

The fourth panel focused on issues of authoritarian retrenchment. The papers collectively provided interesting analysis about how authoritarian institutions, either by persisting in the same form or providing a strong anchor for path-dependence, affected transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, and a period of liberalization in Jordan, following the 2011 uprisings. In “Lineages and Mythologies of the Old Elite: Power in Present-Day Tunisia,” Sarah Weirich argues that both Islamists and old regime representatives positioned themselves as politically relevant elite (PRE), during the country’s 2011 transition. These individuals controlled central sources of power and influence, which allowed them to seize Tunisia’s transformation process and quickly marginalize the young revolutionaries in what she terms a bargained competition. Kristen Kao analyzes Jordan’s National Proportional List (NPL) system in “Rigging Democracy: Maintaining Power through Authoritarian Electoral Institutions.” The system was implemented in the wake of 2011 protests as a concessionary reform and was intended to encourage broader based voter coalitions, strength political parties, and encourage the entrance of new actors into the political process. She finds that NPL MPs are not significantly different from regular MPs and suggests this law does not appear to be liberalizing the kingdom. Merouan Mekouar’s paper, titled Distorting Mirrors and Authoritarian Collapse: How Repressive Regimes Fail to See Themselves,” looks at why police officers defect when facing overwhelming social mobilization. He shows that the low cohesion and low scope of the security forces is one of the main factors explaining the rapid collapse of Tunisia’s police force in 2011, despite it having been one of the most powerful in the region, at least in appearances. He argues that preference falsification, which is normally theorized to perpetuate authoritarian regimes at the mass level, can also be detrimental within a regime when it makes core regime members overestimate the loyalty of low-ranking members of the security apparatus. Finally, Tereza Jermanova argues in “The Struggle for rules of how to make the rules: The Early Stage of Constitutional Change and the Case of Egypt,” that in order to understand the process through which constitutions are made, we need to spend more time focusing on the early phase pre-actually writing and deliberation, when actors set the rules for how a constitution is to be made. This specifically refers to formal and informal discussions about *who* will be involved in constitution-making, *when*, and *how* the process will proceed. She supports her argument with evidence from Egypt’s 2012 constitution.