

Research Line

Violence in the Twilight Zone: informal non-state policing in  
the Global South

**State-Society Dynamics in Egypt:  
The Twists and Turns of a Power Struggle**

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Violence Research and Development Project | Papers

No. 15

International Center for Violence Research – ICVR

A Project of the Institute for Interdisciplinary  
Research on Conflict and Violence – IKG

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## Acknowledgements

The Violent Research and Development Project series of papers documents the preliminary results of a pilot project that was established to integrate higher education training in social science research with cross-regional comparative research on violence. The overall aims of the project, which has been generously supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), is to empower young academics in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, so that they can contribute to international violence research, publish their findings both nationally and internationally, and ultimately develop scientifically grounded political and civil-society responses.

For that purpose, the Bielefeld University's International Center of Violence Research (ICVR) entered into cooperative agreements with five partner Universities in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East: the American University in Cairo (Egypt), the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas in San Salvador (El Salvador), the University of Benin City (Nigeria), the University of the Punjab in Lahore (Pakistan), and the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru in Lima.

The empirical research carried out in the pilot project was structured in five research lines: "Parties, Passion, and Politics", "Justifications and Legitimacy of Police Violence", "Violent and Non-Violent Neighborhoods", "Violence in the Twilight Zone", and "Violence against Women". These topics were chosen to cover intra-societal conflict and violence by looking at aspects such as political violence, violence perpetrated by state institutions, violent events, violent and non-violent locations, violence and gender, and forms of self-defense and vigilantism.

This paper documents research that was conducted in the Research Line "Violence in the Twilight Zone: informal non-state policing in the Global South". Groups carrying out informal non-state policing such as vigilante groups or gangs take "the law into their own hands" and act in lieu of the state. They thus operate in what has been referred to as a "twilight zone": a zone in which public authority is exercised not exclusively by the state but by a variety of institutions including informal, non-state groups. For these groups to be able to exercise this kind of authority, let alone to maintain themselves for a longer period, they have to enjoy at least some degree of legitimacy with the members of the communities in which they operate. Thus, this research examines the basis of legitimacy of groups carrying out informal non-state policing and their relation to the state in four countries of the Global South, namely Egypt, El Salvador, Nigeria, and Peru.

Bielefeld, July 2015

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Research Line

Violence in the Twilight Zone: informal non-state policing in the Global South

**State-Society Dynamics in Egypt:  
The Twists and Turns of a Power Struggle**

Soha Farouk

**Abstract**

Going beyond the traditional state-society dichotomy, in this paper I examine how state-society relations in Egypt have evolved since the uprising of January 2011. Drawing on the example of a neighborhood self-help organization, I illustrate how, in the wake of the uprising, new avenues for negotiating power have opened up at the local level. Oscillating between challenging state domination and taking a pragmatic stance to preserve resources and bargaining power, self-help organizations are engaged in a changing relationship with the state in which the two entities are interwoven.

**Key words**

Egypt, state-in-society, power struggle, social forces, neighborhood

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## 1. Introduction

On January 28<sup>th</sup> 2011, mass protests erupted in public squares all over Egypt. While protesters demanded the fall of then president Hosni Mubarak, security forces were not only unable to prevent the protestors taking to the streets; they were repeatedly forced to retreat after their vehicles were set ablaze. In what followed, a series of police stations across the country were torched, prisoners broke out of jails and weapons and ammunition were looted (Amar & Prashad, 2013). With rumors of a crime wave spreading across Egypt's cities, many ordinary citizens spontaneously organized in neighborhood watch groups to provide security in their communities. While some of these so-called "popular committees" were dissolved within a few months, others continued to exist and extended their activities to include improving living conditions (El-Meehy, 2012).

With these self-help organizations taking up more and more prominent roles in the local sphere, the question arises as to what extent non-state actors were able to actually influence and shape local politics. This question is of special relevance since, as Stepputat (2013: 25) argues, in Egypt, as in other Arab states, *"state presence [at the local level] is limited, highly contested or intertwined with forms of power and governance that are at odds with the*

*Weberian ideals of state and bureaucracy*". Thus, as Bouziane et al. (2013) point out, the local sphere is not only constantly tested but inherently contested.

Against this background, I attempt to explore the patterns of contestation and negotiation about power on the ground by studying a self-help organization that emerged in the aftermath of the uprising of 2011 in one of Cairo's marginalized neighborhoods, namely the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa. Ard El-Liwa is a marginalized neighborhood situated on the outskirts of Cairo. It is composed of an amalgam of middle, working, and lower class inhabitants, as well as people with criminal records that seek refuge there. Built illegally on agricultural land, Ard El-Liwa's inhabitants were forced to resort to various forms of self-help for a long time. In the period under study here, the Popular Alliance expanded its activities from the provision of security to improving living conditions in the community. In practice this meant challenging state policies in the neighborhood in a few instances and collaborating with it in others.

My aim is, first, to understand how the Alliance emerged and developed, and, second, how it interacted with the state authorities over the period of the study. It is my contention that local non-state actors' potential to influence and shape local politics can only be fully understood when examining the dynamics of power struggles at the local level. The study is guided by two questions: how did social transformations at the national level influence the potential of the Popular Alliance to mobilize members of the community, bring about change and challenge the state? And, in what way did the dynamics unfolding between the state authorities and the Popular Alliance affect the relationship between both sides?

In my analysis I build on Migdal's (2001) "state-in-society" approach as well as Hagmann and Péclard's (2010) concept of "negotiated statehood" to capture the complex interdependencies of the state and a societal actor. I consider the struggle between the state and the societal actor to be an ongoing process in which both sides not only renegotiate their relationship, but also transform each other. Thus, the interaction of the Popular Alliance with the inhabitants of Ard El-Liwa and its surrounding yields interesting insights on how power at the local level is continuously (re)configured.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I provide a brief overview of theories on state-society relations in general and in Egypt in particular. After I have presented the theoretical framework and the main concepts used, I then sketch the broad context of state-society interactions in Egypt and the socio-political developments since the uprising in 2011. Given the state of flux and rapid political change at the national level, I focus on milestone moments that had a turning effect on state-society relations. Finally, I zoom in to the local level to trace the evolution of the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa. I first explain how the neighborhood was internally organized and how it operated before 2011. Next, I recount the organization's emergence following the uprising and its attempts to expand its power and influence. On the

basis of this account, I assess the twists and turns of the struggle over power between state and society and its consequences on the exercise of power more generally.

## **2. Power and State-Society Dynamics: a Brief Literature Overview with a Special Emphasis on Egypt**

Much ink has been spilled over the locus of political power and the capacity of societal actors to oppose the state and create alternative social orders. In political science, many paradigms conceive of the state and society as two distinct and dichotomous entities and seek to explain political transformations through an exclusive focus on these entities' respective actions (Sellers, 2010). Thus, state-centric theorists such as Shils (1975) and Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985) tend to oppose the state to society and emphasize the role of the state as the primary agent of change. Society-centered scholars on the other hand emphasize the impact of the actions of societal actors such as social movements or class-based institutions (Miliband, 1983; Putnam, 2000).

In contrast to these rather dichotomous conceptions, authors such as Migdal (2001) or Hagmann and Péclard (2010) assert the “elusiveness” of the boundary between the state and society. Thus, Migdal (2001) argues that power is not confined exclusively to neither of the two entities. Rather, it is subject to a constant struggle between “a mélange of social organizations” (ibid, 2001: 56) such as strongmen, families and clans that are both part of the society and the state. In contrast to conceptualizations that assume the state to be a coherent and autonomous structure, Migdal (2001) argues that power is dispersed and that the state and societal forces act interdependently in a mutually transformative process of empowerment and disempowerment, conflict and complicity, resistance and accommodation.

Hagmann and Péclard (2010) argue that state boundaries are elusive, as they are constantly redefined in a dynamic process of negotiation of statehood involving a heterogeneous mix of local, national and transnational actors. Building on the concept of “negotiating statehood”, they attempt to account for the changes in power relations and elucidate non-state as well as sub-national actors' patterns of engagement with and disengagement from the state. In Hagmann and Péclard's (2010: 550) view, statehood is negotiated in *“arenas [that] structur[e] social actors' scope by conditioning – not pre-determining – their inclusion or exclusion from negotiation processe.”* They distinguish the informal arena from the formal “negotiation table” in which participants recognize the legitimacy of their counterparts and negotiate on the basis of existing procedures.

Regarding the literature on Egypt, many scholars have sought to explain Egypt's political system by exclusively focusing on the state or the “state elite.” Although almost all of these scholars presume that the state is autonomous from society, they disagree on its strength

and capacity to penetrate society (see e.g. Migdal, 1988; Hinnebusch, 1990; Ayubi, 1995; Fahmy, 2002).

There are however exceptions. One is Dorman (2009), who rejects the idea that the state is either strong or weak and instead uses the concept of “neglectful rule” to characterize the Egyptian government’s mode of governance. According to Dorman (2009: 276-277) the state only controls the main axes of the country and focuses on direct threats to its power while turning a blind eye to peripheral zones. Another exception is Sims (2012), who describes the Egyptian state as a “soft state”, maintaining its hold on power while functioning under minimalist conditions.

Besides the literature written by political scientists, the recent rise of informal networks and their interactions with the state have led to a growing number of scholars informed by a more anthropological approach examining politics beyond the level of the state. Thus Ismail (2006), in an astute analysis, investigated citizens’ daily encounters with the state at the local level. She reversed Migdal’s approach (2001) into a “society-in-state approach” to capture the state’s incoherence and its dependency on the power of local actors to expand its control over society. Along the same line, in a volume edited by Singerman (2011), several authors studied the tensions generated by the process of neoliberal globalization and the resulting withdrawal of the Egyptian state from the provision of welfare services. Singerman (2011: 10) found that *“the regime weakened the municipal government intentionally as a defensive mechanism to maintain and consolidate regime power”*. Menza (2012) on the other hand drew on the so-called network approach and ascribes the influence of neoliberal state policies on the rising socio-economic and political role and agency of the so-called lesser notables, well-connected local leaders who become the target of cooptation by the state. Similarly, Harders (2013) employed the concept of “state from below” to emphasize the ongoing bargaining process that takes place between the state and informal actors at the local level.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

In my attempt to conceptualize the interactions between the state and the societal actor of my case study, I make use of Joel Migdal’s state-in-society approach as well as Hagman and Péclard’s (2010) approach of “negotiated statehood.” I adopt Migdal’s (2001) definition of state-society encounters as a process of constant transformation between two fragmented and at the same time interconnected realms struggling over power. It is my contention that Migdal’s as well as Hagman and Péclard’s approach make it possible to comprehend the heterogeneous and alternating character of both actors and the complex nature of their interdependence. Rather than seeing the state and society as static entities, I view them as

“becoming” (Migdal, 2001). Hence, state and society constantly shape and are reshaped by each other leading to a redistribution and fragmentation of power between them.

With regard to the Popular Alliance, I view it as a new form of citizen engagement. While in the last two decades, various groups emerged in Egypt that fought for democracy as well as civic rights (AbdelRahman, 2013), more unconventional self-organized groups also came into being. Dissatisfied with the limited possibilities of contestation among civil society organizations, these associations of citizens sought to fundamentally challenge the status quo (Tadros, 2013).

In so doing they employed new means that obeyed a different logic of action. Following Hagmann and Péclard (2010) I attempt to identify the “material resources” and “symbolic repertoires” that underlie these means and logics. While “material resources” simply are the material bases of collective action that are available to the local actors, the “symbolic repertoires” refer to the various repertoires that can be mobilized to gain popular support and justify their actions. It is my contention that focusing on these resources and repertoires provides insights in light of the constantly shifting bases of power of the Popular Alliance. It also makes it possible to discern the factors that create the power to negotiate. While in their article Hagmann and Péclard concentrate on post-civil war settings, I employ the same lens to analyze the evolution of the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa against the background of the ebbs and flows of the social mobilization in Egypt that occurred after 2011. I suggest that at the local level the flow of ideas and practices regarding state power made the members of the Popular Alliance but also the residents of the neighborhood more feel as if they were part of a change that went beyond their localities, which in turn deepened the appeal of the movement.

#### **4. Methodology**

The paper is the product of ethnographically informed fieldwork conducted from February to April 2014, in Ard El-Liwa, Cairo. Primary data was collected through twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the leaders of the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa as well as with a number of community members and ordinary residents living in the area for more than five years. The snowball sampling technique was adopted to reach those who were involved in the organizational and associational life of the neighborhood (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981).

Following my first three interviews with three local leaders, I got a sense of the neighborhood and identified the most influential families and groups that I ought to talk to. At the same time, I asked people in youth clubs I had chatted with informally to refer me to other, potentially interesting, interlocutors. This method was useful in limiting the selection

bias of the snowball technique. This was especially the case with women who were rarely pointed out to me by other interlocutors.

Given the magnitude of the research site, I was forced to omit the periphery of the neighborhood, which was judged to be controlled by criminals and drug dealers and was therefore too risky an area to effectively conduct research. My investigation thus focused on public spaces, namely the main streets of the neighborhood, which are inhabited by working and middle class families. This was where the Popular Alliance was most active and where it interacted with the state most of the time.

Given the limited numbers of interlocutors, it is important to keep in mind that I do not envisage comprehensively assessing all of the factors affecting state-society dynamics. Longer fieldwork would have provided me with even deeper insights into the complexities and socio-economic tensions in the neighborhood. As an exhaustive analysis of the internal socio-economic hierarchies of the neighborhood is beyond the scope of my investigation and, given the particularities of the experience of the Popular Alliance and of the period throughout which it developed, I will be very cautious when making generalizations.

## **5. State-Society Dynamics in Egypt at the National Level**

In the last three decades, the Egyptian political system has been among the most resilient to change (Heydemann, 2007). The highly centralized, personalized regime of Hosni Mubarak, who had been in power since the 1980s, was skilled in retaining an image of a “democratic and liberal” state by regularly holding multiparty elections and implementing symbolic political reforms. At the same time, dissident voices were intimidated through a repressive security apparatus, the backbone of the regime (Kassem, 2004).

At the economic level, since the 1970s, consecutive governments carried out a neoliberal economic agenda, gradually reducing the number of subsidized public services and privatizing formerly state-owned industries, including in the housing, employment and health sectors. With fewer social services, informality spread, filling the gaps in affordable housing and employment. With the continued withdrawal of the state, informality didn’t just spread among poorer segments of society, but slowly extended to the educated middle and even the higher classes (Bayat, 2012). Thus, economic liberalization led to the emergence of a new business elite that monopolized the economy and dominated the political system at the expense of the middle class in particular, which was left deprived of many of its privileges (Kandil, 2012). Apart from that, it increased social inequality in general (Ismail, 2006).

The concentration of the country’s wealth in the hands of a small business-oriented political elite and the growing social exclusion and rampant nepotism fuelled public frustration

and anger. This dissatisfaction culminated in an unprecedented uprising in January 2011, in which protestors called for social justice and freedom (Amar and Prashad, 2013).

The eighteen days of mass protests in the beginning of 2011 unexpectedly brought together otherwise disparate social groups such as workers, university students and progressive youths. Their demands included – but were not limited to – independent unions, free elections, greater economic and social justice, the end of corruption, as well as the establishment of a “civil state” in which the military as well as religious institutions would not engage in politics (Amar & Prashad, 2011). The January 2011 protests sparked hope for a greater role of citizens in politics but also raised questions regarding their ability to translate their activism into more sustainable forms of political participation.

However, when Hosni Mubarak finally resigned on 11 February 2011, the newly created Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) dashed these hopes. While the SCAF initially tolerated protests and strikes and projected itself as the guardian of the people, it soon after tightened its grip over the public space and regained control over the city’s streets. Thus, the SCAF reactivated the emergency laws<sup>1</sup> that had been in force under Hosni Mubarak. They penalized blocking roads, spreading false rumors, possessing and trading weapons and further restricted the right to protest and go on strike. Apart from the emergency laws, the SCAF also introduced new laws banning and criminalizing public demonstrations and strikes that constrained the work of “public institutions and economic growth” (Irshad, 2012). Moreover, the security forces were deployed to forcefully disperse any social protest. Consequently, protestors and the security forces, backed by hired thugs, violently clashed on several occasions. Thus, the security forces cracked down on many marches, leading to the death of more than a dozen protestors. Demonstrators were tear-gassed and fired on by snipers as well as subjected to military trials, virginity tests and other kinds of oppressive practices<sup>2</sup> (Amar & Prashad, 2013).

Following the victory of the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>3</sup>, Mohamed Morsi, in the first presidential elections after the uprising, the situation did not change much. A new law

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<sup>1</sup> Emergency laws were promulgated in Egypt following the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981. His successor, President Hosni Mubarak repeatedly extended them during his thirty years of rule. According to Eldakak (2012), the extension of these laws sustained Mubarak’s broad and excessive powers and facilitated imposing restrictions over individual freedoms and suppressing any opposition. When the SCAF came to power in 2011, it extended the emergency laws to include “*acts of thuggery, attacks against the freedom to work, the sabotage of institutions, the disruption of transportation, the obstruction of roads and the deliberate broadcasting or spreading of false news, rumors or statements*” (Eldakak, 2012: 304).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of the violence used by the security forces see Amar, 2011, p. 31-33

<sup>3</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood was the most influential Islamist political movement in Egypt after 2011. Although, since its foundation in 1928, it was banned from political activity most of the time, its mobilization power helped it control the two houses of Egyptian parliament and win the presidential elections in 2012. However, these victories were reversed by a military coup backed by massive street protests in June 2013. At the time of

was drafted banning all public demonstrations in which the president or the state was deemed to have been insulted. Peaceful protestors were repeatedly attacked by armed militias consisting of loyal members of the Muslim Brotherhood that wanted to protect the government (Amar & Prashad, 2013). After massive protests on 30 June 2013 and the removal of President Morsi by the military, ways of mobilizing against the regime became even more restricted, both legally and in practice. The interim president, Adly Mansour<sup>4</sup> approved a new law prohibiting all protests that weren't officially approved, thus further restricting the right of assembly (Brown, 2014). Apart from that, further constraints<sup>5</sup> were imposed on non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

All of these measures tremendously diminished the scope for political activism in the public space. When Abd EIFatah Elsisi finally became the new president in June 2014, backed by the military, nationalist rhetoric and official media, he was able to demobilize, vilify and criminalize all sorts of activities that were viewed as being in opposition to the regime and its fight against 'terrorism'. The dispersal of supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood occupying the squares after the ouster of Morsi, the arbitrary detention of a number of pro-revolution protestors who tried to demonstrate without prior government permission and the normalization of police impunity, revived the pre-revolution climate of fear in the country (Kingsley, 2014).

In fact, since the fall of the Mubarak regime in the beginning of 2011, the state and society were engaged in an intense and continuing tug of war over power, particularly the control of public space. Society, represented by numerous groups, was exerting pressure from below in different forms, including through popular movements and all kinds of organizations. On the other side, there was the state, represented by various governments, the military and its corporate partners, building on the country's authoritarian legacy to reinstitute the old rules of the game. The state regained its dominant position when the military regime reasserted its power over society. The relationship between the state and society has thus shifted constantly, according to absolute as well as relative strength over time.

Following this broad picture of state-society interactions at the macro level, the next section zooms in on the experience of the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa. After a broad

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writing of this paper, most of its leaders were behind bars, facing charges of terrorism and incitement of violence (Wickham, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Adly Mansour was the head of Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court. Appointed by the military following the removal of the Islamist president, he served as the country's interim president from July 2013 to June 2014.

<sup>5</sup> In mid-2014, the government announced that all the NGOs not registered with the government by the end of the year would be prosecuted. Moreover, an amendment to article 78 of the Egyptian Penal code in September 2014 stated that anyone receiving foreign funding with the aim of harming national interests would be punished by life imprisonment and a fine of no less than 500.000 Egyptian Pounds (Gehad, 2014).

description of the spatial and social characteristics of the local arena where the societal actor evolved, I describe in detail the pressures exerted by the state and the Alliance.

## 6. State-Society Dynamics at the Local Level

### 6.1 Ard El-Liwa: a portrait

Located in northern Cairo, the neighborhood of Ard El-Liwa (“Land of the General”), which was built illegally over 470 acres of former agricultural land, has about 300,000 inhabitants (Nagati and ElGendi, 2013). Consisting of randomly built, multi-storey brick buildings, separated by unpaved pathways, living conditions in Ard El-Liwa leave much to be desired. Its narrow and noisy streets are filled with huge piles of garbage and lack the most basic amenities.

Ard El-Liwa owes its existence to Cairo’s socio-economic transformations, caused by the neoliberal policies applied by the state in the last decades. Already in the 1950s a decrease in public services delivery forced people to seek alternative forms of housing. As a consequence of the lack of urban planning or control mechanisms, the city rapidly expanded into the desert and surrounding agricultural lands (Sims, 2012: 95). Thus, almost all of the houses were built through a demand-driven housing scheme in which people financed and built their houses themselves.

Nowadays, outsiders consider the neighborhood to be a “no-go-area” inhabited by poor people, plagued by drug abuse, burglaries, and gunfights. Although these things do sometimes happen in isolated corners of the neighborhood that attract criminals seeking refuge from the police, this picture is misleading. Many of my interviewees told me that they feel safer in their neighborhood than in the affluent neighborhoods nearby. Although the increase in the rate of violent crimes is met with indifference by the police, *“streets always fill with people and street cafés open overnight make people feel safe. We can still detect strangers and expel them in case of misbehavior”* (Interview with a local resident, April 2014).

Moreover, the neighborhood is home to urban poor as much as it is to people from the working, middle and even the upper-middle class. In contrast to the predominant perception, which sees popular neighborhoods as homogenous, the steady arrival to Ard El-Liwa of newcomers with different lifestyles has brought about deep mutations in the social structure of the neighborhood. Thus, according to an interviewee, the high population density of the area as well as the differences of class, education and ethnicity had a negative impact on the social ties and the sense of community and led to the development of groups that were hardly interacting and thus isolated from each other (interview with a local resident, April 2014). Moreover, large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers coming from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Iraq and recently Syria settled in the neighborhood. The affordable rent,

the proximity to the local refugees' assistance offices and the existence of a large community of fellow countrymen were the main reasons for the refugees' concentration in the area. As one refugee from Somalia who has lived in the neighborhood for five years explained,

*“Ard El-Liwa is a safe haven for us because many of us have no legal residence permits or fled their countries for political reasons. Here, we feel less vulnerable to police harassment and detention. Many of us had a past of political dissidence in our countries. So here, we feel protected of our embassies' supervision. We have set up our own coffee shops, our own groceries selling our local food at affordable prices and even a private self-help Somalian school was established” (Interview with a Somali refugee, April 2014).*

## **6.2 Genealogy of state-community interactions in Ard El-Liwa**

During the past three decades, Ard El-Liwa's residents have mostly been forced to resort to self-help to satisfy their basic needs. As Néfissa (2009: 180) pointed out, the state encouraged an informal decentralization of public services and assigned more and more responsibilities to citizens, the civil society or the private sector. For a long time, the local administrative system of Egypt was characterized by opaque laws, which were implemented by various state institutions that not only competed with each other and whose actions weren't coordinated, but which also had overlapping responsibilities. However, considering the state's policies towards the municipalities as withdrawal by the state would be misleading. Rather, the state was increasing its control over the informal neighborhoods indirectly at lower cost, reduced accountability and less democracy (Néfissa, 2009).

In this context of state downsizing, residents chose to rely on intermediaries as safety nets against the risks of their everyday life, rather than engaging with state institutions (the municipal authority or the police station). Therefore, local leaders such as elders, wealthy members of the community, and well connected members of the neighborhood – as well as family networks – gained in importance. As the size and social heterogeneity of Ard El-Liwa increased, the “need” for local leaders increased as well. Hence, many notorious elder men and experienced professionals came forward claiming leadership. This also included wealthy shop owners that came from reputed families who had lived in the area for a long time. They were known for their integrity and were respected by most residents. There were also young leaders who were more active at the street level, intervening in street fights between youths for instance. When these fights extended to the families, older leaders intervened to resolve the fights by bringing the disputing parties together in reconciliation and customary councils (Interview with a local leader, April 2014).

These kinds of informal conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms existed in almost all the working-class neighborhoods of Egypt (see e.g. Ismail, 2006; Belge and Blaydes, 2013;

Menza, 2012). People in Ard El-Liwa avoided state authorities, and in particular the police, mainly for two reasons: first, their inefficiency and, second, out of fear of corruption. As one interviewee put it:

*“If you enter a police station, you need a personal connection inside to be treated well and get your rights...if you’re on your own, you might not get anything, and even worse, you can find yourself blamed for something you didn’t do” (Interview with a local resident, March 2014).*

As Ard El-Lewa encloses areas that are strongly dominated by drug traffickers, it is not uncommon to see violent street fights. The police used to intervene after these fights had ended. According to one of my interlocutors,

*“fights of drug dealers are so violent and dangerous and you can never know how it will turn to be... we call the police but they usually come late after the end of the fight, arrest those who are still there if any, and few days later they let them go without charges...sometimes, we even not bother to call them” (Interview with a young local resident, April 2014).*

Nevertheless, when the problems were more complex and involved a dispute with state institutions, personal ties to neighborhood leaders were not sufficient anymore. The residents had to seek endorsement from surrounding communities, members of political parties and civil society organizations that were active in the neighborhood in order to increase their popular support and solve the problem. In 2001, for instance, garbage collectors living in one of the corners of the neighborhood were threatened with eviction. A ramp was to be built to connect a newly established urban neighborhood to the highway surrounding Cairo. Members of the community supported by social activists and members of an Egyptian leftist party as well as a legal NGO established an informal group called “the popular committee for the defense of the people of Ard al-Liwa” (Dorman (2009). With the support of the media and through the mobilization of the community, they succeeded in preventing the implementation of the state plan. In this particular case, the horizontal network established among various social organizations provided the residents of the neighborhood with the power to exert bottom-up pressure on the state and hold sway.

In addition to leaders whose authority is based on their family background, political networks became increasingly important. Even if local residents preferred not to deal with state institutions, in some cases – such as when one wanted to benefit from public services – it was unavoidable. Hence, when, during the Mubarak regime, the National Democratic Party was almost the only political party, its members or people well connected to them were influential and acted as mediators. In return for votes at election time, they offered assistance to the community. The charity organizations affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood played an

intermediary role as well, given that they delivered basic services to disadvantaged members of the community to compensate for the lack of public services. Although the Muslim Brotherhood's political activities were formally banned up until 2011, the Brotherhood's members' personal connections with municipal employees favored them as influential mediators (Néfissa, 2009).

Following this brief overview of some features of state-community interactions characterized by strong tradition of clientelism and mediation taking different forms, I trace the interactions between the state and the neighborhood after the uprising based on the experience of the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa.

### **6.3 A proactive community organization: the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa**

In light of the eruption of violence and rumors of attacks by thugs that followed the withdrawal of the security forces from the streets during the first days of the January 2011 uprising, Ard El-Liwa's inhabitants organized themselves to protect their neighborhood. Young men from the area formed a neighborhood watch group to patrol the streets and secure their homes during the night.

*"It was an exceptional moment as everyone in the area, old and young, professionals and unemployed, and even those with crime records, cooperated to secure the area" (Interview with a local leader of the Popular Alliance, March 2014).*

However, people's feeling of insecurity turned into anger when the mainstream media, influenced by the prejudices that existed against informal neighborhoods such as Ard El-Liwa, accused the residents of being behind robberies that had occurred in the wealthier neighborhoods adjacent to Ard El-Liwa.

*"We were so irritated by the media. They portrayed us as dispossessed thugs looking for the right moment to storm the upper classes [sic!]...it might be true for some of us living here but we are not all thugs" (Interview with a local leader, March 2014).*

In reaction to these allegations, many residents, especially those from the working class, tried to protect the banks and shopping malls in their area of residence to counter these accusations:

*"I took my bike and moved around the entire neighborhood to convince those who might have stolen something to bring it back and in return I assured them they will not be hurt or arrested by the police" (Interview with a local leader, April 2014).*

Subsequently, the media discourse shifted, praising the patriotism of the inhabitants of informal neighborhoods for protecting their country.

Meanwhile, the SCAF initially tolerated the activities of the committees. With the country spiraling into insecurity and lawlessness, the military encouraged citizens to defend their neighborhoods<sup>6</sup> (Interview with a social activist, March 2014). By “outsourcing” the task of security provision to ordinary citizens, it sought to save resources, which then could be used for other purposes such as regaining control of state power and controlling society. However, soon after, the positive image of popular committees as patriotic guardians of their neighborhoods changed again drastically. Popular committees suddenly were accused of harassing people randomly at checkpoints in the streets. While many popular committees dissolved when security forces took to the streets again, others directed their activities towards the social development of their neighborhoods (Bremer, 2011).

In Ard El-Liwa the self-help organization evolved into the so-called “Popular Alliance of Ard Al-Liwa”, a loose network of working class and middle class youths. Its aim was to improve the living conditions in the neighborhood:

*“We were not following a certain strategy...we didn’t have a vision...we just wanted to make the area better...we identified the problems of the area based on our own experiences to resolve them with our limited financial and organizational capacities and time...we were chaotic...we didn’t meet regularly and we were not participating in the implementation of every activity...some of us were more persistent while others had the expertise and the contacts...our success lied in combining various people with different skills” (Interview with a local leader, April, 2014).*

The working-class members of the Alliance were contractors and small to medium-sized shop owners who had been living in the neighborhood with their extended families for many decades. They were not necessarily socially active but had a reputation of being committed to the neighborhood. They usually were of modest social origins, had moved from Upper Egypt many decades ago and had built up a reputation by forging socio-economic ties within their professional networks. They sporadically engaged in social activities such as donating money to express their goodness, humility and connectedness with the people in their neighborhood. They had personal connections with state officials, but their local power was based more on their horizontal family and kin-based ties.

As for the young members of the Alliance, they were from the middle class, well educated and had lived or grown up in the area. They were well connected to the “Tahrir revolutionaries”, the newly emerging liberal and leftist political force that was massively empowered by the mass protests of that time (Mellor, 2014).

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<sup>6</sup> According to an interview partner, following 28 January 2011 – the so-called “Friday of Anger” or “Day of Rage”, in which the protest of hundreds of thousands of people all over Egypt was met with massive police violence which in turn engendered further turmoil – the military even sent text messages calling “loyal citizens to protect their country.”

Although the members of the Alliance were explicitly claiming that they were acting in the name of the entire neighborhood – and organized in a way that went beyond existing cleavages – implicitly certain boundaries were set. This became apparent in the “elitist” character of the organization.

*“We were open to everybody but we tried to control those who speak in our name...emerging of an informal slum, we cared a lot about our reputation” (Interview with a local leader, April 2014).*

Accordingly, inhabitants with a criminal record or those who were thought to have a negative effect on the image of the Alliance as a group of middle class inhabitants seeking to upgrade their neighborhood were excluded. Also, inhabitants affiliated politically with the old regime or who served in a leading position in the Muslim Brotherhood weren't welcome either.

#### **6.4 The rise of a rival of the state?**

A few months after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak in January 2011, an administrative court order followed by a military decree was issued, dissolving the municipal councils<sup>7</sup> (Fahmy, 2011). This decision was welcomed by most political organizations as the local councils were mostly powerless, had been coopted by the old regime, suffered from rampant corruption and lacked accountability. It was hoped that their dissolution would break the domination exerted by the existing patron-client networks, namely those of the ex-members of the former ruling party, the National Democratic Party (Néfissa, 2009). Furthermore, the dissolution provided newly emerging organizations such as the Popular Alliance with room for maneuver to act at the local level and exert pressure on the municipal officials to take them and their local demands seriously.

As a consequence, state authorities tolerated the development-oriented activities of organizations and cooperated with them. In the case of the Popular Alliance for example, the local authorities agreed to extend gas lines to Ard El-Liwa as long as the members of the Alliance helped protect the equipment (Interview with local leader, May 2014). This not only made the Alliance popular among the neighborhood's inhabitants. It also raised its visibility

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<sup>7</sup> Local administration in Egypt is composed of an executive council, appointed by the president, and responsible for providing basic services (paving roads, garbage collection, electricity, water etc.) and elected local councils monitoring their performance. Nevertheless, the municipalities' law (43/1979) gives the executive the right to reject or cancel the decisions of the local councils and even dissolve them. The local councils, on the other hand, can only request information from the executive. Since the January 2011, a new law is in the making, aiming at decentralizing the local administration and granting more power to the elected councils (Tadamun, 2013).

vis-à-vis the state authorities. As a result, the responsiveness of public officials and the high degree of social mobilization in turn encouraged the Alliance to further raise their aspirations.

Thus, in a next step, the Alliance demanded more police presence in the neighborhood to ensure that public spaces were secure. Ard El-Liwa had been affiliated to a police station situated in a distant village, with very few human and financial resources and low capacities to police the densely populated area. While the municipality had come up with a plan to establish a police unit in the neighborhood already before the uprising, the plan didn't substantiate. After the uprising and in response to the public frustration about police inaction and lack of accountability, the state embarked on an effort to improve relations between the police and citizens. In this context, the Alliance decided to make use of the state's discourse which asserts the primary role of the police as a guarantor of security and requested the neighborhood to be affiliated to a closer and better equipped police station. Moreover, encouraged by the favorable political context, the members of the Alliance decided to seize the opportunity and expand their demands to include the establishment of a police unit in Ard El-Liwa itself.

However, as became clear quickly, state officials' practices at the local level didn't correspond to official rhetoric. The officials of the Ministry of Interior and the municipality rejected the demand of the Alliance. As a consequence the Alliance decided to escalate the situation. Backed by favorable media coverage and with the support of urban planners, social activists and residents of the surrounding areas, members of the Alliance blocked one of the main streets separating Ard El-Liwa from an adjacent upper-middle class neighborhood. Soon after, local state officials accepted their demands:

*"We identified the best place to establish the unit for the police authorities...it was an unused municipality building...we suggested to use half of it by the police... we collected donations and renovated the building at our cost...The unit was ready and we continued to exert more pressure through the parliament to convince the police to start using it...it became operational by mid-2012" (Interview with a local leader, April 2014).*

After having successfully pushed for the establishment of a police station, the Alliance then came up with a plan to transform a vacant agricultural land into a park – something that required even more pragmatism. Since Ard El-Liwa lacked safe public spaces for local inhabitants to gather outside their crowded homes, the Alliance sought to transform a vacant agricultural land that was owned by the state into a park with recreational facilities. However, while the project was to benefit not just Ard El-Liwa but the entire suburb – Agouza – and indeed the whole Giza Governorate<sup>8</sup> in which Ard El-Liwa is located, the state had other

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<sup>8</sup> Egypt is made up of twenty-seven so-called Governorates of which Giza is one. Agouza on the other hand is a small suburb within the Governorate of Giza.

plans. Thus, the Ministry of Endowment<sup>9</sup>, which owns the land, planned to build an upscale housing project on the land. By late March 2012, *“we woke up to the sounds of the bulldozers working in the vacant land...we decided to block the railroads for a few hours to stop them”* (Interview with a local leader, April 2014).

Backed by independent MPs, the inhabitants were able to stop the implementation of the initial plan. After lengthy negotiations with municipal officials, one of the MPs even helped the members of the alliance to meet the then prime minister and get his approval for an alternative project, developed by the Alliance with the support of urban activists and an urban design platform (Nagati & ElGendy, 2012). As a local leader explained,

*“We didn’t expect the whole project to be accepted...we thought he will just give us a small space to build a school or a hospital...our arguments helped to convince them of the adequacy of our vision, mainly that the Ministry of Endowment, a government body, will build on agricultural lands which contradicts the law”* (Interview with a local leader, April 2014).

However, although the approval of the Prime Minister meant that the Alliance could implement the project more easily, further negotiations were necessary. These negotiations dragged on for quite a while because, first, in addition to the municipality, another five ministries had to be involved, and, second, the whole process became more complicated with the multiple cabinet reshuffles. Thus, during the 18 months of negotiation, three different cabinets with various political and ideological orientations as well as different Governors with diverse administrative priorities were appointed, and three parliamentary and presidential elections took place (Nagati & ElGendy, 2012). Furthermore, due to the fact that it took each ministry a long time to handle the issue and that they didn’t coordinate, the project was further delayed. Thus, according to members of the Alliance, the project could not be implemented before the governmental agency in charge of the allocation of state property assigned a new strip of land to the Ministry of Endowment, a decision that usually takes more than a year.

What’s more, the competition between the Popular Alliance and the political organizations present in the neighborhood over the symbolic ownership of the project also delayed its implementation. Thus, *“when Morsi was elected, the Freedom and Justice Party of the Muslim Brotherhood tried to appropriate our project and label it as one of their achievements in the area”* (Interview with a local leader, April 2014). As a consequence, members of the Alliance asked a number of media outlets, various political parties and political figures to support them. When the media started to report on the Alliance’s long struggle for the vacant

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<sup>9</sup> In Egypt the Ministry of Religious Endowment (Awqaf) is responsible for religious affairs and the administrative control of mosques.

land, this not only increased their visibility, it also helped to counter the perception of informal dwellers encroaching on state-owned land. Moreover it highlighted the inhabitants' demand for secure public spaces, something they were entitled to. Finally, as the negotiation coincided with parliamentary elections, the Alliance was supported by a number of political personalities, who asked for public support in return. One of these politicians, who was later elected as a member of parliament, played an important role in linking members of the Alliance with state officials that were willing to help resolve problems during the negotiations.

Through the long negotiation process, the Popular Alliance established new ties with state officials, especially at the lower echelons, and gained some degree of leverage. Although it is difficult to assess its actual degree of influence, its new role as intermediary was affirmed when municipal officials asked it for help with the installation of new lighting systems and the paving of streets.

Furthermore, how close the Alliance was to the state authorities became apparent when one of the officials advised the Alliance to register as an official NGO. As the state was trying to restore its image as the legitimate institution providing security, state authorities refused to deal with any popular initiatives that did not have a legal status. Thus, in mid-2013 an official statement was issued banning popular committees<sup>10</sup>. As one of the members of the alliance put it,

*“One of the officials told me, at a certain moment, I can just ask you: why do I have to negotiate with you...who are you? Who do you represent? If you are not a registered NGO, then, you can't talk in the name of the neighborhood...you won't be heard” (Interview with a member of the Popular Alliance, April 2014).*

Hence, after a long registration process the Popular Alliance officially registered with the Ministry of Social Solidarity as an association in mid-2013. However, while the Alliance got legal recognition by the state in order to be able to continue its work, it sought to stay independent vis-à-vis the state authorities and avoid any manipulation or cooptation. The idea was to keep committed to the locality and to keep working in the interests of the entire neighborhood. As one leader of the Alliance claimed:

*“We wear more than one hat...we will work through our legal status when needed...we will be the informal alliance when needed...we wear the right hat at the right moment with the right people” (Interview with local leader, May 2014).*

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<sup>10</sup> After removal of Mohamed Morsi by the military, and in the wake of the “Rabaa Massacre” which led to the death of hundreds of supporters of the Islamist regime, many ordinary citizens formed spontaneous neighborhood watch groups to help the police enforce a curfew and arrest supporters of the overthrown regime. Nevertheless, they were dispelled by the police forces and, later on, the Ministry of Interior banned popular committees on the grounds that they “were used by some to carry out illegal acts” (Ahram Online, 2013).

However, despite the members' resolution to continue to work for the neighborhood, after the Alliance registered its activities diminished. Thus, the Alliance limited itself to coordinating activities and projects with the municipality. After the army took over power again in July 2013, the Alliance further embraced this role as the state authorities became stricter in handling things. Hence, when the new government replaced the railroad at the far end of the neighborhood with a new bridge connecting the highways surrounding Ard El-Liwa, the Alliance didn't challenge the decision although the bridge – which was supposed to serve the more affluent neighborhoods surrounding Ard El-Liwa – blocked one of the main access points to the neighborhood and isolated it further:

*“They did not discuss it with us...what we could do is just try to make a ramp below the bridge for people to access the area...they don't listen to us as before” (Interview with local leader, April 2014).*

## **7. From the National to the Local Level: Politics-as-Usual Reloaded?**

While at first sight the Alliance seems to have acted rather spontaneously and chaotically in its dealings with state authorities, on closer examination it is possible to discern the logic of action. Against the background of massive street protests and the high degree of mobilization that came with it, the Alliance went beyond their usual, kinship-based mechanisms of mediation and instead forged deep horizontal links. Thus, the Alliance's network of support consisted not only of local residents of Ard El-Liwa and surrounding neighborhoods, but also of urban activists, pro-revolutionary forces as well as media outlets and emerging political parties.

Members of the Alliance thus exerted what Clegg et al. (in Pearce, 2013: 646) call “coactive power” – an alternative to coercive power. “Coactive power” enabled them to act in concert with a multitude of actors, whether in their vicinity or on the basis of a shared agenda. It allowed them to circumvent the rather slow mediation mechanisms that existed before and reach out to the state directly, rather than waiting for it to come. The use of disruptive action such as blocking streets put pressure on the authorities, which finally conceded to the Alliance's demands.

Furthermore, linking-up with other people, groups and organizations helped raise awareness of the neighborhood's problems and contributed to the Alliance becoming a legitimate actor within the local negotiation arena. The January 2011 uprising with its demands for social and political justice, can best be described as a “symbolic repertoire” for the Alliance (see Hagmann and Péclard (2010)). The uprising unified otherwise disparate social groups and thus increased the possibility of collective action at the neighborhood level as well as the willingness to engage in activities challenging state policies. The fact that

people from different social groups came together had a direct impact on the aspirations of the Alliance, as it shifted the Alliance's attention to issues related to socio-economic rights.

Moreover, the fact that there were hardly any state security officials on the streets in the first months of 2011 fundamentally altered the image of the state that had consistently been promoted and had nestled in people's consciousness. The Alliance, realizing how powerful society at large was, used the opportunity and took action at the neighborhood level. Put differently, unlike the process of "scaled forms of politics" described by Raeymaekers (2010: 578) "*in which the local increasingly determines the behavior and chances of survival of politics at the national level*", it was the national level, i.e. the uprising and following diffusion of protests, that determined the behavior and chances of survival of politics at the local level.

From the perspective of the state however, the Popular Alliance was the solution to what could be called its "crisis of power". As state authorities strived to reassert their domination over society, they tolerated and negotiated with this new local actor, which was imbued with social and political legitimacy (Hagmann and Péclard, 2010). In a context in which the state no longer had the monopoly of power and the bargaining power of societal forces had considerably increased, the state authorities tried to maintain a façade of authority. At the same time, they had no choice but to compromise and open their doors for negotiation.

At a later stage, their relationship took a more pragmatic form and evolved into mutual cooperation. The change in the state's approach towards the protests and its inclination to resort to harsh repression – whether through new laws or through a confrontational approach adopted by the security apparatus – put the alliance on guard. As the revolutionary fervor faded away, undermining the coercive power of its horizontal networks, the Alliance realized the urgency of adjusting their repertoire and resources to respond to the new situation. Hence, members of the alliance shifted to building vertical ties with state officials and increase their influence. They opted for a much less confrontational, pragmatic and flexible approach and were eager to cooperate with the state, evading the socio-political struggles at the national level and maintaining the image of a local group simply wanting to improve their community (see also Amar, 2013). Aware of their shrinking power, they opted for the use of their links to the state to achieve their goals and avoided interfering with state decisions.

At the same time, the state authorities were increasingly willing to listen to the demands of the Popular Alliance and with time they coopted it as a local ally. Thus, the Alliance was able to facilitate the implementation of the plans of the state, especially those that weren't popular in the neighborhood. This gave the state an opportunity to penetrate the neighborhood and implement its policies. Although state cooptation limited the Alliance's capacity to make demands, it cooperated with the state on the grounds that it had become a strong and influential local partner. Furthermore, the fact that some members had close ties to state officials, especially in the lower ranks, was thought to safeguard its interests and enabled the

Alliance to reach out to the state whenever it needed to get something done. The change in the balance of power thus redefined the relationship between both actors, going from contestation to cooperation, reshaping their strategies, their goals and the scope of their room for maneuver.

However, reducing the relationship between the Alliance and the state authorities to a patron-client relationship would be too simplistic. Rather, the changes in the relationship reflected the power struggle that went on between the state and wider society at the national level. Whether the relationship was characterized by confrontation, collaboration or even interpenetration depended on the shift in the balance of power; power itself was never completely dominated by one side. On the contrary, it constantly went from one side to the other, thus making the boundaries that separate the two sides fuzzy. Operating in a volatile environment, the Popular Alliance had to readjust its agenda to the changing political situation of the country. Given the benefits of allying with the state, it couldn't allow itself *not* to engage with the state. At the same time, the mutual dependency that comes with this kind of relationship had the benefit of leaving the state authorities unable to exert power in the neighborhood without collaborating with the alliance. In other terms, both actors need mutual support to exert power. As White (2013: 213) puts it: *"while at certain times the state might constitute a threat to the group's existence, at other times it might represent a space through which the group can advance its cause"*.

Seen from this perspective, the Popular Alliance never posed a serious threat to the state. The state on the other hand enlarged the boundaries of the Alliance's field of action and bargaining power. Seeking greater inclusion rather than autonomy within the state, the Alliance attempted to transform the modus operandi of the neighborhood from forced self-help to negotiated self-help. Cornwall's observation (2004) that micro-forces have the potential to influence the dynamics of power through small incremental gains, although perhaps at a slower pace than many would expect, thus also holds true for the Popular Alliance.

## 8. Conclusion

*"Power is easier to get, harder to use - and easier to lose"* (Naim, 2013: 3).

The aim of this study was to overcome the state-society divide in studying the relationship between the state and society in Egypt. Thus, instead of assuming that the state and society are two static autonomous and homogeneous entities, I focused on how they interacted at the local level. It is my contention that studying interactions at this level reveals more about the way power actually works, and how it is contested and negotiated. I embraced Migdal's (2001) "state-in-society" and Hagman and Péclard's (2010) "negotiated statehood" approach,

arguing that power is not confined to the state, but is subject to a constant struggle and thus moves back and forth between state and society. Consequently, power arrangements depend on the resources that are mobilized, deployed repertoires of action and strategies adopted by each actor to bolster its bargaining power.

In my case study, the encounters between the state and the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa reveal the limits of the state's power in controlling social order. Seizing the opportunity created by the 2011 uprising, an organization of local residents in a neighborhood that is usually portrayed as crime-ridden and chaotic, made use of its multiple ties to claim power and challenge state policies at the local level. In so doing it exhibited great talent at making use of certain "symbolic repertoires", adapting these to the changing local context and thus maintaining its influence. As the case of the Popular Alliance shows, during and after the massive social mobilization of 2011 state-society relations were at least temporarily in flux and thus open for (re)negotiation.

What the case of the Popular Alliance also reveals is that political developments at the national level had a major impact on the negotiation and mobilization strategies employed by societal actors such as the Popular Alliance. As soon as the Popular Alliance had established itself in a niche, its members went from bypassing or avoiding state institutions to challenging the state and exerting pressure on it. However, while state authorities initially had to adhere to the demands of the Alliance and accommodated them, the Alliance acquiesced into the role of local mediator again when the army hardened its stance from mid-2013 on. In return, state representatives avoided confrontation and took advantage of the Alliance's influence and knowledge of the neighborhood's problems and needs.

However, the findings of this study nevertheless should perhaps be taken with a pinch of salt. The struggle over power is not always straightforward. While for now the Egyptian state isn't yet fully involved, social forces such as the Popular Alliance of Ard El-Liwa aren't completely outmaneuvered either. Moreover, both actors are far from being homogeneous entities with unified interests. Thus, it is safe to assume that if one was to thoroughly analyze the interactions between the various actors of society or the state, one almost certainly would find that tensions exist within each actor. Thus, the various government agencies or bodies have different interests and within the societal forces there are class and identity struggles that impact on wider state-society dynamics. Studying these issues would further our understanding of the factors that influence the ability of the state and society to successfully claim power.

Finally, the purpose of my investigation was neither to assess the strength or weakness of the Egyptian state nor whether the actions of the Alliance had succeeded or failed. Instead, I tried to understand how power is negotiated locally between the state and society and what

kind of influence developments at the national level had on the negotiating power of non-state actors in their localities.

To conclude, in the last two years the interaction between the Egyptian state and society resembled more of a non-zero-sum game. State-society interactions did not necessarily take the form of resistance and rivalry on the one hand or domination on the other. Instead they were characterized by more fragile relationships of e.g. alliance or accommodation with mutual benefits for both sides, depending on who had the upper hand. Against this background, it is clear that in order to understand the ebbs and flows of state-society interactions, in developing as well as in developed countries, an approach is needed that captures how *“states may help mold, but [...] are also continually molded by, the societies within which they are embedded”* (Migdal, Kohli and Shue, 1994: 2).

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