foreign trade (Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff 2002), monetary commitment (Broz 2002), interstate bargaining (Leventoglu and Tarar 2005) and more generally international cooperation (Leeds 1999, Lipson 2003 and Tomz 2006).

Nevertheless, although audience costs are crucial to understand international conflict, as Shultz (2012) points out, they are the "dark matter" of international relations—hard to observe, but central to our theoretical models (Potter and Baum 2014). Indeed, Fearon's use of the audience cost theory as a model (1994) left several crucial aspects unresolved: how audience costs arise, how authoritarian regimes can generate audience costs, and can this concept be extended to internal conflict dynamics? In an article of 2006, Slantchev models two information transmission mechanisms with which he shows that not only can audience costs be exogenous, but can also be endogenous and can arise from domestic governments, the opposition and the media. Building on a theoretical model of domestic interaction, his findings suggest that audiences must be able to sanction the leader only in situations where citizen ability to infer policy quality from information is available to them and in this respect, "the actions of the leader are the most immediate source of information" (ibid. 451). Thus, members of the government and the opposition as well as the media can contribute to arising audience costs

endogenously and the likelihood of that is highly likely in “mixed regimes where the costs of repressing dissent are neither too high nor too low” (ibid. 470).

Similar to the previous authors, the study of Potter and Baum (2014) contributes to an emerging literature explicating the domestic nuances of the audience costs argument (e.g., Horowitz and Levendusky 2012; Tomz 2007) and the importance of the institutions that shape the link between leader’s action and the public’s response (Potter and Baum 2014). However, so far, the lack of explanation from the existing literature about audience costs has led many authors to pretend that non-democratic states do not produce audience costs because power is centralized in the hands of authoritarian leaders. In this respect, our work takes place as a way to find a relevant explanation to the occurrence of audience costs in dictatorships.

Institutional Design and Audience Costs as Determinant of Political Violence

It is in this scientific context that Weeks’ article (2008) bridges the existing gap by combining audience cost theory and regime type literature. Her findings suggest that audience costs can be generated thanks to the authoritarian elite if several conditions are fulfilled. Based on Fearon’s work (1994), Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) typologies of authoritarian regimes, she highlights that some dictatorships such as military or single-party regimes are also able to generate audience costs thanks to different factors and her empirical tests illustrate that democracies do not have significant signaling advantage over most autocracies. However, so far, the role of audience costs in internal processes has been neglected in the existing literature.

Similarly, Conrad and Conrad (2014), drawing on the existing literature, extends for the first time the logic of audience costs to internal conflict dynamics. In their article, they argue that differences in the audience cost produced by dictatorships explain why some non-democracies experience more terrorism than others. Their findings suggest that some types of authoritarian regimes generating higher audience costs experience as much terrorism as democracies, while others face fewer attacks. Indeed, building on this literature and the typology of the authoritarian regimes created by Geddes (2003), the article by Conrad and Conrad (2014) represents the only work that analyses several types of authoritarian regimes and the likelihood that they experience terrorism. One of the main virtue of this article is that it combines two different bodies of the literature for the first time, namely audience costs theory and terrorism studies, and their findings shows that the more a dictatorship generates audience costs, the more likely it will experience acts of terror (Conrad and Conrad 2014:5). Drawing upon their study,

we believe that the logic of audience costs can not only explain terrorism but can be extended to all acts of political violence arising in authoritarian states.

Political Violence and Regime-type in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA), one of the bloodiest regions in the world in terms of enduring conflicts, rebellions, revolutions, terrorism and act of political violence, represents a focal point for a great deal of political research. For years, and through different types of studies, academics have analyzed this region in order to understand the reasons why the MENA host such high level of violence. In this regard, the first empirical research on this region has been focusing on explaining the roots of the conflicts and violence by the lack of democracy, the presence of religious radicalism and existing barriers to modernization (Martin 1987; Huntington 1991; Sorli, Gleditch, and Strand 2005; Piazza 2008b; Newman 2007; Tikusis, 2009). Others such as Howard (2014) have been analyzing the levels of political violence in this region through the prism of state failure to argue that people resort to violence and terrorism so as to “obtain tangible political, economic, and social good, and force strategic political concessions.” (Howard 2014: 48).

However, as correctly pointed out by Kalyvas and Balcells (2010), the first studies on the MENA have emphasized the impact on domestic factors rather than international ones in the explanation of violence in this region. Unlike those analyses, these authors explain that the end of the Cold War has had a direct impact on the conflict dynamics of this region in the way civil wars are fought. Indeed, they outline that most of internal conflicts in the MENA share similarities with former Cold War insurgencies in the Third World because they were subject to common international influence, namely external interventionism, competitive clientelism and competing ideologies (ibid. 2010).

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the growing literature on terrorism has led the majority of work to fall into the existing cleavage between political violence and terrorism studies. As a consequence, there has been a vast amount of work on the different terrorist movements operating in the region through a historical perspective (Ensalaco 2008) or comparative analysis (Dalacoura 2011) as well as the counter strategies undertaken (e.g., Abrahms 2008, Geltzer 2010, Dawoody 2016). In addition, scholars have paid close attention to the organization, motivations and actions of terrorist groups mainly Al-Qaeda (e.g.,

Gunaratna 2002, Post 2007, Behnke and Hellmich 2012), the Hamas (Jefferis 2016) and today ISIS (e.g., Stern and Berger 2015, Weiss and Hassan 2016).

More recently, many studies have focused on the Arab spring and the popular uprisings. Scholars have written on the use of violence by authoritarian states whereas others have focused on civil resistance and marginalized activism during the Arab revolutions (e.g., Gerges 2015; McCarthy et al. 2016). Along with these studies, there have been many case-studies and comparative analysis realized on the different authoritarianisms of the MENA. Gelvin (2015) highlights the fact that similarities between some Middle Eastern dictatorships such as the “coup proofing” of the security apparatus might explain countries’ success or failure of their revolution. However, only few studies have tried to explain why some MENA countries experienced more levels of political violence than others. Thus, it is in that line that we include our work.

In conclusion, this review of the literature presents the state of progress of research on the phenomenon of political violence in an authoritarian environment. Drawing on a growing body of literature analyzing political outcomes within dictatorships, we use the audience costs to show the impact that authoritarian institutional design may have on the likelihood of political violence. Nevertheless, not all regimes are created equal in the face of political violence and our work is aimed at highlighting the key conditions and characteristics beyond this mechanism. To do so, we decided to focus on the Middle East and North Africa, a region that has historically experienced a great variety of political violent acts.

Typology of Authoritarian Regimes

The existence of a great diversity of authoritarian regimes with characteristics traditionally derived from “democratic” and “autocratic” political models, makes a simple dichotomous typology an obsolete approach (Munck 2006) and the distance between these two ideals-types is defined as a “gray zone” by Carothers (2002) or “foggy zone”: “most regimes today are neither clearly democratic nor fully authoritarian. They inhabit the wide foggy zone between liberal democracy and closed authoritarianism” (Schedler, 2002: 37). Traditionally, political scientists have had little interest in what is not democracy, leading to consider authoritarian states as a category that is a theoretical anomaly and where no effort was made to specify any variation inside this heterogeneous group (Brooker 2000, Gandhi 2008, Karvonen 2008, Ezrow and Frantz 2011, Lidén 2014).

In this regard, this dichotomization in modern typologies of political regimes between democratic and non-democratic has led to numerous classification of different subtypes of democracies (Schmitter and Karl 1991, Lijphart 1999, Held 2006) and non-democracies (Geddes 1999, 2003, Brooker 2000). In that sense, the increasing number of regimes in this area and the many attempts to conceptualize them has led to the emergence of a large number of labels to define them—e.g. *illiberal democracy* (Zakaria, 1997), *semi-democracy* (Case, 1996), *democracy with adjectives* (Collier et al., 1997), *hybrid regimes* (Karl, 1995, Diamond, 2002) or *semi-authoritarianism* (Ottaway, 2003). Nevertheless, this terminological diversity has been criticized for contributing to a conceptual increase at the expense of analytical benefits (Armony and Schamis, 2005).

In this respect, deriving from Linz’s (2000) groundbreaking work on the distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, an extensive field has followed concerned with the identification of different types of dictatorships such as *post-totalitarian* and *sultanic* regimes (Linz and Stepan 1996). Although the lack of empirical evidence supporting the expansion of this theoretical work did not survive criticism from contemporary research, this allows the emergence of Geddes (1999) innovative typology of four variants of dictatorships: *military*, *single-party*, *personalist* and *hybrid*. As outlined by Lidén (2014: 4) and drawing on Geddes’ work (1999), since then, “research can be separated into those contributions that see the need for modifying Geddes’ typology and those that suggest different perspectives.” Among the former category, several authors have suggested adding new categories to Geddes’ (1999) first group of authoritarian states.

In this respect Herb (1999) suggests adding two subtypes to *monarchies*, namely *dynastic* and *non-dynastic monarchies* in order to explain specific types of authoritarian regimes existing in the Middle East and North Africa. Unlike Herb (1999), Hadenius and Teorell (2007) are the first authors that put into question some ideal-types from Geddes (1999). Indeed, besides *monarchies*, they propose *electoral dictatorships* consisted of three sub-groups: *no-party*, *one-party* and *multi-party* regimes to increase the accuracy of Geddes' single-party type. Furthermore, they dismiss Geddes' personalist regimes because to them, personalist is a trait that varies among regimes and not a category in itself (ibid. 2007). Another alternative is Brooker (2000) who distinguishes between two types of personalist regimes, *traditional* and *presidential* monarchies as a way to identify personal rulers. Relevant enough to be mentioned is the research of Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010) that represents different perspective followed than the one of Geddes (ibid.). Instead of focusing on who has control over access to power to classify authoritarian regimes (Geddes 1999), these authors place the focus on the *inner sanctum* that is related to the ruling and actual ruler, proposing three variants of dictatorships: monarchy, military and civilian (Cheibub et al. 2010).

However, as mentioned early, the typologies proposed by these authors, although they brought several advantages, do not represent an innovation in the sense that they are built upon Geddes ideal-types and are often categories too specific that do not allow general categorizations. This is why the typology that we adopt in our research comes from the work of Geddes (1999, 2003) and Herb (1999). The categorization from these authors allows to analyze almost all existing autocracies and is not limited to specific types of authoritarian regimes. Moreover, this typology is one source of useful data because Geddes (2014) provides us valuable information through a classification scheme for coding authoritarian regimes (2003: 225).

To classify these regimes, two criteria of classification must be retained: the control of the access to the power and the influence exercised on this power (ibid.). Hence, the main contribution of Geddes is to show that the interests and competition between authoritarian elites depend on the type of regime in which these same elites operate, as well as its composition (Geddes 1999a). Because these authors focus on authoritarian institutional design and the variation of audience costs across regime types, the virtue of this typology is that it makes possible to test our hypotheses on audience costs and likelihood of political violence (Weeks 2008, Conrad and Conrad 2014).

As cited above, six types of authoritarian regimes are taken into account for the purpose of our study: military, single-party, personalist and hybrid (Geddes 2003) as well as dynastic and non-dynastic monarchies (Herb 1999). We decided not to take into account other typologies for the reasons cited above, but also because our work analyses only regimes than we could categories as *closed authoritarian regimes* (Schedler 2002:37) in which, “selection of a country’s leader is the responsibility of a small group of elites from the ruling family, the army, or a political party; the citizenry is constitutionally excluded from participating in the selection” (Howard et al., 2009:107). Thus, six categories emerge from this typology where the criterion of classification is the place where the political power is concentrated, and the influence exerted on the such power (Geddes 1999b).

Single-party regimes (e.g., China, the PRI in Mexico, CCM in Tanzania) are characterized by “a party organization [that] exercises some power over the leader at least part of the time, controls the selection of officials, organizes the distribution of benefits to supporters, and mobilize citizens to vote and show support for party leaders in other ways.” (ibid. 52). As for military regimes, the leader does not usually control appointments or security organs directly. Moreover, a specific feature of single-party regimes is that they hold intraparty competitive elections where the elites rise through the ranks of the party and therefore are not personally connected to the leader (Weeks 2008:46). The ultimate consequence is that in case of domestic threat, as the risk of losing office if the leader is ousted is low, elites can have the means and the will to coordinate in order to remove the incumbent (ibid.). Moreover, in stable single-party regimes, observers out of the government can observe all of these facts and incentives to use political violence might exist.

Military regimes (e.g., Brazil 1964–1985, Argentina 1976–1983) are regimes in which “a group of officers determines who will lead the country and has some influence on policy” (Geddes 2003: 52). In an institutionalized military regime, senior officers have agreed upon some formula for sharing or rotating power, and consultation is somewhat routinized” (ibid. 52). According to Geddes (1999:13), the crucial feature of military regimes is that military elites represent an effective domestic audience that have the means and will to oust the leader in case of domestic troubles, because their main interest is corporatist and embodied by the continuity of the military institutions. Thus, similar to stable single-party regimes, in such stable military dictatorships, foreign observers can also witness all these facts.

Personalist regimes (e.g., Saddam Hussein, Gadhafi) have in common that, “although they are often supported by parties and militaries, these organizations have not become sufficiently developed or autonomous to prevent the leader from taking personal control of policy decisions and the selection of regime personnel” (ibid. 53). Contrary to the other regime-types, Geddes (2005: 9) explained that, “Personalist regimes differ from both military and single—party in that access to office and the fruits of office depend much more on the discretion of an individual leader”. Moreover, “The leader may be an officer and may have created a party to support himself, but neither the military nor the party exercises independent decision-making power insulated from the whims of the ruler” (see Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 61–96; Linz and Chehabi 1998: 4–45; Snyder 1998). Personalist regimes tend to be less affected by internal troubles because there is no domestic audience that can effectively coordinate to sanction the leader, because either the incumbent has the means to punish internal critics or the fate of elites is intimately tied to the leader’s survival in office (Weeks 2008:46). Consequently, observers out of the *inner sanctum* see with clarity that personalist incumbent faces little threat of punishment and so incentive to undertake any actions are lower than in other regimes (ibid. 47).

Hybrid regimes (e.g. Syria, Indonesia under Suharto) are classified as such when “regimes [have] important characteristics of more than one pure regime type, especially when the area specialist literature contained disagreements about the importance of military and party institutions [...]” (Geddes 2003: 72). The specificity of hybrid regimes lies on the fact that as different features of regime-types coexist, the existence of an elite with the means and will to coordinate and sanction the leader will be the crucial factor to determine if the incumbent face a domestic accountability group.

Dynastic monarchies (e.g., Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates) are characterized by the fact “the family forms a ruling institution” and where the leader does not control appointments but instead family members rise to high office through seniority (Herb 1999:8). As pointed out by Herb (1999), “the existence of dynastic monarchism as a particular and distinct form of monarchy in the Middle East has only rarely been recognized” (ibid. 3). Dynastic monarchies differ from personalist dictatorships in the sense that family members do not hold office at the whim of the leader but because of their blood. Hence, in case of domestic troubles, if regime insiders feel that the leader endangers the prestige or authority of the dynasty, incentives exist to sanction the incumbents (Weeks 2008:43). As in military and single-party regimes, observers are easily aware of the existence of an accountability group.

Non-dynastic monarchies (e.g., Morocco, Iran until 1979), in contrast, tend to resemble to personalist regimes, because the ruler rules alone, however, family members are excluded from holding important posts in the regime (Herb 1999). A characteristic of such regimes is that the king or emir usually promotes loyal followers to high position and tie them to his own fate. Thus, in addition to exert a solid control over the state apparatus, in those regimes, elite coordination is highly unlikely (Herb 1999: 238, Weeks 2008: 43).

The typology presented above allows us to define the universe of cases on which our analysis is based. We will focus on dictatorships that are *closed authoritarian regimes* (Schedler 2002:37). Drawing upon Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) typologies, this allows us to analyze countries with specific regimes linked to a specific region, namely the Middle East and North Africa. The interest of our study is identified by the institutional design of authoritarian regimes. The role that this design can play in the production of audience costs and political violence and therefore the political trajectories of our cases go beyond the framework of our research. This is because each type of regime presented includes different institutions and governance arrangements. Our choice to study only closed authoritarian regimes allow to reduce this diversity and increase the validity of our conclusions (Wahman, 2009: 4).

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we present our theoretical framework and the resulting research hypotheses. As highlighted in the literature review, the majority of researchers studying the causes of political violence have focused on the distinction between democratic regimes and dictatorships. As a result of this cleavage, few studies have been done on the causes leading to the use of political violence within dictatorships. In this regard, in building our theoretical framework, we follow the path taken by a minority of authors focusing on the variations of institutional designs present in authoritarian regimes and their impact on the likelihood of political violence. In order to answer our question of research, we draw on Weeks (2008) who explains by what mechanisms dictatorships generate autocratic audience costs and how it influences the authoritarian power and its domestic elites. Nevertheless, because Weeks (ibid.) concentrates mainly on the explanation of foreign authoritarian regime policies and does not extend this logic to internal conflict dynamics, we use the theoretical contributions of Conrad and Conrad (2014) to extend Weeks' logic to all acts of political violence undertaken by non-state actors.

For the purpose of this study, we argue that potential non-state actors willing to resort to violence against authoritarian ruling powers are more likely to do so against states that generate high levels of audience costs. Based on these successive contributions, our analysis focuses on the production of audience costs depending on the institutional setup of dictatorships and to what extent this create incentives for acts of political violence. Following this logic, we draw a classification of authoritarian regimes linked to the level of audience costs they produce and thus the likelihood of political violence they could generate. Consequently, in our work, we argue that authoritarian regimes vary in the extent to which their domestic institutional structures generate audience costs and that non-state actors are more likely to engage in political violence against dictatorships that generate high levels of audience costs.

The Logic of Autocratic Audience Costs

Like Kim Jong II or Saddam Hussein, the image of untouchable dictators with almost unlimited powers is widely spread in the existing literature (Weeks 2008). Nevertheless, these dictators, represent in fact a minority among the authoritarian leaders and, more often than not, dictators owe their power to negotiations with the domestic elites, comparable to public opinion in democracies. Weeks (2008) proposes a theoretical model to explain the logic of audience costs in authoritarian regimes and the necessary conditions that an autocracy must fulfill in order to generate audience costs. Weeks defines “audience costs” as “the domestic punishment that leaders would incur for backing down from public threats” (ibid. 35). Based on Fearon (1994), she explains that a state leader may suffer internal consequences for uttering a threat that he or she has not subsequently put into practice.

According to her, the ability of a leader to generate domestic political costs is influenced by three factors. However, of Weeks’ (2008) three criteria, only the first two are especially applicable to understand non-state actors resorting to political violence against the ruling power (Conrad and Conrad 2014). Firstly, the existence of a domestic political audience with the means and incentives to coordinate to punish the leader. Second, outsiders must be able to observe the possibility of domestic sanctions for backing down. Thus, coordination, elite incentives and visibility are central to their influence on audience costs. In this respect, dictatorships vary greatly in the way their different institutional designs allow to generate these factors.

Political Violence: Actors' Motivations and Goals

What are the driving forces and rational behind actors resorting to political violence? We define political violence as “the use of actual or threatened of physical coercion by non-state actors to achieve a change in the nature of the political order”⁶. The existing body of literature on political violence has widely presented actors using political violence as people seeking to “obtain tangible political, economic, and social good, and force strategic political concessions”. (Howard 2014: 48). However, recently some suicide terrorist movements have been described by the media as irrational and have led to a revival of studies focusing on whether these groups are irrational or not (Madsen 2004, Pronin et al. 2006, Abrahms 2008). Nevertheless, there is a consensus on the fact that non-state actors resorting to political violence are rational actors who act purposively in pursuit of their policy preferences, e.g. terrorists (see Lake 2002; Enders and Sandler 2006, Findley and Young 2011) rebel or revolutionary groups (Gurr 1970, Goodwin 2001) or social movements (Della Porta 2006).

Although main analyses have focused on terrorist groups (e.g. Conrad and Conrad 2014), we argue that similar argument can be drawn for other types of political violence. Hence, according to this logic, non-state actors willing to engage in political violence commonly have extreme policy preferences that are divergent both from the target government and the majority of the population (Lake 2002). Thus, and even more in an authoritarian context, a realistic change of government policy seems impossible because none institutional channels exist and the possibility of demonstrating in the street creates substantial risks. Because actors ready to use violence against the state are rational and think in terms a cost-benefit analysis when undertaking any action, they know that the costs are high and their benefits probabilistic. In this respect, such actors are more likely to use political violence when their actions can be successful in changing the policies of the target regime (Conrad and Conrad (2014). Indeed, as shown by Horgan (2008), there is an important difference between holding radical views and acting on those beliefs. Thus, actors usually make use of violence because they are weak in comparison and do not have the means to challenge the state (Lake 2002, Frieden, Lake and Schultz 2010). Moreover, and especially in dictatorships, the difficulty of effectively hitting the ruling power creates the incentives to direct violence towards civilian populations in order to trigger political change, the reason being that states rarely make any concession to violent groups and because a direct clash with the military is usually beneficial to the latter (Frieden et al. 2010:386).

⁶ This definition is made by ourselves, refer to the section of definition of concepts for a complete explanation.

In this context, the goal sought by actors using political violence is twofold: to pressure the government, through the population, for policy change (Kydd and Walter 2006) and to provoke the government to respond militarily to incite moderates to adopt radical views against the ruling power (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007). The benefits deriving from the use of political violence by non-state actors are therefore mainly those of encouraging a change in government policy that would seem impossible to achieve through peaceful channels such as elections, direct negotiations with the state or by demonstrations. For example, in the 1990s in Latin America, left-wing movements such as the *M-19* in Colombia or the *Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity* (URNG) resorted to political violence as an opposition strategy against the central power, before moving to political parties after the democratization period (Garibay 2005). Regarding terrorist groups, they have also understood the benefits of political violence in order to encourage government policy change. For instance, terrorist attacks such as the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia imputed to Al-Qaeda were aimed at pushing the Saudi government to close the US military bases. More recently, various terrorist groups in Indonesia linked to Al-Qaeda such as *Jemaah Islamiyah* and ISIS branches resort to violence owing to encourage government policy change by wishing to establish an Islamic state.

Although the potential benefits of using political violence are obvious, the cost of any attack is also important. Therefore, non-state actors are likely to target regimes in which the likelihood of enacting policy change is high and so, the variance of political violence across regime-type can be based on the extent to which it generated costs vis-à-vis the domestic populace (Conrad and Conrad 2014). According to this logic many scholars have argued that democracies experienced more political violent attacks than non-democracies (e.g. Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001) and this idea can easily fall into the audience costs argument (Conrad and Conrad 2014). In that sense, these costs generate two mechanisms that can create incentives for dissidents to use political violence against a central authority. Firstly, regimes in which an accountability group exist or where leaders are responsible to domestic pressure for policy change tend to be more vulnerable to political violence as a tactic to modify government policy (Conrad and Conrad 2014).

Following this logic, citizens of democratic states have been thought to have a greater leverage via the pools than other regimes because audience costs are relatively high as politicians are accountable to their voters and the electorate can make its preferences for policy change known at the ballot box (Pape 2003). As a consequence, although the population may not share the policy preferences of non-state actors using political violence, these attacks can

trigger policy change from governments in line with those violent actors. As an example, Pape (2005:65) shows that between 1980 and 2003, half of all suicide attacks worldwide were closely followed by substantial concessions by the target governments.

According to Conrad and Conrad (2014:3), the second mechanism linking audience costs to a high probability of political violence, “is driven by the ability to generate domestic audience costs within a particular group, rather than the general electorate”. Thus, many non-state actors resorting to political violence focus either on trying to recruit isolated people among the population or focusing on generating support for the cause among the moderates. Analyzing terrorist movements, Goodwin (2006) highlights that the use of violence by non-state actors aimed at provoking the government into a response to alienate moderates is more likely in regimes where moderates share similar characteristic with extremists and different from the elite that controls the state. Similarly, Kalyvas (2006) underlines that during civil wars or internal conflicts, civilian are often potential supporters of either side in the conflict. In Sri Lanka, a key tactic of the *Tamil Tigers (LTTE)* was to target the government and incite a military response towards Tamil moderates so that in turn they become radicalized. Moreover, a different strategy can also be used by non-state actors in order to generate high audience costs among the ruling group. Hultman (2008:14) explains that “[n]on-democratic governments need to rely on the support of some section of the population. If this constituency can be easily identified—as when it coincides with ethnicity or a geographical region—it also runs the risk of being targeted by a rebel group in the pursuit of hurting the government.” Examples of such tactics are various attacks perpetrated by non-state armed groups in Syria as the *Al-Nusra Front* that target civilian Alawites and Syrian officials.

Following these two mechanisms that bridge the gap between audience costs and political violence, we believe that the likelihood of strong levels of political violence is higher in regimes where specific institutional designs generate high audience costs. In the following sections, we follow Weeks’ theory on audience costs (2008) that we link to Conrad and Conrad contribution. (2014). However, we extend their theory to not only terrorism but acts of political violence as a broad category. The main reason behind this choice is that in focusing on political violence instead of terrorism, we avoid the theoretical and analytic weaknesses of such concept that could lead to a biased analysis. Thus, we first focus on the incentives that non-state actors have to resort to political violence before moving to explain how the variation of the institutional design in authoritarian regimes affects the production of audience costs and the likelihood of political violence within dictatorships.

Audience Costs as Incentives for Political Violence

Non-state actors using political violence usually lack the capabilities to engage directly in military action against the government and, therefore, direct violence against noncombatant, state officials or symbolic targets (Conrad & Conrad 2014). Thus, the use of violence to spread fear among a large audience is a strategy that is often used to trigger a policy change or influence the behavior of a government (Hoffman 2006). As a result, the rationale behind the use of violence lies in the ability of actors to impact society, as a broad audience and not just the direct victims. Nevertheless, as Conrad and Conrad (2014) explain, the impact of using political violence is useful only if it actually translates into policy or political change. Actors using political violence will be more likely to attack states where leaders are more accountable to their constituency. Indeed, many academics have shown that domestic political institutions exert a direct impact on the way the political leader is accountable to his constituency both in democracy and in authoritarian regimes (Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow 2003).

In this regard, the institutional design of states and more specifically authoritarian ones, also affect greatly the extent to which it generates more or less audience costs. Consequently, this might explain also why some states are more targeted by political violence than others. With this regard, Week's logic of audience costs (2008) is helpful to understand the incentives for non-state actors to target governments by using political violence. Drawing upon Weeks' theory (ibid.), two mechanisms are relevant to explain the incentives for non-state actors to target governments: (1) the existence of a domestic audience able to punish the leader and (2) the visibility of this process to a larger audience. These mechanisms increase violent political movements in at least two ways.

Domestic Elites' Coordination to Sanction the Leader

Unlike democracies, the possibilities of sanctioning the leader in an authoritarian regime may seem minimal because elites are at high risk of undertaking such actions (Weeks 2008). Nevertheless, it has been proved by the existing literature that dictators depend on the support of domestic groups to survive in office (Geddes 1999 and 2003, Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999 and 2003, Haber 2006). Hence, the great variety of non-democratic regime also implies a great variation in the way regime insiders can coordinate and punish the leader making the regime's elites an effective audience. As Weeks (2008:40) and Haber (2006) point out, "[w]hile most

citizens cannot challenge the leader, elites with key positions in the regime can still oust leaders if they can solve their coordination problem.” As a result, it is through a cost-benefit analysis that authoritarian elites will decide whether or not they take part in the attempt to overthrow the leader.

According to this logic, coordination and access to reliable information are central elements. If the domestic actors think that the ouster will be a success and they coordinate and communicate accordingly, then the probability of success will be high. Nevertheless, in an authoritarian context where any evidence of defection may be sanctioned by death, imprisonment or forced removal, “coordination is more difficult because individuals may face external incentives to conceal their true preference” (ibid. 39). Hence, the incumbent can counteract the strategy of the elites in two different ways. Firstly, by the control of the intelligence organs and their monitoring on the elites to locate internal dissidence. Second, through punishment and ultimately through positive incentives such as rewards, appointment and other perks to ensure that the tradeoff between keeping the leader in power and his dismissal always leans in favor of the former (ibid.).

The ability of the leader to prevent the coordination of authoritarian elites is central in the possibility of production of audience costs and therefore in the maintenance of power. In authoritarian regimes where the security and intelligence organs are under the direct control of the leader, communication will be difficult to achieve, making it difficult for the elites to coordinate and overthrow the leader. In addition to the cost of coordination, authoritarian elites also face the costs of how leadership turnover affects their welfare. Indeed, in authoritarian regimes where the fate of the elites is closely linked to that of the leader—through blood ties or because the elite has no base of support in the event of the leader’s eviction—the probabilities of leadership turnover will be low because a reversal would directly affect the welfare of the elites (Weeks 2008:41). Conversely, in non-democratic regimes where the fate of the elites is not linked to that of the leader, the cost of an eviction will be lower. In this regard, authoritarian elites have more incentives to coordinate if the dictator does not directly control and monitor the security and intelligence apparatuses and if he does not control directly political appointments.

The possibility of the dictator generating audience costs, namely that he is politically punished for backing down from public threats such as domestic violent attacks, depends therefore on the existence of a domestic audience that can sanction him. Thus, the primary

condition for generating audience costs within authoritarian regimes is the existence of an internal political audience—the authoritarian elites—with the means and the incentives to coordinate in order to punish the action of the leader. When the institutional design of the authoritarian regimes allows the authoritarian elites to have sufficient room for maneuver, then this regime can produce domestic audience costs.

Following this logic, autocratic incumbents who are accountable to authoritarian elites by facing the threat of punishment or removal from office are more likely to enact policy changes preferred by violent non-state actors as an attempt to reduce the risk of further attacks. For example, the 1983 Beirut barracks bombings claimed by the *Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO)* led to withdrawal of the Multinational Force in Lebanon (MNF) allowed by the Lebanese government. Thus, leaders facing increased audience costs are more pressured to respond to attacks if they are facing censure by domestic constituents (Conrad and Conrad 2014). In this respect, regimes generating higher audience costs will create *ex post* incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence. Indeed, in such regimes, authoritarian incumbents facing audience costs from an accountability group will be tempted either to make political concessions in direct response to the act of violence (that will foster further attacks to obtain more concessions) or to respond violently to the attack (which may incite moderates to support the group and further political violent acts).

Outsiders Can Observe the Leader's Insecurity

The second factor that generates audience costs in authoritarian regimes is the visibility criterion. Indeed, in regimes where outsiders can perceive the possibility that state leaders could face domestic sanctioning, the existence of audience cost is higher. Therefore, the only condition of the visibility criterion is that outsiders know that the leader could face a real likelihood of internal sanctions. As pointed out by Weeks (2008), in unstable regimes it is more difficult to acknowledge whether the leader faces an accountability group in practice or not. In such regimes, outsiders will have difficulties in discerning if the leader rules alone or share the power with an elite. Unlike these, in stable regimes it is easier for foreign observers to assess to who the leader is accountable to. Following this logic, a wider visibility of political violence in states with high audience costs offers non-state actors more repercussions in terms of publicity and advertisement. In this respect, the use of political violence by non-state actors will be mainly driven by the probability of success in influencing relevant audiences to pressure the

leader to policy change in the target state. Thus, in authoritarian regimes that produce high audience costs, political violence is more likely.

Variation in Audience Costs across Autocratic Regimes

The successive contributions of Geddes (2003), Weeks (2008) and Conrad and Conrad (2014) make it possible to classify the different types of authoritarian regimes in relation to their variation in terms of production of audience costs and the likelihood of political violence. According to them, in single-party and in military regimes, the leader is usually neither in charge of the appointment of the authoritarian elites nor in charge of controlling directly security organs. Instead, the party such as politburos or the military junta is responsible for the election and appointment of the ruling elite. In those regimes, since elites rise through the rank of the party or military hierarchy, most of them are not personally tied to the fate of the leader and consequently if the leader is ousted, there is little reason to think they will lose office. Beside the coordination criterion, in stable single-party and military regimes, observers out of the regime can easily observe how the regime is institutionally structured and can observe changes in the leadership structure, allowing to fulfill the visibility criterion (Weeks 2008:46). These two criteria are present in both regimes, although through different institutional mechanisms, enabling the production of high audience costs. Thus, these mechanisms increase the incentive of non-state actors to use political violence in order to trigger political changes.

Unlike the aforementioned authoritarian regimes, personalist regimes are built on the power of an unquestioned leader having highly concentrated powers and where the careers of the elites are usually tied to the fate of the leader. These mechanisms create an environment in which it is difficult for the elite to credibly threaten the leader with removal because he has the means to punish internal dissidents. In this regard, as highlighted by Bratton and Van de Walle (1994:464), elites in personalist regimes have little incentives to remove the leader because the risk of losing their own career is higher in case of ousting the incumbent than in case of maintaining him in power. Moreover, in such regimes, foreign observers can observe that personalist rulers face little domestic threat of punishment. As a consequence, the presence of audience costs are much scarcer in personalist dictatorships, because leaders' concentration of power and elites' dependence on the ruler do not allow their production. This has a direct impact on the incentive to use political violence by non-state actors. Indeed, as the chances to create any political changeover is low, because of the previous factors explained, few incentives to act exist. Geddes (2003) also presents *hybrid authoritarian regimes*, having characteristics of

several authoritarian regimes. The production of audience costs in those authoritarian regimes will depend to whom the effective power belongs to, but also on the coordination and visibility criteria. In regimes where means for removing the leader exists, thus audience costs will be high and so non-state actors will likely use political violence.

Finally, two more authoritarian regimes must be added that were not initially discussed by Geddes (2003) *dynastic monarchies* and *non-dynastic monarchies*. According to Herb (1999) and Anderson (1991), “members of the family share an interest in maintaining the continued health of the dynasty and cooperate to keep the leader in check” (Weeks 2008). In these regimes, the leader plays a major role in appointments, but the real power lies in the hands of the dynastic family as a whole. Moreover, family members hold high office not because of the will of the leader and they retain power even if the leader is removed. In dynastic monarchies elites have incentives to oust the leader if he endangers the prestige or authority of the dynasty (ibid. 2008). In such regimes, audience costs are high because both the elites can coordinate to punish the leader and foreign observers can observe leadership changes. Thus, political violence is highly likely. Regarding *non-dynastic monarchies*, they are similar to personalist regimes in the sense that they generate few audience costs, because non-dynastic leaders do not face an accountability group with real means and will to threatened him. Indeed, family members are often excluded from holding important positions instead of this, the leader promote usually loyal followers in order to tide them to his fate. As non-dynastic monarchies generate few audience costs, the likelihood of non-state actors using political violence is low because the chance of success in influencing relevant audience to pressure the leader for policy change is unlikely.

Table 1. *Authoritarian regime-types, audience costs and expected levels of political violence*

| Regime type | Audience costs | Level of Political violence |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Single-party</i> | high | high |
| <i>Military</i> | high | high |
| <i>Personalist</i> | low | low |
| <i>Dynastic monarchies</i> | high | high |
| <i>Non-dynastic monarchies</i> | low | low |
| <i>Hybrid</i> | depends | depends |

Hypotheses

From the theoretical perspectives presented, we want to highlight the existing link between the institutional design of authoritarian regimes in the production of audience costs and the likelihood of political violence. As explained by Conrad and Conrad (2014), not all authoritarian regimes are equal in the face of political violence. Indeed, dictatorships generating higher audience costs are expected to be more targeted by non-state actors using political violence to achieve their ends. With this regard, we draw our first hypothesis on various theoretical contributions that outlines the role played by audience costs in authoritarian regimes.

H₁: The fulfilment of the accountability and visibility criteria in authoritarian regimes favors the production of high levels of audience costs.

Our first hypothesis attempt to shed light on the positive causal link between the conditions that the institutional designs of dictatorships must meet in order to allow the production of high levels of audience costs. Indeed, the fact that audience costs are generated is the necessary prerequisite of our research. However, the variety of authoritarian regimes and the way they are institutionally organized have a direct impact on the levels of audience costs. Because some dictatorships encompass domestic institutions that could represent an effective counterbalance to leader's powers, we expect different levels of audience costs and therefore disparities in their levels of political violence. In this sense, we decided to divide authoritarian regimes with respect to their expected level production of audience costs. This leads us to make three additional hypotheses:

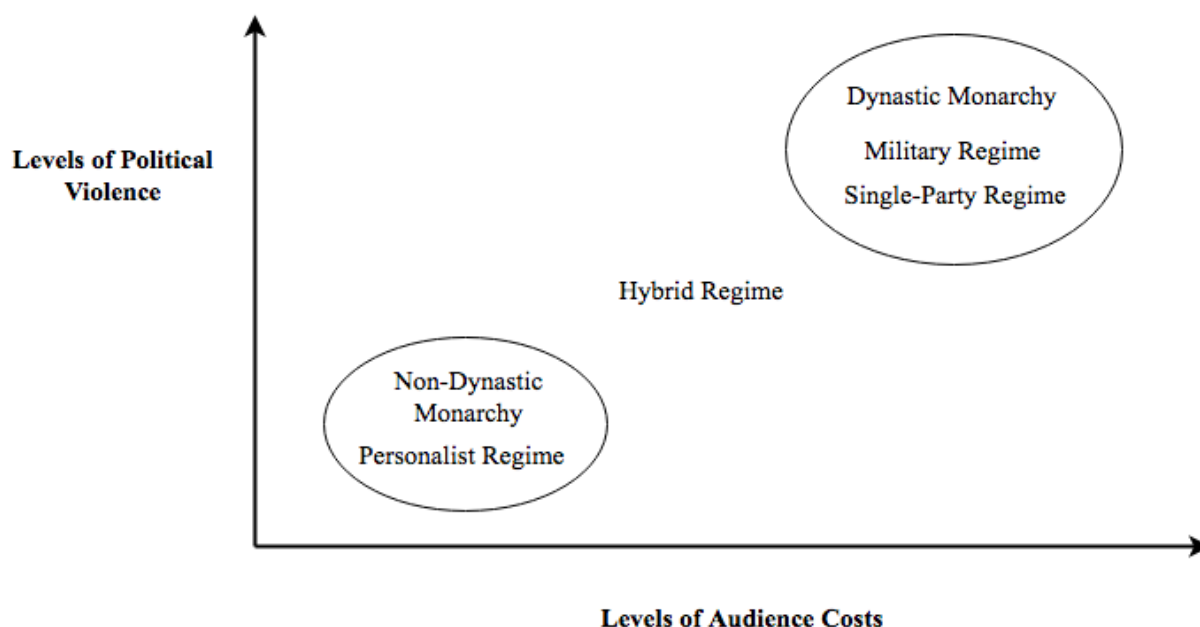
H₂: Single-party, military and dynastic authoritarian regimes generate more audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are therefore more affected by acts of political violence.

H₃: Personalist and non-dynastic authoritarian regimes generate less audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are therefore less affected by acts of political violence.

H₄: If hybrid authoritarian regimes fulfill both accountability and visibility criteria, they generate audience costs that raise the incentives for non-state actors to use political violence.

Our hypotheses attempt to shed light on the causal chain between our three variables, namely the institutional design of authoritarian regimes (IV) audience costs (Int.V) and the incentives for non-state actors to use political violence (DV). To summarize our theoretical expectations, single-party, military and dynastic regimes should be more targeted by acts of political violence as they generate higher audience costs than personalist and non-dynastic regimes. Indeed, in these regimes, the existence of an effective accountability group that have the will and means to possibly threaten the incumbent's tenure in office should provide greater incentive for non-state groups to resort to political violence. Concerning hybrid regimes, the likelihood of political violence within those regimes will depend on whether their institutional design enable the production of audience costs. Figure 2 above visually displays the aforementioned hypotheses showing the correlation between levels of audience costs and political violence. Moreover, the comparison, by strategically selecting our cases in our comparative study, will serve as a control variable in order to respect the postulates of causality and to control the link between our independent variable, intermediate variable and our dependent variable (Sartori 1991: 244).

Figure 1. *Regime-types, levels of audience costs and political violence*



Definition of Concepts

The Concept of Authoritarian Regime

In order to define optimally the concept of authoritarian regimes as well as the different typologies existing, it is first necessary to define that of regime. Barbara Geddes in her article in 2014 defines regimes as “*a set of formal and informal rules for the choice of leaders and policies*” (ibid., 2). In the existing literature, authoritarian regimes are often opposed to democracies by not fulfilling certain democratic criteria. Nevertheless, it should be said that non-democratic regimes themselves are very different from one another because of their different institutional designs (Wahman, Teorell and Hadenius 2013: 1). Although a classical definition of authoritarian regimes from Linz (1964: 225) is widespread in the existing literature and relevantly outlined by Morlino (2009: 278), we consider more suitable for the purpose of our study the one from Geddes et al. (2014: 1) namely “a set of formal and/or informal rules for choosing leaders and policies; there can be multiple regimes within an autocratic spell”. Indeed, we believe that this definition highlights better the existing plurality of authoritarian regimes.

In this respect, the common feature of authoritarian regimes those where leaders and policies are chosen with “any means besides direct, reasonably fair, competitive elections in which at least ten percent of the total population was eligible to vote; or an indirect election by a body, at least 60 percent of which was elected in direct reasonably fair, competitive elections; or constitutional succession to a democratically elected executive.” (Geddes et al. 2014 : 317). Thus, different typologies of authoritarian regimes exist, each having their own methodological and theoretical characteristics linked to the databases used. Although Teorell and Hadenius (2013) have led to a new way of classifying authoritarian regimes in the literature, the two main predominant typologies remain those of Geddes et al. (2014) and Cheibub et al. (2010). The benefits of using the definition of Geddes are twofold. Firstly, we base our typology on her work and dataset and therefore our analysis will be more consistent. Second, the practical application of this conception is that the “identity of the group from which leaders can be selected” is at the core of the way they differentiate authoritarian regime (Geddes et al. 2012: 26; Wahman, Teorell and Hadenius 2013).

The concept of political violence has been subject to debates among academics during decades. Similar to the concept of terrorism, which is still facing disagreements in the literature, the concept of political violence has not found yet a relative consensus. As pointed out by Aoláin (2006: 834), “[p]olitical violence is an extremely broad and multifaceted term. It is also an ‘essentially contested concept’, with boundaries and meanings that shift depending on cultural and community-specific circumstances.” Thus, existing definitions are either minimalist or too specific that do not allow us to take the broad variety of acts of political violence. As an example, the definition of Douglas Hibbs who in his book “Mass political Violence,” (1973) described political violence as a behavior, which involves “anti-system, political significance and collective or mass activity”. Comparably, the distinctions made by Gurr (1986), which means “the physical violence” characterized by the use of force or “the structural violence” as a “more general patterns of denial” have to be underlined when analyzing political violence (149; 152–161). In addition to that, it seems that the late tentative of finding a definition of political violence has been “state centric”. Indeed, scientists have been focusing a lot on the relationship between “violent acts and the state as object of action” (Aoláin 2006: 834).

In addition to these obstacles, the difficulty in differentiating between the notion of terrorism and political violence is nowadays highly difficult and also participate in the complex task of defining political violence. For example, “the legitimate use of violence to force political change within states, particularly those that are undemocratic or unrepresentative” can be defined by some authors as terrorist tactics but by others as political violence (Aoláin 2006: 834).

Regarding what has been said previously, the definition of Schwarzmantel (2010: 3), namely “the use (actual or threatened) of physical coercion to achieve a change in the nature of the political order [...]” represents a relevant basis for our definitional task. Indeed, the advantage of this definition lies on the fact that it is “minimalist” in the sense that it avoids the idea of “systemic violence” (Schwarzmantel 2010:3) but on the other hand, it allows to include a plurality of different actors who could use political violence either defending current policies or challenging it. Furthermore, this definition entails no distinction between “violence” and “force” which are taken as synonyms. However, the weakness of such definition is due to the fact that it could include political violence that can be undertaken by the state. In this regard,

the concept of clandestine political violence of Donatella Della Porta (2013:2), namely, “killings by small, underground groups (or even individuals) oriented to (more or less clearly stated) political aims” is interesting. Indeed, it includes four types of non-state political groups: left-wing, right-wing, ethno-nationalist and religious fundamentalists. In addition, Della Porta’s concept virtue is that it “resolves the sticky problem of whether to include states-sponsored attacks on civilians in the definition of terrorism in a way that is both scientifically and morally defensible” (Leach 2016: 40). Nonetheless, the problem of such definition is that the use of political violence necessarily ends up with killings and does not take into account possible threats and acts that did not report other types of casualties.

Nevertheless, because we want a concept of political violence as broad as possible, it seems necessary for our thesis to clarify to what extent are acts of terrorism include in our work. According to Ramsay (2015) and Erlenbusch (2014) terrorism should be neither used nor defined, because “[d]efinitions of terrorism are controversial due to problems of labeling actions as terrorism promotes the condemnation of the actors, which may reflect ideological or political bias” (Gibbs, 1989: 329). However, as terrorism represents a form of political violence (O’Neil 2007: 267) we decided for this study to include elements of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (START 2017). These elements are “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (ibid). One of the criteria of this definition is interesting with regard to our theory because it accounts the idea that political violence is used to affect a larger audience other than the immediate victims. However, its weakness lies in the fact that the use of violence is not necessarily aimed at targeting a political objective but can also be economic, religious or social and therefore not only political.

In this regard, GTD’s definition (ibid.) could be problematic for an analysis of democratic states in which economic, social and religious institutions are not directly under the control of the state and where the labeling of political violence could be difficult to give. However, unlike democracies, authoritarian regimes are considered to control all main institutions of the society and so we consider that any violent attack in those regimes fall necessary into the category of political violence because it is aimed at targeting the dictatorial power. Consequently, building on previous definitions, we decided to create our own definition of political violence, namely “the use of actual or threatened of physical coercion by a non-state actors to achieve a change in the nature of the political order”. Looking at our thesis, the advantage of this definition is that it focuses only on acts of political violence undertaken by non-state actors that aim at

targeting the authoritarian political authority but also affecting larger audiences. In addition, we can use GDT as database for our work (ibid.). This definition of political violence allows us to bridge the gap with audience costs in explaining the incentives for non-state actors.

The Concept of an Audience Costs

First theorized by Fearon (1994), the concept of audience cost has been defined by many scholars in the literature (Levy 2012; Slantchev 2012; Kertzer & Brutger 2016). The majority of these authors have used this concept to explain the behavior of leaders facing political crisis in democratic states. However, Weeks (2008) has been the first scholar to adapt this concept to authoritarian regimes. According to Weeks, audience costs are “the domestic punishment that leaders would engage to guard against public threats” (2008: 35); or more broadly “the punishments of leaders who ‘fail to fulfill their commitments’ (for example, by failing to carry out a threat)” (Slantchev 2012: 378). Extended to internal conflict dynamics by Conrad and Conrad (2014), the logic of audience costs can explain why non-state actors resort to political violence.

In other words, the concept of audience costs can be understood as the political cost that a leader faces in regard to an accountability group when he or she is confronted with a public threat of any kind. Hence, as any political cost, there must be the existence of an accountability group that can actually threaten the leader and have the means and will to implement the consequences generated by this cost. Thus, this concept is central to our thesis because our main line of argument is explained throughout it. Furthermore, thanks to the theoretical contributions of Weeks (2008), we can link the concept of audience costs to that of political violence within the different types of authoritarian regimes. From this, we can extract two additional concepts, namely political accountability and visibility.

The Concept of Domestic Political Accountability

In the existing literature, there is a fundamental link between the creation of a democracy and the notion of ‘accountability’ with the idea that accountability and responsibility are nearly synonymous (Schedler 1999). However, few academics have written on the notion of ‘accountability’ in authoritarian regimes. Thus, in order to define the concept of political accountability in the most relevant way, we must first present the concepts of democratic

‘horizontal and vertical accountability’ of Guillermo O’Donnell (1998) and then adapt it to an authoritarian context.

According to O’Donnell (ibid. 165), accountability can be understood as “not only vertically, making elected officials answerable to the ballot box, but also horizontally, across a network of relatively autonomous powers that can call into question and eventually punish, improper ways of discharging the responsibilities of a given office”. In this regard, within the concept of accountability itself, we can differentiate between vertical and horizontal accountability. Hence, horizontal accountability appeals to the link that exists between officials who hold each other accountable and vertical accountability emphasizes the link that exists between citizens who hold officials accountable (Mainwaring and Welna 2003: 56). With regard to horizontal accountability, O’Donnell (1998) explains that it mainly consists of “controlling the actions of the state agents’ using ‘checks and balances” (Mainwaring and Welna 2003: 56). Thus, the notion of vertical accountability is linked to the fact that citizens can choose their leader, but they can also “remove him from office” if they disagree with the policies put in place or the mode of government (Mainwaring and Welna 2003: 70).

However, as explained earlier, these definitions of political accountability are more in line with democracies than with authoritarian regimes. We could therefore, at first glance, claim that in an authoritarian regime there is no accountability as there is “no written constitution, or bill of rights, no mutual checks, and balances, and responsibility” (Williams 1794:140). Nevertheless, similar logic to that of democratic accountability can be extended to authoritarian regimes because they “seek the type of authority and power that extends beyond that produced by coercion and intimidation” (Kassem 2004 :4). Consequently, in those regimes, “in the absence of democratic institutions, accountable representation, and a compelling and mobilizing ideology authoritarian regimes depend on the distribution of patronage to establish a clientelist system that secure some form of stability” (ibid.4). Consequently, we agree with Geddes (2014: 315) and Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2009) that “the group whose support the dictator requires in order to retain office is central to understanding autocracies”. Indeed, authoritarian incumbents are accountable to elites because “without democratic institutions, autocracies leaders depend on the support of domestic groups to survive in office” (Geddes 1999 and 2003; de Mesquita and al. 1999).

In this regard, each authoritarian regime relies on a “leadership group” or Selectorate (Shirk & Roeder), group that makes key policies and regime leaders must retain support of its members

to remain in power, even though variations in leaders' ability to influence the group and policies depends on the type of dictatorship. According to this logic, leaders in authoritarian regimes are accountable to the rest of authoritarian elites that can under certain conditions oust them. Following this logic, we can define accountability as "a credible threat to punish the leader domestically" (Weeks 2009: 11). Thus, horizontal accountability exists in dictatorships because, "elites with key position in the regime can still oust leaders if they can solve their coordination problem" (Haber 2006).

Regarding vertical accountability, we consider that, in stable and strong authoritarian regimes, this type of accountability does not really exist. Indeed, in such cases, the electorate has no real power to challenge the ruling power. However, it must be said that in our work, we focus on regimes that are neither victims of revolutions, rebellions nor uprisings that could threaten the dictatorial power. Thus, for our work, only horizontal accountability exists.

The Concept of Visibility

The concept of visibility comes from Weeks (2008) and its audience costs theory applied to authoritarian regimes. Although Weeks (ibid.) did not strictly define it but provide the different condition that must be applied to meet this criterion, we can define visibility as the ability of outsiders, namely domestic non-state actors, to assess whether an incumbent face an effective domestic accountability group. The logic behind the concept of visibility is that non-state actors resorting to political violence must have incentive to act and they will do so, only if they know that the leader might face a domestic punishment from the ruling elites in case of attack.

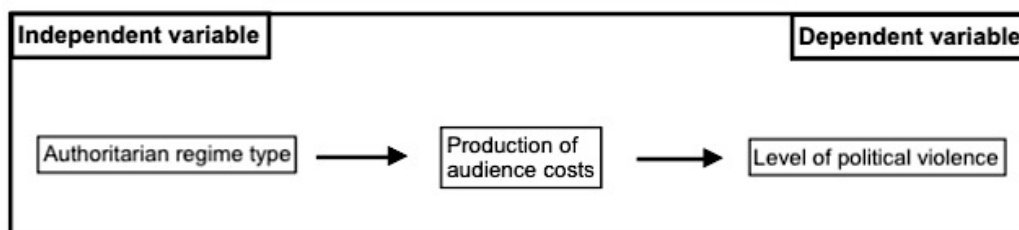
Methodology

Now that we have detailed our research question, our hypotheses as well as the different avenues addressed in the existing literature, it is necessary to define our methodological framework. It will be divided into four parts. In the first part, we present the design chosen for our methodological framework, as well as our selection criteria for our cases, namely Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Syria. Then we present our methodology of analysis. Before moving to the last section, we will operationalize our different variables. Finally, we discuss the types of sources chosen and the data used in our work.

Methodological Framework

In order to test our hypothesis and answer our research question, our methodology of analysis will be qualitative because it is difficult to quantify several variables we take into account. More specifically, we follow a multiple-case study method that allows in-depth investigations in our cases of analysis. To do so we will use a causal approach to study the influence of explanatory factors on the phenomenon to explain and eliminate the disturbing factors (Mcnabb 2010: 4). Furthermore, to do this, we will apply the *process tracing* method, which is a method that can confirm our hypothesis that it aims to establish a chain of causality between different events (Van Evera 1997: 64).

Figure 2. *Causal chain of our process tracing*



According to many authors (Campbell 1975; Yin 1984; Zainal 2007), case study method enables a researcher to closely examine data within a specific context with small geographical area and limited number of subjects under study. In this respect, our work relies on a multiple-case design as we wish to analysis real-life events that “show numerous sources of evidence through replication rather than sampling logic” (Zainal 2007: 2). Moreover, as we study different countries over a period of ten years, we use an in-depth longitudinal examination of

each country that enables to provide a “systematic way of observing the events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results over a long period of time” (ibid.). According to Zainal (2007), the benefits of using such research method are many. First, this helps to raise the level of confidence in the robustness of the method (ibid.). Second, this method allows both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Lastly, case-studies research through detailed qualitative accounts, “often produced in case studies not only help to explore or describe the data in real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real—life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research.” (ibid. 4)

In addition to relying on a multiple-case study method, our work is aimed at explaining a similar phenomenon in different countries. Thus, there are several benefits to use the “comparison as a method of political inquiry” (Lijphart 1971: 682). First of all, we have chosen to perform a comparative method in order to establish “general empirical propositions” but also to discover “empirical relationships among variables” and not to perform a so-called measurement method (ibid. 682–683). According to Lijphart (1971), the main purpose of the comparative method is to establish scientific explanations by the following model, “the establishment of general empirical relationships among two or more variables, while all other variables are controlled, that is, held constant” (ibid. 683). In this regard, it is only by respecting these two principles that we can be sure that the relationship really exists and allow empirical generalizations (ibid. 683). Unlike statistic methods, a comparative method is well suited for analysis dealing with a small number of cases that do not allow systematic controls by means of partial correlations (ibid. 684). Consequently, since we are going to use states as units of observation for our work, the number of selected cases will be restricted in order to satisfy the requirements of this method.

This being said, there are, of course, existing limitations to this method. The main one that must be kept in mind is that the comparative method analyzes many variables and small number of cases (ibid. 685). For instance, the generalization of results is only to a certain extent acceptable. However, we believe that the comparative method combined with quantitative inputs offers a quality in-depth analysis and that taking a limited number of cases will result in a less superficial analysis, which is often the case with quantitative analysis. For these reasons we chose this method of analysis.

Now that we have detailed the reasons why we have opted mainly for a qualitative method, it is now necessary to present the comparative system design that we will adopt, namely a *Most*

Similar System Design (MSSD) (Przeworski and Teune 1970: 34) also called Mill's Method of Difference (or study of "concomitant variations" (Naroll 1968). This type of design is a "maximum" strategy in the sense that, "it is anticipated that if some important differences are found among these otherwise similar countries, then the number of factors attributable to these differences will be sufficiently small to warrant explanation in terms of those differences alone." (Przeworski and Teune 1970: 32). Drawing upon this research design, we will use common systemic characteristics as control variable and intersystemic differences as explanatory variables in order to infer causality in our cases and try to maximize the variance between our analyzed cases, i.e. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Syria.

Still nowadays, the debate on the best method to adopt between *Most Similar System Design* and *Most Different System Design* is widespread in the existing literature. Regarding *Most Different System Design* and according to Anckar (2008), "independent variables can be measured at all levels but the dependent variable should reside at a sub-systemic level", which makes the MDSD model obsolete for a number of studies (ibid. 392). Moreover, the MDSD is a research design that "necessitates a constant dependent variable" (Landman 2003: 29–34, Sartori 1991:250). With regards to our selected design the *Most Similar System Design*, the main shortcoming highlight by several academics is that there are "limited number of countries and therefore it will never be possible to keep constant all potential explanatory factors (Meckstroth, 1975: 134; Peter 1998: 38–39; Anckar 2008: 390). Nevertheless, there are different reasons why a *MSSD* seems to be the most adequate for our study. According to Anckar (2008), three essential features must be fulfilled for its applicability: (1) the level of variable's interactions; (2) the approach type and (3) the variation or not of the dependent variable.

Regarding the first criteria, a *MSSD* can be applied for studying variable interactions not only at a systemic level but also at sub-systemic levels (ibid. 395). This fits perfectly in our work because we will analyze the different institutional designs of our authoritarian regimes and their political outcomes and thus the level of analysis will be domestic and not systemic. Concerning the approach type, Anckar (2008: 395) highlights that "a pure *MSSD* requires that theory guides the choice of both the independent variables that are allowed to vary and the extraneous variables that are to be kept constant". Again, we fulfill this criterion because we will use different theoretical contributions in our work and in our selection of countries in order to keep constant as many plausible extraneous variables as possible. Finally, in a pure *MSSD*, the independent variable should vary, whereas values on the dependent variable are of no

interest in the beginning of the research process (ibid.). This agrees with our study, because our independent variable is the differences in authoritarian regime types and their institutional designs and we are not interested yet in the values of our dependent variable, i.e. the levels of political violence.

According to what has been said previously, the MSSD research design fits to our work. We will use a deductive method as well as cases that share a great deal of similarities but differ in the explanatory factor analyzed. In this regard, all dictatorships that we select belong to the Middle East and North Africa's region and share numerous similarities. However, they all differ in their institutional organization of political power and the production of audience costs as well as the different levels of political violence they have experienced during our period of analysis. As a consequence, the aim of our MSSD is to analyze such causal mechanism by keeping constant all other alternative variables in order to avoid any problem of endogeneity and fallacious relationships.

Before moving to the operationalization of our concepts, we must explain the selection process and methodology of our cases of study on which we will test the hypotheses and try to answer our research question: *“To what extent does the type of authoritarian regime influence the likelihood and form of political violence?”*.

Table 2. *Main criteria of selection in order to fulfill the MSSD research design*

| Country | Regime type | Dictatorship | Same region & period | Cultural/Linguistic proximity | Similar Economic situation | Islam (Sunnis) |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Tunisia | Single-party | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Egypt | Military | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Libya | Personalist | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Morocco | Non-dynastic monarchy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Saudi Arabia | Dynastic monarchy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Syria | Hybrid | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Cases Selection

In order to make a relevant, unbiased and effective case selection, we divide our selection process in three steps. We first explain the region chosen as well as the temporal space of our research. Then, with the help of databases recognized in the academic field and theoretical contributions, we select countries considered as dictatorships and affected by political violence. Finally, we choose authoritarian regimes that fall into Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) typologies.

The choice of the Middle East and North Africa as a focal region in our thesis can be explained by several reasons. According to the Freedom House Index (2017), the MENA is nowadays the least free region in the world as well as during our period which goes from 2000 to 2010. This region has experienced some of the most stable and sustainable dictatorships as shown in Table 1 below. The resilience and survival of those dictatorships have been analyzed by a flourishing literature through political, economic and institutional comparisons (Posusney and Angrist 2005, Schlumberger 2007, King 2009, Davidson 2012, Heydemann, and Leenders 2013, Jebnoun et al. 2014, Sassoon 2016). In this regard, as highlighted by Posusney and Angrist (2005: 222), “authoritarian rulers in those and other states across the region got down to the business of consolidating their hold on power. Their tactics varied [...] but everywhere the common result has been that there is a striking disparity between incumbent and opposition power—a disparity that sustains authoritarian rule”. Economic specificities of the MENA through *clientelism* and *rentier* states, also contribute to making this region a focal point of our analysis.

Moreover, still today, this region hosts a variety of specific types of authoritarian regimes with unique institutional setups that did not exist elsewhere as absolute monarchies (e.g. Saudi Arabia) or hybrid regime (e.g. Syria). Moreover, the role of Islam and religious factors, without entering into the academic debate on whether it is a break on democratic development, also contributes to making this region particularly interesting for our analysis. Finally, more recently, the Arab Spring has led to the breakdowns of several authoritarian regimes but only Tunisia has a successfully transitioned towards democracy according to Freedom House (2017) (coded as *Free*). Thus, we argue that our study by analyzing the institutional designs of such regimes could provide analytic keys to understand the current stage of countries from this region.

Table 3. *Durability of MENA's authoritarian regimes^a*

| Country | Leaders | Period of rule | Length of authoritarian rule (years) |
|--------------|---|----------------|---|
| Bahrain | Al-Khalifa dynasty | 1971*–present | <40 |
| Egypt | Hosni Mubarak | 1981–2011*** | 30 |
| Iraq | Saddam Hussein | 1979–2003*** | 24 |
| Kuwait | Al-Sabah dynasty | 1961*–present | <50 |
| Libya | Mouammar Gadhafi | 1969–2011*** | 42 |
| Morocco | Alaouite Dynasty of Morocco | 1956*–present | <60 |
| Oman | Al Said dynasty | 1976*–present | <30 |
| Qatar | Al Thani dynasty | 1971*–present | <40 |
| Saudi Arabia | Al Saud dynasty | 1930**–present | <80 |
| Syria | Al-Assad dynasty | 1971–2011*** | 40 |
| Tunisia | Ben Ali | 1987–2011*** | 24 |
| The UAE | Al Nahyan (Abu Dhabi) and Al Maktoum (Dubai) dynasties | 1971*–present | <40 |

^a Are excluded from the period selected: regimes imposed and maintained by foreign occupation or military threat (Palestine); regimes that are neither autocracies nor closed anocracies according to Polity IV⁷ scores during the period selected (Algeria, Israel, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey); regimes facing civil war or secession (Yemen, Iraqi Kurdistan, Western Sahara).

* Independence

** State creation

*** Foreign intervention, civil war or revolution

Concerning the levels of political violence, the MENA, as previously highlighted in the literature review, is considered by many scholars as one of the bloodiest regions in terms of political violence (Howard 2014). Over the past decades, most of non-state violent movements have emerged from this region. Among them, Al-Qaeda and more recently ISIS have claimed to be responsible for many attacks that have affected both the MENA and Europe. Focusing on the political violence present in the authoritarian regimes of the MENA will allow to insert our work on both Middle East and Political violence bodies of literature. Finally, the last reason is linked to our comparative design. Indeed, the historical, cultural and linguistic common heritage shared among countries from this same region allows a comparison that best fits the conditions of a *Most Similar System Design*.

Regarding the temporal space, we have decided to analyze the period from 2000 to 2010. The main reason behind this choice is that we avoid the “Arab Spring” period in our study. Indeed, our study wants to highlight the likelihood of political violence in stable authoritarian regimes in which neither rebellion nor revolution are breeding within the population.

⁷ Polity IV (2014) scores are available on <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm> [consulted on January 1, 2018]

Furthermore, in avoiding the period of 2011 onwards, it allows us to put aside many other exogenous variables (e.g. increase of repression, civil war, rebellion) that could directly impact our dependent variable, i.e. the level of political violence, and break up the causal mechanism. Finally, many studies have drawn conclusions on the recent events in this region from 2011 onwards. However, we consider that analyzing the current situation would be scientifically difficult in terms of feasibility but also due to a too nearby temporal analytic distance.

Now that we have defined our comparative method, the temporal space of research as well as our region, we will rely on two databases, namely Polity IV and Freedom House in order to select our countries of analysis which fall into Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) typologies of authoritarian regimes. As our thesis focuses on MENA authoritarian regimes from 2000–2010, our selection is a two-step process.

As a first step, we take the choice to rely on *Polity IV* database (Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1946–2013). This database, run by Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr (2002), is a valuable dataset that provides individual country regime trends. Thereby, “Annual Polity scores have been plotted for each of the 167 countries currently covered by the Polity IV data series for the period 1946–2013”⁸. The academic researchers of this project have thus created a scale ranging from -10 to 10 in order to rank the 167 countries: the score 10 represents a full democracy, 6 to 9 a democracy, 5 to 1 an open anocracy, 0 to -5 a closed anocracy, -6 to -10 an autocracy. They also added to this scale one category without scores: the one of the failed/occupied countries. Similarly, *Freedom House* is a database that uses two criteria that are political rights (PR) and civil liberties (CL). Its rating process is based on a constructed scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is the highest degree of freedom and 7 is the lowest. Depending on the score of each country, they fall into different categories: Free (F) for a score of 1 to 2.5; Partly Free (PF) for a score between 3 and 5; and Not Free (NF) for a score ranging from 5.5 to 7.

For our study, we decide to follow the path taken by Hadenius and Teorell (2007) who use the mean of each country’s Freedom House and Polity scores converted to a scale from 0 (least democratic) to 10 (most democratic). Hence based on the main categorical measures of democracy, they consider countries as autocracies if they score below 7.5. The reason for using both the FH and the Polity scales is to compensate for the respective weaknesses of these two

⁸ Polity IV Project Website (2014): <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

indices (Hadenius and Teorell 2005). According to this logic, we isolate all territories part of the MENA that are considered autocracies from 2000 to 2010. We excluded from this list regimes imposed and maintained by foreign occupation or military threat (Palestine); regimes that are neither autocracies nor closed anocracies according to Polity IV scores during the period selected (Algeria, Israel, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey) and regimes facing civil war or secession (Yemen, Iraqi Kurdistan, Western Sahara). Consequently, we arrived at a list comprising 12 countries (previously depicted in Table 1).

As a second step, we use the Global Terrorism Database (GDT) (START 2017) to report on authoritarian regimes that have been effectively affected by political violence during the period from 2000 to 2010. At first glance, our reliability on a database that focuses mainly on acts of terrorism could be questioned. However, as underlined in the definition of political violence, several criteria used by the GTD are consistent with what we mean by political violence in authoritarian regimes. Moreover, to our knowledge there is no existing database analyzing political violence as such in our countries.

Finally, the last step is to be able to reduce the list to a relevant number of countries taking into account our theoretical framework and the prerequisites of our comparative method, i.e. *Most Similar System Design*. However, even before this, we decided to exclude several countries because of a lack or limited information necessary for the analysis. Thus, we make the choice to exclude Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE of our analysis. In order to meet the criteria of relevance and in order to have an optimal cases selection regarding our theoretical framework, we decided to choose one country per regime type from Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) classifications. Thus, we select six dictatorships with institutional characteristics that best fit the typologies of those authors, namely *single-party*, *military*, *personalist*, *hybrid*, *dynastic monarchies* and *non-dynastic monarchies*. As the typology used in our theoretical model relies on ideal-types, we decided to select the most important MENA countries that fulfill these criteria. Moreover, apart from their different institutional designs, we tried to choose countries maximizing their similarities such as geographical, historical, cultural, economic, and religious factors in order to increase the explained variation. Our selection is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 4. *Countries selected and regime types (2000–2010)*

| Country | Regime type | Leader |
|--------------|--------------|---|
| Tunisia | Single-party | Ben Ali |
| Egypt | Military | Hosni Mubarak |
| Libya | Personalist | Muammar Gaddafi |
| Morocco | Non-dynastic | Mohammed VI |
| Saudi Arabia | Dynastic | Fahd Al Saud (up to 2005) Abdullah Al Saud (2005-2015) |
| Syria | Hybrid | Bashar Al-Assad |

Methodology of Analysis

Now that we have presented our comparative method and our case selection, we must discuss the methodology of our analysis. In this regard, the first step will be to classify our countries thanks to the typology of authoritarian regimes created by Geddes (2003) to which we add two types of monarchies from Herb (1999). In this regard, thanks to Geddes's autocratic database (2003), we will be able to categorize our six countries into specific regime-types. The second step of our analysis will consist of looking at the levels of audience costs generated within these regimes. In this respect, we know from our theoretical framework that levels of audience costs depends on several factors, mainly the existence of an accountability group that has the will and the means to punish the leader and a visibility criterion. Thus, drawing on specialized literature focusing on the institutional design of our dictatorships, we will be able to assess such factors. Finally, in order to quantify the levels of political violence within our dictatorships, we will use the data from the Global Terrorism Database. For each of our authoritarian regime, we will make a chart including the numbers of attacks, victims and perpetrators. This will allow us to compare our six regime types and their production of audience costs with their respective levels of political violence. Then, we will be able to confirm or not our hypotheses.

Operationalization of Variables

Now that we have made the case selection, we need to operationalize our variables so that we can test our hypotheses empirically. In this section we will try to find the relevant dimensions and indicators in order to measure the central concepts of our independent and dependent variables. In this respect, we first deal with the operationalization of our dependent variable, the political violence. Then we undertake the operationalization of our independent

variables, the authoritarian regimes and the audience costs. Finally, we present the operationalization of our different variables, as well as the control variables that we introduce into our study.

The theoretical framework that we have built upon the elements introduced by Weeks (2008), and Conrad and Conrad (2014) does not allow us to reproduce an analysis or a given operationalization as these authors use a quantitative method to test their hypotheses. Moreover, Weeks (2008) focuses on international dynamics and not domestic conflicts while Conrad and Conrad (2014) analysis is only based on terrorism and not political violence. As a consequence, and as part of the operationalization of our variables, we will rely on the existing literature in order to define, possible multiple dimensions of our concepts as well as the underlying indicators. By creating our operationalization in this way, we can meet the criteria of feasibility, internal validity but also reliability.

We are aware that by choosing certain indicators and not others, we could have a possible bias in our analysis and that our choices can be discussed in many ways. However, we also believe that since this will be the first time that these hypotheses will be tested through a comparative and qualitative method, our work has a certain originality and innovation, which leaves us with a certain room for maneuver to establish relevant and reliable criteria. It is therefore important to keep in mind that we are going to select indicators that best represent the different dimensions of the concepts discussed in our hypotheses. Furthermore, we are taking indicators that we can be empirically tested with the limited time and available resources we have.

Operationalization of the Dependent Variable: *Political Violence*

The task of operationalizing political violence is the source of wide debate in the literature because as previously highlighted, the concept itself is not subject to a consensus. Moreover, to our knowledge, none database focusing on political violence as such exists and in recent decades, this term has been relegated to the background because of terrorism studies.

In this regard, we believe that one solution to overcome this problem is to consider terrorism as a form of political violence and therefore to have a definition of political violence that can embrace other types of violent acts. Indeed, as our analysis focuses on MENA countries, the operationalization strategy must be consistent with the purpose of the research and the method

used to achieve it. Fortunately, as highlighted in the definition of political violence, we consider that we can extend the definition of terrorism from the *Global Terrorism Database* (GTD) to other types of political violence. The GTD's definition of terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation", is similar to our definition of political violence, i.e. "*the use of actual or threatened of physical coercion by non-state actors to achieve a change in the nature of the political order*". Indeed, the three GTD's attributes namely the incident must be intentional, the incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence and the perpetrators of the incidents must be subnational actors match to our definition (START Codebook 2017: 10). Furthermore, the GTD adds three inclusion criteria with which at least two must be present to be included in the database: (1) the act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal; (2) There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims; and (3) the action must be outside the context of a legitimate warfare activities (START 2017: 10).

As previously highlighted we believe that the logic behind those criteria can be extent to acts of political violence as a broad category. Indeed, the use of political violence by non-state actors is aimed at targeting the ruling power in order to trigger political change and therefore strategies are diverse. Nevertheless, a common feature of acts of political violence is the wish to reach a larger audience than the direct targets in order to spread widely their political message. Although the GTD focuses mainly on terrorism, an important virtue of this database is that it also includes incident others than terrorism. With this respect, thanks to the GTD's variable (*alternative*) we are able to take into account acts of insurgency/guerilla actions as it falls into the category of political violence. Consequently, for our dependent variable, we decide to take the number of acts of political violence in a given country-year. The data for our dependent variable come from the *Global Terrorism Database* (GTD). As we are interested in the levels of political violence from 2000 to 2010, we use the indicator (*nkill*) for each year, coded as a numeric variable, which represents the total number of fatalities within a country for one year. The main benefits of this variable it that it includes all victims and attackers who die as a direct result of the incident (START 2017: 48). Moreover, the categorical variable (*attacktype1*) and the text variable (*gname*) of the GTD tell us information on the attack type as well as the perpetrator group name. These different variables will help us for assessing the level of political violence in our qualitative analysis of our six dictatorships.

Although we believe that these indicators best fits to our analysis, our choice contains several drawbacks. Firstly, we expect that the GTD does not have all information on the acts of political violence, especially the name of the perpetrator groups. Thus, in such situation, the variables in the GDT are coded as “unknown” (START 2017). However, even in the case of an unknown actor, we believe that we must take into account the attack because if those attacks are included in the GDT it means that they fulfill the inclusion criteria of political violence and that it was aimed at targeting the government. Secondly, our analysis focuses on political violence in an authoritarian context and therefore a complete and transparent information is impossible. Finally, the inherent weaknesses of the GTD methodology will be present in our work. For instance, as pointed out by (Lafree and Dugan 2007: 187), the GTD relies on media articles and secondary source materials to collect data and therefore less developed countries might provide few information on incidents. However, we decide to select major MENA countries in order to overcome this problem as much as possible.

Operationalization of Independent Variables

Authoritarian regimes

Our variable concerning the nature of authoritarian regimes comes from the classification scheme and database of Geddes et al. (2003) completed with Herb’s criteria for dynastic and non-dynastic monarchies (1999). The categorization of these regimes is based on a battery of questions aimed at determining whether the authority at the head of a country of more than one million inhabitants is qualified as military, one-party, personalist or hybrid (Geddes 2003: 225–227). To do so, “each regime used in the data analysis receives a score between zero and one for each regime-type and this score is the sum of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answer” (ibid.9). The final categorization of any regime depends on which score is significantly higher than the other two⁹. Furthermore, regimes are considered as hybrids when similar scores exist for two or more regime types. The reason of taking these databases is mainly linked to our theoretical framework. Indeed, as previously highlighted, this typology enables us to bridge the gap between regime type and audience costs. Moreover, this typology remains central in this academic field. Nevertheless, it should be said that this database is not initially constructed as part of research on audience costs and political violence. However, many of the questions present in the classification scheme allows to outline the levels of audience costs that can be

⁹ See the complete Geddes’ (2003) classification Scheme for Coding Authoritarian Regimes in Appendix 1.

experienced by different regime-types. Given our object of study and in order to exploit this data in an optimal way, we proceed to certain rectifications and simplifications.

First, Geddes et al. (2003) categorize some regimes as hybrids when characteristics of several types of authoritarianism are present. Their approach is to consider any regime as a unit regardless of its duration in power. For the purpose of our work and because we analyze only a short period of time going from 2000 to 2010, we decide to classify our countries in only one regime-type apart from the hybrid one. Thus, if the entity at the head of the state remains the same while experiencing evolution in its authoritarian features, these regimes will be characterized under the same acronym. We justify our choice, because we consider that ten years in stable authoritarian regimes that do not experience changes of leaders evidence the fact that the core institutional setup remains the same. We are aware that through this method we could lose information. However, given that our interest is not to have an overview of the regime but to assess the nature of it for the period of our analysis (2000–2010), this limit can be solved for our study.

Second, Geddes et al. (2003) do not codify some specific regime types such as monarchies. Indeed, many countries (e.g. Iran, the UAE, Mexico) that do not match with the four ideal-type included in their study. In this respect, because Geddes (2003) does not include monarchies as regime type in her classification, we complete her typology scheme by using the criteria of Herb (1999)¹⁰. This, concerns in particular many existing regimes in countries part of the MENA and especially for our work, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. By filling this data gap, we complete the current academic work done on the topic and open it for further research. Based on Geddes (2003: 225–232) coding rules and Herb’s typology (1999) as well as secondary literature, we evaluate for each regime what type of authoritarianism is most salient during our analyzed period.

Audience Costs

The task of operationalizing audience costs has been subject to many difficulties. Indeed, Potter and Baum (2014) outline that they are the “dark matter” of international relations, hard to observe, but central to our theoretical models. Nevertheless, the successive theoretical contributions of Weeks (2008, 2009, 2014) and Conrad and Conrad (2014) allows us to identify

¹⁰ See our classification scheme for monarchies based on Herb (1999) in Appendix 1.

two central dimensions of this concept and therefore several indicators. In this regard, for the purpose of our analysis, the logic of audience costs is relevant in understanding the incentives for non-state actors to target governments through two mechanisms: a domestic accountability group and the visibility of this process to a larger audience.

First, regarding the concept of accountability, we will measure it with the variable “executive constraints” (*xconst*) from Polity IV dataset. Following Eckstein and Gurr’s definition (1975: 121), they consider executive constraints as decision rules and therefore the focus is on the checks and balances between the various parts of the decision-making process (Marshall and Jaggers 2002). According to Polity IV’s Codebook (2016), this variable refers to the extent of institutionalized constraints on the decision-making powers of chief executives, whether individuals or collectivities and such limitation may be imposed by any “accountability groups”. The *xconst* variable uses a seven-category scale: from 1 which refers to “unlimited authority”, where almost none constraints over the leader exist, to 7 “Executive parity or Subordination namely the existence of accountability groups having an effective authority equal or greater than the executive (ibid. 24–25). As our study focuses on autocracies and closed anocracies, we expect lower scores ranging from (1) “unlimited executive authority” to (3) “Slight to Moderate Limitation on Executive Authority”.

This variable will allow us to assess the level of accountability experienced by the incumbents in our dictatorships. However, although the variable *xconst* is useful in our work as an outlook, this quantitative data provides neither qualitative information on who composed effectively the accountability groups in our authoritarian regimes, nor through which institutional mechanisms. Thus, we will bridge the gap of this dataset by completing our analysis with specialized literature. Indeed, we will assess thanks to specialized literature on our countries the possible executive constraints existing in our regimes as well as the different institutional setups implemented by the leaders to counteract possible accountability groups. The reason for choosing such variable is that no other dataset measures constraints on authoritarian leaders directly apart from Polity IV (Weeks 2009). Furthermore, the variable “Executive constraints” is “similar to the notion of ‘horizontal accountability’ found in the democracy literature but it assumes that dictator may also be bound by certain institutional constraints” (Polity IV Codebook 2016: 62).

The second relevant dimension of audience costs is the visibility criteria. Indeed, the existence of an accountability group than can threaten the leader generates audience costs

within the authoritarian regime itself. However, these audience costs cannot create incentives to act for outsiders if those non-state actors do not know the effective existence of an accountability group. Thus, the visibility of the existence of the accountability group is central in understanding the incentives of non-state actors. In this respect, non-state actors resorting to political violence have incentives to do so when they can be aware that a domestic audience exists and can punish the leader. However, to our knowledge, none authors have proposed a clear way of measuring this criterion. Indeed, Weeks (2008: 43) simply underlines that “the visibility condition described here is quite undemanding: the only requirement is that the opposing state knows that the leader faces a real probability of domestic sanctioning”. Extending this logic to domestic non-state actors, we decided to take into account several indicators to measure the dimension of visibility.

First, according to Weeks (2008), the regime must be stable. In this regard, to assess the stability of our regime, we rely on two variables from Polity IV’s dataset. The first variable is *Polity* which is a scale that rates regimes going from -10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic). Polity scores make it possible to account for the stability of regimes if their scores do not undergo serious modifications. Following this logic, if our countries do not undergo sharp changes in their Polity scores, we can consider that they are stable dictatorships in which politics are stable enough for outsiders to determine whether the leader face an accountability group or not. Therewith, we can use the variable on regime durability (*durable*) which is the number of years since the most recent regime change (defined by a three-point change in the Polity score over a period of three years or less). Based on the Polity score of each country, this variable allows to assess whether a country has experienced a regime change and if not the number of years since a regime is in place, assessing the durability of it.

Our second indicator for the visibility criterion is the fact that outsiders know that the leader effectively faces an accountability group. Unlike democracies, authoritarian regimes do not have free and fair elections as well as transparency principle that allows the domestic population to easily identify accountability groups. However, even in dictatorships, the existence of media coverage is relevant regarding the transmission of information from the ruling power to a domestic audience. Indeed, nowadays, authoritarian regimes (e.g. Syria) relies widely on media as a propaganda tool and thus, each person having media access can easily know the names and composition of the ruling power. In this regard, the mere access to the Internet and the press, even if those are controlled by the state, represent an indicator of visibility that enables non-state actors to identify clearly the existence of an effective accountability group.

Control Variables

As our analysis is based on a *Most Similar System Design*, the choice of countries that are similar in a number of specified variables will operate as control variables. Thus, in order to monitor the potential effect of other factors in our analysis, we present below four groups of control variables that could also influence our dependent variable.

First, systemic variables including temporal and geographical dimensions may play a role in the level of political violence in an authoritarian regime. For this reason, we decided to take and compare countries from a same region, i.e. the MENA, and during a same time-period out of the Cold War or colonial period. In doing so, we avoid any influence that international/external factors could play in our analysis. Second, a structural dimension relating to the economy can play a role in the levels of political violence. Indeed, several academics such as Pederson (2002: 176) outlines that, “stern conflict and political violence arise when access to critical resources is under dispute, especially at times of general economic decay.”. In this regard, the choice of our cases was oriented towards countries that do not experience a deep economic crisis during the years of our analysis.

In addition to our first two dimensions, the religious dimension must also be taken into account. Many academics have written on ethnic cleavages existing in Muslim countries and the extent to which political violence arises from sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shias (e.g. Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Hence, we decided to compare only countries with a Sunni-majority in our work. We believe that this choice, combined with our analysis period that excludes any war between Shia and Sunni countries that could spill-over in the level of violence within our countries, is a way to limit the possible influence that the religious variable could have on the level of political violence. Our fourth and final control dimension concerns two variables related to the countries/regimes analyzed. Firstly, several academics say that regime repressiveness might play a role in the level of political violence used by non-state actors (Muller 1985, Gerschewski 2013).

To control this variable, we selected countries sharing similar scores of regime’s repressiveness in two databases measuring levels of repression: the Political Terror Scale (PTS) project and Freedom House (2017)¹¹. Secondly, high levels of inequality might increase the

¹¹ See Freedom House, “Freedom in the World” and Gibney, Cornett, and Wood, “Political Terror Scale”.

levels of political violence (Sigelman and Simpson 1977). In this regard, we control this variable in choosing only countries that experienced low to medium rates of inequality from 2000 to 2010 so that no major discrepancy could influence the levels of political violence¹².

Type of Sources Selected and Data Used

Now that we have identified the different indicators necessary for our analysis, it is worth describing in more detail the type of data and sources that we will use for the analysis of our cases namely Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. For the sake of clarity, we will first present the different databases that we will use and in a second step, qualitative sources. For our research, we will mainly rely on secondary sources, databases, websites and monographs. In order to analyze our independent variable and our intermediary variable, namely the institutional design of our dictatorships and the production of audience costs, we will rely on databases, as well as secondary literature and particularly specialized monographs on MENA studies. The use of secondary literature will be necessary because it will supplement the lack of potential information from primary sources as we analyze dictatorships. Furthermore, it allows us to investigate new or additional research questions that are still untreated. Moreover, for the sake of feasibility and validity, we will not be able to collect all of the data by ourselves and therefore we accept that the use of secondary sources may be biased because we are partly depending on information collected by other researchers.

As we have seen in the operationalization, the first database used in our research is the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017). The Global Terrorism Database “is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2016” created by Gary LaFree, Laura Dugan, Erin Miller and Michael Jensen¹³. Besides including the numbers of attacks for almost 50 years worldwide, this database also provides qualitative data on the perpetrator groups, the victims and alternative acts of political violence such as insurgency/guerilla. Thus, we will use its insights to analyze the levels of political violence within our six countries.

In addition to the GTD, the other two databases used are Polity IV and Geddes (2003) classification scheme dataset completed with Herb (1999). These databases provide us the necessary information for classifying our authoritarian regimes and assess their levels of

¹² See Hassine (2015) for a complete economic analysis on the inequalities present in the MENA region

¹³ Global Terrorism Database: an overview (2017) <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about/>

audience costs. As a reminder, Polity IV database (2014) is a project led by Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr and which “overs all major, independent states in the global system over the period 1800–2015 (i.e., states with a total population of 500,000 or more in the most recent year; currently 167 countries)”¹⁴. In order to carry out this project, their study relies on “six component measures that record key qualities of executive recruitment, constraints on executive authority and political competition” and “it also records changes in the institutionalized qualities of governing authority” (ibid.). It should also be recalled that this database is widely recognized in the field of political science and has a number of advantages including the fact that it is “the most closely scrutinized data series on political issues as analysts and experts in academia, policy and the intelligence community regularly examine and often challenge Polity coding’s” (ibid.). In addition to these databases, we use other qualitative sources to complement the analysis of our countries. Indeed, specialized literature on our MENA countries and their authoritarian regimes provide us valuable insights into the institutional design of our countries and the degree to which they generate audience costs.

Table 5. *Summary of our operationalization, sources and data used*

| Concepts | Dimensions | Indicators |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Regime type | Nature of authoritarian regimes | Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) classification schemes |
| Audience Costs | Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Xconst</i> variable – Specialized literature |
| | Visibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stability variable: <i>Polity</i> – Durability variable: <i>Durability</i> – Knowledge of outsiders: Specialized literature and media |
| Political violence | – Total number of fatalities in a country-year | – <i>Nkill</i> Variable |
| | – Type of political violence | – <i>Alternative</i> Variable |
| | – Type of attack | – <i>Attacktype1</i> Variable |
| | – Perpetrator group | – <i>Gname</i> Variable |

¹⁴ The Polity Project (2016): <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>

Analysis

Our analysis is divided into three parts. First, we carry out a classification of our six countries into different categories of authoritarian regimes by their relative levels of audience costs using Geddes dataset (2003) and Herb's typology (1999). In a second step, drawing upon our theoretical framework, we conduct a combined quantitative and qualitative in-depth analysis of our dictatorships divided into different groups so as to be able to compare their levels of political violence and validate or refute our hypotheses. The third and last part of our analysis briefly compare our six authoritarian regimes and highlight similarities and differences between them with respect to their levels of political violence. We therefore assess whether the institutional nature of the regime in power and their production of audience costs influence violent dynamics.

Authoritarian Regimes' Classification and Levels of Audience Costs

In order to test the effect of audience costs on the likelihood of political violence in dictatorships, we first classify our six authoritarian regimes drawing upon Geddes' classification dataset (2003) and Herb's (1999) categorization of monarchies. To classify the regimes of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria, we use specialized literature to answer Geddes' questions battery (2003) available in Appendix 1. Moreover, because Geddes does not classify monarchies, we draw on Herb's (1999) typology to create a classification scheme in order to categorize Saudi Arabia and Morocco. The classification of our authoritarian regimes with respect to their institutional design will allow us to assess their level of audience costs by means of Polity IV and specialized literature¹⁵.

Tunisia

*"What weighs on us is also what protects us."*¹⁶

In her book of 2003, Geddes classifies Tunisia as a single-party regime. However, because our period of analysis goes beyond 2003, we decided to reassess her findings. The authoritarian regime of Zine el-Abidine "Ben Ali" started on November 7, 1987, and lasted almost 24 years. Relying on the *Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique* (RCD), Ben Ali established a

¹⁵ The complete classification scheme of our regimes is available in the Appendixes (2–7)

¹⁶ A businessman on Ben Ali's regime (Hibou 2006: 189)

system in which the party became, “largely devoid of ideology, but it retained the system of patronage” (Jebnoun 2014: 110). Similar to Egypt, Tunisian ruling party underwent many changes and transformations. In this respect, although being previously named differently, the RCD was the direct continuity of the previous nationalist party, i.e. the *Socialist Destourian Party*, founded by Habib Bourguiba in order to obtain independence from France. The figure of Ben Ali as Bourguiba’s successor emerged progressively in the previous years of the destitution of the latter in 1987. Indeed, before ousting former president Bourguiba in 1987 through a “medical coup d’état” (ibid. 103), Ben Ali holds the functions of Interior Minister and then Prime Minister, positions that allowed him to impeach Bourguiba for medical reasons and become the new leader.

According to Sassoon (2016: 42), under the dictatorship of Ben Ali, Tunisia was described as a multi-party system, however, in reality these definitions of single or multi are superfluous because, “the ruling party reached into every aspect of life” and therefore, although other political parties were allowed, they were prevented from functioning. From 2000 to 2010, Ben Ali won successively two national elections, 24 October 2004 with 94.49 percent and 25 October 2009 with 89.62 percent. The RCD had a strong functioning in both local and national level organizations and the party “functioned as a mechanism of social control at all levels of society” (Jebnoun 2014: 110). Based on statistics of the RCD, Hibou (2011: 86) claims that there were almost two million Tunisian members of the party out of a population of eight million in 2001. Moreover, joining the party was not onerous, the candidate should simply declare that he was not a member of another party and that he believed in the principle of the RCD (Sassoon 2016: 44). In the same way as the Bath’ party in Syria, the RCD relied on a strategy of cooptation regarding accession to civil servant position or high government offices, namely that it was almost impossible for a non-party members to be hired (ibid. 46).

As pointed out by Sassoon (2016), the ruling party in Tunisia was the instrument used by the leadership to sustain its longevity. Following this logic, Erdle (2010: 149) outlines that state bureaucracy in Tunisia preserved three essential features already in place under the Bourguibian regime: centralization; strong and overlapping ties with the RCD; and a leading role in public life. The centrality of the party under Ben Ali also prevailed in the civilian-military relations. Indeed, although Ben Ali had a military background, overall, the military as an institution was not at the center of decision-making for both domestic and international decisions (Sassoon 2016: 111). Indeed, Ben Ali based his authoritarian control on and through the police and the RCD. In this regard, Jebnoun (2014:102) points out, “the alliance between the security

apparatuses and the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, was the backbone of Ben Ali's reign". Following this logic, the regime of Ben Ali resulted in strengthening the control of the only party that dominated public affairs and the accumulation of power and riches along Ben Ali's family lines (ibid. 109; Beau and Graciet 2009). Consequently, with respect to what has been said and according to Geddes classification scheme (2003), we therefore classify Ben Ali's regime as single-party (see Appendix 2).

The classification of Tunisia as a single-party regime leads us to now assess the levels of audience costs that generates the regime of Ben Ali through the existence of an effective accountability group and the fulfillment of the visibility criterion. According to Polity IV, from 2000 to 2010, the constraints on the Tunisian Executive moved from a score of 3 in the years 2000–2002 to a score of 2 from 2002–2010. In this regard, in the first two years of our period of analysis, a "xconst" score of three means that Tunisia had a "slight to moderate limitations on executive authority." Looking at these results and as we argued above, the centrality of the Tunisia single-party that dominated public affairs entails a certain degree of accountability to Ben Ali. Indeed, until 2002 and the constitutional revision, Ben Ali was partly accountable to the high-rank officials of the RCD. Indeed before 2002, the centrality of high-rank members of the RCD within the inner-circle of Ben Ali and the independence of Tunisian's judicial branch represented two indicators of the existence of an accountability group over the leader.

However, since 2002, the constraints over the executive authority of Ben Ali decreased and moved to an "intermediate category." (Polity IV 2014). It is worth mentioning that according to Polity IV's Codebook (2016), a "xconst" score of 2 means that "the leader of a one-party state begins to consolidate his/her political power over the party apparatus". Indeed, in Tunisia, Ben Ali's consolidation of power increased in May 2002 by a constitutional reform approved by referendum that abolished presidential term limits, previously limited to two terms by Article 39 of the Tunisian constitution (Jebnoun 2014:106). In this regard, Jebnoun (ibid.) points out that this constitutional revision gave to Ben Ali, "judicial immunity for life, which stated that the president was neither accountable to, nor responsible for, any abuses of power committed during or after the exercise of his term". Furthermore, according to the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) Report of 2003 on Tunisia, "an effective balance of powers is precluded by the dominance of the executive branch in form and in fact. This is demonstrated by the parliamentary majority of the official party, the RCD, which has held 81% of the mandates since 1999; the second house of Parliament, with its combination of indirectly elected and appointed members; and the president's hegemony in political life."

Thus, from 2003 to 2010, Jebnoun (2014: 106) highlights that “Tunisia continued to sink more deeply into constitutional despotism.” In this regard, no accountability group was relevant within the authoritarian elites since 2003. As Ben Ali’s regime was based on systems of patronage and corporatism, the elites had few incentives to go against his decisions. Moreover, the security apparatus directly under the control of Ben Ali’s “police state” also contributed to making difficult any direct opposition to his power (Jebnoun 2014). Thus, the authoritarian elites had neither the will nor the means to overthrow the leader. Moreover, neither the weak political opposition (Sassoon 2016: 54) nor Tunisian parliamentarians could represent a relevant accountability group (ibid. 60). The 2006 BTI Report on Tunisia outlines that “[d]issent within the regime about the measures taken in the course of transformation toward a market economy has thus far been handled through cabinet reshuffling and the assignment or withdrawal of career chances within the RCD and administration. The military does not represent an important veto power within the regime. Reform-oriented actors in society, among opposition parties and in intellectual circles, seem politically irrelevant today.” All of this entitled Ben Ali to the position of untouchable, uncriticizable and irreplaceable dictator (Jebnoun 2014: 109–110).

Concerning the criterion of visibility, the strong stability of Ben Ali’s regime is visible through the Tunisian’s *polity* scores for the period of our study, namely (–3) from 2000 to 2002 and (–4) from 2002 to 2010. Moreover, the *durable* scores assess that no sharp changes of regime have occurred. Finally, regarding the existence of media coverage under Ben Ali, Gaaaybess (2013: 120) highlights that Tunisia has had a large number newspapers, magazines, radio and television channels under Ben Ali. Although most of them were under the direct control or ownership of Ben Ali, some of them were “independent.” Thus, these three indicators outline a strong stability of the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali and therefore the possibility for outsiders to know the composition of the ruling power and whether an effective accountability group exists.

Thus, with regard to what has been said previously, the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali has generated two different levels of audience costs linked to two different periods. Indeed, from 2000 to 2002, namely before the constitutional reform, levels of audience costs in Tunisia were high because of the existence of an accountability group and institutional setups that represented a counterbalance to the strong powers of Ben Ali. However, since 2002, the successive constitutional reforms undertaken by Ben Ali himself in order to assert his own power over the

Tunisian state generated low levels of audience costs in the absence of any possible accountability group.

Libya

*“Those who do not love me do not deserve to live.”*¹⁷

Geddes (2003) classifies Libya as a personalist regime, however, as for Tunisia, we think it is relevant to reassess her findings. The dictatorship of Muammar al-Gaddafi (Gaddafi) started from the 1 September 1969 until his death on 20 October 2011. Gaddafi’s rise of power arrived through a revolution on 1 September 1969 undertaken by a small group of junior army officers known as the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) that overthrew the monarchy. Although Gaddafi is very soon appointed commander-in-chief of the armed forces, from the onset, the new regime was completely dominated by the military as explained by Gaddafi himself (1970). After the successful revolutionary coup and two years of an ill-equipped single-party system (Sassoon 2016: 39), he established the *Jamahiriyah*, namely a highly centralized political system with several levels designed by himself to ensure that no centralized body could challenge his own authority (Pargeter 2006).

Moreover, Gaddafi also created and tightly controlled many revolutionary committees and a national-level popular body called the General People’s Congress (GCP) (St John 2014: 131). These revolutionary committees reported directly to Gaddafi and they were the main instrument to impose his ideological will (ibid. 130). The rapid transformation to a personalist dictatorship of the Libyan regime operated by Gaddafi is outlined by St John (2014: 127), “the RCC projected an image of collegial decision-making, but Qaddafi from the start was much more than first among equals.” Moreover, Gaddafi relied largely on the residual power of tribalism to enforce his authority and to emphasize the personalist nature of the Libyan regime (ibid. 131). Hence, in addition to the Qadhadhifa tribe, five main tribes had a political power within the regime and Gaddafi also appointed many blood relatives to important functions.

As regards the role of the military, they played a key role in Gaddafi’s regime but fall outside the informal and formal structure power (ibid. 132). Indeed, as pointed out by Sassoon, “Qaddafi managed to control the army by using the popular committees, and members of local

¹⁷ Gaddafi during a meeting on 31 October 2011: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/a-fiery-message-from-gaddafi-my-enemies-deserve-to-die-2347914.html>

tribes [...].” Furthermore, from 1980s onward, the army gradually lost influence and was integrated to the revolutionary committees, becoming the principal coercive arm of the regime. In this regard, St John (ibid. 133) relevantly outlines that Gaddafi was distrustful of the armed forces and therefore he regularly downplayed their role for the benefit of the security services. Thus, according to Di Maio (2006:23), this “led to a complete transformation of the Military Forces into a Law Enforcement apparatus, which was primarily aimed to preserve Qaddafi and his opposed regime from every potential subversion of power.” Furthermore, by the early 1980s, Gaddafi became the “unquestioned supreme commander of the Regime, leading the armed forces” (ibid. 17). With regard to appointments, Gaddafi remains the top political elite ruling on the basis of his charismatic legitimacy and, “[t]op executives, formally elected by the General People’s Congress, appear to be nominated by Qaddafi. Even elections at lower levels increasingly came to be guided from above.” (Hinnebusch 1984: 66). Thus, with respect to what has been said and according to Geddes classification scheme (2003), we therefore classify Gaddafi’s Libyan regime as personalist (see Appendix 3).

The classification of Libya as a personalist regime leads us now to assess levels of audience costs that generates the regime of Gaddafi through the existence of an effective accountability group and the fulfillment of the visibility criterion. According to Polity IV, from 2000 to 2010, the constraints on the Libyan Executive remained stable with a score of 1, meaning that Gaddafi had an unlimited executive authority. In this respect, there were no legal or institutional regular limitations existing on Gaddafi’s actions.

However, in addition to the Polity IV database (2014), it is worth mentioning the composition of the authoritarian elite within the Libyan regime. in order to assess whether Gaddafi could be held accountable by an elite. In this respect, in Gaddafi’s regime, authoritarian elites were mainly composed of family members as well as tribal leaders and therefore three groups must be taken into consideration (Pargeter 2006). First, at the top of the *Jamahiriyah* was the General People’s Committee, a cabinet that perpetuate the rule of an extremely narrow elite and that “has been composed largely of a small group of individuals who have been reshuffled every few years” (ibid. 224). Nevertheless, according to Pargeter (ibid.), the real center of powers in Libya lay in several informal networks that Gaddafi has created since his takeover. Hence, although Gaddafi does not have an official role within the *Jamahiriyah*, he has, as the Leader of the Revolution, a central informal power that “enables him to make key decisions without being held accountable” (ibid. 226). The last and most important informal network of advisors was his own tribe and family, also called *Rijal Al-Khaimah* (the Men of

the Tent) (Obeidi 2004). This network included mainly original members of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), cousins, members of the Gaddafi tribe and high-ranking officers. Moreover, Pargeter (2006: 227) outlines that “one important change within this informal network in recent years has been the growing influence of Qaddafi’s children” and mainly Saif al-Islam.

However, as we argued above, the personalist nature of the Libyan regime entails that none of these groups could neither have the will or the means to oust the incumbent nor hold him accountable. Indeed, as Pargeter (2006: 224) points out, Gaddafi’s regime was based on “highly patronage networks that underpin the existing political framework” and therefore, the elites feared changes that could possibly threaten their own interests. Moreover, relying on clientelism and a system of patronage, Gaddafi’s control over the political arena was mainly done through the creation of the People’s Social Leadership Committee (PSLC), an organization created in 1993 and aimed at “establishing social stability, maintaining regime control, and preventing opposition from tribal and family members” (St John 2014: 132; Vandewalle 2008: 109–110). This reliance on members of his family and tribe allow Gaddafi to ensure the loyalty of the regime’s inner circle (Sassoon 2016: 124). Furthermore, concerning the army, the intelligence and security services, Gaddafi successfully created several related bodies all headed by a member of the Qadhadhifa tribe or a regime loyalist in order to counter any internal threats from the army, Islamic group or rival tribes (St John 2014: 133). Following this logic, Mattes (2008: 73–76) outlines that one of Gaddafi’s cousin and two of his brothers were in charge of the security and intelligence services or tasked with commanding the Presidential Guard. Thus, looking at these results and as we argue above, the institutional setup of the Libyan regime headed by the central figure of Gaddafi entails the absence of an effective accountability group.

Regarding the visibility criterion, the BTI Reports (2003, 2006, 2008) on Libya highlight that, “since the revolution on September 1, 1969, Libya’s authoritarian political system has shown considerable stability [...]” This is confirmed by *polity* score of (-7) meaning a stable autocracy and *durable* scores that assess no sharp changes of the Libyan political regime for our period of study. With respect to the existence of media coverage, the BTI Reports on Libya (2003, 2006, 2008) point out that the government controlled both state-run and semi-autonomous media. However, according to El Issawi (2013: 5), there was a limited degree of freedom for local media and state journalists also had more room to maneuver in the latter years of the Gaddafi regime. Thus, these three indicators show a strong stability of the authoritarian

regime of Gaddafi and therefore the possibility for outsiders to know the composition of the ruling power. With regard to what has been said previously, from 2000 to 2010, the authoritarian regime of Gaddafi did not generate high levels of audience costs. Indeed, the personalist feature of the Libyan regime where all powers were concentrated in the hands of Gaddafi linked to the ways he coup-proofed possible rivals made difficult the existence of an authoritarian elite that could threaten him. Thus, the authoritarian regime of Gaddafi has generated low levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, from 2000 to 2010, levels of audience costs in Libya were low because of the inexistence of an accountability group and institutional setups that provides almost unlimited powers to Gaddafi.

Egypt

*“In kunta ‘aiz ta’jul ‘aish, ruh lil-jaysh”
“if you want to eat bread, join the army.”¹⁸*

Unlike Geddes (2003) who categorizes Egypt as a hybrid regime sharing features of personalist, single-party and military regimes, we believe that under Muhammed Hosni El Sayed Mubarak (Mubarak), Egypt can be considered mainly as a military regime. Mubarak’s presidency started soon after the assassination of former President Anwar Sadat in October 1981. As outlined by Sassoon (2016: 78), already under Nasser and Sadat presidencies, “power in Egypt remained in the hands of the Revolutionary Council, which consisted mostly of officers, and they were without doubt the locus of decision-making.” Furthermore, it is worth outlining that Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak had strong military backgrounds.

Regarding the role of the ruling-party, similar to Tunisia, the Egyptian ruling-party, i.e. the National Democratic Party (NDP), was organized with an essential feature of centralization around the president and Mubarak relied on him to enforce his power (Sassoon 2016: 41). However, contrary to both Syria and Tunisia, the NDP did not reach into every aspect of life and its influence mainly in the decision-making was counterbalanced by the military. Indeed, having himself a rank of marshal in the Egyptian air force, the military was a central component of Mubarak’s regime. As underlined by Jebnoun (2014: 14), contrary to Tunisia under Ben Ali, the Egypt of Mubarak was notably different to the extent that the armed forces were part of the “inner power circle.” Indeed, especially in Egypt, the modernization of the army and its expansion in the second half of the 20th century played a key role in the importance they have

¹⁸ (Sassoon 2016: 100)

in Mubarak's regime (ibid. 100). Furthermore, in the late 2000s, the army abandoned the regime, as the last few years of Mubarak's rule "had incubated dissatisfaction among the high command who feared that their position was deteriorating." (Cronin 2013: 3).

Thus, Mubarak derived his power from the strength and support of the military. Although he became the leader of the regime, the army remains the backbone of its leadership even if his relationship with the military establishment was not always harmonious (Sassoon 2016: 111). Nevertheless, the military was the most cohesive institution within Mubarak's regime and provided ample rewards and benefits to its members, especially the officers (ibid.). In this regard, Egypt is relevantly defined as a "military-dominated state" by Sassoon (2016: 79). Although features of single-party and personalist regime are present, we decide to categorize Egypt as a military because it is the predominant regime's feature (see Appendix 4).

The choice of classifying Egypt as a military regime leads us to now assess the levels of audience costs that generates the regime of Mubarak through the existence of an effective accountability group and the fulfillment of the visibility criterion. According to Polity IV, from 2000 to 2010, the constraints on the Egyptian Executive remained stable with a score of 3, meaning that Mubarak's leadership faced real but limited restraints on his power. Indeed, the Egyptian highly bureaucratized and long-standing military regime in which many military officers have key positions and influence alongside with Mubarak played an important role. According to Nassif (2013: 510), Mubarak's survival in office "depended on wedding the leaders of the coercive apparatus to their rule, an imperative they achieved by transforming Egypt into a "military society."

In this respect, soon after 1952, the Egyptian military quickly transformed from a military elite into a "power elite" (Mills 1956). Moreover, Mubarak needed to ensure the non-interference of the military and therefore, "senior officers benefited from a generous system of privileges throughout Mubarak's years in power, which contributed to their political quiescence." (Nassif 2013: 510). Mubarak also granted to the military elite enormous autonomy in creating and running a lucrative military-industrial-business complex (MIBCC) (Demmelhuber 2011). Unlike the coup-proofing strategies used in the Tunisian and Syrian regimes, Mubarak relied mainly on two mechanisms in order to keep the army loyal. First, of the 156 governors appointed under Mubarak, 63 came from the army, showing the need for Mubarak to keep the army under-control through appointments (Nassif 2013: 516). Second, the army was permitted to be engaged in economic activities to the extent that it represented an

“armed forces’ economic empire” (Marroushi 2011). Nevertheless, this system allowed the military to operate outside the control of the Egyptian parliament and partly outside the monitoring of Mubarak. Thus, in Egypt, the mere existence of this military elite having “[a] veto power over much of Egyptian politics” means that it could effectively threaten Mubarak and thus, attests the existence of an accountability group (Hashim 2011: 119). Indeed, the army through the MIBCC had the financial means to possibly overthrow Mubarak and the will to do so could arise in case their corporatist interest would be threatened (Hashim 2011: 109).

Concerning the criterion of visibility, we assess the stability of Mubarak’s regime through the Egyptian’s *polity* and *durable* scores for the period of our study. It is worth mentioning that both scores are affected by the holding of the 2005 first multiparty elections for more than thirty years. In this respect, *polity* scores range from (–6) from 2000 to 2005 and (–3) from 2005 to 2010. The reason behind this shift of 3 points in the changes in *durable* scores lies in the fact that in 2005, Mubarak reformed the presidential election law allowing other candidates to be elected and thus this influenced the scores. Nevertheless, in examining carefully the specialized literature and looking at the election results, we argue that “rather than undermining the durability of the Mubarak regime, competitive parliamentary elections ease important forms of distributional conflict, particularly conflict over the access to spoils.” (Blaydes 2010).

In addition to the stability of Mubarak’s regime, we must look at the existence of media coverage in Egypt. In this respect, Khamis (2011: 1161) points out that “the era of President Hosni Mubarak witnessed significant developments that affected the Egyptian media landscape. These include the emergence of media privatization, the introduction of private satellite television channels, the spread of privately owned opposition newspapers (both in print and online), and growing Internet accessibility.” These three indicators outline a strong stability of the authoritarian regime of Mubarak and therefore the possibility for outsiders to know the composition of the ruling power and the existence of an effective accountability group.

Thus, with regard to what has been said previously, the authoritarian regime of Mubarak has generated high levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, from 2000 to 2010, levels of audience costs in Egypt were high because of the existence of an accountability group embodied by the military institution and able to counterbalance the power of President Mubarak.

Syria

*“You remain forever and Bashar, the Hope, is your replacement.”*¹⁹

Geddes (2003) defines Syria as a hybrid regime, namely an amalgam of the three ideal-types. Although we agree with Geddes (ibid.), we think it is relevant to reassess her findings. Bashar Al-Asad ascended to the office of President of Syria upon the death of his father in June 2000. According to Bar (2006: 366), “[t]he elements of his regime—the Asad family, the ‘old guard’ of military officers and party bureaucrats, the checks and balances of the various security services, the role of the Alawite community, and the involvement of the portions of the Sunni elite—all remain in place.” Following this logic, the hybrid nature of Bashar Al-Asad’s regime can be perceived through its three main institutions, namely the president, the Ba’th Party and the military.

With respect to the single-party, according to Heydemann and Leenders (2013: 8), the rise of the Ba’th Party that seized power in 1963 gave birth to a secular autocracy. As for Ben Ali’s regime, the peculiarity of the Syrian Ba’th Party is that it reached into every aspect of society and was aimed at being the eyes and ears of the regime (Sassoon 2016: 42). In this respect, the Ba’thification process of Syria remained a crucial feature under Bashar Al-Asad (ibid.). Nevertheless, alongside the single-party nature of the regime, the central position of Bashar within the Ba’th Party’s structure is reflected into the centralization around the president. His role of party secretariat in charge of regional command as well as the executive body in charge of party operations in every town and village shows the personalist feature of the Syrian regime (Belhadj 2013: 35–36).

Although having common features with a personalist regime, Bar (2006: 374) points out that “[t]he model of hypercentralist decision-making that characterized the regime of Hafez Al-Asad faded with Bashar’s rise to power.” Indeed, contrary to his father, Bashar lacked a real sense of leadership and, during the first years of his presidency, the regime became less personalist. Moreover, he did not have a military training before his brother’s death, which makes him even less suitable for the presidency. Furthermore, during the first years of its presidency, Bashar was not the object of a personality cult because he was aimed to play a minor role in the regime as his brother was supposed to be the heir apparent (Bar 2006: 367). Thus, within Bashar’s regime, the intimate relationship between the Ba’th party and Bashar has

¹⁹ See Al-Thawra (2000: 9) in Bar (2006).

grown and “the party has become a natural platform to influence the leader” (ibid. 374). To show the relative importance of the Ba’th party, non-party members have almost no chance to fill important positions within the regime. However, unlike the NDP and the RCD, adhering to the Syrian Ba’th Party was difficult and promotion more rigorous (ibid.).

Regarding the relationship with the military, it is worth mentioning that in Syria, the army is an “ideological army” meaning that it is neither distanced from politics nor from the Ba’th Party (Sassoon 2016: 83–84). According to Bar (2006: 356), the Syrian military is one of the “primary mainstays of the regime” and it is difficult today to assess to what extent the military can be seen as a “distinct political entity with clear objectives.” Nonetheless, although the army and security apparatus are the backbone of the regime, the military is not the center of decision-making (ibid. 111). Contrary to his father, Bashar’s ability to rely on the military considerably diminished and he tends to surround himself more with technocrats (ibid. 374). Thus, Bashar’s regime gathers several crucial features of different regime-types. Consequently, the hybrid nature of the Syrian regime leads us to classify Syria as an amalgam of the three ideal-types (see Appendix 5).

The choice of classifying Syria as a hybrid regime leads us to now assess the levels of audience costs that generates the regime of Bashar Al-Assad through the possible existence of an effective accountability group and the fulfillment of the visibility criterion. According to Polity IV, from 2000 to 2010, Syria had a score of 3, meaning few but real constraints over Bashar’s power. According to Bar (ibid. 375), “Bashar’s capability to implement his decision—such as they are—is considerable less than his father had.” Indeed, unlike the strong personalist regime of Hafez Al-Assad, under Bashar, several circles among which the Ba’th party elite’s nomenklatura and the Assad family are jockeying for the residual political power (Bar 2006: 353).

In this regard, two groups have a direct influence over Bashar and compose the inner circle of the Syrian regime: the Ba’th Party elite and the Al-Assad family. The role played by the Syrian Ba’th party operated has a counterbalance to Bashar unlimited rule and represents a certain degree of accountability to him. Indeed, as relevantly outlined by Bar (ibid.), by the end of 2003, most of the presidential decrees issued by Bashar as president were blocked or ignored by the Ba’th party bureaucracy. As a relevant example, the decree issued by Bashar, namely Decision 408 calling for a separation of the party apparatus from that of the state was blocked by the former (ibid.).

Alongside with the Ba'th party, it is worth mentioning the nuclear Al-Asad family that surrounded Bashar Al-Asad, another key player in influencing the decision-making in the Syrian regime. Hence, the Al-Asad family represents a relevant accountability group to the leader and "is close-knit and the main constraint on Bashar's rule." (ibid.). In addition, it is worth mentioning here that we could expect that the military and the Hafez Al-Asad's "old guard elite" within the government represent an effective accountability group. However, according to Bar (2006: 390), "the Syrian government (the cabinet) is a body that 'manages' the country but does not 'rule' and has never held any real power." Moreover, regarding the military and the "old guard" of his father, Bashar has been able to effectively coup-proofed the former and gradually eliminate the latter, preventing them from being a threat to his ruling power.

Although Bashar lacks the enormous personalist power of his father, it would be wrong to omit the strong personalist nature of the Syrian hybrid regime. Hence, Bar (ibid. 375) relevantly outlines that "[t]he incumbent leadership and bureaucracy are, for the most part, appointed by Bashar and, except for those with family, economic or tribal power bases of their own, beholden to him for their status." Thus, as we argue above, the personalist nature of the Syrian regime entails that, although two accountability groups exist, none of them could either have the will or the means to oust the incumbent nor hold him accountable. Indeed, concerning the Ba'th Party, Bashar monitors it through his reliance on Syria's intelligence and security service (known as the *Mukhabarat*) that are involved in all aspects of public and political activities that serves the president to monitor any possible internal threat (ibid. 389). Furthermore, being the designated heir by his father makes it impossible for a member of the Al-Assad family to effectively threaten Bashar's power. Thus, looking at these results and as we argue above, the institutional setup of the hybrid Syrian regime headed by the central figure of Bashar al-Asad entails the absence of an effective accountability group.

Concerning the criterion of visibility, we assess the strong stability of Bashar's regime through the Syrian's *polity* scores that remained stable at (-7) for our period of our study. The *durable* scores also assess that no sharp changes of regime have occurred. Furthermore, the BTI Reports (2003, 2006, 2008) on Syria also outline that "[r]egime stability has been highlighted by the swift and smooth transfer of powers from father to son in 2000. [...] stability continues to rest to a large extent on repression." Finally, regarding the existence of media coverage under Bashar Al-Assad, Kawakibi (2010: 5) shows that "[f]ollowing Bashar Al-Assad's accession to

the Presidency in 2000, the timid and tightly opening up of the media started to flag” and that a “new publishing law was passed in 2001, which allowed the private sector to re-enter the media industry, having been banned from it since 1963.” Thus, these three indicators outline a strong stability of the authoritarian regime of Bashar and therefore the possibility for violent non-state movements to know the composition of the ruling power, although no real effective accountability group exists.

Consequently, with regard to what has been said previously, Syrian regime headed by Bashar has generated low levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, from 2000 to 2010, no real accountability group could effectively threaten Bashar’s power. Indeed, the institutional design of the Syrian regime hybrid entails that neither his family nor the authoritarian elite of the Ba’th party could have both the means and will to overthrow Bashar. As a consequence, levels of audience costs in Syria were low.

Saudi Arabia

“States, be what they may, can never ever rule the world. Reason rules the world; justice rules the world; ethics rules the world. These can rule the world. The world is not ruled by those who commit violent deeds.”²⁰

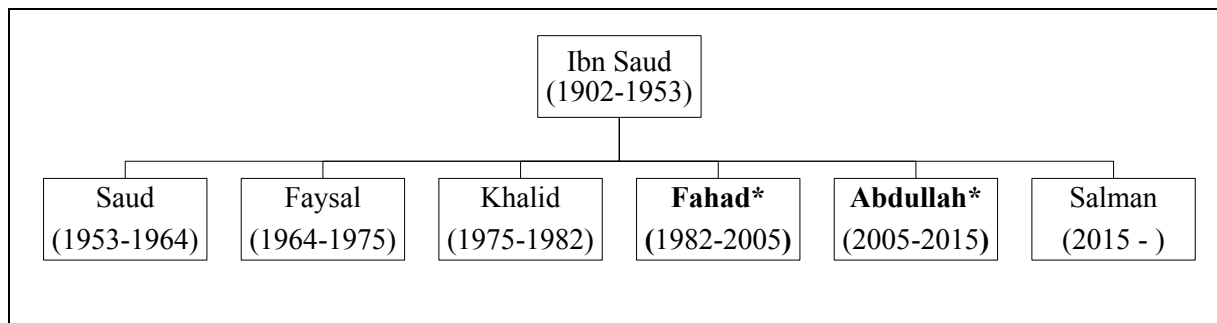
The Al Saud family has deep roots in the emergence of the modern Saudi Arabian state. After two separated periods of rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the unification of Saudi Arabia started in 1902 by Abdalaziz bin Abd al-Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud) until his death in 1953 (Herb 1999: 87). Following Ibn Saud’s death, the family rule took its full form and as Herb (ibid.) points out, dynastic monarchy princes “share power among themselves” leading to a competition for the seizure of power between the different princes and factions (see figure 3 below). For our period of analysis, Fahad and then Abdullah were the two monarchs in power. Fahad ascended to the throne in 1982 after Khalid died of a heart attack. However, Fahad is impacted by a stroke in 1995 and Abdullah is proclaimed king after Fahad’s death in 2005.

According to Jebnoun et al. (2013: 143), “the royal family, or more precisely, the senior princes of the family, still control the levers of powers and are the ultimate arbiters of all disputes between their society’s major groups.” It is worth mentioning that within the Al Saud

²⁰ King Abdullah, September 2012: <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/notable-quotes-from-king-abdullah-bin-abdul-aziz-of-saudi-arabia-1.1445541>

family, one of the main factions is the Al-Fahad or “Sudayri Seven” in which Fahad and Sultan are full brothers from their mother Hussa al-Sudayri (ibid. 105). Although the Al-Fahad faction occupies key high offices in the Saudi regime, other princes of the Al Saud who do not belong to this faction, hold key positions such as Abdallah who became King in 2005 (ibid. 106). In this respect, seniority remains a core value in the monarchy and the basis of power.

Figure 3. *Successors of Ibn Saud as kings of Saudi Arabia*



**Incumbents during our period of analysis*

With regard to the structure of the Saudi regime, it can be depicted as a “diamond” where “senior princes occupy the center of the diagram” (Jebnoun et al. 2013: 143). Each prince has a different constituency and ministry and each of them is responsible for keeping his group coming to him for leadership, thereby centralizing the “diamond” which in turn adjudicates all the groups (ibid.). The center of the “diamond” composed of senior princes led by the king monitors the four main socio-political entities within the regime, namely the civil service in charge of the state-administration, the minor princes in charge of the military and the security forces, the merchants running the economy and the religious establishment known as the *Sahwa* that manages the education and religious system (Seznec 2014: 143).

The strength of the regime is based on that fact that these four groups cannot negotiate with each other and they “always turn to the central power of the senior princes to handle their disagreements” to which it is in his interest to maintain tensions among them (ibid. 155). Furthermore, Seznec (2014: 144) relevantly outlines that the key feature of a dynastic monarchy is visible in Saudi Arabia by the fact that although rivalry is always present among family members, “[t]he princes are essentially united in their need to preserve their family’s power; indeed, their bonds are as tight as the carbon crystals in a diamond and can withstand almost any pressure.” In this respect, the rules for the succession have a great deal of importance in this regime. In 2004, King Abdullah instituted the “Bay’ah Committee” aimed at dealing with royal succession matters and choose Prince Salman though it (ibid. 146). This Committee is

composed of 35 princes and Seznec (ibid.) highlights that King Abdullah was unwilling to impose a choice on the family, demonstrating that when it comes to succession, royal consensus is a core element in Saudi Arabia. Drawing upon Herb (1999) typology, we therefore classify Saudi Arabia as a dynastic monarchy for the purpose of our study (see Appendix 6).

The choice of classifying Saudi Arabia as a dynastic monarchy leads us to now assess the levels of audience costs that generates the regime headed by the Al-Saud family through the existence of an effective accountability group and the fulfillment of the visibility criterion. According to Polity IV, from 2000 to 2010, the constraints on the Saudi Arabian Executive remained stable with a score of 1, meaning that both reigns of Fahad until 2005 and then Abdullah had an unlimited executive authority. Such results are correct to the extent that they consider the authoritarian government of Saudi Arabia, namely both the monarch and the royal family as a single unity. However, drawing on MENA's specialized literature, a close look at the results provided by Polity IV database do not seem to capture well the organizational setup of the ruling elite in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, Saudi Arabian Polity IV score do only capture the almost inexistent accountability and unlimited executive constraints of the entire royal family towards the rest of the society but do not account for the constraints that exert the inner circle of the authoritarian elite on the monarch.

Following this logic, the dynastic monarchical feature of the Saudi Arabian regime entails that, as we mentioned above, the locus of power lies in the hands of the entire royal family rather than the king himself. Thus, when assessing the existence of a possible accountability group, the peculiarity of Saudi Arabia is that the power remains within the entire royal family and not only in the hands of the leader. This entails that the king does face an effective accountability group represented by the royal clique. The aforementioned accountability to the leader is exemplified by the fact that for matters of royal succession since 2004, the king must obtain the approval of the "Bay'ah Committee" composed of royal family princes. In this respect, in 2005, King Abdullah appointed Prince Nayef and then Prince Salman after the acquiescence of the other princes, members of the Committee (Seznec 2014: 146). Furthermore, according to Seznec (ibid.), the Committee can also remove the king for medical reasons when a subcommittee deems him unable of governing. All these elements emphasize the existence of an accountability group.

Concerning the criterion of visibility, Saudi Arabian monarchy is one of the most stable and resilient authoritarian regimes in the MENA. This is confirmed by both its *polity* scores for the

period of our study, namely (–10) and the *durable* scores that assess no sharp changes of regime. Regarding the existence of media coverage, according to Freedom House (2017), Saudi Arabia has had a large number newspapers, magazines, radio and television channels although most of them were under the direct control or ownership of the royal family. Internet is widely available but highly censored by authorities (ibid.). Moreover, the royal family has its own website²¹ where anyone can be aware of the composition and position of the royal inner circle. Thus, these three indicators outline a strong stability of the authoritarian regime of the Al-Saud and therefore the possibility for violent groups to know the composition of the ruling power and whether an effective accountability group exists. Thus, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the institutional setup designed as a diamond makes the leader accountable to the royal family whose priority is to keep safe their privileges through the continuation of the dynasty. Hence, the Al Saud monarchy has generated medium to high levels of audience costs with a peak from 2003 to 2005 due to the institutionalization of the “Bay’ah Committee” and the royal succession.

Morocco

*“You will always find me, my dear and loyal people, at the frontline, at the head of those who are determined to thwart every discourse that aims at casting doubt on the importance of holding elections and on the utility itself of political parties.”*²²

After 38 years on the throne, King Hassan II died in 1999 and his heir and son Mohammed VI assumed his position. According to Boukhars (2010: xi), “since the ascent of King Mohamed VI to the throne, most striking has been his ability to extend the monarchy’s monopoly over the exercise of power [...]” Moreover, no real institutions of accountability that function independently from the whims of the king exists and the parliament is set up in order to legitimize king’s decision (ibid. 44). Unlike a dynastic regime such as Saudi Arabia in which the royal family share the power and control over the state, in non-dynastic monarchies as Morocco, the king embodies all powers and do not share it with family members (Herb 1999). Indeed, Boukhars highlights (2010: 59), “since he came to power in 1999, King Mohammed IV has surrounded himself with a close circle of friends who display a stubborn determination to reproduce the monarchy’s full spectrum dominance of the Moroccan state [...]”. Following this logic, Mohammed VI relies on the royal cabinet which is the “linchpin of

²¹ House of Saud (2015): <http://houseofsaud.com/saudi-royal-family-profiles/>

²² King Mohammed VI, July 30, 2007 (Sater 2012: 9)

the Moroccan political system” and the criteria of selection to be part of the cabinet involve absolute loyalty and discretion (ibid. 51).

Regarding the institutional structure of the Moroccan non-dynastic monarchy, it can be depicted with three concentric circles. Among members of the royal cabinet, the core circle of the politically relevant elite (PRE) is composed of intimate friends of the monarch and high-ranking members of the royal cabinet (Boukhars 2010: 52). However, the first and inner circle of the PRE is made up of the monarch’s personal friends and former classmates whose task is to “shape major policies and supervise their executions by their subordinates in the intermediate circle.” (ibid.). The second circle includes cabinet ministers, army officers and religious leaders. The last and third circle is composed of regional administration representatives, leaders of political parties and members of the civil society (ibid.). Moreover, it should be said that Mohammed VI keeps counting on the “old guard” of his father Hassan II and no elite renewal has occurred (ibid.).

Concerning the powers of Mohammed IV, like his father, he exercises direct control over the key ministries, the so-called ministries of sovereignty, as well as the coercive apparatus and other ministries that can fall into his reserved domain at his will (Boukhars 2010: 55). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that unlike other regimes where religious affairs are conducted by specific institutions, the King of Morocco is the sole depositary of both political and religious sovereignty with the title of “Amir Al-Mouminine” (Commander of the Faithful) (ibid. 42). Furthermore, Mohammed VI chooses and nominates himself all cabinet ministers and keeps “the government on the leash through the government secretary general, the most powerful member of the government” (ibid. 56). Consequently, political parties do not play any relevant role in the Moroccan political stage and most of parliamentarians are “careerist-driven political machines” (ibid. 58). Thus, the institutional design of the Moroccan regime makes us classify it as a non-dynastic monarchy (see Appendix 7).

The choice of classifying Morocco as a non-dynastic monarchy leads us to assess whether the regime of Mohammed VI generates levels of audience costs. To do so, we must look at the existence of an effective accountability group having the means and will to sanction the leader and the fulfillment of the visibility criterion. According to Polity IV, from 2000 to 2010, Morocco had a score of three meaning slight to moderate limitations on the Executive Authority. Such results are correct to the extent that they take into account the content of the

Moroccan constitution in which Parliament and political parties are deemed to exert some real but limited restraints on the king.

However, by relying its analysis on quantitative macro-data, Polity IV database does not capture the informal structure of Moroccan's locus of power. Indeed, according to Boukhars (2010: 47), Moroccan's institutional framework has a democratic facade that lacks any legislative or executive power and real power structures are directly controlled by the monarch and his core councilors. This is also confirmed by the 2003 and 2006 BTI Reports on Morocco that outlines, "Morocco does have a constitution; however, the Moroccan system of rules cannot be considered a constitutional monarchy in the European sense" and "[t]he monarchy is the locus of the executive, judicial and legislative powers." In this respect, as relevantly outlined by Cubertafond (2004) and Boukhars (2010: 39), despite a political and societal liberalization, the mechanisms of authoritarian rule and the political foundations of the system have not changed but rather they have been stabilized to keep the regime's grip on power. Indeed, similar to Saudi Arabia, a closer look at the institutional design of Morocco through specialized literature provides a different analysis when it comes to the existence of an effective accountability group to Mohammed VI.

Although institutional mechanisms to hold the monarch accountable exist within the constitution, notably through an elected parliament, this is not the case in reality. Indeed, as a matter of fact, Moroccan parliament was not set up as an independent institution aimed at ensuring government accountability but rather as playing an auxiliary role in supporting the monarch (*ibid.*). Thus, Moroccan rubber-stamp legislature does not exert any limitations on the executive. Concerning political parties, according to Boukhars (2010: 20), the "powerlessness of elected institutions has created widespread political apathy" and "all parties are in the end irrelevant as real power resides with the King and his acolytes [...]". Lastly, as we argued above, Mohammed VI also embodies the religious leadership and so no religious institutions can counterbalance his authority. Hence, the locus of power in Moroccan monarchy and the accountability group lies within the core of the first circle in the royal cabinet whose members controls and shape the entire policy-making and take most major political, economic, social and religious decisions (*ibid.* 51).

In order to assess whether the inner circle of the royal cabinet might represent an effective accountability group, we must look at the composition and interest of its members. In this regard, Mohammed VI's personal friends and former classmates are key members and have

proved their unfailing loyalty to the monarch besides the fact that some members were close to his father Hassan II (ibid.). As a consequence of Mohammed VI's reliance on members whose loyalty is unquestionable and whose top priority is the continuation of the monarchy, none members of the core first circle has incentive to challenge the king. Moreover, with respect to the rest of the PRE, Mohammed VI uses a tactic of rotation in recycling the personnel among members of the first and second circle of the PRE as an effective strategy to prevent the emergence of a competing power (Boukhars 2010: 539). Thus, an accountability group does exist in Morocco embodied by the royal cabinet. Moreover, its members by being totally loyal and receiving the perks of doing so, have neither the will nor the means to effectively threaten the monarch.

Concerning the criterion of visibility, the monarchy of Morocco is, with Saudi Arabia, one of the most stable resilient authoritarian regimes in the MENA. This is confirmed by both its *polity* scores for the period of our study, namely (−6) and the *durable* scores that assess no sharp changes of regime. Regarding the existence of media coverage, according to Freedom House (2017), Morocco has broadcast media, which are mostly government-controlled, reflect official views, though foreign broadcasting is available via satellite and a large independent print press flourishes (Freedom House Report on Morocco 2003). Internet is widely available but highly censored by authorities (ibid.). Thus, these three indicators outline a strong stability of the authoritarian regime of Mohammed VI and therefore the possibility for outsiders to know the composition of the ruling power and whether an effective accountability group exists. Following this logic, unlike Saudi Arabia, the non-dynastic monarchical feature of the Moroccan regime entails that, similar to a personalist regime, the locus of power lies solely in the hands of Mohammed VI. Thus, when assessing the role of accountability groups, the peculiarity of Morocco is that none members of the royal cabinet has the will or the means to threaten the king. Thus, with regard to what has been said previously, the authoritarian regime of Mohammed VI has generated low levels of audience costs for our period of analysis.

To conclude the first part of our analysis, we validate our first hypothesis which stresses that if authoritarian regimes fulfill the accountability and visibility criteria, audience costs will be generated. In our six countries, the criteria of visibility were fulfilled. Nonetheless different levels audience costs were generated in our six authoritarian regimes from our period of analysis going from 2000 to 2010. In this regard, we argue that the different institutional designs existing among our cases of analysis are at the root of the discrepancies of their levels of audience costs.

To summarize, the authoritarian regime of Tunisia experienced two different levels of audience costs due to the change of Tunisian constitution in 2003. Prior to 2003, high-rank RCD elites represented an effective accountability group to Ben Ali. Nevertheless, from 2004 onwards, the constitutional reform provided the tools for Ben Ali to become unchallengeable and consolidate his hold in power. Contrarily to Tunisia, the authoritarian regimes of Egypt and Saudi Arabia experienced on average high levels of audience costs due to the existence of authoritarian elites having the means and will to sanction the leader. Indeed, in both regimes, the institutional design led to the existence of groups that could effectively hold the leader accountable. In Egypt, Mubarak faced a strong counterbalance to his personal power embodied by the military apparatus. In Saudi Arabia, the diamond structure of the political power entails a great power to the entire royal family and therefore the existence of an effective accountability group towards the monarch. Those respective accountability groups could hold accountable the incumbent and therefore generate high levels of audience costs. Unlike those three regimes, the dictatorships of Libya, Syria and Morocco experienced on average lower degrees of audience costs. Indeed, the institutional nature of these regimes in which the dictator could difficultly be held accountable either because none accountability group truly exists or because they do not have any incentive to threaten him generated low levels of audience costs.

Political Violence and Audience Costs in our Authoritarian Regimes

As we have previously argued, potential non-state actors tend to engage in political violence based on the probability of success in influencing relevant audiences to pressure the leader for policy changes (Conrad and Conrad 2014). To summarize our theoretical expectations, since single-party regimes, military regimes and dynastic monarchies have institutional setups in which an autocratic leader can be held accountable and more easily removed from office, levels of political violence should be higher in our authoritarian regimes of Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Unlike these regime-types, personalist regimes and non-dynastic monarchies, namely Libya and Morocco, do not have the same levels of accountability and should experience, on average, less acts of political violence than other regimes. Concerning the hybrid regime of Syria, we expect that, as it generated low levels of audience costs during our period of analysis, violent political acts should be sparse.

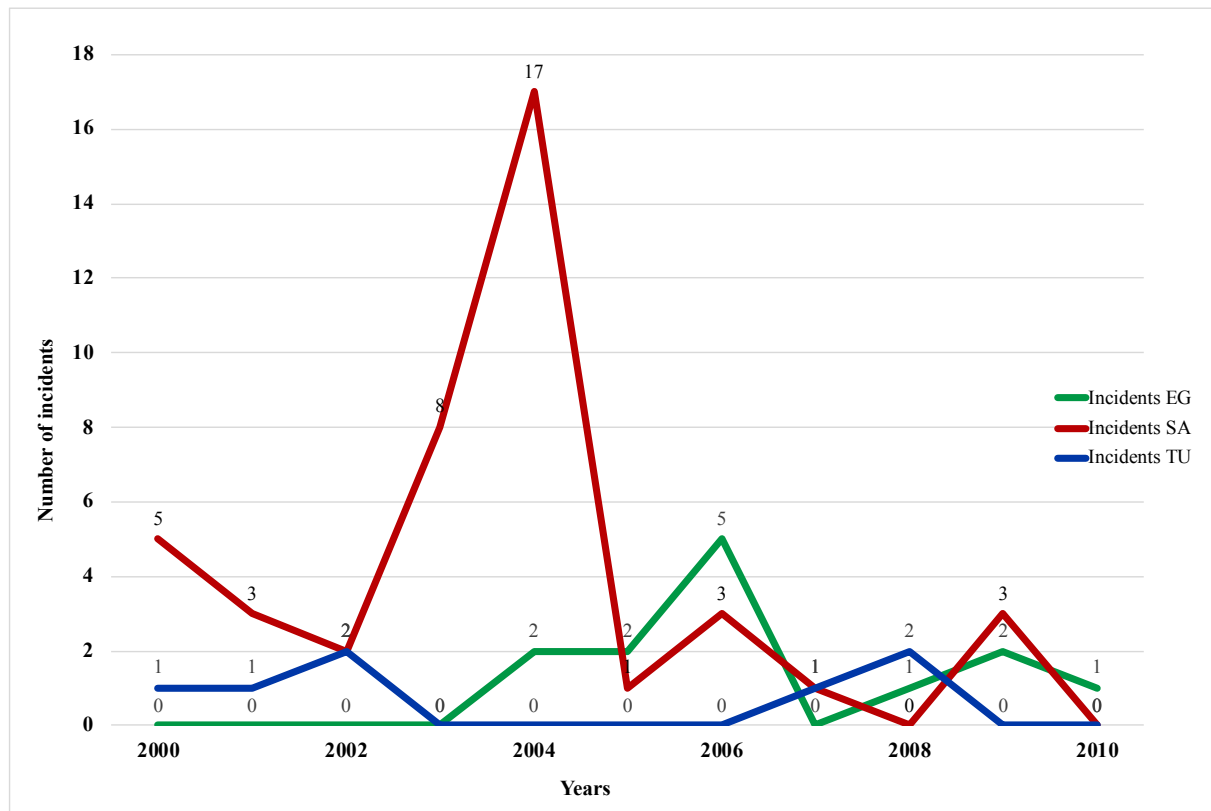
To assess whether audience costs effectively influence levels of political violence, we divided our dictatorships into two groups with respect to their expected levels of political violence. In addition, as previously mentioned, we argue that authoritarian regimes are

considered to control all main institutions of the society and so we consider that any violent attack in those regimes fall necessary into the category of political violence because it is aimed at targeting the dictatorial power. Consequently, in our choice of including several target-types, we chose to include not only attacks directed towards governmental institutions, but also diplomatic missions, business, educational and religious entities and tourists. Indeed, we argue that all these targets provide efficient means for non-state actors to put pressure on the ruling power and thus increase levels of audience costs.

Political Violence in Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia

From 2000 to 2010, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia experienced in total 64 numbers of incidents. Graph 1 below presents the results drawn from the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017) for our three countries during our period of study. As we have presented in our theoretical part, we expect high levels of political violence in these three regimes as their institutional designs generate high levels of audience costs.

Graph 1. *Levels of political violence in Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia (2000–2010)*



From 2000 to 2010, Tunisia under Ben Ali experienced seven acts of political violence. During these 10 years, two waves of violence can be assessed, one from 2000 to 2002 during which four incidents were registered and then the second one from 2007 to 2008 with three attacks. In addition to that, it is worth mentioning the different non-state actors targeting Ben Ali's dictatorship as well as the different target types. In this respect, according to GTD, four perpetrator groups were involved in the attacks: The *Armed Islamic Group* (GIA), Anti-Semitic extremists, *Al-Qaeda* and *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM). Those groups mainly targeted state institutions as the military, the police and religious entities as well as tourists. During those attacks, 38 people died and 50 were injured (see Appendix 2).

Regarding Egypt, it experienced in total 14 incidents from 2000 to 2010. It is worth noting that from 2000 to 2003 included and in 2007, Egypt was not targeted by any political violence. Apart from these years, the main wave of violence hitting Mubarak's regime happened in 2006 with an overall of five incidents with a total of 19 fatalities and 100 people injured. With respect to the localization of the attacks, the capital Cairo and Alexandria have been mainly targeted. In addition to a suspected attack launched by Bedouin tribesmen, three groups have been the main perpetrators of these attacks: the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*, the *Egyptian Tawhid and Jihad* and *Jamaa Al-Islamiya Al-Alamiya* part of the World Islamist Group. Nevertheless, we must notice that regarding the perpetrators, 9 out of 14 attacks have not been connected to any violent group and are therefore coded with an "unknown". Lastly, with respect to the target types, religious institutions, tourists and businesses have been mainly affected. Overall, these 14 attacks injured 413 people and killed 150 (see Appendix 4).

Among our six countries, Saudi Arabia has been the one most targeted by acts of political violence. Indeed, according to GDT (START 2017), no less than 43 incidents regardless of doubt have been registered from 2000 to 2010. The peak of violence happened during the year 2003 with 17 incidents mainly located in the capital Riyadh. Moreover, apart from 2008, each year has witnessed an incident meaning that on average per year, Saudi Arabia has experienced four acts of political violence. Overall, during the decade going from 2000 to 2010, 136 people died and 491 were injured. The main perpetrator groups targeting Saudi Arabia were *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (AQAP), *Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia* and the *Al-Haramayn Brigades*. Those groups are suspected of being responsible for 17 violent attacks. Hence, it must be mentioned that 24 out of these 43 incidents could not be assigned to a group by GDT and therefore have been coded with an "unknown" with respect to their perpetrator group (ibid.). Among all these attacks, the most striking one is that of August 2009 during which according

to GTD (ibid.) a suicide attack attempt to kill Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, Saudi Arabian Deputy Minister of the Interior and being at the time, the second in the line of succession after his brother Prince Sultan. The AQAP claimed responsibility for this attack. Lastly, concerning the target types, political violent non-state actors chose to strike directly and predominantly state public institutions such as the government, the military and the police (see Appendix 6).

As previously highlighted, most of violent political actions directed towards our three authoritarian regimes occurred during the period when levels of audience costs were at their heights. The case of Tunisia is probably the most striking one in this respect. Indeed, over our period of analysis lasting 10 years, most of violent political acts happened during the period when Ben Ali faced an effective accountability group. Indeed, looking at the number of attacks, four out of seven hit the regime before 2003 and the constitutional reforms, when Ben Ali could still be held accountable by the authoritarian elite of the single-party RCD. Following this logic, we argue that non-state actors had from 2000 to 2002 greater incentives to target the ruling power in Tunisia as Ben Ali faced an effective accountability group that could potentially threaten him. This is confirmed when looking at the number of incidents. Indeed, from 2003 onwards, we believe that Tunisia's low levels of political violence—with only three incidents over eight years—can be explained by the fact that after 2003, Tunisian's single-party regime moves towards a personalist regime in which Ben Ali could no more be held accountable by any authoritarian elite.

Following this logic, after 2003, there has been none attacks registered during four years in Tunisia suggesting that non-state actors willing to resort to political violence had few incentives to target a dictatorship in which any attacks could not have an effective impact on its policy. As we have previously outlined, the increase of his despotic powers through constitutional reforms coupled with the system of patronage as a tactic to coup-proof effectively the regime led to the absence of a group having either the means or the will to possibly threaten his tenure in office. Consequently, the case of Tunisia provides a relevant example on the existing positive link between levels of audience costs and political violence because fluctuations in the levels of audience costs matched with those of political violence. Indeed, as soon as Ben Ali did not face an accountability group, the regime generated low levels of audience costs leading to a decrease in the numbers of political attacks.

The results for Egypt also tend to confirm the idea that a correlation exists between authoritarian institutional designs generating high audience costs and levels of political

violence. Indeed, the military regime of Mubarak is, after Saudi Arabia, the regime that experienced more attacks with 14 incidents over 10 years. On average, Egypt experienced 1.4 attacks per year during our period of analysis. Moreover, as previously stated, the strength of the military apparatus represented an effective accountability group to Mubarak's ruling power. However, the system of patronage and clientelism put in place by Mubarak allow him to keep loyal the army as long as their economic and corporatist interest would not be at risk. Nevertheless, a constitutional amendment approved in a referendum in May 2005 opened the way for multi-candidate presidential elections menacing the entire fruitful collaboration between the army and Mubarak.

Thus, we believe that the period surrounding the elections represented a key moment during which audience costs were at their maximum. Indeed, during this period, although it was almost certain that Mubarak would win, non-state actors were aware that the military apparatus would look carefully at the process and could intervene if their interests were threatened. In this regard, the numbers of incidents seem to suggest that the mere existence of a window of opportunity to strike the ruling elite and trigger a political change was sufficient as incentive for non-state actors to target the regime. Looking at the results, among the 14 incidents, seven occurred during the years 2005 and 2006, namely two in 2005, the same year when the first direct presidential election in Egyptian's history took place and five in the following months.

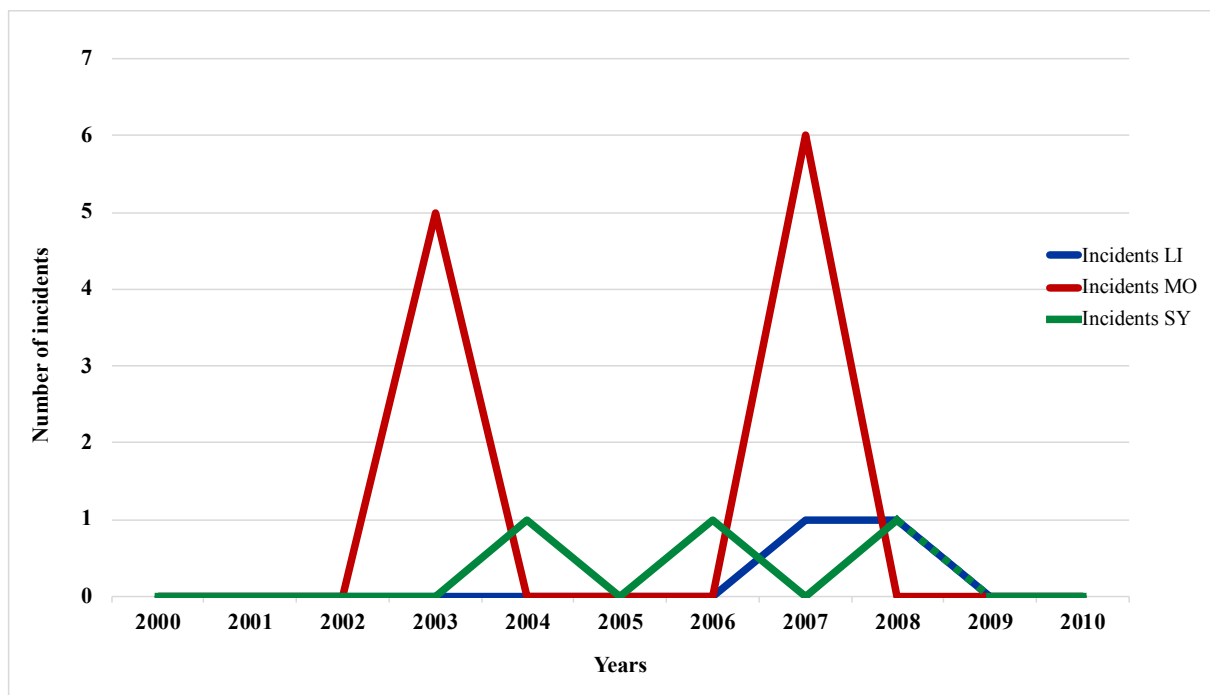
Concerning Saudi Arabia, the fact that the dynastic monarchy has been the most targeted regime among our six countries does not seem to be hazardous. Indeed, among our three countries in which audience costs were high, it is probably the one in which the accountability group is the most powerful, i.e. the royal family. We should also notice that it is also the only country out of our six authoritarian regimes that experienced a change of leader with the death of King Fahad in 2005 and the ascent of Abdallah as new King. In this respect, we believe that the incentives of non-state actors have been greater during the years surrounding the succession as audience costs reached their peak. Indeed, the ultimate goal of non-state actors resorting to political violence being to likely influence policy change, such period of power shift within the ruling power represented the perfect window of opportunity. In this respect, as we previously highlighted, the period going from 2003 to 2005 is the deadliest date range. Consequently, when looking at the number of incidents, this tend to validate empirically our theoretical assumptions.

To conclude, by comparing levels of audience costs previously analyzed and levels of political violence in the authoritarian regimes of Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the results tend to confirm our second hypothesis standing that single-party, military and dynastic authoritarian regimes generate more audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and thus are more affected by acts of political violence (H2). Indeed, we argue that non-state actors resorting to political violence do not target dictatorships randomly. On the contrary, because actors ready to use violence against the state are rational and think in terms a cost-benefit analysis when undertaking any action, they know that the costs are high and their benefits probabilistic, this even more in an authoritarian context. Consequently, as dictators have the powers to change the policies of the regime, such actors are more likely to use political violence in regimes where the dictator can be held accountable by a group that could threaten his tenure in office (Hoffman 2006, Conrad and Conrad 2014). Non-state actors using political violence usually lack the capabilities to engage directly in military action against the government and, therefore, direct violence against noncombatant, state officials or symbolic targets (Conrad & Conrad 2014). Thus, the use of violence to spread fear among a large audience is a strategy that is often used to trigger a policy change or influence the behavior of a government (Hoffman 2006). Thus, this is confirmed when looking at the number of incidents, their location and the target types in our regimes.

Political Violence in Libya, Morocco and Syria

From 2000 to 2010, the dictatorships of Gaddafi, Bashar Al-Assad and Mohammed VI, experienced a total of 16 numbers of incidents. Graph 2 below presents the results drawn from the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017) for our three countries during our period of study. As we have presented in our theoretical part and drawing from our hypotheses, we expect on average low levels of political violence in these three regimes as their institutional setups generate low levels of audience costs. Because leaders in those regimes do not face an effective accountability group that could threaten their tenure in office in case of a domestic threat, we argue that non-state actors have fewer incentives to launch violent acts in these regime types.

Graph 2. *Levels of political violence in Libya, Morocco and Syria (2000–2010)*



While Saudi Arabia was the most targeted country among our six authoritarian regimes, Libya is on the contrary the regime that has been less affected by acts of political violence. According to GDT (ibid.), from 2000 to 2010, the regime of Gaddafi experienced in total only two political violent acts, one in 2007 and one in 2008. However, when looking carefully at the information of these two attacks, both were aircraft high jacking among which only one was originated from Libya. Moreover, both attacks were coordinated by Sudanese assailants and targeted a Sudanese Airways indicating that the ultimate goal of the attacks was not to strike Gaddafi's power. Thus, by taking that into account, it turns out that the personalist regime of Gaddafi did not experience any act of political violence for our period of study (see Appendix 3).

Regarding Syria, the regime of Bashar was hit by three violent political acts from 2000 to 2010. It is worth noting that these three attacks happened each two year, namely in 2004, 2006 and 2008. The consequences of these three incidents were 27 fatalities and 16 people injured. Although the perpetrator groups are coded "unknown" by the GDT (ibid.), all of them used bombing to perpetrate their attacks and targeted governmental institutions in Damascus (see Appendix 5).

Among this group of three countries, Morocco has been the one most targeted by acts of political violence. Indeed, according to GDT (START 2017), 11 incidents have been registered from 2000 to 2010. During these 10 years, two waves of violence can be assessed, one in 2003 during which five incidents were registered and then the second one in 2007 with six attacks. Apart from one attack, it is striking that all the remaining ones took place in the biggest and most tourist city of the country, namely Casablanca. Concerning the perpetrators of the attacks of 2003, they have been attributed to *Salafia Jihadia*, a Moroccan Islamic group. With regard to the 2007 wave of attacks, five out of six attacks have not been connected to any violent group and the last one has been alleged by AQIM (START 2017). Lastly, with respect to the target types, businesses, tourists and state institutions have been mainly affected. Overall, these 11 attacks injured 126 people and killed 64 (see Appendix 7).

As previously highlighted, we expect that the number of incidents is on average lower in Libya, Syria and Morocco than in our three previous dictatorships due to the fact that they generated lower levels of audience costs. This is effectively confirmed for the cases of Libya and Syria. Indeed, in Libya, we argue that the personalist feature of Gaddafi's regime did not provide sufficient incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence as a tool to trigger policy change. Looking at the previous results of levels of political violence in Libya, more salient is the fact that Gaddafi's regime has only experienced two incidents over a period of 10 years. Indeed, we argue that outsiders knew that Gaddafi had unlimited power in the country. Consequently, with the inexistence of an effective accountability group, resorting to violent act would have been dangerous, but above all, not rational and inefficient with respect to a low likelihood of success. As shown in our theoretical framework, violent political non-state actors are considered as rational. Thus, the amount of money and preparation that request an attack being important, those actors will target governments only if the likelihood of success is conceivable. Following this logic, the informal system set up by Gaddafi through his reliance on tribes and the revolutionary committee successfully prevented the emergence of a group that could counterbalance his personal authority.

Similar to Libya, the regime of Bashar Al-Assad provides a relevant case. Indeed, it has been targeted by only three incidents over a period of 10 years suggesting that non-state actors willing to resort to political violence had few incentives to target a dictatorship in which any attacks could not have an effective impact on its policy. Indeed, as we have previously outlined, the personalist feature of Syrian hybrid regime and the grip on power consolidated by Bashar

made it harder for non-state actors to threaten him. This led to the absence of a group having either the means or the will to possibly threaten his tenure in office.

In this respect, we believe that low levels of political violence in both Libyan and Syrian dictatorships can also be explained by the way Bashar Al-Assad and Gaddafi effectively coup-proofed their regime so as not to be held accountable by any elite. In this regard, in addition to the clientelist and patronage system put in place, different tactics were used by both dictators to keep control over the distinct factions. In Libya, Gaud (2013: 231) outlines that “[c]oncrete measures taken by the regime included the creation of parallel security structures as well as a systematic erosion of the Libyan military’s professionalism.” By preventing the creation of strong cohesion in the military forces through frequent rotation of officers, “the Libyan military was incapable of acting at the macro level in any meaningful way.” (ibid. 221). Moreover, the crucial role played by revolutionary committees and tribe affiliation allowed Gaddafi to effectively coup-proofed his regime.

In Syria, Bashar Al-Assad adopted a slight different coup-proofing technic but nonetheless highly effective and tailored to the features of the Syrian regime. Indeed, his reliance on the *Mukhabarat*, namely the Syrian intelligence and security apparatus provide him a complete monitoring of public, political and military activities (Quinlivan 1999). Furthermore, alike Libya, the symbolic importance of the Assad family strengthened his grip on power. We argued that non-state actors have fewer incentives to target the ruling power in authoritarian regimes where leaders have almost unlimited power and therefore cannot be overthrown or threatened by an authoritarian elite. Consequently, both countries confirm this assumption and provide relevant examples on the existing positive link between low levels of audience costs and low levels of political violence.

Unlike our previous regimes, the case of Morocco provides a counter-example to our theory. Indeed, being a non-dynastic monarchy and generating low levels of audience costs, Morocco should be less targeted by acts of political violence. Surprisingly, unlike Syria and Libya, the regime of Mohammed VI experienced on average more violent political acts than Tunisia. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that over 10 years, Morocco was only targeted by two waves of violence, one in 2003 during which five incidents were registered and then the second one in 2007 with six attacks. When trying to explain such levels of political violence in Morocco, audience costs do not seem to provide a satisfactory explanation and therefore an alternative explanation might be provided.

Thus, by comparing levels of audience costs previously analyzed and levels of political violence in the authoritarian regimes of Libya and Morocco, the results partially confirm our third hypothesis standing that personalist and non-dynastic authoritarian regimes generate less audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and thus are less affected by acts of political violence (H3). Indeed, the hypothesis is only confirmed for the personalist regime of Muammar Gaddafi that experienced none act of political violence against his ruling power. However, in contrast with Libya, the non-dynastic monarchy of Morocco tends to refute the idea that this specific type of authoritarian regime is less prone to violent political acts. Furthermore, our results also allow to confirm our fourth hypothesis (H4) because the regime of Bashar Al-Assad did not have an accountability group, non-state actors did not have incentive to target Syria as they were aware that an attack could not trigger any political change. Indeed, Syria as hybrid regime, did not fulfill the accountability criteria to generate high levels of audience costs and thus, non-state actors did not have incentive to target the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.

To conclude on our analysis, the results found for our six authoritarian regimes confirm the significant role played by audience costs in the likelihood of political violence in dictatorships. The more audience costs are higher, the greater the chances that act of political violence will occur. These results also confirm the observations of other studies on the role played by audience costs not only in international outcomes (e.g. Smith 1998; Schultz 2001; Weeks 2008) but also in domestic outcomes. They also corroborate the theoretical contribution of Conrad and Conrad (2014) who see the institutional design and the levels of audience costs as a factor of important discrepancies of political violence among dictatorships.

Conclusion

Why are some dictatorships targeted by a large number of violent political acts while others are not? It is from this question that our research focused on identifying the factors explaining the different levels of political violence in dictatorships. Using rigorous selection criteria and choosing a period of ten years from 2000 to 2010, we decided to analyze countries part of the Middle East and North Africa representing different types of authoritarian regimes that could lead to different levels of political violence.

In this regard, the method of analysis employed in our research has strived to offer a comparative-examination of different authoritarian institutional designs and to what extent they influence the likelihood of political violence. Drawing upon Weeks (2008) and Conrad and Conrad (2014), our line of argument emphasizes the role of audience costs as main incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence as an act aimed at triggering policy change. Indeed, when looking at political violence in authoritarian regimes, sharp discrepancies exist among dictatorships worldwide. Thus, by assessing the inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence, our interest has been to investigate the explanatory weight played by the different authoritarian institutional setups and their production of audience costs in order to explain why some dictatorships experienced more acts of political violence than others.

Through a combination of quantitative and in-depth qualitative analyses of our six authoritarian regimes, we argue that two main criteria are at play when it comes to producing audience costs. The first one is the presence or absence of a domestic authoritarian accountability group that have the means and will to effectively threaten the incumbent's tenure in office. The second element is the visibility criterion that requires the existence of sufficient media coverage. Depending on whether the institutional design of dictatorships encompasses those two elements, we argue that different levels of audience costs will be produced and therefore will increase the incentives for non-state actors to launch attacks in autocratic countries.

The results that emerged from our analyzes can be summarized as follows:

(1) The fulfillment of the accountability and visibility criteria in authoritarian regimes favors the production of high levels of audience costs and the incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence.

- (2) Single-party, military and dynastic regimes generate more audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are on average more affected by acts of political violence.
- (3) Personalist regimes generate less audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are on average less affected by acts of political violence.
- (4) The absence of accountability group to the leader in hybrid regimes favors the production of both low levels of audience costs and political violence.
- (5) Non-dynastic regimes, although generating similar level of audience costs than personalist regimes, are nonetheless comparably affected by political violence as single-party, military and dynastic regimes. In this case, the lack of causal certainty in our country analyzed, i.e. Morocco, does not allow us to assert with confidence the relationship between audience costs and political violence in this type of authoritarian regime. Thus, our results suggest that an alternative explanation might exist.

Drawing on our findings, our research raises the importance of taking into account the existing diversity present among authoritarian regimes and their production of audience costs for the study of political violence. We have shown how the presence or absence of a visible effective accountability group able to threaten the leader through the production of audience costs can create incentives for non-state actors to resort to violent acts politically motivated. Indeed, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia experienced on average more political violence than Libya and Syria due to the fact that the former had strong accountability groups. While the military institution, the single party and the dynastic family have a real power in counterbalancing the power of the dictator and can hold him accountable, we found that leaders in personalist regimes do not face any rival challenging their authority. Similar to the latter, hybrid regimes whose leaders have successfully imposed their power over other relevant players cannot see their power endangered. Following this, we have shown that Libya and Syria experienced on average low levels of both audience costs and political violence. Furthermore, we have argued that not only is the original institutional setup of these regimes responsible for discrepancies of levels of political violence experienced, but also the way leaders coup-proofed their regimes through clientelism, appointments, frequent rotation of officers or creation of parallel security structures.

In this respect, aware of such institutional mechanisms of accountability, we argued that the decision of non-state actors to attack dictatorships relies on the likelihood of success in changing government policies. Consequently, in regimes such as Tunisia, Egypt or Saudi

Arabia, levels of political violence were higher as non-state actors knew that an effective accountability group could threaten the leader and pushing him to adopt policies in line with non-state actors' objectives. Contrariwise, low levels of political violence in the regimes of Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar Al-Assad can be explained by the fact the "leader's concentration of power and elites' dependence on the incumbent for their livelihood make any attempt to coordinate on the part of domestic elites both dangerous and difficult to conceal." (Weeks 2008: 47). Thus, non-state actors were aware of the difficulty and inefficiency of striking these authoritarian governments where political change was highly unlikely.

While our study confirmed the role of audience costs as incentives for non-state actors to target authoritarian regimes in five out of six regime-types, the non-dynastic monarchy of Morocco provides a divergence with regards to our theoretical expectations. Indeed, low levels of audience costs in Morocco should have entailed few incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence. Nonetheless, the regime of Mohammed VI experienced on average more political violence than Tunisia a country part of the first group, i.e. the most affected by political violence. One way to explain this observation is to focus on the institutional mechanism established by the regime to deal with the religious institution. As we previously highlighted, Morocco was the only country in our analysis in which the dictator was both the leading political and religious figure. Drawing on this legitimacy, already under King Hassan II, the non-dynastic monarchy of Morocco used ideology and fostered the expansion of radical Islam notably Wahhabism as a way to combat opposition by leftists and Islamists and at the same time reinforce its grip on power (Alonso and García Rey 2007: 574–573). This, according to several authors, could have led to a more radical interpretation of Islam in Morocco and have backfired on the regime in the 2000s. Hence, various studies (e.g. Kalpakian 2005; Dialmy 2005) show that the incentives and rationale of non-states actors behind the 2003 and 2007 attacks in Morocco are linked to both domestic and international context, notably political system seen as corrupt and the alliance with the USA. These last explanations can thus shed light on the reason why Morocco experienced high levels of political violence.

These last remarks lead us to address certain limits of our research. The first concerns a dimension specific to our field of study: the problem of endogeneity. Indeed, endogeneity remains an important challenge in the fields of authoritarianism and political violence studies. Although we try to minimize its impact in our research notably through the use of control variables and a comparative design, it seems difficult to say that political violence is only the results of a variation in the institutional setups of our authoritarian regimes and in audience

costs' dynamics. Moreover, the use of four groups of control variables might potentially be not enough to confirm with certainty the correlation between our explanatory and explained variables.

A similar limit of our work lies in two strong assumptions that we have made. The first follows the assumption that violent non-state actors behave rationally and in line with their objectives and beliefs. Although we are aware that such assumption is strong, we believe that such argument is coherent with the results found by many academics (e.g. Muller and Weede 1990; Lake 2002; Horgan 2008). Linked to the preceding point, the second concerns the idea that incentives of non-state actors to target authoritarian regimes derived from and fluctuate in accordance with the levels of audience costs generated. Again, this has been assessed by various researchers and that is what we attempted to demonstrate.

Following this, a criticism might also be made with regard to the definition and inclusion of terrorism in our work as well as the reliance on the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017) for a thesis on political violence. In this respect, we acknowledge that such concept should be avoided as it is highly politicized and does not gather a consensus among academics in the literature. Nonetheless, as we have previously outlined throughout our analysis, the lack of data and research on political violence *per se* are scarce and therefore we try to overcome this problem with a broad definition.

The classification of our authoritarian regimes might also represent a limit of our work. Instead of relying on Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) classifications, we could have opted for a typology that more appropriately account for some new types of dictatorships. In that respect, the typology of Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010) might represent new research avenues in the field of authoritarianism. Finally, there is a limit in our interpretation of our countries related to the persistence of the same regime-type during our period of analysis. Indeed, for the sake of feasibility, we considered the same regime-type for our countries over 10 years. Although we justified this choice thanks to different variables assessing no sharp institutional changes, we could have classified differently each regime within these 10 years of analysis. In this regard, Tunisia represents a relevant example of a country that could have been classified as a pure single-party until the constitutional reforms of 2002 and subsequently as a personalist regime. Such changes could have had an impact on the different levels of political violence present in our cases.

These few remarks highlight the challenges that remain to be explored in the area of authoritarianism, audience costs and political violence. Future research should mainly continue to develop approaches limiting as much as possible problems of endogeneity. In addition, as far as we know, this is the first qualitative study to use audience costs theory to analyze the behavior of violent non-state groups as well as the inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence. Thus, as our study suggests, the interest of researchers must also focus more on the influence of institutions and audience costs on the dynamics of political violence not only in democracies but also in dictatorships. Our use of Geddes (2003) and Herb (2003) regimes' categorizations that we have readapted for our study offer fruitful perspectives of analysis in this way but other typologies may represent valuable alternatives.

In conclusion, new studies must be done to increase our understanding of the reasons why some authoritarian regimes experienced more violent acts than others. Indeed, countries worldwide are currently witnessing a reemergence of political violence and the need for understanding the incentives behind such dynamics appear to be crucial in order to counter them. Identifying the conditions favoring the phenomena of political violence in dictatorships must be one of the central tasks of academics interested in the possible factors able to reduce the number of domestic violent movements. Although our analysis has highlighted the role of audience costs and their impact on levels of political violence in dictatorships, we should take into account possible influences that audience costs might have on non-state actors in democracies, especially when it comes to explain high levels of violence. In this regard, our study emphasizes that it is by increasing the mechanisms by which political leaders are held accountable that non-state actors resort to political violence in non-democratic states. Consequently, our research suggests that by replicating our study with a different typology of authoritarian regimes or looking at regimes experiencing political transitions, this might offer new avenues to understand why the likelihood of political violence is higher in some countries. Furthermore, audience costs theory might also be relevant in bridging the gap between other fields of study and explaining violent political dynamics in period of democratization.

Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Classification Scheme for Authoritarian Regimes

We use Geddes' (2003: 225–227) classification scheme for coding authoritarian regimes as military, one-party, personalist or hybrid. As Geddes (ibid.) does not account for monarchy regime-types, we draw on Herb (1999) criteria and create a similar classification scheme with a battery question for dynastic and non-dynastic monarchies.

For military, single-party, personalist and hybrid regimes, the battery question is constructed as followed: “each regime used in the data analysis receives a score between zero and one for each regime type; this score is the sum of ‘yes’ answers divided by the sum of both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers. A regime’s classification into a nominal category (see the next section in this appendix) depends on which score is significantly higher than the other two. Hybrids are regimes with similar scores for two or more regime types.”. (Geddes 2003: 225)

For dynastic and non-dynastic monarchies, we create a battery question for both regimes where each regime received a score between zero and one. A regime’s classification depends on which score is significantly higher than the other.

Is it a single-party regime?

1. Did the party exist prior to the leader’s election campaign or accession to power?
2. Was the party organized in order to fight for independence or lead some other mass social movement?
3. Did the first leader’s successor hold, or does the leader’s heir apparent hold, a high party position?
4. Was the first leader’s successor, or is the current heir apparent, from a different family, clan, or tribe than the leader?
5. Does the party have functioning local-level organizations that do something reasonably important, such as distribute seeds or credit or organize local government?
6. Does the party either face some competition from other parties or hold competitive intraparty elections?
7. Is party membership required for most government employment?
8. Does the party control access to high government office?
9. Are members of the politburo (or its equivalent) chosen by routine party procedures?
10. Does the party encompass members from more than one region, religion, ethnic group, clan, or tribe (in heterogeneous societies)?
11. Do none of the leader’s relatives occupy very high government office?
12. Was the leader a civilian before his accession?
13. Was the successor to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a civilian?
14. Is the military high command consulted primarily about security matters?
15. Are most members of the cabinet or politburo-equivalent civilians?

Is it a military regime?

1. Is the leader a retired or active general or equivalent?
2. Was the successor to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a general or equivalent?
3. Is there a procedure in place for rotating the highest office or dealing with succession?
4. Is there a routine procedure for consulting the officer corps about policy decisions?
5. Has the military hierarchy been maintained?

6. Does the officer corps include representatives of more than one ethnic, religious, or tribal group (in heterogeneous countries)?
7. Have normal procedures for retirement been maintained for the most part? (That is, has the leader refrained from or been prevented from forcing his entire cohort or all officers from other tribal groups into retirement?)
8. Are merit and seniority the main bases for promotion, rather than loyalty or ascriptive characteristics?
9. Has the leader refrained from having dissenting officers murdered or imprisoned?
10. Has the leader refrained from creating a political party to support himself?
11. Has the leader refrained from holding plebiscites to support his personal rule?
12. Do officers occupy positions in the cabinet other than those related to the armed forces?
13. Has the rule of law been maintained? (That is, even if a new constitution has been written and laws decreed, are decrees, once promulgated, followed until new ones are written?)

Is it a personalist regime?

1. Does the leader lack the support of a party?
2. If there is a support party, was it created after the leader's accession to power?
3. If there is a support party, does the leader choose most of the members of the politburo-equivalent?
4. Does the country specialist literature describe the politburo-equivalent as a rubber stamp for the leader?
5. If there is a support party, is it limited to a few urban areas?
6. Was the successor to the first leader, or is the heir apparent, a member of the same family, clan, tribe, or minority ethnic group as the first leader?
7. Does the leader govern without routine elections?
8. If there are elections, are they essentially plebiscites, that is, without either internal or external competition?
9. Does access to high office depend on the personal favor of the leader?
10. Has normal military hierarchy been seriously disorganized or overturned?
11. Have dissenting officers or officers from different regions, tribes, religions, or ethnic groups been murdered, imprisoned, or forced into exile?
12. Has the officer corps been marginalized from most decision-making?
13. Does the leader personally control the security apparatus?

Is it a hybrid regime?

Hybrids are regimes with similar scores for two or more regime types.

Is it a dynastic monarchy?

1. Does the monarch rule with the assistance of an extended ruling family?
2. Is the monarch accountable to any group?
3. Do family members hold high offices?
4. If yes, do they have an independent influence over the power?
5. If the leader is removed, do family members retain power?
6. Does the monarch control appointments?
7. Has the monarch promoted loyal followers to high positions that are not part of the royalty?
8. Is there a mechanism for settling family disputes—especially over succession?
9. Is seniority the main way to rise high office?
10. Has the monarch the control of the security apparatus?

Is it a non-dynastic monarchy?

1. Does the monarch rules alone?
2. Are family members excluded from holding high offices?
3. Is the inner-circle of the leader mainly composed of friends or loyal followers?
4. Does the monarch control appointments?
5. Has the monarch promoted loyal followers to high positions that are not part of the royalty?
6. Is loyalty the main way to rise high office?
7. Has the monarch the control of the security apparatus?

Appendix 2

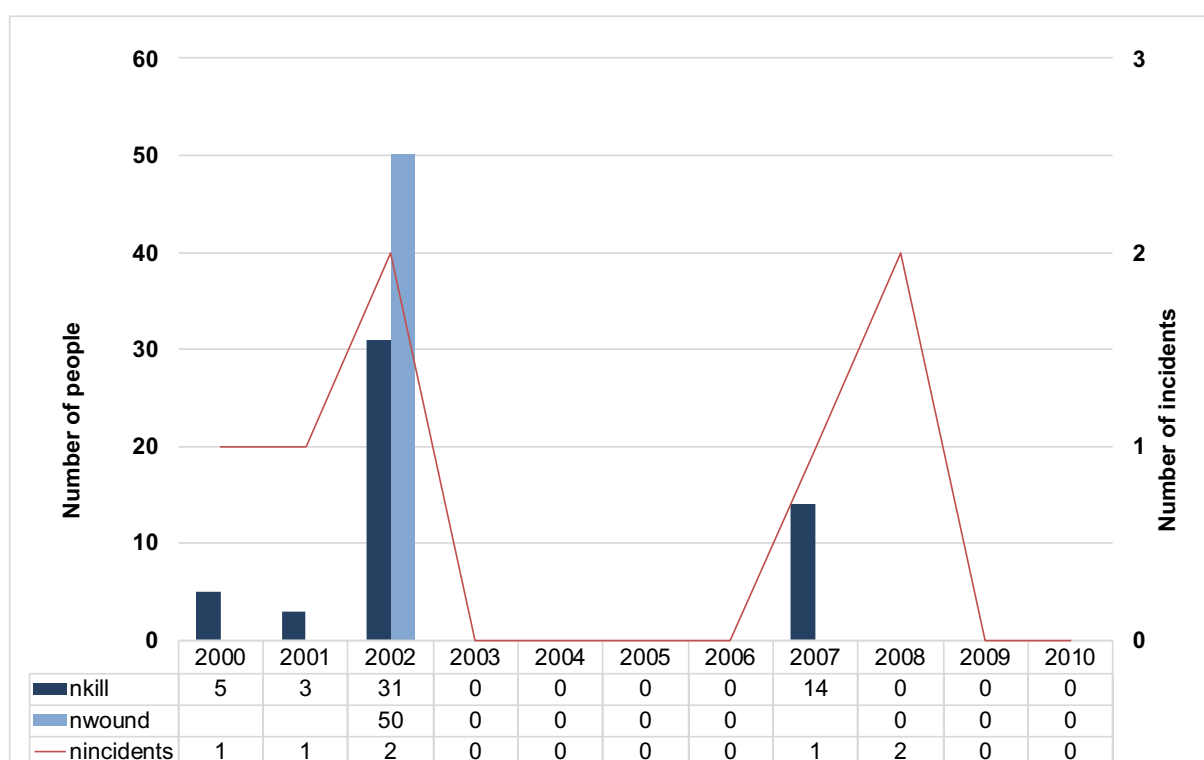
Tunisia under Ben Ali (2000–2010)—*Single-party regime*

We applied Geddes’ dataset (2003) to Tunisia and try to answer the battery questions using specialized literature. Our results make us classify Tunisia as a single-party regime. For some questions, we did not find sufficient information so as to answer them. Thus, we include them into the category “No information”. Furthermore, some questions were not applicable to our specific authoritarian regime and therefore are labelled as “N/A”.

| | Scores | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Is it a single-party regime? | Yes | 11 |
| | No | 2 |
| | N/A | 1 |
| | No information | 1 |
| | Score | 0.84/1 |
| Is it a military regime? | Yes | 4 |
| | No | 7 |
| | N/A | 1 |
| | No information | 1 |
| | Score | 0.36/1 |
| Is it a personalist regime? | Yes | 5 |
| | No | 8 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | — |
| | Score | 0.38/1 |

Levels of political violence in Tunisia (2000–2010)

Graph 3. *Number of incidents, fatalities and people injured*



*Boxes left blank mean unknown data (based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Table 6. *List of acts of political violence from 2000 to 2010 ^a*

| Year | Perpetrators | Fatalities | Injured | Target type | Attack type |
|------|--|------------|---------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| 2000 | Unknown | 0 | Unknown | Unknown | Firearms |
| 2001 | Armed Islamic Group (GIA) | 3 | Unknown | Military | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2002 | Anti-Semitic extremists | 10 | 20 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2002 | Al-Qaeda | 21 | 30 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Unknown | 14 | Unknown | Police | Armed Assault |
| 2008 | Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) | 0 | 0 | Tourists | Hostage Taking |
| 2008 | Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) | 0 | 0 | Tourists | Hostage Taking |

^a (Based on Global Terrorism Database counts [START 2017])

Appendix 3

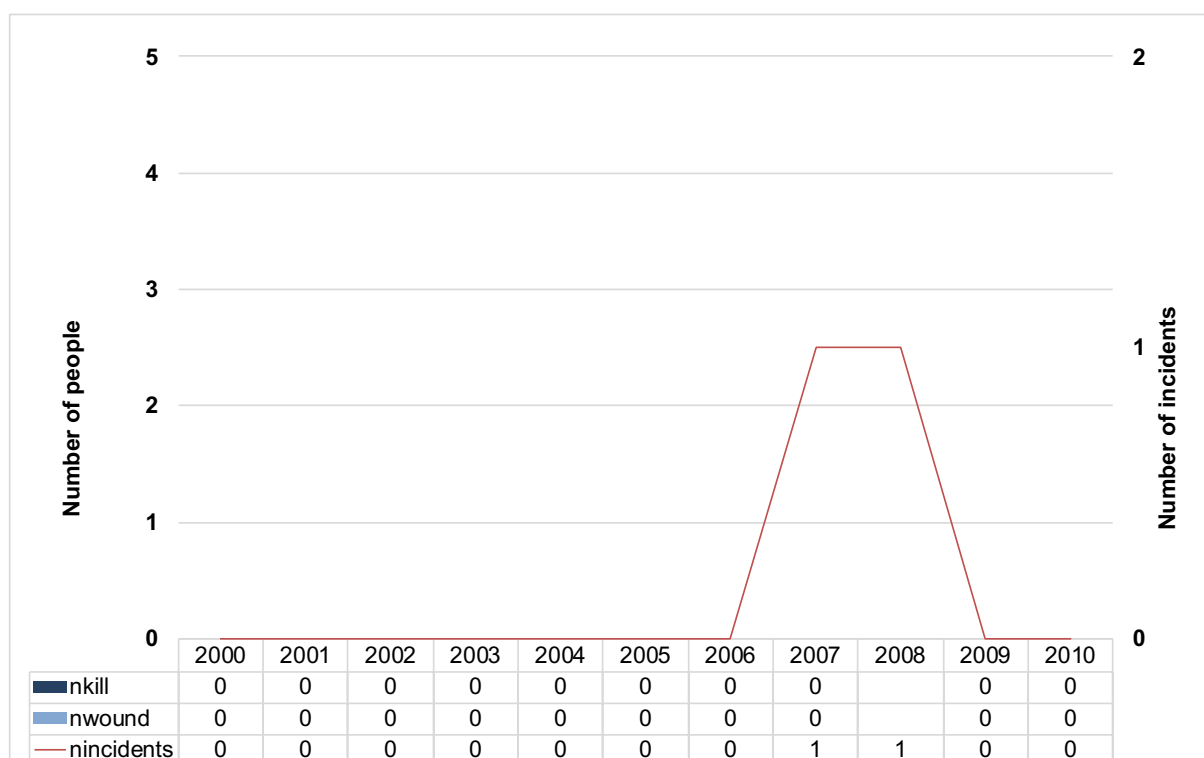
Libya under Gaddafi (2000–2010)—*Personalist regime*

We applied Geddes’ dataset (2003) to Libya and try to answer the battery questions using specialized literature. Our results make us classify Libya as a personalist regime. For some questions, we did not find sufficient information so as to answer them. Thus, we include them into the category “No information”. Furthermore, some questions were not applicable to our specific authoritarian regime and therefore are labelled as “N/A”.

| | Scores | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Is it a single-party regime? | Yes | 6 |
| | No | 8 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | 1 (Q. 14) |
| | Score | 0.43/1 |
| Is it a military regime? | Yes | 3 |
| | No | 9 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | 1 (Q. 4) |
| | Score | 0.25/1 |
| Is it a personalist regime? | Yes | 10 |
| | No | 1 |
| | N/A | 1 |
| | No information | 1 (Q. 12) |
| | Score | 0.90/1 |

Levels of political violence in Libya (2000–2010)

Graph 4. *Number of incidents, fatalities and people injured*



*Boxes left blank mean unknown data (based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Table 7. *List of acts of political violence from 2000 to 2010 ^a*

| Year | Perpetrators | Fatalities | Injured | Target type | Attack type |
|------|--------------|---------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 2007 | Unknown | Unknown | 0 | 0 | Airports and Aircraft |
| 2008 | Kufra | Sudan Liberation Movement | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown |

^a (Based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Appendix 4

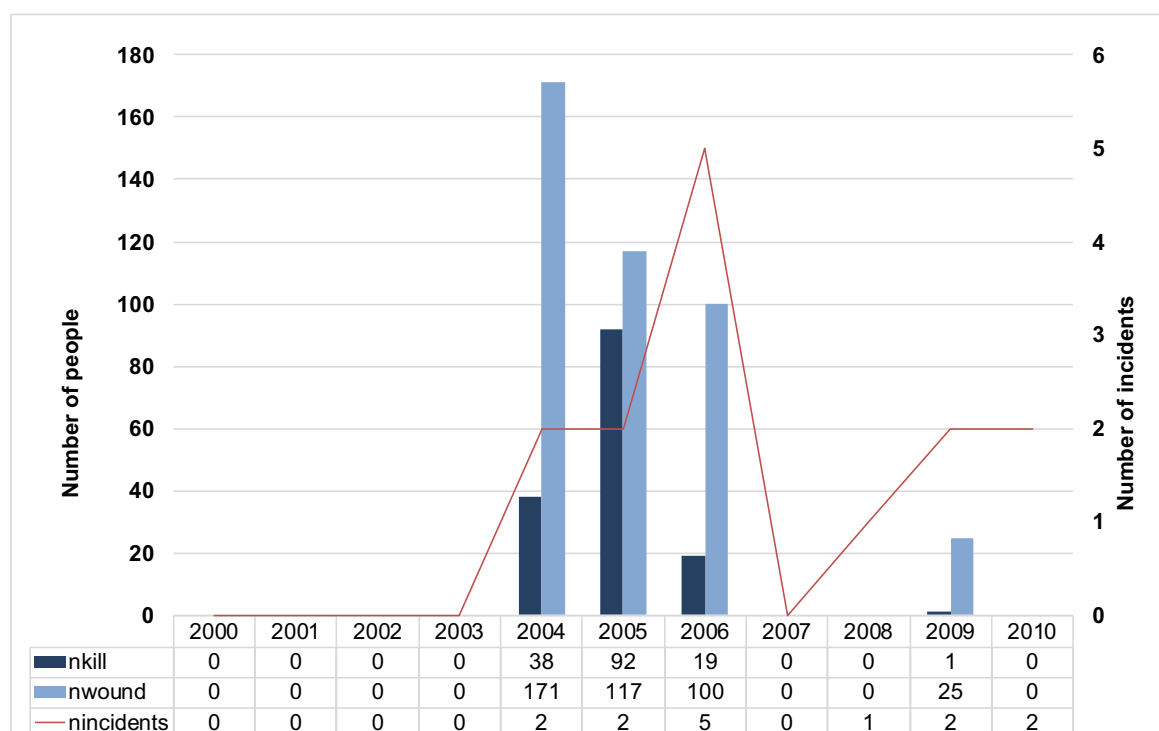
Egypt under Mubarak (2000–2010)—*Military regime*

We applied Geddes’ dataset (2003) to Egypt and try to answer the battery questions using specialized literature. Our results make us classify Egypt as a military regime. For some questions, we did not find sufficient information so as to answer them. Thus, we include them into the category “No information”. Furthermore, some questions were not applicable to our specific authoritarian regime and therefore are labelled as “N/A”.

| | Scores | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Is it a single-party regime? | Yes | 8 |
| | No | 6 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | 1 |
| | Score | 0.57/1 |
| Is it a military regime? | Yes | 8 |
| | No | 3 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | 2 |
| | Score | 0.72/1 |
| Is it a personalist regime? | Yes | 4 |
| | No | 9 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | — |
| | Score | 0.30/1 |

Levels of political violence in Egypt (2000–2010)

Graph 5. *Number of incidents, fatalities and people injured*



*Boxes left blank mean unknown data (based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Table 8. *List of acts of political violence from 2000 to 2010 ^a*

| Year | Perpetrators | Fatalities | Injured | Target type | Attack type |
|------|-------------------------------|------------|---------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 2004 | Abdullah Azzam Brigades | 4 | 12 | Other | Bombing |
| 2004 | Abdullah Azzam Brigades | 34 | 159 | Business | Bombing |
| 2005 | Unknown | 1 | 7 | Tourists | Bombing |
| 2005 | Abdullah Azzam Brigades | 91 | 110 | Tourists | Bombing |
| 2006 | Unknown | 0 | 8 | Private Citizens | Armed Assault |
| 2006 | Unknown | 0 | 0 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Armed Assault |
| 2006 | Unknown | 1 | 2 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Armed Assault |
| 2006 | Unknown | 0 | 3 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Armed Assault |
| 2006 | Egyptian Tawhid and Jihad | 18 | 87 | Tourists | Bombing |
| 2008 | Unknown | 0 | 0 | Police | Hostage Taking |
| 2009 | Unknown | 1 | 25 | Private Citizens | Bombing |
| 2009 | Unknown | 0 | 0 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Bombing |
| 2010 | Unknown | 0 | 0 | Religious Figures/Institutions | Bombing |
| 2010 | Bedouin tribesmen (suspected) | 0 | 0 | Utilities | Bombing |

^a (Based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Appendix 5

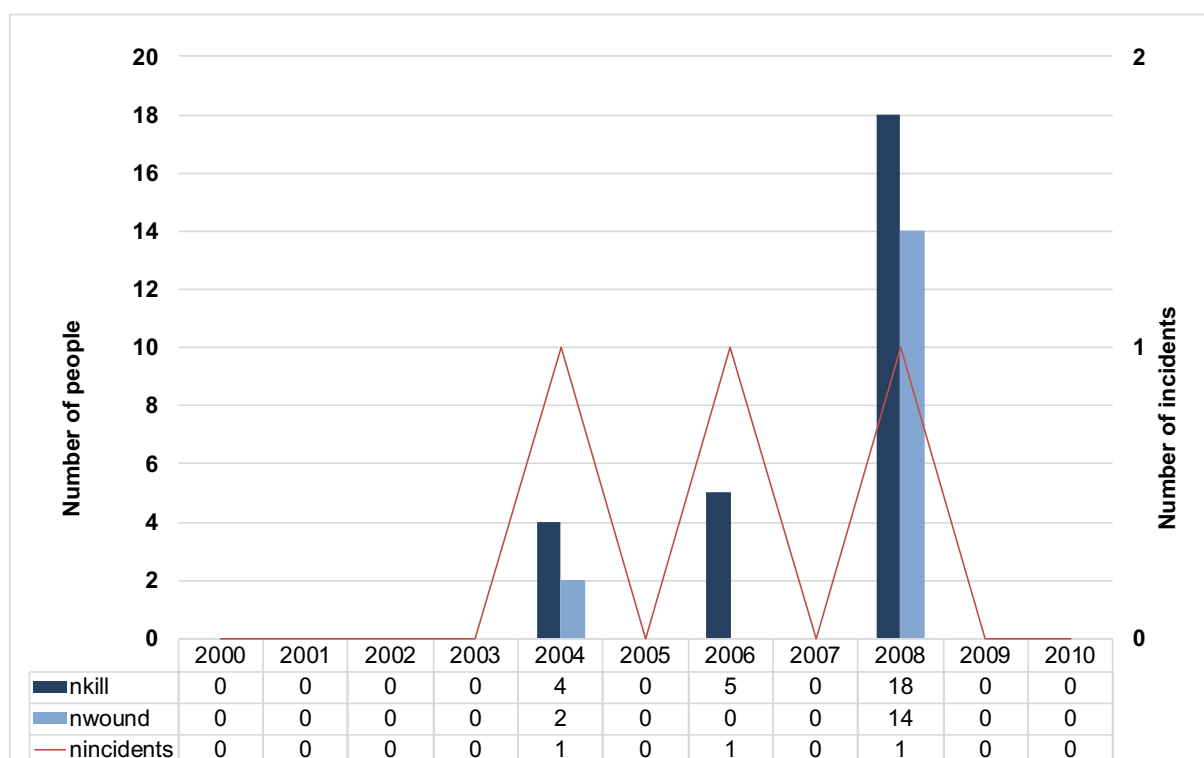
Syria under Bashar Al-Assad (2000–2010)—*Hybrid regime*

We applied Geddes’ dataset (2003) to Syria and try to answer the battery questions using specialized literature. Our results make us classify Syria as a hybrid regime. For some questions, we did not find sufficient information so as to answer them. Thus, we include them into the category “No information”. Furthermore, some questions were not applicable to our specific authoritarian regime and therefore are labelled as “N/A”.

| | Scores | |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Is it a single-party regime? | Yes | 9 |
| | No | 5 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | 1 |
| | Score | 0.64/1 |
| Is it a military regime? | Yes | 6 |
| | No | 5 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | 2 |
| | Score | 0.54/1 |
| Is it a personalist regime? | Yes | 7 |
| | No | 4 |
| | N/A | 1 |
| | No information | 1 |
| | Score | 0.63/1 |

Levels of political violence in Syria (2000–2010)

Graph 6. *Number of incidents, fatalities and people injured*



*Boxes left blank mean unknown data (based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Table 9. *List of acts of political violence from 2000 to 2010^a*

| Year | Perpetrators | Fatalities | Injured | Target type | Attack type |
|------|--------------|------------|---------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 2004 | Unknown | 4 | 2 | Government (Diplomatic) | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2006 | Unknown | 5 | 0 | Government (Diplomatic) | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2008 | Unknown | 18 | 14 | Private Citizens & Property | Bombing/Explosion |

^a (Based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Appendix 6

Saudi Arabia under the Al-Saud dynasty (2000–2010)—*Dynastic monarchy*

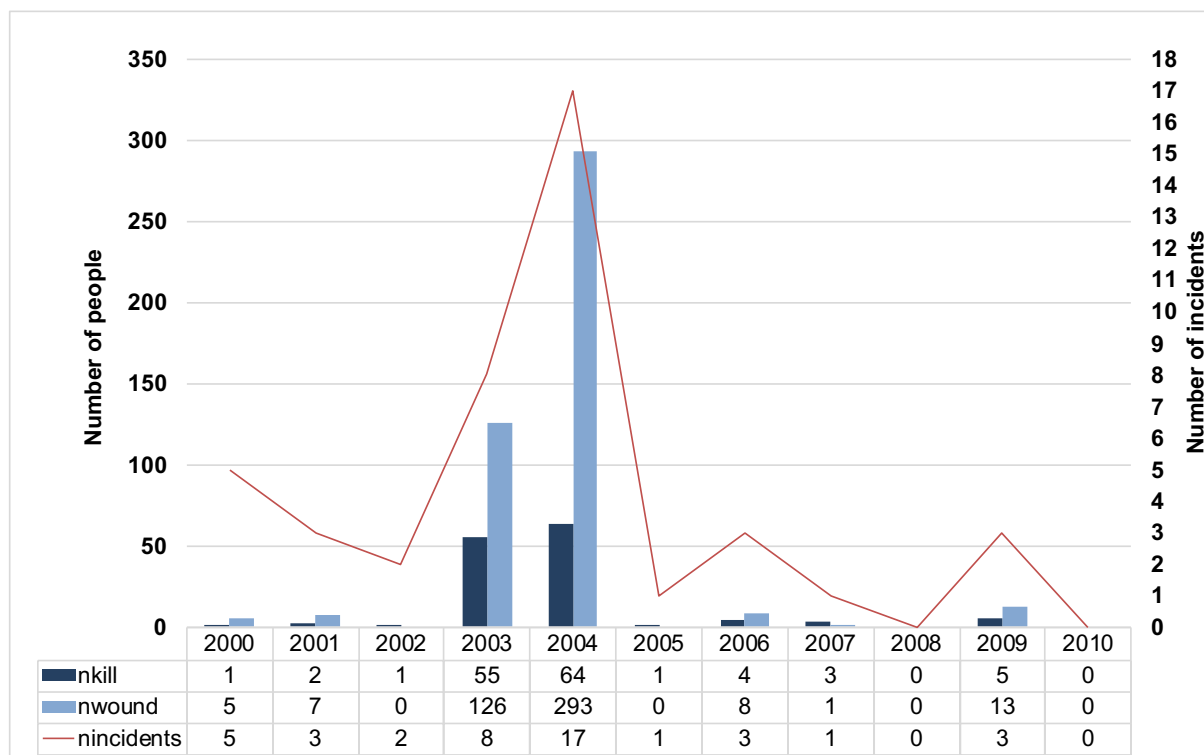
We applied the dataset that we have created drawing upon Herb’s classification (1999) to categories Saudi Arabia. To do so, we answer the battery question using specialized literature. Our results make us classify Saudi Arabia as a dynastic monarchy. For some questions, we did not find sufficient information so as to answer them. Thus, we include them into the category “No information”. Furthermore, some questions were not applicable to our specific authoritarian regime and therefore are labelled as “N/A”.

| | Scores | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Is it a dynastic monarchy? | Yes | 9 |
| | No | 1 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | — |
| | Score | 0.90/1 |
| Is it a non-dynastic monarchy? | Yes | 2 |
| | No | 5 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | — |
| | Score | 0.29/1 |

Levels of political violence in Saudi Arabia (2000–2010)

Due to the high number of political violence in Saudi Arabia, we decided to depict the information through one single graph.

Graph 7. *Number of incidents, fatalities and people injured*



*Boxes left blank mean unknown data (based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Appendix 7

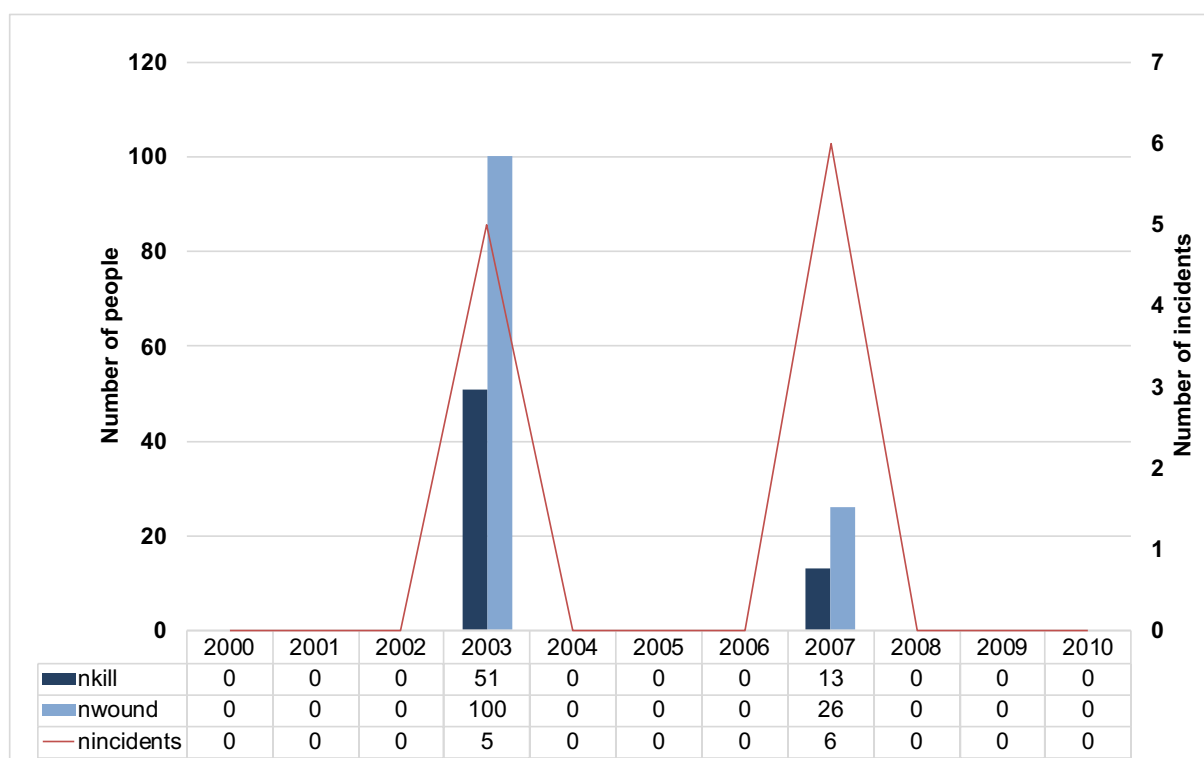
Morocco under Mohammed VI (2000–2010)—*Non-dynastic monarchy*

We applied the dataset that we have created drawing upon Herb's classification (1999) to categories Morocco. To do so, we answer the battery questions using specialized literature. Our results make us classify Morocco as a non-dynastic monarchy. For some questions, we did not find sufficient information so as to answer them. Thus, we include them into the category "No information". Furthermore, some questions were not applicable to our specific authoritarian regime and therefore are labelled as "N/A".

| | Scores | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Is it a dynastic monarchy? | Yes | 3 |
| | No | 5 |
| | N/A | 1 |
| | No information | 1 |
| | Score | 0.38/1 |
| Is it a non-dynastic monarchy? | Yes | 7 |
| | No | 0 |
| | N/A | — |
| | No information | — |
| | Score | 1/1 |

Levels of political violence in Morocco (2000–2010)

Graph 8. *Number of incidents, fatalities and people injured*



*Boxes left blank mean unknown data (based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

Table 10. *List of acts of political violence from 2000 to 2010^a*

| Year | Perpetrators | Fatalities | Injured | Target type | Attack type |
|------|---------------------------------|------------|---------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 2003 | Salafia Jihadia | 8 | 20 | Business | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2003 | Salafia Jihadia | 6 | 20 | Business | Explosives |
| 2003 | Salafia Jihadia | 6 | 20 | Business | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2003 | Salafia Jihadia | 6 | 20 | Private Citizens | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2003 | Salafia Jihadia | 19 | 20 | Business | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Unknown | 1 | 0 | Business | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Unknown | 1 | 4 | Business | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Unknown | 5 | 0 | Police | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Unknown | 3 | 21 | Police | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb | 2 | 1 | Educational Institution | Bombing/Explosion |
| 2007 | Unknown | 1 | Unknown | Tourists | Bombing/Explosion |

^a (Based on Global Terrorism Database counts [GDT] [START 2017])

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Department of Political Science

International Public Policies

Authoritarianism and Political Violence

The inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence

SUMMARY

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Introduction and Literature Review

Political violence has been a widespread phenomenon across the globe. Overtime, the concept itself has evolved, shaped by the appearance of new forms of violence directed against political targets. Often associated with revolutionary movements at the end of the 19th century and later on during the Cold War, this phenomenon has been analyzed in recent decades to explain conflict dynamics in poor or failed countries (Howard 2014). However, since the 9/11 and the various attacks in European countries, political violence research has been mainly reduced to terrorism studies by most journalists and academics around the world without a real and relevant consensual definition, contributing to a conceptual increase at the expense of analytical benefits. As a consequence of terrorism studies and the classical democracy-dictatorship dichotomy, the majority of scholars have focused on acts of political violence happening in Western democracies. Hence, political violence within authoritarian regimes has long remained neglected because considered either as an inexistent or natural phenomenon in this type of regime. Indeed, conventional wisdom suggests that acts of political violence should be sparse in authoritarian regimes both because these regimes have a wide repertoire of action to prevent any political dissent (e.g. Piazza and Wilson 2013) and because violence is unlikely to trigger policy change (e.g. Eubank and Weinberg 1994; Pape 2003; Kydd and Walter 2006).

For many dictatorships such as North Korea or Belarus, this assertion holds true. Nevertheless, how can we explain that Egypt under Mubarak or Saudi Arabia ruled by the Al-Saud dynasty experienced high levels of political violence whereas authoritarianism as Eritrea led by Isaias Afwerki or Libya under Muammar Gaddafi only few?¹ Based on this observation, we decided to study the inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence. In this regard, two main theses embody this field of study and try to understand what factors trigger political violence in authoritarianism. The first follows the mobilization-repression argument and outlines that regimes having wider range of coercion and co-optation strategies can more easily counteract any dissent (Gupta 1993, Rasler 1996, Davenport 2005, Johnston 2012, Piazza and Wilson 2013). The second postulates that some authoritarian regimes generate more audience costs² than others and this can lead to create incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence (Conrad and Conrad 2014).

¹ According to the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017), from 1982 to 2010, Egypt under Mubarak experienced around 468 attacks and Saudi Arabia 61. Unlike these two dictatorships, from 1994 to 2010, Eritrea under Afwerki experienced 9 incidents and Libya under Gadhafi only 7 for the same period.

² Following Weeks (2008: 35), we define audience costs as “the domestic punishment that leaders would incur for backing down from public threats”. See also Fearon (1994).

The research question investigated in our study concerns this last approach: ***To what extent does the type of authoritarian regime influence the likelihood and form of political violence?*** Our interest relates to the peculiarities of authoritarian institutional designs which generate audience costs and trigger political violence. In other words, the ambition of our work is to understand and explain why certain types of authoritarian regimes in the way they are organized, can create incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence. Drawing upon several hypotheses, we analyze levels of political violence with respect to the various institutional designs existing in the dictatorships of Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. The reasons behind our choice of countries part of the Middle East and North Africa are twofold. First, it is a region that has experienced the most stable modern dictatorships as well as types of authoritarian regimes that no longer exist elsewhere (e.g. dynastic monarchies). Second, it is the world's deadliest and bloodiest region in terms of acts of political violence. Thus, by comparing and focusing on the levels of audience costs within our six dictatorships, we seek to determine the effect of the institutional design on the variation of politically motivated violence.

Typology of Authoritarian Regimes

The typology of authoritarian regimes that we adopt in our research comes from the work of Geddes (1999a, 1999b 2003) and Herb (1999) that classify dictatorships as: *single-party*, *military*, *personalist* and *hybrid regimes* as well as *dynastic* and *non-dynastic monarchies*. According to them, single-party regimes are characterized by “a party organization [that] exercises some power over the leader [...]” (Geddes 1999b: 52). Military regimes entail “a group of officers who will lead the country and has some influence on policy” (Geddes 2003: 52). Dynastic monarchies are characterized by the fact that “the family forms a ruling institution” and where the leader does not control appointments but instead, family members rise to high office through seniority (Herb 1999:8). The crucial feature of the preceding regimes is that they encompass elites (the military, the party apparatus and the royal family) that represent an effective domestic audience that can have the means and will to oust the leader in case of domestic troubles. Unlike these regimes, personalist and dynastic monarchies share the existence of a leader/monarch that has taken the personal control of policy decisions and therefore does not face an accountability group. Finally, hybrid regime are regimes encompassing several regime-types.

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses

In this section, we present our theoretical framework and the resulting research hypotheses. For the purpose of this study, we argue that potential non-state actors willing to resort to violence against authoritarian ruling powers are more likely to do so against states that generate high levels of audience costs.

Like Kim Jong II or Saddam Hussein, the image of untouchable dictators with almost unlimited powers is widely spread in the existing literature (Weeks 2008). Nevertheless, these dictators represent in fact a minority among the authoritarian leaders and, more often than not, owe their power to negotiations with the domestic elites, comparable to public opinion in democracies. As a consequence, even in an authoritarian context, dictators do face political costs from an audience, i.e. audience costs, from an accountability group embodied by the authoritarian elites, when they are confronted with a public threat of any kind. According to Weeks (ibid.), the ability of a leader to generate domestic political costs is influenced by three factors. However, of Weeks' (2008) three criteria, only the first two are especially applicable to understand non-state actors resorting to political violence against the ruling power (Conrad and Conrad 2014). Firstly, the existence of a domestic political audience with the means and incentives to coordinate and punish the leader. Second, the visibility criterion meaning that non-state actors must be able to observe the existence of an effective accountability group that could sanction the dictator. In this respect, dictatorships vary greatly in the way their different institutional designs allow to generate these factors.

Variation in Audience Costs across Autocratic Regimes

The successive contributions of Geddes (2003), Weeks (2008) and Conrad and Conrad (2014) make it possible to classify different types of authoritarian regimes in relation to their variation in terms of production of audience costs and the likelihood of political violence. According to them, in single-party and in military regimes, the leader is usually neither in charge of the appointment of the authoritarian elites nor in charge of controlling directly security organs. Instead, the party, such as politburos or military juntas, is responsible for the election and appointment of the ruling elite. In those regimes, since elites rise through the rank of the party or military hierarchy, most of them are not personally tied to the fate of the leader. Consequently, if the leader is ousted, there is little reason to think they will lose office.

Personalist regimes are built on the power of an unquestioned leader having highly concentrated powers and where the careers of the elites are usually tied to the fate of the leader. These mechanisms create an environment in which it is difficult for the elites to credibly threaten the leader with removal because he may have the means to punish internal dissidents. As a consequence, the presence of audience costs is much scarcer in personalist dictatorships because leaders' concentration of power and elites' dependence on the ruler do not allow their production. This has a direct impact on the incentive to use political violence by non-state actors. Indeed, as the chances to create any political changeover are low, few incentives to act exist. Geddes (2003) also presents *hybrid authoritarian regimes*, having characteristics of several authoritarian regimes. The production of audience costs in those authoritarian regimes depends to whom the effective power belongs to, but also on the coordination and visibility criteria. In regimes where means for removing the leader exist, audience costs will be high and non-state actors will likely use political violence.

Finally, two more authoritarian regimes must be added although they were not initially discussed by Geddes (2003): *dynastic monarchies* and *non-dynastic monarchies*. According to Herb (1999) "members of the family share an interest in maintaining the continued health of the dynasty and cooperate to keep the leader in check" (Weeks 2008). In these regimes, the leader plays a major role in appointments, but the real power lies in the hands of the dynastic family as a whole. Moreover, family members hold high office not because of the will of the leader and they retain power even if the leader is removed. In dynastic monarchies, elites have incentives to oust the leader if he endangers the prestige or authority of the dynasty (ibid. 2008). In such regimes, audience costs are high because the elites can coordinate to punish the leader and because foreign observers can observe leadership changes. Consequently, political violence is highly likely to happen in those regimes. Regarding *non-dynastic monarchies*, they are similar to personalist regimes in the sense that they generate few audience costs, because non-dynastic leaders do not face an accountability group with real means and will to threaten him. Indeed, family members are often excluded from holding important positions. Instead, the leader usually promotes loyal followers in order to tie them with his fate. As non-dynastic monarchies generate few audience costs, the likelihood of non-state actors using political violence is low because the chance of success in influencing relevant audience to pressure the leader for policy change is unlikely.

What are the driving forces and rationale behind actors resorting to political violence? We define political violence as the use of actual or threatened of physical coercion by non-state actors to achieve a change in the nature of the political order. In this respect, we agree with various authors on the fact that non-state actors resorting to political violence are rational actors who act purposively in the pursuit of their policy preferences, e.g. terrorists (e.g. Lake 2002; Enders and Sandler 2006, Findley and Young 2011) rebels, revolutionary groups (Gurr 1970, Goodwin 2001) or social movements (Della Porta 2006).

Thus, and even more in an authoritarian context, a realistic change of government policy seems impossible because none institutional channels exist and the possibility of demonstrating in the street creates substantial risks. Because actors ready to use violence against the state are rational and think in terms of a cost-benefit analysis when undertaking any action, they know that the costs are high and their benefits probabilistic. In this respect, such actors are more likely to use political violence when their actions can be successful in changing the policies of the target regime (Conrad and Conrad 2014). In this context, the goal sought by actors using political violence is twofold: to pressure the government, through the population, for policy change (Kydd and Walter 2006) and to provoke a military response from the government so as to incite moderates to adopt radical views against the ruling power (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007).

Although the potential benefits of using political violence are obvious, the cost of any attack is also important. Therefore, non-state actors are likely to target regimes in which the likelihood of enacting policy change is high and so, the variance of political violence across regime-type can be based on the extent to which it generated costs vis-à-vis the domestic populace (Conrad and Conrad 2014). Consequently, these costs can create incentives for dissidents to use political violence against a central authority. Indeed, regimes in which an accountability group to the leader exists or where leaders can be held accountable by domestic pressure tend to be more vulnerable to political violence as a tactic to modify government policy (Conrad and Conrad 2014). Thus, we argue that the likelihood of strong levels of political violence is higher in regimes where specific institutional designs generate high audience costs.

Following this logic, because non-state actors using political violence usually lack the capabilities to engage directly in military actions against the government and therefore they

direct violence against noncombatant, state officials or symbolic targets (Conrad & Conrad 2014). Thus, the use of violence to spread fear among a large audience is a strategy that is often used to trigger a policy change or influence the behavior of a government (Hoffman 2006). As a result, the rationale behind the use of violence lies in the ability of actors to impact society, as a broad audience and not just direct victims. Nevertheless, as Conrad and Conrad (2014) explain, the impact of using political violence is useful only if it actually translates into policy or political change. Actors using political violence will be more likely to attack states where leaders are more accountable to their constituency.

In this regard, the institutional design of states, and more specifically authoritarian ones, also greatly affect the extent to which it generates more or less audience costs. Consequently, this might explain also why some states are more targeted by political violence than others. In this matter, Week's logic of audience costs (2008) is helpful to understand incentives for non-state actors to target governments by using political violence. Drawing upon Weeks' theory (ibid.), two mechanisms are relevant: (1) the existence of a domestic audience able to punish the leader and (2) the visibility of this process to a larger audience. From the theoretical perspectives presented, our hypotheses below want to highlight the existing link between the institutional design of authoritarian regimes in the production of audience costs and the likelihood of political violence.

H₁: The fulfilment of the accountability and visibility criteria in authoritarian regimes favors the production of high levels of audience costs.

Our first hypothesis attempts to shed light on the positive causal link between the conditions that the institutional designs of dictatorships must meet in order to allow the production of high levels of audience costs. Indeed, the fact that audience costs are generated is the necessary prerequisite of our research. However, the variety of authoritarian regimes and the way they are institutionally organized have a direct impact on the levels of audience costs. Because some dictatorships encompass domestic institutions that could represent an effective counterbalance to leader's powers, we expect different levels of audience costs and therefore disparities in their levels of political violence. In this sense, we decided to divide authoritarian regimes with respect to their expected production's level of audience costs. This leads us to make three additional hypotheses:

H₂: Single-party, military and dynastic authoritarian regimes generate more audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are therefore more affected by acts of political violence.

H₃: Personalist and non-dynastic authoritarian regimes generate less audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are therefore less affected by acts of political violence.

H₄: If hybrid authoritarian regimes fulfill both accountability and visibility criteria, they generate audience costs that raise the incentives for non-state actors to use political violence.

To summarize our theoretical expectations, single-party, military and dynastic regimes should be more targeted by acts of political violence as they generate higher audience costs than personalist and non-dynastic regimes. Indeed, in these regimes, the existence of an effective accountability group that have the will and means to possibly threaten the incumbent's tenure in office should provide greater incentive for non-state groups to resort to political violence. Concerning hybrid regimes, the likelihood of political violence within those regimes depends on whether their institutional design enables the production of audience costs.

Methodology

In order to test our hypotheses and answer our research question, we use a combined quantitative and in-depth qualitative methodology of analysis. More specifically, we follow a multiple-case study method that allows in-depth investigations in our countries. To do so, we rely on a comparative system design, namely a *Most Similar System Design* (MSSD) (Przeworski and Teune 1970: 34). For the temporal and geographical space of research we rely on two databases, namely Polity IV and Freedom House (2017) in order to select our MENA countries which fall into Geddes (2003) and Herb (1999) typologies of authoritarian regimes. As our thesis focuses on MENA authoritarian regimes from 2000 to 2010, our analysis follows a two-step process. The first step consists of classifying our countries thanks to the typology of authoritarian regimes created by Geddes (2003) to which we add two types of monarchies from Herb (1999). The second step consists of looking at the levels of audience costs generated within these regimes. In this respect, we know from our theoretical framework that levels of audience costs depend on several factors, mainly the existence of an accountability group that has the will and the means to punish the leader and a visibility criterion. Finally, in order to quantify the levels of political violence within our dictatorships, we use the data from the Global Terrorism Database (GDT) (START 2017).

Analysis

For the purpose of our study, we classify our six regimes as follow: Tunisia as single-party, Libya as personalist, Egypt as military and Syria as hybrid regime. Moreover, we classify Saudi Arabia as a dynastic monarchy and Morocco as a non-dynastic monarchy. Our choices of classification stem from a detailed qualitative analysis of each country, which results from a comprehensive understanding of the specialized literature. In the Tunisian case, we argue that the *Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique* (RCD) was the predominant center of decision-making in Ben Ali's regime (Jebnoun 2014). In Libya, Gaddafi was the unquestioned central figure of the regime and embodied all powers (St John 2014). In Egypt, we assess the role played by the military as a crucial feature of Mubarak's regime because he derived his power from the strength and support of the army (Jebnoun 2014; Sassoon 2016). The hybrid nature of the Syrian regime comes from the fact that the regime encompasses various key players in the decision-making—Bashar Al-Assad, the military and the Ba'th party—but none of them had full powers during our period of analysis. In Saudi Arabia, the predominant role played by the royal family made us assess the dynastic feature of the regime led by the Al-Saud family (Seznec 2014). Finally, the features of the Moroccan monarchy lead us to classify it as non-dynastic because Mohammed VI embodies all powers and does not share it with family members (Boukhars 2010). These different classifications lead us to assess the discrepancies existing among our countries with respect to their levels of audience costs from 2000 to 2010.

In Tunisia, the single-party regime has generated two different levels of audience costs linked to two different periods. Indeed, from 2000 to 2002, namely before the constitutional reform, levels of audience costs in Tunisia were high because of the existence of an accountability group and institutional setups that represented a counterbalance to the strong powers of Ben Ali. However, since 2002, the successive constitutional reforms undertaken by Ben Ali himself in order to assert his own power over the Tunisian state generated low levels of audience costs in the absence of any possible accountability group. In Libya, the personalist regime of Gaddafi did not generate high levels of audience costs. Indeed, the personalist feature of the Libyan regime where all powers were concentrated in the hands of Gaddafi linked to the ways he coup-proofed possible rivals made difficult the existence of an authoritarian elite that could threaten him. Thus, the authoritarian regime of Gaddafi has generated low levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, from 2000 to 2010, levels of audience costs in Libya were low because of the inexistence of an accountability group and institutional setups that provides almost unlimited powers to Gaddafi.

In Egypt, Mubarak derived his power from the strength and support of the military. Thus, the Egyptian military regime has generated high levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, from 2000 to 2010, levels of audience costs in Egypt were high because of the existence of an accountability group embodied by the military institution and able to counterbalance the power of President Mubarak. The hybrid Syrian regime headed by Bashar has generated low levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, from 2000 to 2010, no real accountability group could effectively threaten Bashar's power. Indeed, the institutional design of the Syrian regime hybrid entails that neither his family nor the authoritarian elite of the Ba'th party could have both the means and will to overthrow Bashar. As a consequence, levels of audience costs in Syria were low.

In Saudi Arabia, Al Saud monarchy has generated medium to high levels of audience costs with a peak from 2003 to 2005 due to the institutionalization of the "Bay'ah Committee" aimed at dealing with matters of royal succession. The institutional setup of the dynastic monarchy makes the leader accountable to the royal family, whose priority is to keep their privileges safe through the continuation of the dynasty. In Morocco, the authoritarian regime of Mohammed VI has generated low levels of audience costs for our period of analysis. Indeed, the non-dynastic monarchical feature of the Moroccan regime entails that, similar to a personalist regime, the locus of power lies solely in the hands of Mohammed VI. Thus, when assessing the role of accountability groups, the peculiarity of Morocco is that none members of the royal cabinet has the will or the means to threaten the king.

To summarize our theoretical expectations, since single-party regimes, military regimes and dynastic monarchies have institutional setups in which an autocratic leader can be held accountable and more easily removed from office, levels of political violence should be higher in our authoritarian regimes of Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Unlike these regime-types, personalist regimes and non-dynastic monarchies, namely Libya and Morocco, do not have the same levels of accountability and should experience, on average, less acts of political violence than other regimes. Concerning the hybrid regime of Syria, we expect that, as it generated low levels of audience costs during our period of analysis, violent political acts should be sparse.

Political Violence and Audience Costs in Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia

From 2000 to 2010, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia experienced in total 64 incidents. From 2000 to 2010, Tunisia under Ben Ali experienced seven acts of political violence. During these

10 years, two waves of violence can be assessed, one from 2000 to 2002 during which four incidents were registered and then the second one from 2007 to 2008 with three attacks. As far as Egypt is concerned, it experienced in total 14 incidents from 2000 to 2010. It is worth noting that from 2000 to 2003 included and in 2007, Egypt was not targeted by any political violence. Apart from these years, the main wave of violence hitting Mubarak's regime happened in 2006 with an overall of five incidents with a total of 19 fatalities and 100 people injured. With respect to the location of the attacks, the capital Cairo and Alexandria have been mainly targeted. Among our six countries, Saudi Arabia has been the one most targeted by acts of political violence. Indeed, according to GDT (START 2017), no less than 43 incidents regardless of doubt have been registered from 2000 to 2010. The peak of violence happened during the year 2003 with 17 incidents, mainly located in the capital Riyadh.

By comparing levels of audience costs previously analyzed and levels of political violence in the authoritarian regimes of Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the results tend to confirm our second hypothesis stating that single-party, military and dynastic authoritarian regimes generate more audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are therefore more affected by acts of political violence (H2). Indeed, most of violent political actions directed towards our three authoritarian regimes occurred during the period when levels of audience costs were at their highest. The case of Tunisia is probably the most striking one in this respect. Indeed, over our period of analysis lasting 10 years, most of violent political acts happened when Ben Ali faced an effective accountability group. The results for Egypt also tend to confirm the idea that a correlation exists between authoritarian institutional designs generating high audience costs and levels of political violence. Indeed, the military regime of Mubarak is, after Saudi Arabia, the regime that experienced the highest number of attacks with 14 incidents over 10 years. Moreover, as previously stated, the strength of the military apparatus represented an effective accountability group to Mubarak's ruling power. Concerning Saudi Arabia, the fact that the dynastic monarchy has been the most targeted regime among our six countries does not seem to be hazardous. Indeed, among our three countries in which audience costs were high, it is probably the one in which the accountability group is the most powerful, i.e. the royal family.

Hence, we argue that non-state actors resorting to political violence do not target dictatorships randomly. On the contrary, because actors ready to use violence against the state are rational and think in terms of a cost-benefit analysis when undertaking any action, they know that the costs are high and their benefits probabilistic. Consequently, as dictators have the powers to change the policies of the regime, such actors are more likely to use political violence

in regimes where the dictator can be held accountable by a group that could threaten his tenure in office (Hoffman 2006, Conrad and Conrad 2014). Thus, this is confirmed by looking at the number of incidents, their location and the target types in our regimes.

Political Violence and Audience Costs in Libya, Morocco and Syria

From 2000 to 2010, the dictatorships of Gaddafi, Bashar Al-Assad and Mohammed VI, experienced a total of 16 incidents. As we have presented in our theoretical part and drawing from our hypotheses, we expect on average low levels of political violence in these three regimes as their institutional setups generate low levels of audience costs. Because leaders in those regimes do not face an effective accountability group that could threaten their tenure in office in case of a domestic threat, we argue that non-state actors have fewer incentives to launch violent acts in these regime types.

While Saudi Arabia was the most targeted country among our six authoritarian regimes, Libya is on the contrary the regime that has been less affected by acts of political violence. According to GDT (ibid.), from 2000 to 2010, the regime of Gaddafi experienced in total only two political violent acts, one in 2007 and one in 2008. However, by looking carefully, both attacks were coordinated by Sudanese assailants and targeted a Sudanese Airways indicating that the ultimate goal of the attacks was not to strike Gaddafi's power. Regarding Syria, the regime of Bashar was hit by three violent political acts from 2000 to 2010. It is worth noting that these three attacks happened every two year, namely in 2004, 2006 and 2008. The consequences of these three incidents were 27 fatalities and 16 people injured. Among this group of three countries, Morocco has been the most targeted by acts of political violence. Indeed, according to GDT (START 2017), 11 incidents have been registered from 2000 to 2010. During these 10 years, two waves of violence can be assessed, one in 2003 during which five incidents were registered and then the second one in 2007 with six attacks.

As previously highlighted, we expect that the number of incidents is on average lower in Libya, Syria and Morocco than in our three previous dictatorships due to the fact that they generated lower levels of audience costs. This is effectively confirmed for the cases of Libya and Syria. Indeed, in Libya, we argue that the personalist feature of Gaddafi's regime did not provide sufficient incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence as a tool to trigger policy change. Looking at levels of political violence in Libya, more salient is the fact that Gaddafi's regime has only experienced two incidents over a period of 10 years. Indeed, we

argue that outsiders knew that Gaddafi had unlimited power in the country. Consequently, with the inexistence of an effective accountability group, resorting to violent act would have been dangerous, but above all, not rational and inefficient with respect to a low likelihood of success. Following this logic, the informal system set up by Gaddafi through his reliance on tribes and the revolutionary committee successfully prevented the emergence of a group that could counterbalance his personal authority.

Similar to Libya, the regime of Bashar Al-Assad provides a relevant case. Indeed, it has been targeted by only three incidents over a period of 10 years suggesting that non-state actors willing to resort to political violence had few incentives to target a dictatorship in which any attacks could not have an effective impact on its policy. Indeed, as we have previously outlined, the personalist feature of Syrian hybrid regime and the grip on power consolidated by Bashar made it harder for non-state actors to threaten him. This led to the absence of a group having either the means or the will to possibly threaten his tenure in office.

Unlike our previous regimes, the case of Morocco provides a counter-example to our theory. Indeed, being a non-dynastic monarchy and generating low levels of audience costs, Morocco should be less targeted by acts of political violence. Surprisingly, unlike Syria and Libya, the regime of Mohammed VI experienced on average more violent political acts than Tunisia. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that over 10 years, Morocco was only targeted by two waves of violence, one in 2003 during which five incidents were registered and then the second one in 2007 with six attacks. When trying to explain such levels of political violence in Morocco, audience costs do not seem to provide a satisfactory explanation and an alternative explanation might therefore be provided.

Thus, by comparing levels of audience costs previously analyzed and levels of political violence in the authoritarian regimes of Libya and Morocco, the results partially confirm our third hypothesis stating that personalist and non-dynastic authoritarian regimes generate less audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and thus are less affected by acts of political violence (H3). Indeed, this hypothesis is only confirmed for the personalist regime of Muammar Gaddafi that experienced no act of political violence against his ruling power. However, in contrast with Libya, the non-dynastic monarchy of Morocco tends to refute the idea that this specific type of authoritarian regime is less prone to violent political acts. Furthermore, our results also allow us to confirm our fourth hypothesis (H4) because the regime of Bashar Al-Assad did not have an accountability group. Consequently, non-state actors did not have

incentive to target Syria as they were aware that an attack could not trigger any political change. Indeed, Syria as a hybrid regime, did not fulfill the accountability criteria to generate high levels of audience costs and non-state actors did not have incentive to target the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.

To conclude on our analysis, the results found for our six authoritarian regimes confirm the significant role played by audience costs in the likelihood of political violence in dictatorships. The higher audience costs are, the greater the chances that acts of political violence will occur. These results also confirm the observations of other studies on the role played by audience costs not only in international outcomes but also in domestic outcomes (e.g. Smith 1998; Schultz 2001; Weeks 2008). They also corroborate the theoretical contribution of Conrad and Conrad (2014) who see the institutional design and the levels of audience costs as a factor of important discrepancies of political violence among dictatorships.

Conclusion

Why are some dictatorships targeted by a large number of violent political acts while others are not? It is from this question that our research focused on identifying the factors explaining the different levels of political violence in dictatorships. Using rigorous selection criteria and choosing a period of ten years from 2000 to 2010, we decided to analyze countries part of the Middle East and North Africa representing different types of authoritarian regimes that could lead to different levels of political violence. In this regard, the method of analysis employed in our research has strived to offer a comparative-examination of different authoritarian institutional designs and to what extent they influence the likelihood of political violence. Drawing upon Weeks (2008) and Conrad and Conrad (2014), our line of argument emphasizes the role of audience costs as main incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence as an act aimed at triggering policy change. Indeed, when looking at political violence in authoritarian regimes, sharp discrepancies exist among dictatorships worldwide. Thus, by assessing the inequality of authoritarian regimes in the face of political violence, our interest has been to investigate the explanatory weight played by different authoritarian institutional setups and their production of audience costs in order to explain why some dictatorships experienced more acts of political violence than others.

Through a combination of quantitative and in-depth qualitative analyses of our six authoritarian regimes, we argue that two main criteria are at play when it comes to producing

audience costs. The first one is the presence or absence of a domestic authoritarian accountability group that have the means and will to effectively threaten the incumbent's tenure in office. The second element is the visibility criterion that requires the existence of sufficient media coverage. Depending on whether the institutional design of dictatorships encompasses those two elements, we argue that different levels of audience costs will be produced and therefore will increase the incentives for non-state actors to launch attacks in autocratic countries. The results that emerged from our analyzes can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The fulfillment of the accountability and visibility criteria in authoritarian regimes favors the production of high levels of audience costs and the incentives for non-state actors to resort to political violence.
- (2) Single-party, military and dynastic regimes generate more audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are on average more affected by acts of political violence.
- (3) Personalist regimes generate less audience costs than the other type of dictatorships and are on average less affected by acts of political violence.
- (4) The absence of accountability group to the leader in hybrid regimes favors the production of both low levels of audience costs and political violence.
- (5) Non-dynastic regimes, although generating similar level of audience costs than personalist regimes, are nonetheless comparably affected by political violence as single-party, military and dynastic regimes. In this case, the lack of causal certainty in our country analyzed, i.e. Morocco, does not allow us to assert with confidence the relationship between audience costs and political violence in this type of authoritarian regime. Thus, our results suggest that an alternative explanation might exist.

Drawing on our findings, our research raises the importance of taking into account the existing diversity present among authoritarian regimes and their production of audience costs for the study of political violence. We have shown how the presence or absence of a visible effective accountability group able to threaten the leader through the production of audience costs can create incentives for non-state actors to resort to violent acts politically motivated. Indeed, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia experienced on average more political violence than Libya and Syria due to the fact that the former had strong accountability groups. While the military institution, the single party and the dynastic family have a real power in counterbalancing the power of the dictator and can hold him accountable, we found that leaders in personalist regimes do not face any rival challenging their authority. Similar to the latter, hybrid regimes whose leaders have successfully imposed their power over other relevant

players cannot see their power endangered. Following this, we have shown that Libya and Syria experienced on average low levels of both audience costs and political violence. Furthermore, we have argued that not only is the original institutional setup of these regimes responsible for discrepancies of levels of political violence experienced, but also the way leaders coup-proofed their regimes through clientelism, appointments, frequent rotation of officers or creation of parallel security structures.

These last remarks lead us to address certain limits of our research. The first concerns the problem of endogeneity although we try to minimize its impact in our research notably through the use of control variables and a comparative design. A similar limit of our work lies in the assumption that violent non-state actors behave rationally and in line with their objectives and beliefs. Although we are aware that such assumption is strong, we believe that such argument is coherent with the results found by many academics (e.g. Muller and Weede 1990; Lake 2002; Horgan 2008). Following this, a criticism might also be made with regard to the definition and inclusion of terrorism in our work as well as the reliance on the Global Terrorism Database (START 2017). In this respect, as we have previously outlined throughout our analysis, the lack of data and research on political violence *per se* are scarce and therefore we try to overcome this problem with a broad definition.

In conclusion, new studies must be done to increase our understanding of the reasons why some authoritarian regimes experienced more violent acts than others. In this regard, our study emphasizes that it is by increasing the mechanisms by which political leaders are held accountable that non-state actors resort to political violence in non-democratic states. Consequently, our research suggests that by replicating our study with a different typology of authoritarian regimes or looking at regimes experiencing political transitions, this might offer new avenues to understand why the likelihood of political violence is higher in some countries. Furthermore, audience costs theory might also be relevant in bridging the gap between other fields of study and explaining violent political dynamics in period of democratization.

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