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Military Influence on Middle Eastern Democratization Following the Arab Spring

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Military Influence on Middle Eastern Democratization Following the Arab Spring

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The Williams Honors College

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ABSTRACT

Despite experiencing countless wars, sectarian extremism, imperialism, and authoritarian rule, very few events have impacted the Middle East more significantly than the Arab Spring. Starting in 2010, the Arab Spring marked a turning point in which the people of numerous Arabic states collectively gathered to protest and combat the oppressive regimes that had controlled the region for decades. The Spring was indicative of the strong, recurring ambitions for revolution and regime change across the Middle East, presenting the Arab nations with an opportunity to reform their states from within. For some Middle Eastern states, the Arab Spring served as a catalyst for revolutions that overthrew authoritarian regimes and replaced them with governments that valued individual freedoms and sovereignty. Other states, however, chose not to pursue democratic goals after the Spring, often creating worse conditions than before. Although the Arab Spring was started with intentions of freeing the people of the Middle East from the regimes they existed under, the revolution simply failed within certain states. In this paper, a formal analysis will be conducted of two Middle Eastern states that felt entirely different effects from the Arab Spring: Egypt and Tunisia. From this analysis, a proposal will be formulated regarding how military status influenced Tunisia's maintenance of a functional democracy, while Egypt fell victim to a coup and subsequent authoritarian rule following the Arab Spring.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 - Introduction

6 - The Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt

20 - Hypotheses and Model

24 - The Argument

32 - Conclusion

37 - Works Cited

INTRODUCTION

Frequently recognized as the cradle of civilization, the Middle East offers more historical significance and insight than arguably any other region on Earth. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Middle East, however, is the recent political change and instability experienced across the Arab nations. World War I brought an end to the Ottoman Empire's reign of over 600 years, and subsequent partitioning of the region under the Sykes-Picot Agreement allowed European influences to drastically manipulate the cultural and governmental structure of the Middle East. The following decades were met with fierce opposition toward European presence, leading the majority of French, British, and Russian forces to abandon their occupation by the end of World War II. A lack of external influence in the region allowed for the formation of the modern sovereign states in the Middle East, yet many were quickly plagued by sectarian extremism, ethnic strife, and authoritarian rule. The 1990s further fueled instability in the Middle East by introducing the United States' military presence during the Gulf War, which continued throughout the Iraq War and still exists today.

However, despite the recurring theme of political unease and regime change, very few events have impacted the Middle East more significantly than the Arab Spring. Starting in 2010, the Arab Spring marked a turning point in which the people of numerous Arabic states collectively gathered to protest and combat the oppressive regimes that had controlled the region for decades. The Spring was indicative of the strong, recurring ambitions for revolution and regime change across the Middle East, presenting the Arab nations with an opportunity to reform their states from within. For some Middle Eastern states, the Arab Spring served as a catalyst for revolutions that overthrew authoritarian regimes and replaced them with governments that

valued individual freedoms and sovereignty. Other states, however, chose not to pursue democratic goals after the Spring, often creating worse conditions than before. Although the Arab Spring was started with intentions of freeing the people of the Middle East from the regimes they existed under, the revolution simply failed within certain states. In this paper, a formal analysis will be conducted of two Middle Eastern states that felt entirely different effects from the Arab Spring: Egypt and Tunisia. From this analysis, a proposal will be formulated regarding how military status influenced Tunisia's maintenance of a functional democracy, while Egypt fell victim to a coup and subsequent authoritarian rule following the Arab Spring.

THE ARAB SPRING IN TUNISIA AND EGYPT

The Arab Spring

The Arab Spring produced vast amounts of pro-democracy movements across the Middle East, introducing an unprecedented desire for revolution within the region. Spanning across a plethora of Arab nations, the Spring mobilized a revolution against existing imperious regimes, calling for popular sovereignty to replace authoritarianism. Although the movement was successful in tearing down multiple regimes and dictatorships, the outcome following the Arab Spring differed significantly across individual states. The upheaval of domineering governments was certainly the greatest accomplishment of the Arab Spring, especially when considering the short time frame in which the uprisings occurred. However, while certain states succeeded in establishing democratic institutions following the Spring, others struggled to preserve what they had fought for, often falling back to the confinements of totalitarianism. Additionally, some rebellion and opposition forces, such as the ones in Libya and Syria, never favored democratic ideals in the first place, and simply sought to replace the current leadership with new authoritarian regimes. Tunisia and Egypt present a particularly interesting example of countries that followed significantly different paths after the Arab Spring. While modern-day Tunisia is governed by a representative democracy, Egypt is under the rule of a dominant President, whose fearful tactics and military backing make him more of a dictator than a democratic leader.

Tunisia and the Arab Spring

In March of 1956, France ended its protectorate in Tunisia, deeming it independent from any foreign entity. During the following months, Tunisia quickly became recognized as a

sovereign state and was granted membership to the United Nations. Despite France's attempt to structure Tunisia as a constitutional monarchy, the Tunisian Constituent Assembly abolished the rule of Lamine Bey in 1957 and declared the state a Republic. The establishment of the Tunisian Republic was followed by an election in which voters were required to choose governing parties rather than candidates. The Neo Destour party, which previously had played an instrumental role in escalating independence negotiations with France, dominated the election and took control of the state's newly founded government. Habib Bourguiba, the leader of the party, was selected to be the first president of Tunisia, effectively establishing the Neo Destour Regime.

As President of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba sought to reduce the presence of fundamental Islam within the state through the adoption of a secular constitution. By restructuring Tunisia around liberalism and Western ideals, Bourguiba effectively drove the country away from the clerical and radicalized tendencies of surrounding countries. However, Bourguiba's Tunisia fell victim to the radical presence of the Islamic Tendency Movement as well as severe economic decline. By 1987, Bourguiba was declared mentally incapable of ruling and was replaced by his Prime Minister, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, in a nonviolent coup d'état.

Despite attempts to maintain the progressive and advancing Tunisia created by Bourguiba, the country fell into a state of hardship and corruption under Ben Ali and his party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD). Through coercion and violence against his political opponents, Ben Ali asserted himself as a dominant leader in Tunisia and maintained his title of President for decades. Despite his constant impositions of fear, the people of Tunisia became increasingly angered and frustrated with Ben Ali's single-party state. By the start of the 21st Century, Ben Ali's regime was recognized as one of suppression and corruption (Hubbard and

Gladstone, 2019). The RCD was quick to silence any opposition standing in its way, and police forces did not hesitate in abusing the general public of Tunisia. Additionally, the country suffered from mass poverty and unemployment, leaving many Tunisians to survive in the worst of conditions while the political elite enjoyed lavish and extravagant lives. Dissatisfaction with Ben Ali's Tunisia was nearly unanimous across the country, yet change was difficult to catalyze as protesting often led to government sanctioned imprisonment or violent punishments (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Although liberation from the Ben Ali regime seemed nearly impossible without help from external forces, the spark of a revolution began in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi, a poor street vendor, set himself on fire outside a government office to protest corruption within the state. Bouazizi was the sole provider for his family and was forced to sell fruit on the streets due to the high unemployment rate across Tunisia. When Tunisian police senselessly confiscated his vending cart in an act of corruption, Bouazizi enacted his suicidal protest to demonstrate the pain Ben Ali's government was causing the people of Tunisia. After surviving the initial damage from the burns, followed by an infamous visit from Ben Ali himself in the hospital, Mohamed Bouazizi died weeks later on January 4, 2011.

Mass protests erupted across Tunisia in the aftermath of Bouazizi's death, starting what is now known as the Jasmine Revolution. Tunisian citizens filled the streets demanding the resignation of Ben Ali and the dissolution of the RCD, yet the Tunisian government refused to comply. Protests escalated when police forces began imposing violence against demonstrators, resulting in the unnecessary death of numerous Tunisians. Ben Ali sought to end the growing protests by firing numerous Tunisian officials and promising an end to the violence against

protestors. Additionally, Ben Ali vowed to create thousands of jobs to combat unemployment and poverty within Tunisia, then later agreed to end his presidency once his term ended in 2014. The Tunisian people, however, were not receptive to Ben Ali's promises, with protests and demonstrations growing larger and more aggressive each day. Then, on January 14, 2011, Ben Ali dissolved the Tunisian government through a state of emergency and fled the country. After less than a month of protests and rioting, Tunisia had been liberated from the Ben Ali regime. However, protests continued as numerous interim leaders sought to control Tunisia after Ben Ali's resignation. The people of Tunisia demanded that the temporary government be cleansed of any current or former RCD members, and police forces quickly joined the citizens in their mobilization against the government. As new interim leaders came into power and elections were repeatedly postponed, the unrest in Tunisia continued to grow and violent demonstrations started to reoccur. In attempts to settle the chaos and strife within the state, elections were held in October of 2011 to select members for the National Constituent Assembly, which was designated the essential duty of structuring a new constitution for Tunisia.

Egypt and the Arab Spring

Although Egypt was declared independent by the United Kingdom in 1922, the Egyptian Republic was not established until 1953 when the Egyptian parliamentary government was dissolved after a coup d'état. Gamal Abdel Nasser claimed the title of President of Egypt in 1956 after forcing the current president, General Muhammad Naguib to resign. Egypt experienced some of the country's most significant events under the control of Nasser, including the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the Six-Day War with Israel. Upon his death in 1970,

Nassar was replaced by Anwar Sadat. Sadat picked up where Nassar left off, leading the October War alongside Syria to combat the presence of Israel. However, Sadat was later credited with establishing a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, an extremely salient act that resulted in Egypt's removal from the Arab League. Two years later, Sadat was assassinated and subsequently replaced by Hosni Mubarak.

Mubarak entered the Egyptian Presidency in 1981 and held the position until the Arab Spring gained prominence within the state. Much like Ben Ali's Tunisia, Egypt suffered both politically and economically under Mubarak's leadership. Under Mubarak, Egypt saw significant decreases in employment, followed by drastic increases in poverty and inflation. The economic hardship was accompanied by civil suppression, where fear and punishment disincentivized Egyptian citizens from openly opposing or advocating against Mubarak and his government. Unrest began to stir in Egypt, however, following the death of Khaled Said, who was murdered by Egyptian police in June of 2010. After posting a video displaying the corrupt handling of illicit drugs by the Egyptian police, Said was approached in an internet cafe by state officers, then taken outside and beaten to death. Following his death, Egyptian police tried to cover up the brutal killing, claiming Said had died from ingesting a bag of illegal drugs he was attempting to hide. However, an autopsy photograph of Said's grossly deformed face quickly went viral in Egypt, and a Facebook group called "We Are All Khaled Said" gained massive attention for exposing the story of Said's unjust death. Numerous demonstrations occurred following the death of Said, including the famous Egyptian Police Day protest in which thousands of Egyptians gathered to condemn Mubarak's government. Aggressive protests continued to ensue for weeks, and clashes between demonstrators and police forces left hundreds dead and

thousands injured. Despite attempts to finish his term, Hosni Mubarak resigned as President in February of 2011, handing power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. In the week following Mubarak's resignation, the Supreme Council abandoned the Egyptian Constitution and dissolved the parliamentary government, setting the stage for a new era in Egypt. Similar to the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, the Egyptian people had separated themselves from their oppressive government in just a few weeks.

Post-Arab Spring Tunisia

As mentioned previously, Tunisia elected its National Constituent Assembly (NCA) in the Fall of 2011, establishing a legislature to govern the country. Through a system of proportional representation and a large voter turn-out, 217 individuals were chosen to form the Assembly. Winning a plurality of the votes was the Islamist Ennahda party, which was joined by the Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic parties to form the first Tunisian government following the Arab Spring. The three-party combination was seen as a balanced government, with the moderate Ettakatol and the liberal Congress for the Republican parties present to offset the Islam focused Ennahda party. Additionally, nearly a quarter of the representatives in the NCA were women, establishing the most gender diverse government in Tunisian history.

After officials were formally elected, the National Constituent Assembly possessed the duty of drafting a new constitution for Tunisia, and enacted an interim constitution to temporarily govern the state while a final document was being finalized. The NCA's drafting process, however, serves as a prominent reason for why Tunisia has been able to maintain democratic ideals following the Arab Spring when so many Middle Eastern countries have failed

to do so. Particularly, the decision to formulate a constitution through an organized constituent assembly allowed the people of Tunisia to play an active role in the drafting of their country's governing document, which subsequently led to a more balanced constitution that was less vulnerable to opposition from the general masses. Rather than establishing loose restrictions for the drafting process, the interim constitution set strict and burdensome requirements for creating the new constitution, ensuring no single party could approve proposals with the votes of their representative alone. Therefore, the NCA was required to construct the new constitution by approaching each article individually rather than simply accepting a collective proposal of statutes. Each article had to be passed by a total majority vote, and the new constitution with all of its articles would only be finalized when the entire document was approved by a two-thirds vote. If numerous attempts to approve a final constitution failed in the NCA, the document would eventually fall into the hands of the Tunisian people during a referendum. By implementing myriad tedious steps into the drafting process, the NCA established a system that prevented the Tunisian Constitution from the appropriation of a singular party or group.

Structuring the drafting process around the approval of large majorities was more than just a democratic formality from the National Constituent Assembly, but was indicative of the newly formed government's determination to preserve the rights and autonomy of the people. Rather than selecting constitutional provisioners through means of nomination, appointment, or mere power grabbing, the NCA was formed around elected representation, which effectively placed drafting power in the hands of the Tunisian citizens. By doing so, the NCA granted the Tunisian people the opportunity to select individuals that would adequately represent their morals and values in the constitutional discussion. Additionally, after elections were held and

representatives were selected, the NCA took significant measures to ensure the general public maintained an active role in the drafting procedure. Numerous constitutional drafts were given to the public by the NCA, asking the Tunisian people to review the governing document and offer input. Conferences and group discussions between Tunisian citizens and NCA representatives were held to recognize flaws within drafts, which was then followed by subsequent amending in the Assembly. By the time a final constitution was brought before the NCA, the document had been thoroughly critiqued and examined by the Tunisian people, leaving little room for controversy on the voting floor. In January of 2014, the Tunisian Constitution was adopted into law, with 200 of the NCA's 217 members voting in favor of the document.

Post-Arab Spring Egypt

Unlike the constitutional drafting process in Tunisia, the Egyptian Constitution was structured around the competing agendas of the pre-existing governmental foundations, the protestors who had catalyzed the Arab Spring within the country, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Rather than indoctrinating a constitution built upon democratic ideals and the desires of the people, chaotic and sloppy drafting procedures led Egypt to adopt a constitution that spiraled the country into a condition worse than before the Arab Spring.

Egypt's constitutional drafting process was nothing short of a political disaster and shared virtually none of the linear or progressive qualities of the Tunisian system. Following the takedown of the Mubarak Regime, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces organized the Constitutional Review Committee, which was appointed to reform and amend the temporarily suspended 1971 Egyptian Constitution. Members of the Committee were selected to ensure

diversity and inclusion within the amending process while preventing any one group from dominating the discussion, granting membership to various leaders from prominent Christian, Muslim, and secular groups as well as former legislative and judicial figures. Upon meeting, the Constitutional Review Committee had the responsibility of negotiating a solution for conflicting groups with differing constitutional proposals in Egypt. Although many Egyptians were receptive to amending the 1971 Constitution, others fiercely opposed it, arguing that the Constitution represented a flawed Egypt and must be abolished and replaced in its entirety if Egypt ever wanted to become a truly democratic state. The Committee chose to preserve the 1971 Constitution, but offered an alternative avenue with hopes of satisfying the wants of strict constitutional reformers. Nine constitutional amendments were proposed by the Committee, which primarily included protections against specific corruptions that Mubarak had become infamous for during his rule. Once proposed, the amendments would be handed down to the Egyptian people to be accepted or denied through means of referendum. However, a clause was included within the amendments that enable a new constitution to be proposed by 50 percent of both Houses of Parliament or the President with cabinet backing. This proposal was the Committee's solution to resolving the conflict between the opposing constitutional advocacy groups. Those who favored constitutional amending would be satisfied by the amendment proposal and subsequent referendum system, and those preferring an entirely new constitution had means of pushing their agenda through a political process. In March of 2011, the Egyptian Republic conducted its first fair and lawful referendum, in which every amendment was passed by a vast majority of the voters.

The referendum represented the beginning of democratic tendencies in Egypt, and the mass approval of the constitutional amendments was indicative of the Egyptian peoples' new found faith in the system. However, opposition movements in favor of repealing the 1971 Constitution continued to protest against the Constitutional Review Committee's actions, displaying vocal disapproval regarding the decision to simply amend the existing Constitution. Then just weeks after the national referendum and without explanation, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces chose to abandon the recently amended 1971 Constitution and opt for a constitutional declaration instead. Rather than recognizing the sovereignty of the people and the outcome of the referendum, the Supreme Council chose to introduce a new plan for drafting a constitution, preserving only the nine most recent amendments and a few older segments of the 1971 Constitution. Within the declaration, the Supreme Council established a new process for constitutional drafting that prioritized the values of elected representatives and their commitment to the people that elected them. Under the declaration, elected members of the Egyptian Parliament would appoint members of a constituent assembly which would then have the sole duty of establishing a new constitution for the country. Parliamentary elections were held in November of 2011, and the newly elected representatives began selecting members of the constituent assembly.

Although the Supreme Council strived to establish a new and inclusive constitutional drafting process that encompassed representation for all of Egypt's ideological camps, it fell short in its goal when the parliamentary elections became dominated by Islamist candidates. Over 70% of the seats in the Egyptian Parliament were filled by either the Islamist Nour Party or the Freedom and Justice Party run by the Muslim Brotherhood, denoting the legislature as an

institution influenced heavily by Islam. The apportionment of the seats was felt with disdain by secular, liberal, and other religious Egyptians, installing a preconceived disposition against the newly formed legislature. Differences between opposing parties in the Egyptian Parliament created a sense of instability within the legislative body, which was reflected in its attempts to nominate a constituent assembly. Originally the Parliament authorized a system for electing members of the constituent assembly which designated half of the seats for legislators, and then opened the remaining seats for prominent Egyptian citizens to further represent the general public. The system, however, was later ruled unconstitutional in a controversial ruling which stated that members of Parliament could not elect themselves into the constituent assembly. A new assembly was elected in the Summer of 2012, but was also ruled unconstitutional, this time on the basis that it unfairly discriminated against independents who were not associated with a party. In response to the election chaos, the Security Council issued a declaration granting itself power to select the members of a new constitutional assembly if the current one was to dissolve. However, the declaration was short-lived as Mohammed Morsi, the newly elected President of Egypt, amended the declaration so that he would select a new constitutional assembly if needed, rather than the Security Council. The election process for the constitutional assembly presented a mess of conflicting opinions and ideals, which ultimately granted an unprecedented amount of power to Morsi in the end.

Realizing Morsi's declaration jeopardized any chance of finalizing a fair and inclusive constitution, the constituent assembly rushed to complete a document for referendum before the end of its six-month deadline was reached. Due to the existing time restraints, the constituent assembly chose to prioritize amending the 1971 Egyptian Constitution rather than establishing an

entirely new document. As a result, the constitutional drafting process became a chaotic ordeal in which revisions and amendments to the 1971 Constitution were sloppily made in a desperate attempt of meeting the deadline. Provisions regarding the rights of women, judicial authority, and the application of sharia law were implemented despite opposition and a lack of consensus from large portions of the assembly's members. Additionally, the rush to finalize the constitution led the constituent assembly to slack in its participation with the public, leaving the majority of Egyptians entirely uninvolved with the drafting process. If information was exposed to the public, it was often done through external leaks which were used to mobilize opposition groups, further removing the people's faith in the new constitution. Finally, in December of 2012, the constituent assembly released its finished constitution to the public. With only a mere third of eligible Egyptians voting, the finalized Egyptian Constitution was approved through a national referendum with 64 percent.

Despite numerous roadblocks and obstacles standing in its way, the constituent assembly had finally offered a constitutional draft to the people which was then approved through referendum. However, Egypt's new constitution remained widely unpopular, and opposition groups escalated their mobilization against the Egyptian government. Although Morsi stood as the first democratically elected President of Egypt, his unpopularity served as his demise, resulting in his removal from office by a military coup in the summer of 2013. Upon the coup, the military issued a suspension for the new constitution, arguing that the document unfairly favored the Islamic values of Morsi and his constituents. The leader of the military, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, chose Adli Mansour, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, to serve as Egypt's interim President and supervise while a new constitution was formed. Once

again, another constitutional drafting process had begun, this time starting with a select group of judicial analysts with the responsibility of picking out the “flaws” in the new constitution and subsequently proposing amendments to revise them. After the group had finished its work, the proposed amendments moved on to a review committee selected by Mansour, consisting of 50 prominent Egyptian figures. However, Mansour made a point to block Islamists from gaining power in the committee as they had done in the Parliament, leading him to select only one Islamist party member to sit on the review board.

The committee’s review process was conducted with the objective of reforming the strict and conservative Islamist policy that had been implemented into the 2012 Constitution, which was clearly reflected in the committee’s final amendment proposals. Any authority previously granted to religious figures was stripped, and exceptions for sharia were promptly removed. When sharia did come into question, it was to be addressed by the Supreme Constitutional Court to ensure religious bias did not influence Egyptian law. Additionally, more authority was given to individual governmental bodies, granting expanded sovereignty to the military, police forces, and the judiciary. By replacing Islamic institutionalism with verbiage that emphasized separated governing powers and balanced authority, the committee hoped to establish a governing document that stood against the politically dominant nature of Morsi’s Egypt. The constitutional amendments were approved by President Mansour the following December, and a national referendum for ratifying a final document was set for the beginning of the new year. Voter turn-out increased during the January referendum, with 40% of eligible Egyptians participating in the constitutional vote. The Egyptian voters passed the amendments with 98 percent approval, ratifying the new 2014 Egyptian Constitution. The following summer, a controversial and

illegitimate election was held, naming General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi President of Egypt. Through fear and coercion conducted through the armed forces, Sisi was able to impose corruption into the Egyptian election, granting him a sweeping victory despite disapproval from the public (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Since assuming power, Sisi has used authoritarian power backed by his military to misconstrue and appropriate the 2014 Egyptian Constitution, including an amendment in 2019 that extends his tenure as President into 2030.

HYPOTHESES AND MODEL

Egypt and Tunisia have considerably different governmental structures today, despite both experiencing the political upheaval and democratic mobilization of the Arab Spring. Following the ousting of the existing regimes, each country held free and fair elections, establishing representative democracies as the governmental structures for both states. However, Egypt and Tunisia began to diverge in their governmental tendencies when attempting to preserve legitimacy within their newfound democracies. The defining factor for Egypt was the influence of the military, which used its power and independent status to repeal the 2012 Constitution and remove Morsi in a coup, just a year following his election into office. The Tunisian Military, on the other hand, lacked the strength and legitimacy to even consider mobilizations against the state's new found democracy. Given the differences between the two countries, a hypothesis is proposed that military status was the main variable that influenced democratic tendencies between Egypt and Tunisia. To structure a research proposal for this topic, the study will denote the state of democracy in each country as the dependent variable, which is then influenced by the legitimacy of the military, which is the independent variable.

A significant body of literature and research exists concerning the variables that incentivize military legitimacy and the occurrence of coups. Although the presence of a coup is dependent on a plethora of factors exclusive to the individual countries they occur in, observational trends suggest that certain variables have frequented influence during military overthrows. Perhaps the most consistent variable among military coups is, unsurprisingly, the strength of the military. In order for a military to even propose the enactment of a coup, there must be significant reason to believe that it would inevitably result in the overthrow and removal

of the current leader(s). Regardless of political influence or civilian backing, the military must exist and be recognized as a legitimate and powerful institution in order for an attempted coup to even be practical (Perlmutter, 1980). When authoritarian or autocratic leaders begin to fear an impending coup, they may seek to quickly weaken their militaries and designate that authority to an institution they perceive as more loyal and trustworthy (Bausch, 2018). Therefore, the first and arguably most important factor for incentivizing a coup is the strength and ability of the military to actually remove the targeted official(s) in power.

However, if the military does possess the strength to conduct a coup, the next variable to consider is the loyalty of the armed forces to the existing regime. Recognizing the power vested within their militaries, authoritarian leaders will often incentivize loyalty into the armed forces by rewarding them. Rather than selecting the most qualified or substantial individuals to head the military, figures in power often select generals that they believe will remain trustworthy and dedicated to the regime. Occasionally power may even be stripped from the military entirely and re-designated to another institution favored by the ruler. These tactics have been proven successful in the past, and studies show that militaries were significantly less likely to attempt a coup when prospering under the current regime (Bausch, 2018). Although rewarding the military may grant increased economic and social influence to members of the armed forces, it allows regimes to carefully delegitimize their own militaries, turning them into regime-serving powers rather than state-serving institutions.

Contrastingly, a strong independent military status has the opposite effect on coups, often serving as the determining factor for military overthrows. As mentioned previously, military leaders are statistically less likely to stage a coup against the regime they operate under when a

loyalty structure exists. On the other hand, however, a regime-change coup is much more likely to happen when the armed forces exist as a sovereign entity with a stable political-military balance (Koehler and Albrecht, 2019). In certain countries, military forces have successfully separated themselves from the label of state-serving institutions, establishing themselves as independent establishments that act more like a consolidated branch of government. By implementing a sense of independence and authority into the armed forces, militaries can further legitimize themselves, leading them to be seen by the public as a counterbalancing force alongside the regime. This sovereign status can often incentivize military leaders to stage coups from the regime, especially when an overthrow will lead to increased utility and benefit for the armed forces. Although coups have been conducted on behalf of a nation's people, the perceived military gain seems to be the driving force for the armed forces when following through with a regime overthrow (Koehler and Albrecht, 2019).

Finally, independent and legitimized military forces tend to conduct coups more often when operating alongside presidential systems rather than parliamentary systems. Strong, sovereign military institutions typically possess some type of political, social, or economic agenda that is reflected in their efforts. It is not uncommon for military forces to be actively involved within specific manufacturing sectors or religious/secular associations, which then influence their stances on governmental policy (Kordunsky, 2013). When independent militaries find themselves in opposition with presidential policies, however, they are more likely to conduct a coup given the singular status of the presidency. In parliamentary systems, the executive has accountability to the parliament, which offers military forces less strenuous avenues to pursue their objectives. While no less immoral, militaries can use persuasion,

coercion, or threatening toward legislators in parliamentary systems to form governments that align with their ideals, which is easier and less public than staging a coup. However, the executive in presidential systems lacks the strong sense of accountability to the legislature, making strategic influence from inside the government more difficult. Therefore, a military may simply choose to capitalize off the negative perception of a sitting president and stage a coup to either obtain power or fill the position with a candidate that reflects its preferences (Aydogan, 2019).

The three variables mentioned above (strength, loyalty, and system of government) all play a significant role in establishing the military legitimacy, which then influences the presence of fresh democracies. In the following Argument section, I will study the statuses, perception, and tendencies of both the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries to determine how the armed forces had contrasting impacts on each country's new-found democracy.

THE ARGUMENT

When referencing the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia, the uprisings are frequently mistaken as “opposition-military alliances” that saw the armed forces joining the people in the dissolution of the pre-existing governments (Koehler, 2018). Although military presence was certainly an influential factor during Arab Spring demonstrations, the armed forces should not be characterized as a supporting body that shared the interests of the opposition. The removal of Mubarak in Egypt was not hastily done through a joint opposition-military overthrow, but rather a peaceful coup d’etat. After removing Mubarak, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces even offered him protection from violent parts of the Egyptian public that still felt resentment toward the former president, further separating the military from the agenda of opposition forces. Additionally, the Tunisian military continued to obey the government’s orders during the Arab Spring, including the imposition of violence against protestors when ordered to do so. The dissolution of the Tunisian government and resignation of Ben Ali were a direct result of escalating opposition demonstrations within the country that did not include military backing. However, while the presence of the military was not a substantial factor in either country’s revolution, the armed forces had a unique opportunity to expand their authority following the Arab Spring.

Military Statuses Prior to the Arab Spring

To understand why the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries had contrasting impacts on their new-found democracies, it is important to differentiate how they operated as institutions prior to

the Arab Spring. Rather than serving as a state-ruled institution, the Egyptian military has a history of existing as an independent body. Following the assassination of Sadat and the subsequent replacement by Mubarak, the Egyptian military developed into a stronger, modernized, and self-sustaining institution that existed separate from the state government. Through strategic and capitalistic efforts, the military established itself as a dominant economic force controlling a large sector of Egypt's industry. The economic boom allowed the Egyptian military to generously compensate its officers, installing a sense of loyalty into the members of the armed forces. However, despite its new-found power and clout, the Egyptian military avoided gaining attention at the political level, and rather chose to exercise its governmental influence externally. Steven Simon, Executive Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Washington, DC., states the Egyptian military has maintained this position since 1973 by “[keeping] largely out of political sight, tacitly guaranteeing the rule of successive, unpopular rulers, while not being visibly connected to them” (Kordunsky, 2013, Para 24). By possessing vast amounts of economic and governmental influence without mass social recognition, the Egyptian military built itself a sovereign institution that denied allegiance to both the government and the Egyptian people.

The Tunisian military, on the other hand, lacked an independent status prior to the Arab Spring, leading it to exist as a state-based institution with little power. Under Bourguiba, the Tunisian military was weakened and strictly limited in its authority. Bourguiba had observed a recent trend of military overthrows and coups in the Middle East, and therefore chose to restrict the sovereignty of his own military by balancing its influence with the presence of a police force and national guard (Grewal, February 2016). As Tunisia transitioned from Bourguiba to Ben Ali,

the state of the military continued to grow weaker. Fearing a coup, Ben Ali undermined his military and chose to rely on a strongly entitled police force instead. Ben Ali's police force consisted of individuals loyal to him and his party, ensuring that policy would be adequately backed and enforced within the public sector. To preserve the firm sense of loyalty, Ben Ali cut funding and resources from the military and granted them to his police forces. By doing so, the police force became a political and economic stronghold with great authority in Tunisia, while the military dwindled away as a socially irrelevant institution.

Military Influence Following the Arab Spring

Clearly the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries possessed entirely different statuses leading up to the Arab Spring, therefore it should be no surprise that the military played contrasting roles during the revolutions. As we know, the Egyptian military was instrumental in mobilizing change in Egypt, which eventually led to the coup d'état of Mubarak. The Tunisian military, however, had little influence on escalating the Jasmine Revolution, and stood beside Ben Ali until he dissolved his government and fled the country. Although the two militaries had varying levels of influence leading up to the Arab Spring, military authority became the most prevalent following the creation of democratic institutions. Despite the Egyptian military's success in removing Mubarak, its enhanced sovereign status proved to be detrimental toward the new, democratic Egypt. Conversely, entering a democratic transition with a weak and dependent military allowed Tunisia to establish a system of armed forces that paralleled the structure and ideals of its newly structured government.

During Egypt's first truly free and democratic elections, the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Mohammed Morsi, was selected to be the country's new president. Although Morsi had won fairly in an election free of corruption, his rise to leadership was greatly opposed by progressive Egyptians that had hoped for a secular governing body for the country. Following the ouster of Mubarak, many Egyptians held optimism towards the possibility of establishing a governing body that was not structured around fundamental Islam. Morsi's election, however, was a devastating blow to progressive Egyptians, who feared the Muslim Brotherhood would steer Egypt towards an oppressive, authoritarian state. Opponents of Morsi quickly gathered in the streets to protest his leadership, which was further escalated by the President's decision to grant himself unprecedented levels of executive authority. Morsi's power grab was done in a desperate attempt to quickly pass a constitution structured around Islamic fundamentalism, something he knew would receive intense backlash from certain minority sectors of the general public. As the public's perception of Morsi grew increasingly worse, the Egyptian military began to capitalize on the situation, which would eventually lead to a coup that found the armed forces in power.

Although the coup was the final driving force that removed Morsi from office, the Egyptian military carefully intervened prior to his ouster. When the Egyptian military arrested Morsi and stripped away his power, General Sisi rejected the notion that a coup was conducted, and rather declared that the military had completed a revolution in an act of "public service" to meet the demands of the Egyptian people (Hauslohner, Booth, & al-Hourani, 2013). However, the actions conducted following Morsi's removal suggest that the military never truly wanted to serve the Egyptian people, but simply took an opportunistic stance that allowed military

personnel to fill the Presidency and expand the power of the armed forces. A series of leaks accused the Egyptian military of interfering with the media and funding the grassroots opposition group, Tamarod, to worsen Morsi's reputation prior to his ouster, which would inevitably lead to increased public approval of a military overthrow (Kingsley, 2015). Additionally, the military allegedly used wide-spread propaganda to exaggerate and falsely portray the Muslim Brotherhood as an institution with a radical and violent Islamic agenda, which is reflected by the Sisi Regime's suppression of the Brotherhood in recent years (Zollner, 2019). Regardless of accusations, however, is the blatantly obvious realization that the Egyptian military has done virtually nothing to serve the people of Egypt since obtaining power.

After coming to power through a corrupt and illegitimate election, President Sisi has worked to expand his power while simultaneously undermining the sovereignty of the Egyptian people. Rather than preserving the democratic ideals that were fought to achieve during the Arab Spring, Sisi has imposed extreme authoritarianism onto Egypt, silencing anyone who voices out against his regime. The most undeniable example of this was during the 2013 Rabaa Massacre, in which the Egyptian military murdered over 800 pro-Morsi demonstrators in Cairo. The Massacre was a direct message from Sisi that his leadership shall not be challenged, and proved that punishment would be imposed on those that attempted to thwart his presidency.

Additionally, studies conducted by Zogby Research Services suggest that the Egyptian people are deeply unsettled by the state of their country, which is reflected by a lack of trust and legitimacy in the military (Zogby Research Services). Despite Sisi's 2014 "The New Egypt" campaign which promised "Peace, Prosperity, and Growth" for the country, Egypt has slipped into a state of poverty and oppression that has placed many Egyptians in positions worse than

under the Mubarak Regime (Cook, 2018). Similarly, the Human Rights Watch currently lists Egypt as one of the worst countries for promoting basic human rights, stating mass incarceration, unjustified torture and executions, and speech suppression all contribute to the worsening of quality of life within the country (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Although the declining state of Egypt under Sisi and the Egyptian military is recognized globally, new amendments made to the 2014 Egyptian Constitution in 2019 have allowed Sisi to remain in office until 2030, implicating that the oppressive rule of the regime will remain for at least another decade.

The Egyptian military's strong and independent status undoubtedly played a significant role in bringing an end to Egypt's short-lived democracy. Through coercion and political influence, Sisi and his military were able to manipulate and highlight Morsi's flaws, which subsequently led to the return of authoritarianism in Egypt. The Tunisian military, however, was devastated by the start of the Arab Spring, with frequent funding cuts and loss of authority occurring up until the end of Ben Ali's regime. Due to Ben Ali's inclination toward a police state, the military had become severely undermined during his tenure, allowing the budget of the Interior Ministry to double that of the Defense Ministry (Grewal, March 2016). Nonetheless, the Tunisian military was rebuilt under the new parliamentary system, which successfully structured it as a state-based institution with dependence on the governing body.

As the National Constituent Assembly became the democratic governing body of Tunisia, numerous threats to national security led representatives to the realization that the military must be rebuilt. Therefore, the Tunisian military saw a massive increase in budget, with funding for the armed forces increasing by 21% on average annually. The budget increase was subsequently accompanied by a plethora of weapon contracts and partnerships with various nations, which

further improved the strength and security of the military (Grewal, March 2016). However, the most important developmental change for the Tunisian military was an increase in political clout, carefully arranged by the NCA to ensure the armed forces remained an institution that was dependent on and counter-balanced by the governing bodies. Whereas the military was previously under the personalized rule of Tunisian autocrats, the Tunisian armed forces were now under mutual authority of the president and prime minister, while still maintaining relevant positions within the government itself (Grewal, February 2016). Additionally, the military found itself with greater political representation, with both the president and prime minister appointing military advisers and security councils to oversee and manage affairs regarding the armed forces. The military's political influence was further extended as military officers became appointed for governorships and retired personnel began to form lobbyist groups on behalf of the institution. As the newly democratic Tunisia developed, so did its military, subsequently leading to the drafting of the 2014 Tunisian Constitution, which utilized the advice and insight of various military officials to ensure the armed forces were properly represented within the document.

Under the leadership of the NCA, the Tunisian military was resurrected from a state weakness and despair. However, the initial weakness of the military immediately following the Arab Spring may have been advantageous to the freshly democratic Tunisia, which was still experiencing heavy amounts of political unrest. When Ennahda won 90 of the NCA's seats and obtained leadership in the Tunisian parliament, many feared the Muslim party would turn democratic Tunisia into an authoritarian, Islam-based country (Johnson, 2014). Derived from the Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahda represented a form of political Islam that was considered threatening by both secularists and autocrats alike, hence its prohibition in Tunisia for over

twenty years before the Arab Spring. Therefore, when Ennahda formed a coalition government following the Tunisian elections, the party remained widely unpopular among Tunisians that had hoped for expanded civil rights and a secular government. However, mobilizations against Ennahda were unable to escalate as they did against Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, primarily due to the weakened state of the Tunisian military. When Morsi became controversial in the public eye, the Egyptian military capitalized on his flaws to convince the Egyptian people he was unworthy to lead the country and removed him in a coup. From there, the Sisi and his military had full authority to establish a dominant government of their own, holding an illegitimate election that eventually placed them in power indefinitely. Tunisia's case, although, was strikingly different due to the lack of a strong and independent military presence to intervene. Regardless of the Tunisian military's stance on Ennahda, there was no way to attempt an overthrow of the party, solely due to the lack of strength and resources. While the Egyptian military was able to exercise political manipulation to obtain power, the Tunisian military existed only as a weakened, state-serving institution. Therefore, Ennahda had to be counterbalanced by other parties in the new parliamentary system through a democratic and diplomatic process. The years following the Arab Spring would bring Ennahda to become more moderate both in practice in policy, eventually leading the party to support a unity government and participate in the ratification of the 2014 Tunisian Constitution.

CONCLUSION

Given the research conducted on the relationship between military legitimacy and democratic preservation, this study concludes that the hypothesis is well supported, and that military status was the defining variable that caused Egypt and Tunisia to diverge politically following the Arab Spring. The beginning of this paper observed that both Egypt and Tunisia experienced strikingly similar trends during the Arab Spring, in which public mobilization and demonstrations inevitably lead to the downfall of the existing authoritarian regimes. Additionally, this study recognized that each country followed the Arab Spring with the pursuit of democratic ideals, leading to implementation of new constitutions and free and fair elections. The end result for each country was the establishment of a new Middle Eastern democracy, structured around a government elected by and for the people. Despite their initial similarities, however, Egypt and Tunisia quickly deviated in the preservation of their new-found democracies, which subsequently found Egypt returning to authoritarianism while Tunisia maintained its parliamentary structure. After closely studying the states of Egypt and Tunisia before, during, and after the Arab Spring, the research posits that military legitimacy was the primary and most important factor influencing their democratic divergence.

Within the Hypotheses and Model section of this paper, it was hypothesized that military status was the main variable that influenced democratic tendencies between Egypt and Tunisia. To conduct a model for the hypothesis, the study denoted the state of democracy in each country as the dependent variable, which was then influenced by the independent variable, the legitimacy

of each country's military. Once the model had been constructed, a method of classifying a military as legitimate had to be established. In doing so, the study referenced the extensive body of literature available on military legitimacy and its impact on democratization, which led to the identification of three key factors influencing military legitimacy: strength, loyalty, and the system of government. These three variables were then studied in relation to both the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries, examining how each applied to both armed forces. Through the data found in the Argument section, it was discovered that the Egyptian military fulfilled almost all of the criteria for defining a legitimate military, while the Tunisian military shared practically none of those defining factors.

Overall strength was arguably the most significant variable when comparing the legitimacy of the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries. Military strength was a critically important factor to consider during this research project, primarily because the Egyptian military existed as an extraordinarily powerful institution while the Tunisian military had been diminished in nearly every aspect following the Arab Spring. This first variable provided immediate insight into the differing legitimacy of the two militaries, especially when considering that the initial strength of the armed forces is notably impactful on the remaining variables. As the research shows, the Egyptian military stood as a uniquely powerful force during Morsi's rule and was recognized as a dominant body by the Egyptian people. The combination of economic fortitude, political influence, and arms control allowed the Egyptian military to stand alone, separate from the government as a mighty institution. The Tunisian military, on the contrary, had been devastated both financially and authoritatively by Ben Ali, who sought to replace the armed forces with an organized police force of his own. As Ben Ali continued to pull resources from the military and

distribute them to his police force of constituents, the Tunisian military continued to grow weaker, inevitably leaving it with virtually no power or authority after the Arab Spring.

The initial strength of a military clearly was the initial and primary difference between Egypt and Tunisia's armed forces, hence the continued divergence that was observed in both countries following their revolutions. Despite the discrepancies in strength, however, the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries differed in respect to the loyalty each felt toward the new democratic governments. As Tunisia transcended into a country structured democratic ideals, the Parliament quickly found itself needing a response to external threats that jeopardized national security. Therefore, the Tunisian Parliament sought to rebuild the military by funding it with a large portion of the country's budget, in addition to granting government positions to officers and generals. The action saw an immediate strengthening of the Tunisian military, which was further sustained through a series of arms contracts with a variety of international actors. However, although the military made dramatic gains in both power and authority, it still remained an entity operating under and serving the Tunisian Parliament. Regardless of how strong the military had become, its strength could be easily stripped away by simple defunding from the government. This hierarchical structure established between the military and the Tunisian government embedded a sense of loyalty into the armed forces. Generals recognized that the preservation of their military was dependent on the support of the government, hence forcing the armed forces to remain loyal to the Tunisian Parliament. This system of dependence allowed the Tunisian government to bolster the stability of its military while ensuring its new democracy was protected from excess military power that could potentially result in a coup.

The Egyptian military lacked this sense of loyalty to the government, which was clearly displayed by its successful initiative of damaging Morsi's reputation and removing him from office. Rather than existing as a state-serving institution, the Egyptian military operated in a self-serving way, supporting itself both structurally and financially without dependence on the government. This lack of dependence can be equivocated as a lack of loyalty, especially when considering that the military was unobliged to follow any of the Egyptian government's orders. An absence of loyalty allowed for the Egyptian military to seamlessly mobilize against Morsi without any ties or agreements being broken. The military which had previously removed Mubarak had once again affirmed it was loyal to nobody, removing Morsi in a coup just a year following his election into office.

Additionally, while less notable than the previous variables, the system of governance was an identifiable difference between Egypt and Tunisia that may have impacted the preservation of democracy in each country. After conducting research on military intervention and governmental structures, I found that presidential systems are historically more likely to experience a military coup than parliamentary systems are. This claim is supported by the differing occurrences in both countries in which Egypt, the presidential system, experienced a coup while Tunisia, the parliamentary system did not. However, it can not simply be assumed that Egypt experienced a coup solely due to its presidential system because a plethora of additional variables were existent and likely more influential. Regardless, the findings present an interesting hypothetical of whether a coup would have occurred in Egypt if a parliamentary system was adopted following the Arab Spring.

The findings suggested that coups may be less likely in parliamentary systems due to the dependence of the executive on the legislature, which provides an easier avenue for military forces to pursue their agendas. Whereas the executive is independent in a presidential system, parliamentary executives must work jointly with the legislature, allowing the military to influence leaders in secondary ways. Rather than immediately enacting a coup, military leaders in a parliamentary system can assert their influence into the executive via persuasion or threatening of the legislature. This channel of influence then provides military forces with a less burdening and public alternative to conducting a coup, which may be why parliamentary systems are less vulnerable to physical military interference. Further research could be conducted that focuses more specifically on the impact parliamentary and presidential systems have on military legitimacy and tendencies toward intervention. Gathering additional statistics and data on the matter could help to explain Morsi's removal from office and why the military chose to conduct a coup so quickly.

The collective results of the findings concluded that the hypothesis was correct, and military legitimacy was the defining variable that separated Egypt and Tunisia in the preservation of their new-found democracies. This study suggests that military controlled states are some of the main perpetrators keeping democracy from flourishing within the Middle East as a whole. Regardless of the initiative, mobilization, or revolution, democratic ideals will remain unable to thrive in Middle Eastern countries controlled by strong militaries with conflicting values.

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