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*THE DICTATORS' DILEMMA: REPRESSION OR  
CONCESSIONS IN THE FACE OF RESISTANCE*

By

Christopher Massaro

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in the Political Science program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New

York

2018

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Christopher Massaro

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in the Political Science program in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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# The Dictators' Dilemma: Repression or Concessions in the Face of Resistance

By

Christopher Massaro

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Abstract:

The Arab Spring revolts of late 2010 and 2011 were a profound moment in the history of a region troubled by decades of authoritarianism. Years of economic mismanagement and security force repression trampled on the rights and aspirations of people striving for a better life. When social movements and anti-government protests erupted throughout the region, each country responded to the uprisings with different methodologies. This research closely examines why autocratic regimes of the region chose such divergent responses, with some opting to use violent repression, others attempting to make concessions and most combined repression with concessions. I will make the argument that authoritarian regimes use a cost-benefit analysis based on the rational choice theory, of whether state-sponsored violence on peaceful protests will ensure the survival of the regime and the individual autocrat. In the event the regime chooses not to fire on protesters, there are a number of intervening variables considered in this process. I argue that sectarian divisions within the armed forces are a fundamental determining factor in the regimes willingness to use violence. If the armed forces identify with the ethnic or religious sect of the ruling regime, the military is more likely to remain loyal and fire on protesters. The financial incentives of the armed forces also determine military action. If the regime protects the economic interests of the armed forces, the institution is more likely to remain loyal than not. A patrimonially based military, structured along ethnic or sectarian ties to the ruling regime, will have more at stake and view an uprising as an existential threat, backing the regime and using repression. When armed forces are highly institutionalized, based on professionalism and conscription that represents society at large, not the ruling elite, the military will be less likely to support violent repression. I will also argue that external support is another extremely important variable. External support can either facilitate or stifle the possibility of repression, depending on the nature of the relationship between the allied states, and the geostrategic objective in question. Also important in the discussion is the strength and structure of the anti-government movement.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War rivalry between the Super Powers culminated in an unprecedented wave of peaceful anti-government protests and democratic transfers of power to more accountable forms of government. This trend has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and showcases the power of peaceful protest and a greater urge for democratization around the world. Most recently, waves of anti-government protests erupted throughout the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 resulting in what is now known as the Arab Spring. There has been a great deal of research and focus on these events and the structural causes of the revolutions and toppling of regimes. However, a fundamental aspect of these uprisings that gain little attention is the concept of political violence and the calculations that are involved in assessing the costs and benefits of using state-sanctioned violence to suppress peaceful uprisings. Therefore, an important empirical question for both scholars and policymakers to answer is why some authoritarian regimes respond to mass mobilization with violence and others do not. There are several critical variables that authoritarian regimes calculate when they are faced with mass anti-government protests. When a crisis surfaces the authoritarian government's ultimate goal is regime survival and it will use whatever methods necessary to ensure the endurance of the regime. I will make the argument that authoritarian regimes use a cost-benefit analysis based on the rational choice theory, of whether state-sponsored violence on peaceful protests will ensure the survival of the regime and the individual autocrat. The costs of using violence must not outweigh the benefits of other methods to quell the uprising and remain in power. In the event the regime chooses not to fire on protesters, there are a number of intervening variables considered in this process. I argue that sectarian divisions within the armed forces are a fundamental determining factor in the regimes willingness to use violence. If the armed forces identify with the ethnic or religious sect of the ruling regime, the

military is more likely to remain loyal and fire on protesters. The financial incentives of the armed forces also determine military action. If the regime protects the economic interests of the armed forces, the institution is more likely to remain loyal than not. A patrimonially based military, structured along ethnic or sectarian ties to the ruling regime, will have more at stake and view an uprising as an existential threat, backing the regime and using repression. When armed forces are highly institutionalized, based on professionalism and conscription that represents society at large, not the ruling elite, the military will be less likely to support violent repression. I will also argue that external support is another extremely important variable. External support can either facilitate or stifle the possibility of repression, depending on the nature of the relationship between the allied states, and the geostrategic objective in question. Also important in the discussion is the strength and structure of the anti-government movement.

The most profound cases of anti-government protests against authoritarian regimes took place across the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. While much of the post-Cold War world has made tremendous strides in democratic transitions and consolidation the MENA region seemed to be immune to the wave of democratization that spread across the globe. The region was stuck in a malaise of authoritarianism that greatly reduced civil liberties and free expression that is a necessary component of a democratic society. In addition to the suppression of civil and political rights, economic stagnation and rising unemployment, especially in the regions overwhelmingly youthful population, boiled to a critical juncture in late 2010 and early 2011. The region finally succumbed to the wave of protest and destabilization that had taken place in other parts of the developing world and each incumbent regime employed different tactics and methodologies to either avert further crises or to stifle it once and for all. The cases being examined are Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Bahrain. Each state experienced mass social

mobilization in opposition to the regime in power and various policies were adopted to address the economic crises.

Before closely examining each case and what measures the incumbent governments took in response to protest movements, it is important to define and conceptualize key terms that will help us understand the nature of the problem and to outline the theoretical construct of the dynamics at play within authoritarian governments and the interaction with anti-government protest movements.

### **Key Concepts and Definitions**

The study of regime type has become a focal point within political science and is necessary to understand why certain regimes respond differently to challengers than others. Prior to the end of the Cold War, the study of regime type primarily focused on a binary and dichotomous typology between democracy and non-democracy, or authoritarianism. Jennifer Gandhi conceptualizes regime type in the minimalist democracy-dictatorship dichotomy. Her parsimonious definition of dictatorship is a regime “in which rulers acquire power by means other than competitive elections” (Gandhi 7, 2008). This definition is too simplistic and does not include regimes who attain and remain in power through other mechanisms. In recent times, the debate surrounding regime type has been contested and the classic binary choice does not allow us to place a regime type neatly into the democracy or authoritarian category. It has become fashionable for authoritarian regimes to allow minimal levels of political opposition and conduct elections that are heavily managed and manipulated. This type of “hybrid” regime, as Larry Diamond suggests, includes trappings of democratic systems. Levitsky and Way conceptualize “competitive authoritarian regimes” as a civilian regime “in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents’

abuse of the state places them at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis their opponents” (Levitsky, Way 5, 2001). These regimes understood the external costs of authoritarianism, leading elites to adopt certain aspects of democracy to placate the international system that was trending towards liberal democracy but, in reality, abusing institutions to preserve their power. In this categorization of what we may also call “illiberal democracy,” the outcome of the election is all but certain.

Going back to Gandhi, her thesis is based on the premise that authoritarian leaders rely on institutions to stay in power. These institutions play “a central role in the construction, policymaking, economic performance, and durability of authoritarian regimes” (Art 359, 2012). The institutions of authoritarian regimes, most notably the armed forces are a crucial variable in the study of political violence and protest movements that will be elaborated on further in this research. For the purposes of this research project, I use Juan Linz’s definition of an authoritarian regime: “Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones” (Linz 255, 1970).

Now it is important to define what we mean by “repression” based on the political violence literature. Levels of political violence and repressive acts by the regime can be both overt and covert. When discussing repression through the lens of social movements, Charles Tilly defines repression as actions that increase the costs of protest (Tilly 1978). Davenport provides a more specific definition of repression that includes “harassment, surveillance, spying, bans, arrests, torture, and mass killing by government agents and/or affiliates within their

territorial jurisdiction...that violate First Amendment type rights, due process in the enforcement and adjudication of law, and personal integrity or security” (Davenport 2, 2007). Earl uses a broad definition of repression and defines it as “state or private action meant to prevent, control, or constrain non-institutional, collective action (protests) including its initiation” (Earl 263, 2011). If we disaggregate forms of repression into distinct categories, we can separate overt from covert forms of repressive tactics. Observable and overt coercion by a central government includes military based repression, security forces repression, and public protest policing. Unobservable and covert actions by central governments include surveillance, enforced disappearances, and monitoring and infiltration of groups sponsored by the regime (Earl 265, 2011).

Sidney Tarrow’s definition of repression is limited to the “physical coercion of challengers” (Tarrow 170, 2011). The unit of analysis is the state and the violence it employs will be bodily harm and the physical integrity of an individual or groups of individuals. The violent state-sponsored repression I will focus on is repressive actions taken by the armed forces of the regime, specifically, firing on peaceful protesters in order to enforce compliance and shut down the threat posed by the demonstrations. This threat perception forces the authorities to act and quell dissent. As Earl states: “the more a movement or protest threatens authorities, the more likely it is to face repression” (Earl 266, 2011).

It is also important for us to analytically differentiate between military and security force repression because this distinction will help us understand why some regimes resorted to violence and others refused. Any nation-state, not just an authoritarian regime, is concerned with internal security and order. In order to ensure domestic tranquility, states establish some form of a police or law enforcement agency to monitor the domestic population, while the military is

typically concerned with external aggression and adversaries. Lutterbeck conceptually refers to security forces as “usually applied to police forces which have a certain military characteristic and some degree of military capability even though strictly speaking they are not part of the armed forces” (Lutterbeck 47, 2004). Lutterbeck notes that many of the authoritarian Arab regimes created these parallel militarized internal security forces “whose primary task is to secure the regime in power against domestic threats, including challenges by the regular army” (Lutterbeck 31, 2013). These forces tend to be highly ideological and indoctrinated by radical state ideology or have a level of emotional attachment to the regime and the leader. Internal security forces are less professionalized than the armed forces, meaning they do not operate in a system based on clearly drawn rules, and meritocratic principles. They function in a patronage oriented capacity with their loyalty benefits distributed by the leader (Lutterbeck 31, 2013). The sole function of internal security forces is to prevent the collapse of the leader and the regime.

According to Salih, Arab rulers understood the importance of the armed forces in building the nation-state after decolonization and independence and sensed the potential danger that the military could pose to their regime (Salih 190, 2013). Salih points to the regime in Tunisia where measures were taken to marginalize the military through economic and financial concessions while highly complex and sophisticated parallel security forces were established to protect the regime, not the state (Salih 190, 2013). Makara and Nassif discuss “coup-proofing” methods of the regime, which the leader employs to impact the military’s ability to engage in a coup. Such strategies involve balancing among the regime’s various coercive apparatuses, offering different incentives while exploiting communal bonds (Makara, Nassif 359, 2013). A strategy of marginalization of the military from political affairs is a propitious tactic to keep the military in a peripheral position and prevent a hostile takeover of the government. Structural

coup-proofing creates obstacles for any one particular institution from plotting an overthrow of the regime. This strategy allows for a counterweight or balancing approach among the various coercive bodies that reflects a mutually suspicious atmosphere or divide-and-conquer environment (Powell 175, 2014). The main divide here is the mandate of each institution and where their loyalty lies. The parallel structures created must be more loyal than the previous one which allows the dictator to reduce his reliance on the coercive institution that would carry out a coup, mainly the military (Folch, Rivero 8, 2016). The military is mainly responsible for protecting the nation from external threats and invasions from foreign adversaries. And in most cases, internal security forces and intelligence agencies, generally under the rubric of an interior ministry, is responsible for internal stability and security and would be the agency committed to using repression to stifle dissent from mass uprisings. However, this can vary from each regime depending on many causal factors which will be elaborated on and will prove to be extremely relevant when we analyze why certain armies refused to shoot at protesters even though the internal security forces were willing to use violent repression.

Finally, we must define the contentious politics of anti-government protests. As Tilly astutely puts it, anti-government demonstrations represent a “repertoire of contention” within dissident behavior, and Eckstein describes it as “alternative channels” of political participation. These varying strategies or repertoires of dissent present degrees of threats to the regime and must be addressed accordingly. Motivations for anti-government protests are diverse and include a range of grievances from economic and policy reforms, corruption charges, human rights concerns and other issues as well. Brancati’s contribution to the discourse is important for the disaggregation of protest movements that erupted across the Middle East and North Africa during the Arab Spring revolts. These protest movements were diffuse and encompassed a wide

variety of actors with multiple preferences that were ignited by deleterious economic conditions and included the desire for democratic reforms that have escaped the region for decades.

Now that we have conceptualized key terms and definitions we must examine the theoretical construct behind the repressive calculations of an authoritarian regime. I will first analyze how the authoritarian regime views the protest movement and the determinations and choices the regime has at its disposal to combat the threat. The level of threat, or threat perception, is a profound variable in this equation. Also important in this model is the dynamics of the protest movements and how the government interacts with the threat. What other options does the regime have that would mitigate the threat and ensure regime survival? If violent repression is viewed as too costly, what other measures can be taken? What is the military's role in regime calculations and how does it impact authoritarian endurance and movement success? How does the military differ from the security and police force and does each institution have its own separate and distinct interest at stake? Once we have a greater understanding of the literature and prior research on the costs and benefits of state repression, we can utilize this background to analyze the Arab Spring movements and gain a greater understanding of how authoritarian regimes function while providing lessons for future research on how we study authoritarian survival.

### **Regime Options:**

#### **Repression**

When an authoritarian regime faces threats to its rule and survival there are a number of different options that the regime can take in order to quell the dissent and reestablish stability and the rule of law under regime guidelines. As previously mentioned, one of these options is violent

repression. Repression, being physical sanctions against individuals or organizations for the purposes of imposing costs and deterring continued or future collective action against the state and its institutions. When I refer to physical sanctions in this context, I mean specifically regime authorized military engagement against the protesters with the clear objective of suppressing dissident activities.

Governmental behavior in these instances can be viewed in a rationalist perspective under the auspices of rational choice theory. The rational choice paradigm is a prominent decision-making theory within the political economy and international relations subfields and provides insights into actor preferences and the choices made that would lead to optimal outcomes under certain conditions. The argument rests on the assumption that individuals, in this case, regime leaders, are rational actors and carefully calculate the costs and benefits of repressive behavior. Rational choice is predicated on the assumption of the leader's rational egoism under certain circumstances. "In each case, the political sphere is seen to bear distinct similarities to the working of a competitive market. All share the assumption that exogenous forces do not constrain rational actors from pursuing their own self-interests" (Crane, Amawi, 22, 1997). From this perspective, the regime, being a rational actor, will pursue its self-interests as a consumer does in the marketplace to achieve an optimal outcome.

Game theory and more specifically the iterated prisoner's dilemma are useful analytical tools for analyzing cooperative and non-cooperative situations in the social sciences. Axelrod outlines the benefits of mutual cooperation through the iterated prisoner's dilemma game. Mutual cooperation can be achieved despite great antagonism and mutual restraint is preferred over mutual defection or punishment. With a sustained interaction over time, the stable outcome could be mutual cooperation based on reciprocity. Once again, a cost-benefit analysis must be

employed and a Pareto-optimal outcome, or “outcomes from which no actor could become better off without worsening the pay-offs to another actor” (Aggarwal, Dupont, 56, 2014) are ultimately desired for both the regime and the armed forces. In the classical rationalist paradigm, “political leaders carefully weigh the costs and benefits of coercive action...when benefits exceed costs, alternatives are not viewed favorably, and there is a high probability of success, repressive action is anticipated. When costs exceed benefits, alternatives exist, and the probability of success is low, no repression is expected” (Davenport, Inman 621, 2012). But how can we assume that actor preferences are rational and that the consequences of repressive strategies are fully understood? Analysts cannot assume that the primary players involved have complete information to base their decisions. The concept of bounded rationality can help explain these information asymmetries and why a regime might choose one method of movement control over another. Faber outlines how bounded rationality impacts a government’s decision to deal with both internal and external threats. Faber notes and confirms my overall contention that the primary objective of the autocrat is to survive and remain in power, and in that pursuit, the leader will have to make choices on how best to remain in power. However, decisions made by the government or the autocrat are hampered by “incomplete and inaccurate information and limited mental information-storage and information-processing capabilities” (Faber 309, 1990). Selten notes that “human capabilities of computation and cogitation impose cognitive limits on rationality” (Selten 641, 1990). The decision emergence view, which is related to boundedly rational decision-making, empathizes that rationality has little influence over behavior (Selten 641, 1990). The impact of emotions such as fear or anger also limits deliberative decision making. The author notes these types of emotions can shift the focus of the individual on a narrow set of activities related to temporary goals and fears and “thereby control

the direction of thinking and imagination” (Selten 641, 1990). This is a reality that a leader under threat from a mass uprising or an armed opposition must face and that fear or desperation could prompt the leader to choose repressive measures that backfire and further escalate tensions. The decision-maker will choose an option that seeks to minimize losses and preserve the status quo. As a result, when their survival is under threat from an uprising, the government will adopt a risk-taking posture in the decision-making process and which ultimately will result in repression.

Hodgson identifies a “doing one’s best” notion of rationality that often fails to identify their situations or how they define what the best outcome is. Hodgson further explains that “the problem with this ‘doing one’s best’ notion of rationality is that it lacks the necessary explanatory detail concerning agent cognition and goal-formation” (Hodgson 95, 2012). The regime or the central figure leading the regime may perceive a certain tactic or strategy to be in his best interest in order to ensure his own survival, but that limited ability to fully comprehend other options and outcomes could lead to choosing a strategy that would seal their ultimate demise. Hodgson refines his idea of the “doing one’s best” notion and claims it is better described as “following incentives or adapting to circumstances” (Hodgson 95, 2012). The expected payoff utility, where a payoff is “a reward in a game that has an explicitly expected worth that is known to the analysts of the game and to all its players” (Hodgson 95, 2012) is generally accepted within mainstream economics and consumer behavior, but it assumes the regime and its challengers are aware of what a potential payoff would be in a struggle against one another.

But what if the various players involved have a different set of preferences and interests? This is where the rational actor model runs into a wall. If the ultimate goal of the regime leader is to ensure his own survival by any means necessary, that same logic applies to the military

establishment and the various actors within the security forces. Each institution has its own preferences that might run counter to the other. The leader may opt to repress the movement, fearing it could take down its regime. The law enforcement establishment may follow through on orders to repress, given the close ties it has to the regime, depending on the country in question. The military, however, may decide to remain neutral or directly oppose the regime and its law enforcement arm and refuse to fire on innocent protesters, fearing the many costs it could face and the possibility that it could lose certain economic privileges that are distinct from the actual regime in power. Members of the elite ruling class of the military may fear these losses of economic privilege most. Rank and file members, on the contrary, may have serious and legitimate concerns about killing unarmed innocent civilians. On the other hand, members of the police and security force may have different fears. Depending on the structural makeup of a police force, individuals may fear losing their job and benefits or fear losing their life if they abandon a regime that they must protect from challengers. We will see this play out in Egypt, where the members of the elite within the armed forces were extremely cautious and deliberate in the initial outbreak of protests, using selective forms of repression and carefully observing where the movement was headed (Barany 32, 2011). As we will see, each coercive institution indeed has its own interests in mind and that could run directly counter to the mission and interests of other institutions.

There is no unitary consensus within the literature on the consequences of using violent repression against dissent. The regime must calculate whether or not repressive tactics will achieve the ultimate desired goal of squashing the opposition and ensuring the stability of the regime. This is often referred to as the repression-dissent nexus (Lichbach 1987). There are several hypotheses within the literature to suggest the varying degrees of effectiveness of

political repression. Repression can deter social mobilization, can escalate mobilization, can have no effect but affect how individuals become involved and what tactics are used (Earl 267, 2011). Repressive tactics can actually backfire and instigate protest movements, acting as a trigger event and spurring collective action amongst the disgruntled populace. Therefore, a regime must be cautious when weighing the options against dissent. The ambiguities and uncertainties that exist in the choices regimes have resulted in a game-theoretic model that is based on a strategic interaction between multiple players, mainly the regime, the armed forces and the opposition. It is not simply a binary choice between using repression or restraint.

The regime's decision to use repression against a social movement will be based on the threat perception relative to the state's capacity to survive such a challenge to its rule. How does the regime properly measure or view threat perception under fast-moving and fluid conditions that characterize mass upheaval? The regime may be boundedly rational, operating with minimal information or a limited amount of reasonable options. Cohen states that a "threat may be perceived, and countermeasures are taken, even when the opponent possesses no malicious intent" (Cohen 93, 1978). Cohen further disaggregates perception into two separate stages, observation and appraisal. The observation stage is where cues are received and the appraisal stage is where the environment is evaluated as either threatening or benign, from which options are weighed or debated (Cohen 95, 1978). This threat perception sequence is a psychological process where information and evidence are analyzed and a proper response is formed. Here, the consequences of bounded rationality are on display, as the regime monitors the social movement that is ongoing and always evolving, it can misinterpret the message trying to be delivered. Viewing a threat, the dictator must also anticipate how the opposing movement will behave and respond to threats of its own. Under duress and social instability, the regime may act based on

this fear, without complete information. Pruitt contends that perception finds its source in distrust, past experience, contingency planning and personal anxiety (Pruitt 400, 1965). We will learn how the diffusion effects from the Arab Spring throughout the MENA region played into the calculations of all the relevant actors involved across the region. No dictator wants to end up like Egypt's Mubarak or worse Libya's Qaddafi, who wound up killed at the hands of rebels. So what may be a relatively benign movement that could be co-opted or accommodated, or doesn't have the resource strength to pose a significant challenge, could be radicalized by a strategic blunder on the part of the regime. "Perceptions of threat are anticipations of the future," (Cohen 101, 1978) and as we will discover, the use of repression can result in several outcomes, one being the dissipation or elimination of the social movement which would be a desirable and optimal outcome for the regime, or it could increase collective action and radicalize the movement toward reciprocal violence. The payoff of employing violence is simply unknown.

Davenport outlines threat perception and how this predisposes the regime towards the use of political repression. This is referred to as the "Law of Coercive Responsiveness" and assumes regimes will use repression in response to real and perceived challenges to its rule. Davenport claims the difference in threat perception is based on four state-level variables: system type, coercive capacity, economic development, and dependency (Davenport 690, 1995). According to Davenport's thesis, these four elements impact the government's domestic threat perception and the impetus to resort to repressive tactics. Regime type is central to this argument and the authoritarian regime type is the unit of analysis for my research. Whereas democracies gain legitimacy through free and fair contested elections and permit the free exercise of expression through protected civil liberties, authoritarian regimes most certainly do not. Davenport refers to this as the "domestic democratic peace" and is a state level version of the democratic peace

thesis in international relations theory. Institutional mechanisms of restraint, accountability, and rule of law prevent democracies from using violent repression against peaceful mobilizers. The legitimacy of the authoritarian regime does not come from competitive elections and civil liberties are generally curtailed as they are deemed threatening to regime survival. Thus, if widespread dissent emerges, the authoritarian regime is more likely to use coercive and repressive tactics to remain in power.

The coercive capacity of the state is the second factor that influences domestic threat perception and the regimes willingness to resort to violence. Coercive capacity is measured by the state's allocation of military and security expenditures relative to the overall budget. Davenport highlights two explanations in this calculus; the first being a strategic issue and the second an organizational matter (Davenport 691, 1995). Providing the regime with the resources for coercive measures reduces the costs of undertaking repressive tactics. Davenport states: "This reduced cost made repressive strategies more attractive to those in authority because more areas and more individuals could be subject to the regulatory efforts of the regime" (Davenport 691, 1995) and this increases the probability that the regime will use repression because it is viewed as a possible answer to the domestic threat. The other factor, organizational structure, shapes the regimes preferences through what Davenport calls the bureaucratic "law of instrument" (Davenport 691, 1995). Much in line with organization theory, the coercive apparatus of the state has a vested interest in repressive behavior and will seek further access to key resources such as monetary allocations and political influence (Davenport 691, 1995). A bureaucratic machine composed of soldiers within the military and security forces, judges, lawyers, and other groups become embedded in such a coercive structure and are predisposed to violent means. When faced with revolutionary challenges such as the Arab Spring, the "law of instrument" would take

effect and “as a result of this pursuit, the organization would become more attentive to different aspects of anti-systemic behavior and it would consistently lobby the government to respond repressively” (Davenport 691, 1995). Rational choice theory can be applied here as well as the coercive institutions of the state believe it is in their self-interest to promote such tactics in order to gain political influence and resources.

The third variable in Davenport’s thesis is the political economy and economic development of the state. A sound and prosperous economy lower the perception of domestic threats and repression is not a viable tool. “Since basic human needs (including health care, housing, food, economic opportunity) have a greater likelihood of being met within this context, important elements of society are probably not called into question” (Davenport 692, 1995). This claim by Davenport is important because the primary causal mechanism of legitimacy for an authoritarian regime is economic development. When the economy performs well, collective action against an authoritarian regime is unlikely. If the economy deteriorates and erodes the legitimacy of the regime, it is more likely to influence collective action in opposition to the state. “As underdeveloped economies have a much more difficult time providing basic human needs, if conflict does take place, then the latent hostilities felt towards the regime has a potential for escalating” (Davenport 692, 1995). When the population feels the effects of a lagging economy and take to the streets, the threat increases and so does the possibility of repressive measures.

Henderson elucidates on the importance of sound economic policy to authoritarian resilience and maintaining power. It is perhaps more crucial for the authoritarian to ensure a stable economy because the mechanisms available to the public to redress grievances are limited and narrow. Whereas in a democracy, a struggling economy will often lead to electoral realignments, or the “throw the bums” out mentality. Citizens can vote out their representatives if

they feel they are mishandling or mismanaging the economy. These same mechanisms are not permitted by authoritarian systems and even those that do permit elections, the process is generally manipulated and rigged. The authoritarian regime must be proactive and engaged in managing its economy while reducing the scarcity of goods. Henderson states: “the most lasting pattern has been for authoritarian governments of various types to take charge, presumably to offer more manageability of the economy” (Henderson 124, 1991). More scarcity will inevitably result in greater repression. The level of inequality in a society also determines whether the government will use repression against anti-government protesters. The inequality problem creates a gap between the few at the top with the most wealth and resources and the rest of the population that is not blessed with such status. Along with other economic indicators discussed above, high inequality breeds instability and discontent and “because elites do not want to share, repression appears relatively efficient in the short run when resources are scarce” (Henderson 125, 1991). Economic development played a crucial role in the Arab Spring and I will look at several domestic economic indicators within each Arab Spring country later in this research. As Davenport makes clear: “despite the presence of anti-systemic behavior, high levels of economic development should have a negative effect on threat perception and repressive response because the regime does not wish to antagonize dissidents” (Davenport 692, 1995). However, the direct correlation between GNP per capita may be spurious and not a clear indicator of regime decision-making.

The final factor mentioned by Davenport is dependency and how the global economy penetrates the domestic economy which increases the need to protect certain political and economic relationships (Davenport 692, 1995). This last point may be salient but I am inclined to revise this in the analysis phase of the Arab Spring portion of this paper. Dependency may not

necessarily involve the disenfranchisement of capitalists, but dependency on foreign aid, particularly from the United States or other external actors, which I will argue weighs heavily in the repressive decision-making process of the regime.

### **Concessions and Accommodation**

The ambiguities and uncertainties that exist in the choices regimes have resulted in a game-theoretic model that is based on the strategic interaction between multiple players, mainly the regime, the armed forces and the opposition. It is not simply a binary choice between using repression or restraint but rather a strategic choice between violent repression and accommodation and certain concessions offered by the regime. Brancati outlines three possible forms of concessions: political, economic, or policy. According to Brancati, economic and policy concessions can include promises to improve living standards, increase public sector employment, and reduce widespread corruption (Brancati 107, 2016). Political concessions have the greatest potential to impact regime structure and can include reforms to the electoral system, restoration of elections, and reducing the powers of the central government. Rasler notes that such concessions can either be procedural or substantive (Rasler 138, 1996). Procedural concessions are rather hallowed and limited but signal the regimes willingness to negotiate. Procedural concessions can include “the release of political prisoners, mass pardons or amnesties, reshuffling of administrative personnel, or arrests of controversial government figures” (Rasler 138, 1996). Substantive concessions reflect a higher degree of regime vulnerability and include a wide range of accommodations such as extensive liberalization efforts or co-opting the opposition to the government under certain conditions.

This interplay can be viewed as a game theoretical model whereby cooperation on one side should facilitate mutual cooperation on the other, while defection from one side will

encourage defection on the other. The strategic interaction between the players involved is summed up by Pierskalla and resembles this structure of choices following mass mobilization (Pierskalla 123, 2010):

<b>Regime</b>	<b>Anti-Government Protesters</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Represses	Protesters escalate	Conflict escalation
Represses	Protesters acquiesce	Status quo remains
Accommodates	Protesters escalate	Conflict escalation
Accommodates	Protesters acquiesce	Status quo remains unless genuine democratic reforms offered

Regime repression can either force the movement to back down and acquiesce or it could have a significant backlash and provoke civil conflict. If the regime is willing to compromise and offer concessions, the movement can either continue to escalate, knowing full well the costs of refusal will likely result in civil conflict, or the payoff structure is adequate enough where the movement can afford to compromise with the regime. Examples from the Arab Spring which will be explored in the case studies section of the research, show this dynamic interplay at work. Syria under the Assad regime illustrates that government repression can actually radicalize the opposition and provoke a civil war. Bahrain will show us that sustained government repression, along with other factors including external support, can adequately suppress a rebellion. The case of Egypt shows that the government tried to offer concessions to the opposition and make limited

accommodative reforms, but the challengers refused to make any such compromises with a regime believed to have lost legitimacy, and protests continued to escalate. Finally, the Kingdom of Jordan highlighted that regime's ability to offer minimal concessions to the opposition that did not challenge the monarchy's hold on power alongside selective repression to finally co-opt the movement and prevent a hostile takeover of the government.

This strategic game is also referred to by Lichbach as the Rational Actor (RA) model. This model focuses on the strategic interaction between the opposition group and the regime and the tactics used by each in response to the other. Lichbach highlights the key factor of the government's response and as an agent of "social control." The government's response will alter the costs of the opponent's strategy. Pierskalla notes that "it is always rational for the opposition to acquiesce after the government accommodates" (Pierskalla 124, 2010) and that escalation becomes a viable option only after the government represses. An authoritarian regime with a weak or decentralized security structure that faces a strong opposition with preexisting social networks and a strong base of support to overcome the collective action problem will be more likely to concede accommodation in order to avoid escalation (Pierskalla, 125, 2010).

Lichbach states that "higher and higher levels of repression bring proportionally fewer and fewer rewards to the regime" (Lichbach 270, 1987). In this instance, regime repression is counterproductive, stimulating social mobilization and helping the opposition to overcome the collective action problem. Repression decreases the government's legitimacy and movement organizers and activists who previously adhered to peaceful methods of protest become hard line, radicalized and heightening a sense of revolutionary fervor. Lichbach summarizes this predicament by stating: "In this sense, coercive responses by the government are self-

reinforcing: After a certain point, they only trigger similar responses by opponents” (Lichbach 270, 1987).

It should also be noted that regime accommodation of protest movements and policy concessions may also backfire on the regime as well. Consequently, any type of concessions or accommodations offered by the regime to the opposition could have the reverse effect and whet the appetite of the challengers for greater concessions or possibly regime change. Offering concessions can signal weakness or vulnerability to the opposition, spurring increased collective action and motivating people to join the movement, realizing that greater strength in movement numbers can increase the possibility of extracting further concessions from the regime. Rasler reiterates the potential counterproductive nature of concessions by stating: “the result is more dissent because successful collective action sustains the involvement of old participants while convincing sideliners of the usefulness of protest and ensuring their future participation” (Rasler 135, 1996). The regime could theoretically cause itself to collapse with this “trap of reform.”

### **Military Calculation and Defection**

Military defections amidst peaceful civil resistance against the regime is a prime indicator of how the regime will respond to the protesters and whether coercive measures will be used. The regime relies upon the state’s coercive capacities if repression is employed and key defections from within hamper the regimes ability to exert force over the demonstrations. Military defections played an important role in several of the Arab Spring uprisings. The question that demands answers is why some militaries experienced splits and defections and others remained loyal? Nepstad argues that troop decisions to defect were shaped by “whether or not they received financial or political benefits from the regime, and their perception of the regime’s strength” (Nepstad 338, 2013).

Ensuring the loyalty of the armed forces is paramount for the regime when faced with large-scale anti-government demonstrations. There are several methods the regime uses to safeguard against defections and ensure loyalty while there are several structural variables outlined by Nepstad that influence troop defection or loyalty to the regime. One clear regime method to deter against defection is punishment; “Those who do not demonstrate sufficient loyalty can be demoted, fired, or imprisoned” (Nepstad 338, 2013). However, negative sanctions are not the only method used by the regime to deter defection and promote loyalty. Selective incentives and positive inducements in the form of economic payoffs to troops are also viewed as a propitious strategy by the regime to keep the armed forces cohesive and unified. Nepstad states: “Many regimes have granted their security forces financial benefits or privileged access to (often illicit) economic activities” (Nepstad 338, 2013). These lofty economic incentives will likely keep the military in line with the regime despite its repressive nature to ensure continued economic benefits for themselves and their families. McLaughlin, who spoke to these issues well before the Arab Spring uprisings, agrees and notes that autocratic governments have various economic tools at their disposal to ensure loyalty of the armed forces, which include providing individual incentives and relying on “group-based strategies that exploit ethnic ties to cement in-group bonds” (Brooks, 2017). These factors can help determine how the military will react in a time of crisis such as a mass uprising. Brooks notes that individual incentives to soldiers may be questioned if the regime is under threat which could compel members of the military to defect, whereas ethnic or sectarian loyalty, soldiers “are reassured that others will stay loyal and the regime will endure” (Brooks 6, 2017). Out-group soldiers, or soldiers that do not identify with the ethnic or sectarian nature of the regime and armed forces, will be more likely to defect to the opposition because their position is far more tenuous as an out-group actor. Nepstad agrees with

the tactic of ensuring loyalty and unity through political incentives and patronage politics based on religious or ethnic affiliation with the ruling regime. Nepstad states: “If security forces feel that the state protects their identity-based interests, they are likely to remain loyal – particularly in socially divided nations” (Nepstad 338, 2013). If members of the armed forces believe their ethnic or religious interests are protected it is more likely they will remain loyal and uphold the regime.

The anti-government protesters as a movement can also influence the military’s calculus and persuade defection from the regime. In order for the resisters to impact the military’s calculus, the movement must attempt to increase the costs of regime loyalty while decreasing the costs of defection. One way the movement can increase the costs of loyalty and armed crackdowns is through the media. Worldwide broadcasting of repressive regime crackdowns on peaceful protesters can have a heavy influence on the international community’s ability to affect realities on the ground and also raise the costs for the military and entice defection. Nepstad reinforces that this media tactic is effective because if troops cracked down such measures could lead to “international condemnation, the ending of diplomatic relations, the cessation of aid and trade agreements, and arms embargoes” (Nepstad 339, 2013). These costs can have a severe impact on the financial benefits provided to the military and provoke defection on the side of the protesters.

The structural composition of the military and their constitutional role in society also play a role in potential defection. With respect to the composition of the military, the relationship between the army and the society is essential. Whether or not the military is representative of the social makeup of society can determine the willingness to use repression. If there is a lack of overlap between the identity of the military and society, there will be greater likelihood to

repress a movement. Selective appointment and recruitment along ethnic, sectarian, or tribal lines are critical, and this is on display in Syria and Bahrain where the majority of high-level members of the military are taken from the ruling ethnic or sectarian clan. On the other hand, where this is conscription, the military will be more representative of society and complicates the possibility of using violent repression against your own people. Brooks notes “asking soldiers to fire on a population with whom they identify can produce substantial disaffection and potential insubordination” (Brooks 6, 2017).

Nepstad states that “if the armed forces are largely comprised of recruits, nonviolent movements may have a greater chance of winning their sympathy since recruits are likely to identify with civil resisters and share their concerns” (Nepstad 340, 2013). Nepstad mentions the case of East Germany during the 1989 uprising where soldiers were reluctant to crack down on peaceful protesters because many of the participants were friends and family members. The mission and identity of the armed forces may also play a factor. If the military views itself as the guarantors of democracy or stability, they may be less likely to fire on protesters and more likely to defect from the regime. A military that views itself as the protector of the regime or a particular political party, defection will be less likely. And if there are constitutional or legal protections for the military regardless of the regime in power, then it is less costly for the military to defect and side with the movement. A second structural variable, according to Nepstad, that will influence the military is the natural resource wealth of the nation, particularly oil wealth. Nations with large oil revenues are better able to fund their coercive institutions without heavily taxing the population. Nepstad claims “When autocrats lavishly fund their militaries, troops tend to be loyal and dutifully carry out orders, including orders to repress”

(Nepstad 340, 2013). The regime can use the vast wealth generated from oil revenues to ensure the loyalty of the military and significantly raise the costs of defection on the part of the military.

The level of institutionalization of the armed forces is crucial in determining the coercive capacities of the state and their willingness to use violent repression on anti-government protesters. Bellin examines this logic and reinvestigates the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East and the vulnerabilities faced by regimes during the Arab Spring. Bellin concurs with Nepstad's finding that natural resource wealth contributes to the vitality of the coercive capacities of each state and their willingness to use coercion. Bellin claims the institutionalization of the armed forces along with the level of social mobilization, discussed in a later section, are vital in determining the will of the military to repress (Bellin 129, 2012). When the military is organized along patrimonial lines, meaning, military leaders as well as rank and file soldiers are closely linked to the ruling regime through clan, ethnic, or religious bonds, and when professional advancement is premised on these bonds through patronage and cronyism rather than merit and the economic interests of the military are tied to the elite, the military's leadership and survival is inseparable from regime endurance. Brooks also elaborates on the notion of institutionalization of the armed forces and how that impacts the calculus of the military during moments of crisis. Patrimonial militaries are centered on the ethnic identity of the leader, with personal ties between the ruling regime and the senior military officers. These are primordial and existential relationships, cemented through patronage and corruption that are mutually relied upon in order to survive. As Brooks states: "In this informal and highly personalistic incarnation of civil-military relations, military leaders depend on the ongoing support of the country's leader to retain their positions and keep the regime intact" (Brooks, 2017). A military based primarily on patrimonialism rather than institutionalization will be more

likely to use repression and less likely to support the opposition because the institutional interests will be protected by the close ties with the ruling regime (Bellin 129, 2012) and this will be demonstrated further in the discussion of the Arab Spring countries.

In relation to the institutionalization of the armed forces, the military has several core interests that it must protect and uphold and this does not necessarily include regime survival under certain circumstances. Bellin outlines three institutional interests that guide the military's missions: "defend the country; maintain security and order; and look out for the military's institutional interests" (Bellin 131, 2012). Bellin further explains that the military's interests can be disaggregated into several component parts including: "maintain internal cohesion, discipline, and morale within the corps; protect the image, prestige, and national legitimacy of the military (all of which depends on delivering on its role as defender of the nation); secure the economic interests of the military (both the economic interests of the military as an institution – that is, access to first rate military equipment, as well as the economic interests of the military as individuals – that is, access to adequate salaries, benefits, and professional promotion opportunities" (Bellin 131, 2012). Barany agrees and claims that so long as the regime protects the interests of the armed forces, the military will likely back the regime: "In general, the stronger a regime's record of satisfying political and socioeconomic demands, the more likely the armed forces will be to prop it up" (Barany 29, 2011). We can expect that if the institutional interests of the military are threatened by regime survival and they are ordered to use repression, then there is a high risk of military defection and splits within the ruling elite that will hamper the use of violent coercion. On the other hand, if the military's interests are protected and secured by the ruling regime then we can expect the likelihood of the armed forces remaining loyal and using repression against innocent protesters.

The military also faces a moral quandary between remaining loyal to the regime and using force to suppress peaceful, nonviolent protesters or defecting from the regime and siding with the movement. Gould and Moe refer to this as “dilemma actions” that compel a regime to make a strategic choice, in game theoretic fashion, to either violently suppress a peaceful movement or create political space and seek concessions and accommodation. The question of morality is an effective tactic by resisters as it can “intentionally create moral conflicts for troops as a way to undermine their loyalty” (Nepstad 339, 3013). Nepstad also refers to “honor costs” within the military that appeal to troops sense of honor and prestige to do what is right and not what is ordered. Nepstad states: “resisters can persuade troops that if they support the regime, they will go down on the wrong side of history” (Nepstad 339, 2013). Brooks highlights the importance of military cohesion and how the dynamics of the military shape the decision-making process. When discussing the cases of Egypt and Tunisia, Brooks claims: “senior military leaders feared that ordering junior officers and their subordinates to repress regular citizens would test their loyalties and lead to splits within the organization” (Brooks 12, 2017). This is in line with Nepstad’s argument regarding the “honor costs” incurred by military leaders and their subordinates if they fired on innocent people protesting against the regime. Movement organizers can also compel military defections by highlighting the personal costs of loyalty and the benefits gained from defection. However, using the rational actor model, this only becomes an option once regime troops determine defection is in their rational self-interest. Nepstad argues that “even if troops are suffering under the current system, they may conclude that there is little point in rebelling if the opposition movement is destined to lose” (Nepstad 340, 2013). This is where movement strength and organization comes into play and it must be made clear to the armed forces that their best interests lie in supporting the opposition.

The structure of the international system, alliance formation, and the potential diffusion of conflict from neighboring states can also impact possible defections within the military. Moves to defect are based on the military's perception of regime strength or weakness. Nepstad states: "If a ruler's repressive acts result in international sanctions, the regime may appear to be severely weakened - especially if it is heavily dependent on other nations for aid, trade subsidies, or military support" (Nepstad 340, 2013). On the other hand, if nations are dependent on the authoritarian regime and closely interdependent, then the international community may be apprehensive in applying sanctions, resulting in the military's perception of state strength and decreasing the likelihood of defection. Bellin agrees that international support networks that were retained after the end of the Cold War because of Western strategic and security interests, such as assuring the free flow of oil and gas and also containing Islamic extremism are important factors in determining the coercive apparatus' capacity and strength to intervene (Bellin 129, 2012).

Allied or neighboring state's ability or willingness to intervene in the conflict also shapes military preferences. If neighboring states are willing to intervene on the side of the regime to ensure the survival and stability of the government, military defections will be less likely. However, clear signals of nonintervention on the side of allies or neighboring states can portray state weakness and provoke a military mutiny. These factors that influence whether or not the military remains loyal to the regime or defects to the protest movement are crucial to the authoritarian's decision to use repression and ensure regime survival or alter the balance of the conflict and increase movement success. The regime's willingness to use repression or adopt accommodative compromises may lie with the military's ultimate strategic decisions.

### **Security Force Fragmentation**

Now we must disaggregate police or security forces from the military and explain why this differentiation matters to the survival of the authoritarian regime and how parallel coercive structures compete for power, which can result in higher levels of repression against incumbent challengers. What's been called security force fragmentation involves creating several distinct coercive institutions that operate alongside and oftentimes in competition with the regular military (Folch, Rivero 4, 2016). "It is argued that leaders create parallel organizations in order to counterbalance the military thereby undermining its capacity to coordinate and making coups more unlikely" (Folch, Rivero 4, 2016). Creating these different structures, which generally took place immediately after decolonization and national independence were declared, helps the dictator consolidate power and reduce the likelihood of challengers from within. These different players are called the ruling coalition, which is essential for regime durability. Svoboda defines the ruling coalition as consisting of "individuals who support the government and, jointly with the dictator, hold enough power to be both necessary and sufficient for the survival of the government" (Svoboda 480, 2009). This survival is predicated on keeping these institutions and their key members satisfied enough to dissuade them from defection.

The competing internal dynamics within the ruling coalition is revealing as to why repression is used and by what institution, "hence, successfully differentiating the security forces, creating paramilitary units, undermining the military as an organization, and placing security forces under the direct control of the ruler are key processes that may help establish a narrow autocracy headed by a largely unconstrained ruler or strongman" (Folch, Rivero 5, 2016). This divide creates a different incentive structure for the multitude of institutions responsible for ensuring stability and regime survival. We saw this scenario play out in the first country to revolt in the nascent Arab Spring. When mass uprisings began in Tunisia, longtime dictator President

Ben Ali unleashed gangs not directly tied to the security establishment as well as the elite presidential guard against the demonstrators (Barany 31, 2011). Ben Ali also ordered the army chief of staff to deploy the armed forces into the streets, but that order was rejected, and members of the military were placed in between the protesters and the security units. These types of personalist or sultanistic regimes, as Tunisia and Libya were and Syria currently remains, place a great emphasis on parallel and competing security forces to remain in power. The key to this organizational proliferation is to link the security forces to the rule of the leader so that they are more likely to resort to repression. It's also important, as was discussed, to provide patronage to the military to buy their loyalty and prevent an intervention in politics (Powell 175, 2014).

### **Social Movement Strength and Structure**

Although the main focus of this research is on the authoritarian regime and its response to anti-government demonstrations, we should also briefly examine the social movement and contentious politics literature, as it relates to challenging an incumbent government and how the internal dynamics of a social movement interacts with and ultimately affects what a government opts to do in response. Most importantly, why would ordinary individuals drop what they're doing, go out into the street and protest against a highly repressive and authoritarian regime? The risks are enormous, and you are putting your life and the lives of your family and relatives in possible jeopardy. You and loved ones could be surveilled, harassed, beaten and tortured, indefinitely detained, and possibly killed. What are the incentives of taking such risks without knowing the expected benefits or outcome of a dangerous decision? Here, the literature on collective action and social movements can help us explain why.

Let us define social movements and contentious politics. McCarthy and Zald define social movements as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences,

for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society” (McCarthy, Zald 1217, 1977). Tarrow states that contentious politics occurs “when ordinary people – often in alliance with more influential citizens and with changes in public mood – join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents...it is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives to take action for actors who lack resources on their own (Tarrow 6, 2011). What motivates an individual to protest against a perceived injustice at the hands of the central power? Firstly, there must be some sort of collective grievance felt by the masses that inspires people to take action. This grievance or deprivation view holds that “discontent produced by some combination of structural conditions is a necessary if not sufficient condition to an account of the rise of any specific social movement phenomenon” (McCarthy, Zald 1214, 1977). The mobilization potential of a society must be triggered so that individuals take a positive stance toward a social movement (Klandermans, Oegema 519, 1987). Like rational choice theory, the expected benefits must outweigh the costs. In volatile situations such as an uprising against an authoritarian regime, the cost of potentially losing your life is tremendous, and the benefits must real and substantial for such an undertaking. People must be willing to engage in unconventional forms of politics with others who share some sort of common identity or goal (Klandermans, Oegema 519, 1987). In the Arab Spring cases, the motivations were many, but an emphasis on strain theories are important. The economic pressures being faced by the people in the Middle East was growing to a boil. Economies had been lagging, people were suffering, starving, lacking gainful employment, and feeling otherwise dejected and disenfranchised. This formed the mobilization potential which is “the reservoir the movement can draw from” (Klandermans, Oegema 519, 1987). There is strength in numbers, and as individuals become motivated to participate, it creates a cascading

effect where other individuals want to participate as well. Tarrow says that this coordination of collective action “depends on the trust and cooperation that are generated among participants by shared understandings and identities, or...on the collective action frames that justify, dignify, and animate collective action” (Tarrow 31, 2011).

In these cases examined later, the framing was centered on the corrupt and abusive powers of unaccountable and repressive governments that did virtually nothing to improve their standard of living, only enriching themselves and their cronies at the expense of a subjugated population. This can loosely be called “ideology” in a narrow sense as “it dignifies discontent, identifies a target for grievances, and forms an umbrella over the discrete grievances of overlapping groups” (Tarrow 31, 2011). Here, ideology is more of a rallying cry that includes the preconditions, emotions, and interests that push people to take collective action. Tarrow also disaggregates collective action into what he calls “contentious collective action.” Collective action becomes contentious “when it is used by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities” (Tarrow 7, 2011). People in Arab Spring countries did not have access to routine or institutionalized politics. Politics is dominated by ruling cliques that suppressed their individual freedoms and liberties for decades. Elections, if held at all, were fraudulent and manipulated by the regime to ensure their own victory. There is no “throw the bums” out mentality that generally characterizes democratic elections because there is simply no mechanism for it. As Tarrow continues, contentious collective action is “often the only recourse that most ordinary people possess to demonstrate their claims against better-equipped opponents or powerful states” (Tarrow 7, 2011).

Collective action creates networks of interpersonal relationships and is also increased by preexisting social networks. This forms the bedrock of any social movement. Movement activists bring in outsiders from across their lives to increase participation and sustain the movement: “Because organizations are presumed to forge ties between individuals, membership in organizations (both movement-related and non-movement related) is almost always found to facilitate recruitment into protest” (Schussman, Soule 1086, 2005). Another way to create greater participation is through selective incentives or positive inducements. Selective incentives can be material or nonmaterial to induce them to participate. A collective incentive must be tied to the expectancy of the success of the movement (Klandermans, Oegema 520, 1987). This is much in line with the heavyweights of social movement theorists, Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam, that contentious politics is best understood as a process of social interaction. This is also related to the resource mobilization school of thought in social movement research. This approach emphasizes the support and constraints faced by a movement and examines the internal and external resources available as well as protest control tactics by the authorities (McCarthy, Zald 1213, 1977). As previously mentioned, grievances against the state is a common feature within and across social movements. However, grievances against the state are not sufficient enough to form a social movement. Lots of people feel aggrieved or deprived, for many different reasons and in many different societies. But not all societies rise up against their leaders. The allocation of resources in pursuit of a common goal, organizational structure, and effective leadership are all crucial elements of the resource mobilization process and to forming a social movement.

We have already climbed down the ladder of abstraction from a more general field of social movements and contentious politics to a more specified movement which I refer to as anti-government protests or demonstrations. The movement in question will factor into the hierarchy

of decisions put on the table that the regime must weigh. We can expect that when an authoritarian regime faces a significant threat to its survival, in the form of riots or armed insurgency that could easily spiral into civil war, the regime most certainly will respond with coercive methods to put an end to that challenge. Anti-government demonstrations should not be placed in the same conceptual category as these other violent forms of political opposition, although it is always an option, albeit extremely dangerous and risky. If we assume anti-government protests are peaceful in nature and will not cross the armed threshold, why would the regime resort to repression in this instance? Authoritarian regimes must exercise caution against peaceful demonstrations because there is a risk that repression could cause a backlash whereby the movement alters its preferences in response to repression, or what Lichbach calls tactical adaptation. From the viewpoint of the movement, “all repression does is shift challengers from one tactic to another or from active public dissent to private dissident mobilization and coordination” (Davenport, Inman 624, 2012). Lichbach also refers to what economists call the “comparative statics of the optimization equilibrium” (Lichbach 283, 1987). The underlying assumption is that protest movements do not operate in isolation and there are economic, social, political, and international costs to be gained or lost through movement tactics that are employed. Lichbach states: “A change in an opposition group’s tactics is therefore a function of a change in the exogenous factors it confronts, such as an increase in governmental repression” (Lichbach 284, 1987). Anti-government protests adopt tactics under certain conditions that will increase the likelihood of success.

It’s also important to highlight the interaction of threats and opportunities that are present during ongoing and fluid protest movements. Threats and opportunities exist for both the regime and the movement. History shows us that in certain cases, a regime will seek to reform itself

from within. Such efforts at reform or liberalization can also have a backlash with the unintended consequences of stimulating more independent initiatives or greater participation in the social movement (Tarrow 157, 2011). Threats and opportunities combine to shift the prospects of success or failure for a movement. Opportunities could be presented to the challengers by way of the political process of internal reforms or liberalization. Political opportunity is “dimensions of the political environment or of change in that environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 163, 2011). Integral to this political process equation are resources external to the group, particularly in the form of the availability of potential allies. Allies can include foreign support in some capacity or prominent elite defection from within the ruling elite or the security establishment. Protesters can create political opportunities for elites to either use repression against the movement or encourage elite defection (Tarrow 168, 2011). Tarrow goes on to note that defections from the ruling regime reflect the self-interest of those who determine that it is more beneficial to side with the challengers than remain loyal to the regime: “elites are unlikely to be persuaded to make policy changes that are not in their own interest. Reform is most likely when challenges from outside the polity provide a political incentive for elites within it to advance their own policies and careers” (Tarrow 168, 2011). Elite defection or external support can strengthen the opportunity structure and increase collective action, giving individuals the perception that real change can be won through a collective effort against the state.

The mechanisms and processes of mobilization in the initial stages of the uprising offer key insights into how a movement can grow and strengthen or if the state can mobilize its repressive capacity to end the uprising if it chooses the option to repress. Social movements are characterized by cycles of contention where political opportunities open for “early risers” and

their claims can resonate with a broader swath of the public and can also create fissures or cracks within the regime that reinforce instability among the ruling elite (Tarrow 201, 2011). This is where the regime can “signal” to its opponents, either its willingness to cooperate and offer mild forms of concessions or accommodations or repress any opposition from the outset, indicating the regime is not willing to accommodate its detractors. This temporal dilemma can change the course of the movement, from modest aims to a radical shift in ideological commitments towards extremes or adoption of more disruptive forms of contention (Tarrow 207, 2011). As we will see in the case of Syria, the regime early on opted to use repression against the uprising, spurring a radical escalation in the conflict that ultimately led to violent civil war.

Do emotions play a part in social movements and collective action, and if so does it make individual protesters irrational? Emotions pervade every aspect of social life, and it’s no different for social movements. Emotions form the response to an event but they help shape the goals of an action (Jasper 398 1998). Collins calls emotions “the glue of solidarity” and what mobilizes conflict (Collins 28, 1990). And these emotions are completely rational, “to the extent that emotions depend on cognitions, they more clearly allow learning and adaptation to one’s environment, i.e., rationality” (Jasper 398, 1998). When a focusing event occurs that brings people out into the street to protest their anger and frustration over the current state of affairs, it is a very risky proposition to undertake against an authoritarian regime predisposed to using repressive means to silence your sentiments. Naturally, protesters will experience fear, angst, suspicion, and rage all at once, and it is wholly rational to feel this way, especially if your opponent is heavily armed. This is why emotion is such an important factor in the protest movement. “Sometimes emotional responses are strong enough that people search out protest groups on their own. It is affects and emotional responses that political organizers appeal to,

arouse, manipulate, and sustain to recruit and retain members” (Jasper 405, 1998). The interplay between strong emotions tied to the movement and the social networks that exist or are created help explain the strategic choice to continue to participate or defect, and social movement endurance hinges on this collective effort.

Movement goals and objectives also factor into the regimes proclivity for repression or concessions. If the anti-government protesters demand a greater share of public goods, desire economic or policy concessions to improve their standard of living but fall short of demanding the resignation of the government, regime concessions will be more likely. If the anti-government protesters are intransigent in their preferences and demand the overthrow of the government, those are unacceptable demands that increase the threat perception from the regime’s perspective, making repression more likely. The strength and size of the anti-government protests impact the regimes decision-making process when weighing the options of repression or concessions. We can expect when the size of the anti-government protests is substantial and overwhelming enough to present a clear and present danger to the survival of the regime, the regime will look to accommodate. Brancati reiterates the impact of movement strength, claiming “protests up to between one hundred thousand and one million participants were offered political concessions at a higher rate than protests drawing fewer participants” (Brancati 128, 2016). Movement numbers also affect whether or not the regime leader decides to resign from power. The greater the number of protest participants the more likely the leader will be deposed from power either involuntarily or compelled by regime insiders.

### **Rational Choice, Strategic Imperatives, and International Relations**

The field of international relations has been dominated by the realist school of thought. States are in constant competition with one another and rationally pursue self-interested goals in

the international arena. Military and economic might are the backbone of this theory, which gives states the means to pursue their objectives. This assumes that interests outweigh ideals in the international system. And those interests at the expense of ideals is what forms the basis of rationality because rationality involves the agent's beliefs (Keohane 308, 2002). Jon Elster emphasizes belief in rationality: "An action, to be rational, must be the final result of three optimal decisions: First, it must be the best means of realizing an individual's desires, given his beliefs. Next, these beliefs must themselves be optimal, given the information available to him. Finally, the person must collect an optimal amount of evidence—neither too much nor too little" (Elster 30, 1989). Political actors, in this case, political actors within a ruling regime and security forces, as well as those operating in the opposition social movement, behave strategically, what Johan Olsen calls the "logic of consequences."

United States engagement in the Middle East took on a greater priority during the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower and the enunciation of the Eisenhower Doctrine. The goal was to fill the vacuum following Great Britain's debacle in the Suez Canal crisis and prevent the Soviet Union from intervening and gaining a foothold in the region. Eisenhower outlined the doctrine, highlighting that the United States would use military force to "defend" the region, which would act as a deterrent against Soviet aggression (Michaels 471, 2011). States in the region, and other allies of the U.S., essentially surrendered some their sovereignty to the U.S. in exchange for protection or economic and military assistance (Boutton, Carter 1145, 2014). With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the world's remaining (albeit declining) superpower, the U.S. continued its network of alliances in the region, as they took on a new mandate after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and subsequent "war on terror." The U.S. views terrorism as a major threat to its national security interests of regional stability and a

larger threat to the liberal international rules-based order of which the U.S. was the principal architect of.

The amount of foreign aid the U.S. provides countries in the Middle East (including ones that are the focus of this research) reflect the vital interests at stake in the region and the importance of maintaining stability. Along with the fight against international terrorism, U.S. national security interests and foreign aid seek to advance unwavering support for the state of Israel and peaceful relations with its Arab neighbors and the protection of vital energy supplies (Sharp, Humud 1, 2015). Since 2011, the top three recipients of U.S. bilateral foreign aid appropriations are Israel, Egypt, and Jordan (Sharp, Humud 2, 2015). According to a report by the *Congressional Research Service*, for fiscal year 2016, the Obama administration requested bilateral aid for Near East and North Africa countries amounting to \$7.14 billion, which totaled 13 percent of the State Department's international affairs budget with more than 80 percent of the total going to Israel, Egypt and Jordan (Sharp, Humud 5, 2015). Although Israel did not experience "Arab Spring" type uprisings, it is important to note the amount of financial aid the country receives from the U.S., because it forms the crux of U.S. assistance throughout the region. Israel is the largest recipient of aid; "In 2007, the Bush Administration and the Israeli government agreed to a 10-year, \$30 billion military aid package for the period from FY2009 to FY2018" (Sharp, Humud 10, 2015). Egypt is the second highest recipient, receiving \$1.3 billion yearly in military aid from 1987 to the present (Sharp, Humud 10, 2015). Jordan has been provided a total of \$1 billion in annual foreign assistance from FY2015 to FY2017 (Sharp, Humud 11, 2015).

Alliance formation is a common feature of the international system and it functions as a means for states to combat external threats that exhibit aggressive behavior. In this classical

balancing approach, states form alliances in order to prevent stronger powers from dominating them. According to preeminent realist scholar Stephen Walt, “states join alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat” (Walt 18, 1987). States will balance, according to Walt because their survival will be put at risk if a growing hegemon is not balanced against before it gets too strong. Walt states, “To ally with the dominant power means placing one's trust in its continued benevolence” (Walt 18, 1987). This can be applied to U.S. strategic relationships in the Middle East. States feared the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the threat of Islamic extremism, and now an increasingly aggressive Iran and its Shi'a proxies such as Hezbollah. The U.S. is looked at as the principal guarantor of peace and stability in this tumultuous part of the world. From the perspective of Middle East states, in this case, Egypt and Jordan, they are attracted to U.S. power and seek to remain under the U.S. security umbrella. Walt makes note that states will ally with or against the foreign power that poses the biggest threat, what you might call a balance of threat. “For example, states may balance by allying with other strong states if a weaker power is more dangerous for other reasons” (Walt 21, 1987). This can certainly explain the disparate coalition that formed against the Islamic State. Geographic proximity is another reason why states will look to form alliances in order to counter or balance a threat within their neighborhood: “States are more likely to make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant” (Walt 23, 1987). American allies in the region benefit greatly not only from U.S. security guarantees but also from institutional access and material rewards that “allowed their forces to maintain cutting-edge capabilities and their agencies access to inner realms of American intelligence and strategy” (Walt 10, 2017). This is one of the many reasons Sunni Arab states and monarchies are allied with the United States because they fear the rising threat of Shi'a Iran

and its aggressive behavior in the region that could potentially be bolstered with nuclear weapons.

Syria is the only case study examined that is not closely aligned with the United States, and it remains one of the only countries in the region that did not pivot toward the United States during or after the Cold War. Russian support for Syria emerged out of the ideological battle of the Cold War rivalry with the U.S. Syria gained greater Soviet support as the Syrian Baathist regime grew more radical and adopted a number of Marxist tenets (Walt 189, 1987). Syria is the only country that remained in the Russian orbit after the Cold War, and Russia must maintain its offensive capabilities within Syria if it wishes to remain relevant and have an impact in the region. Thus, Russia's influence and power in the Middle East rests on the fate of Bashar al-Assad and the maintenance of the Syrian state.

## **Research Method**

The subject of study under investigation is why some authoritarian regimes repress anti-government demonstrations and other authoritarian regimes offer concessions. I examined four Arab Spring cases: Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain. Each of these cases, along with the other Arab Spring countries, have similar historical, post-colonial trajectories, and share an authoritarian regime type, whether it is in the form of an "Arab Republic" or monarchy. The four cases I examined had very similar coercive and repressive state apparatuses to enforce compliance from the population, were characterized by extreme corruption and nepotism, and each country experienced deteriorating economic conditions that spread throughout the region and was a primary causal factor that led to social mobilization. The units of analysis for each state are the authoritarian regime, the military and the internal police and security forces, and the social movement. However, it should be noted that not each unit of analysis is a unitary actor, the

regime, the military and security forces as well as the social movement are made up of individuals, and every individual has their own preferences and goals under certain conditions and not every actor within the regime or the movement is expected to act in concert with each other. The timeline of these cases I examine begins with Tunisia in late 2010, which provided the trigger or diffusion effect that helped spark uprisings elsewhere in the region. The other cases experienced mass uprisings in early 2011. I limited the case of Egypt to a narrow time horizon, from the start of anti-government protests in January 2011 to the overthrow of the Mubarak regime in February 2011. Egypt is an interesting case because it experienced prolong but interim military rule with increased repression following the initial overthrow of the regime, which was subsequently followed by a democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood regime, which was then ousted and replaced by military rule that continues to govern the country under extreme repression. These counterrevolutions fell outside the scope of my initial research.

I employ a comparative case study analysis of four countries that were among the Arab Spring movement. Each country is classified authoritarian within the existing literature and Freedom House rankings, all experienced economic downturns and subsequent mass uprisings. The comparative method allows you to examine the cases and draw causal inferences to help explain certain phenomena and apply it to other cases. Flyvbjerg outlines the benefits of the case study method, noting that the case study “produces the type of context-dependent knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts” (Flyvbjerg 421, 2003). I chose a small number of cases for this research project in order to gain as much content-driven knowledge on the countries as possible. Case studies are rich in detail and information and provide a more in-depth and clearer understanding of the phenomenon being examined in each case. This method helps the researcher understand the

similarities and differences between the cases and conclusions can be drawn from each in order to hypothesize or generalize to other cases and scenarios. The comparative case study method is undertaken knowing full well that law like conclusions will not be drawn and that only generalizations can be made. As Yanow and Schwartz-Shea mention, case studies allow the researcher to establish causal inferences and hypotheses-testing.

One method of data analysis I utilized in conducting my research is game theory. Game theoretic models can help us understand interactions between multiple players and why they make certain decisions that lead to a particular outcome. Cooperative and non-cooperative game theory is integral to the calculus of the regimes willingness to negotiate or remain firm and use violence to suppress an uprising. It also involves military calculations and whether or not the armed forces will in fact fire on peaceful protesters. Axelrod uses the example of the iterated prisoner's dilemma to describe the benefits of mutual cooperation over time. The rationale provides an insight into why a regime or military would choose not to violently suppress an uprising if it would be deleterious to their interests. It would certainly not be out of altruism or respect for human rights. Ultimately, the primary objective of each side is to sustain their own self-interests and remain in power.

Another important research method that will be of relevance to my research is historical methods and process tracing. Hall notes that "process tracing is a methodology well-suited to testing theories in a world marked by multiple interaction effects, where it is difficult to explain outcomes in terms of two or more independent variables" (George 2006). Descriptions of causal mechanisms are inherently process tracing and involves case studies and historical scholarship. Tracing the historical and path dependent variables within and across cases is a necessary and fundamental aspect of comparative politics research and has certainly been included in my

research analysis. George agrees and contends that “process tracing is an indispensable tool for theory testing and theory development not only because it generates numerous observations within a case, but because these observations must be linked in particular ways to constitute an explanation of the case” (George 207). I use process tracing and historical methodologies to trace the history of each regime under consideration, past methods used in response to social unrest, and the underlying structural economic conditions that led to severe societal discontent over time and resulted in social mobilization.

In the initial phases of this research, I had preconceived notions or biases as to why some authoritarian regimes might use violent repression against an opposition movement and why other regimes might not, but I did not let it impact my hypotheses before diving into the existing literature on the subject, which altered my preferences and hypotheses. I also avoided the selection bias by choosing four random cases from the Arab Spring movement. What makes the research question difficult is that each authoritarian regime in the Arab Spring movement involved many causal variables that led a particular regime to choose repression or concessions, and most regimes initially included a mix of both. I aim for accuracy and validity in my hypotheses. I also addressed the issue of spuriousness, in terms of the economic conditions that resulted in protest movements across the region. I initially hypothesized that stagnant and poor economic conditions are explanatory variables in a regimes calculus to repress or not. However, I realized that this is spurious, or occurs alongside the overall movement and regime response. Anemic economic growth and unemployment erode a regimes credibility and legitimacy, which helps explain why a movement might emerge in the first place but doesn't explain to us why a regime might opt to repress or accommodate. The primary causal factors lie in the structural composition and the interests of the military and the support from external actors.

Now that we have outlined a theoretical understanding of the conditions most conducive to government repression of anti-government protests and the other methodologies used either alongside repression or in replacement of violence, we can apply this construct to the wave of protest movements that spread across the Middle East North Africa region from the end of 2010 throughout 2011 and continuing into the present as the Syrian civil war continues to rage for its sixth year with no end in sight.

### **Arab Spring**

The Arab Spring uprisings in late 2010 and 2011 provide paradigm examples of the threats posed to authoritarian regimes in the form of mass social mobilization. What surprised many scholars and policymakers alike about the protests and the diffusion of demonstrations across the region was that it actually occurred. It seemed as if the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region was impervious to the previous wave of democratization ignited through mass social uprisings that took place in Eastern Europe toward the end of the Cold War and subsequent movements that emerged in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The MENA region appeared to escape the fate that autocrats around the world had succumbed to through the process of people's power movements. The strength and endurance of Middle East authoritarian regimes were thought to be immune from being toppled and the massive coercive apparatus at the disposal of the regimes continued to hold a tight grip on a severely repressed society. Many of the structural economic grievances, widespread corruption and cronyism and both overt and covert forms of repression from the state had always been present. The populations of the entire region were subjugated by repressive intelligence and security apparatuses with little or no space for political mobilization and expression. This extremely coercive environment simmered with stagnating economies that left many without the essentials needed to survive, including food and

a decent paying salary. What subsequently took place has profound significance for the region and the survival of authoritarian regimes that continue to persist not only in the region but around the world. It is now important to examine the conditions that existed in the region and what the dynamics were within the ruling authoritarian regime, the military and how both interacted with the threat posed by the uprisings.

The Arab Spring was triggered by the events that took place in Tunisia in December 2010 when 26-year-old Mohammed Bouazzi, a local street vendor who had been deeply disenfranchised by the lack of career opportunities that existed in Tunisia, lit himself on fire in response to police harassment. This self-immolation was the spark that ignited the most significant political upheaval in the Middle East since the Arab-Israeli wars of the 1940s and 1960s. The movement spread from the tiny North African state to the heart of the Middle East. Along with the robust security apparatuses that were established in order to safeguard regimes from overthrow as well as to topple the state of Israel, the Arab regimes that came to power were predicated on statist socioeconomic policies that included mass subsidies of food, provision of social services, and public sector employment with the understanding that political participation and expression was forbidden (Winckler, 2012). Just prior to the Arab Spring uprisings, life satisfaction was relatively low and dissatisfaction with life was growing (World Bank Report, 2015). By 2010, the countries that would succumb to Arab Spring revolts, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, were among the most dissatisfied in the world, and by the end of the 2000s, the MENA region saw a sharp decline in subjective well-being and a steep rise in dissatisfaction with the quality of government services that are critical to life in the MENA region ([World Bank Report](#), 2015). The report states: “Ordinary people were frustrated by their deteriorating standards of living, reflected in a shortage of quality jobs in the formal sector, poor quality public

services, and the lack of government accountability” ([World Bank Report, 2015](#)). The “social contract” of redistribution that defined the authoritarian Arab regimes could not keep pace with the rising levels of disaffection.

The uprisings that took place, although unique to each individual state and society, experienced similar processes and causal factors leading to the initial mass mobilization. Each campaign of mobilization featured thousands of ordinary citizens using protest strategies including strikes, mass demonstrations, marches and rallies (Salih 184 2013). The advent of social media platforms was also a vital tool utilized by movement participants and leadership to plan and coordinate demonstrations and record the historic and unprecedented example of contentious politics in a region that was devoid of such movements for much of its modern history. The causal factors that ignited this region-wide movement were attributed to economic stagnation, government corruption, and state-sponsored repression of dissent and suppression of civil liberties and political rights.

Like many uprisings and social movements that have occurred throughout history, fledgling economies and social injustices were significant catalysts leading to societal discontent and boiling frustrations. Soherwordi and Ikram discuss the four “deficits” that plagued the MENA region that spurred the uprisings against incumbent regimes: The economic deficit, the political deficit, the freedom deficit, and a dignity deficit (Soherwordi, Ikram 63, 2011). Severe corruption and cronyism were also endemic in the region, with the small ruling elite increasing their financial gains at the expense of the population which suffered through economic and wage stagnation for decades. Salih emphasizes the role that international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) played in aggravating the tensions that had already existed in many societies throughout the MENA region. As far back as the mid-1980s, many

Arab economies underwent extreme pressure from the IMF as well as the World Bank to undergo a program of liberal economic reforms known as “Structural Adjustment Programs.” A major component of these liberalization programs entail canceling government subsidies of essential commodities, public sector jobs were reduced, and taxation on consumption was raised while local and foreign investors were granted tax exemption status (Salih 187, 2013). These economic policies caused massive strain on local populations that resulted in rising food prices and high unemployment, especially among the growing youth population of the Arab world. Salih notes the deleterious impact of international institutions on the domestic affairs of Arab republics and monarchs: “the Structural Adjustment Program imposed on the region by the World Bank and the IMF resulted in a sharp divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ in the Arab world, creating a recipe not for economic reform as intended, but for all-out revolution” (Salih 187, 2013).

While the ruling elite lived lavishly and continued to amass great wealth, the lower and middle classes were mired in poverty and economic insecurity with little prospects for a better future. Unemployment was among the highest in the world and rampant throughout much of region just prior to the uprisings, averaging at 10.3 percent in the Middle East and 9.4 percent in North Africa in 2008 (Soherwordi, Ikram 64, 2011). The region also suffers from a burgeoning youth population that has struggled to find employment and a decent standard of living in an environment where inequalities between the top and bottom of society are steadily growing. In addition to the poor economic performance, the region has a skyrocketing illiteracy rate of 30 percent, contributing to a toxic mix of anger, resentment, and revolutionary fervor (Soherwordi, Ikram 64, 2011). The 2008 global financial crisis intensified these economic strains and each regime was forced to respond to the Great Recession with policies that only worsened the

situation. The recession hit the primary sectors of the economies that states rely upon most for their economic survival: tourism and oil. The price of oil plummeted and IMF imposed severe adjustment plans in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, such as reducing the state budget and amount of state workers, as well as privatization of public services (Soherwordi, Ikram 64, 2011). This only pushed the populations into a deeper malaise of poverty and depression.

Economic disenchantment was not the only cause for mass discontent within the region. Pervasive corruption throughout the bureaucracy and ruling parties was a major source of frustration for the populace. The autocratic regimes rigged elections through fear and intimidation, stacked the parliament with a rubber-stamp legislature that would be merely an extension of the despotic executive and never provided a real check-and-balance that is so necessary to an accountable and democratic form of government. Along with corrupt politicians who were bought off through state rents, the repressive and coercive institutions of the state routinely squashed any form of dissent that was deemed a credible threat to the regime and committed massive violations of human rights. The regimes typically abused declared states of emergency that extended well beyond any particular expiration date and were generally declared in the name of “fighting terrorism,” but was merely a façade and manipulated in order to monitor the population and isolate any potential challengers. The exploitation of these emergency laws included “abduction, involuntary disappearances, unwarranted arrest, torture and unfair trials, and even unlawful killings” (Salih 187, 2013). Cherished civil liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, were both covertly and overtly repressed by internal security forces and the intelligence apparatus. The regimes also have a monopoly on information and what news was disseminated to the public. Journalists that looked to hold officials accountable and showed any independence from the state were subject to intense

harassment, indefinite detainment, torture, and lengthy prison sentences. Human rights lawyers and activists, moderate or independent-minded politicians, academics and trade unionists were also subjugated and exposed to this type of state abuse (Salih 187, 2013). These authoritarian regimes consolidated their rule and hold on power through these intimidation and fear tactics, while simultaneously enriching themselves at the expense of their suffering people and rewarding those who exhibited party, ethnic, or sectarian loyalty. Those who were not identified within the ruling elite were socially and politically marginalized.

## **Syria**

Based on the conceptualization of an authoritarian regime outlined earlier in the research, Syria is clearly a classic authoritarian state. According to Freedom House's 2012 analysis of Syria following the oppressive crackdown of the uprising, the country was categorized as Not Free and the key indexes of political rights, civil liberties, and overall freedom rating ranked each at 7, with a score of 1 being free characteristic of liberal democracy, and a score of 7 being the worst, characteristic of oppressive societies. Having established that Syria is clearly an authoritarian regime that uses repression to sustain its hold on society, we must examine the many structural dynamics that led to the initial uprising, why repression was chosen by the regime and how coercive measures impacted the regime and the opposition.

The Arab Spring uprisings that began in Tunisia caused a contagion effect that spread to Syria against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The Assad family has ruled Syria since Bashar's father, Hafez al-Assad took power in a military coup in 1970 and firmly entrenched the Assad's throughout Syrian state institutions. Syria is constituted by many different religions, including variations within Islam as well as Christianity and also roots of secularism. Syria is comprised of many ethnic identities including Arabs and Kurds, and its tribal and regional affiliations are more

complex than other Arab Spring countries (Aita 293, 2015). Because of this complex social structure, “the ‘power body’ (the president himself, his family, or at least the high command of the army and the security services) has played on these divisions while proposing itself as the—only—safeguard for their coexistence (Aita 293, 2015). Even prior to the Assad regime’s iron grip on power, Syrian society and politics were dominated by the Alawite elite that were put in positions of power under the French Mandate after World War I. Alawites found themselves in high positions within the military while the majority Sunnis did not want to collude with the ruling French (Lesch 3, 2012). The Baath Party came to power by slowly winning seats in the Parliament and allying itself with important elements in the military. “Alawite officers worked their way into the political mix and up the ladder, eventually becoming the dominant element in government as the primary arbiters of power” (Lesch 3, 2012). This is an important point because the Syrian state has been tied to the Assad family and the ruling Alawite elites that have been in power for decades. When challenges emerged in any form, it was simply unacceptable to tolerate: “Alawites worked long and hard to obtain their positions of power and influence in the country, and they were not going to give those up easily” (Lesch 3, 2012). This intolerance of dissent was on full display during the reign of Bashar’s father, when the city of Hama was besieged and hundreds of thousands of people were massacred.

An important element of Assad’s rule in the early years of his reign included a complex system of alliance-formation combined with coercion and accommodation, critical strategies used by all authoritarians (Haddad, Wind 398, 2014). When he came to power, Assad forged a mixture of state-society relations that included the fragmentation of society along with forming binding relations with other social groups in society (Haddad, Wind 398, 2014). The ruling regime championed a populist cause of labor and exploited groups such as peasants. Assad

created a policy of “leveling egalitarianism” where all sections of society were partially repressed, partially represented and provided redistributive benefits from the state that would serve all Syrians and bind the state together, preventing any major challenge to Assad’s power. Preventing internal threats from within the ruling regime and the military was another crucial strategy to the Assad regimes hold on power.

Syria became a classic “mukhabarat” state where the security and intelligence services along with certain elements of the military were responsible for defending the regime against perceived threats both foreign and domestic (Lesch 5, 2012). The mukhabarat or various intelligence agencies were responsible for monitoring and surveilling domestic opposition, foreign enemies, the army, and each other (Pierret 65, 2017). The mukhabarat functioned to quell internal dissent, the army was used to suppress more significant threats to the regime, like the Hama uprising and subsequent Arab Spring revolt (Pierret 65, 2017). Unlike other regimes, however, the Syrian military does not have to accept second-place status behind other security formations, as the sectarian nature is one of highly privileged status. “The Syrian military is heavily politicized; loyalty to the regime often outweighs skill or professional merit in determining who gets promoted” (Barany 36, 2011). These economic benefits help ensure the loyalty of individual members. But the military was one component of the heavily repressive state. “Hafiz al-Assad had largely established the mukhabarat state in Syria, having created a tangled matrix of overlapping security agencies during his time in power” (Lesch 5, 2012), and with a very chaotic and turbulent post-independence history, the Syrian people were willing to forego civil and political rights for guarantees of safety and security.

Much like the other regimes that experienced social uprisings, the Syrian economy was characterized by persistent structural issues as Syrians suffered from high unemployment,

declining standards of living, gross human rights abuses, and decades of oppressive rule (Nepstad 344, 2013). The longstanding grievances and structural deficiencies in the economy came to a boiling point in 2011. A major population boom combined with the free education provided by the state produced a growth of unemployed educated youth that the economy could not accommodate (Hinnebusch, et. al, 225, 2016). This population explosion caused a tremendous strain in the rural areas of the country where fixed land resources were limited, caused many peasant youths to be landless, coupled with a severe drought, created a mass exodus to the urban parts of the country that would become the foundation of the uprising against the regime (Hinnebusch, et. al, 225, 2016).

The Syrian uprising that took place was rooted in the extreme grievances certain segments of the population felt against the Assad regime. The Assad regime had instituted liberal market economic reforms in order to modernize the economy, but in reality, a deep network of clientelism that favored Assad's allies and loyalists was established enriching those closest to the regime and marginalizing many others leading to gross inequalities between those in the rural regions and urban workers, who were the victims of political and economic marginalization (Pinto 214, 2013). The social pact of public services and social institutions that underpinned the Baathist regime for decades was dismantled and neglected by Assad (Pinto 214, 2013). The suffering, rising cost of living and inequality that festered following regime led market reforms resulted in a growing sense of dissatisfaction among the populace, as it became clear that Assad's Baathist regime "not only became a less and less efficient provider of services but also was transformed...into a more repressive and predatory state (Pinto 214, 2013). The new economic policies initiated by the Assad regime to modernize the outdated socialist system slowly created a backlash from the periphery, where the population felt they were abandoned by

the Assad regime. The goal of these policies was to open Syria to the world economy, encourage foreign direct investment, and to strengthen the private sector and grow the economy in order to alleviate the backwardness of Syria's economy (Zisser 66, 2013). The new economic policy instituted in 2005, called the "Social Market Economy" combined traditional statist and market economic strategies that formally put an end to the redistributive economic system based on state subsidies for gas and food (Haddad, Wind 400, 2014). Poverty increased and workers' remittances became the main social safety net, replacing the traditional state-run welfare regime (Aita 292, 2015). Assad underestimated the importance of Baathist socialist ideology and policies that people in the periphery relied upon, and as a result: "It lost the broad popular support that it had enjoyed among the Sunni population in the rural areas and the periphery after it turned its back on them" (Zisser 66, 2013).

The divide between Assad's cronies and neglected portions of the population created strife and instability, and because the regime did not want to share the spoils of the economic liberalization, repression became more likely and efficient when resources were scarce. The economic strains were exacerbated by the religious and sectarian divides that began to emerge in the uprisings. The demographics of the uprising became increasingly dominated by Sunni Muslims who integrated religious symbolism and idolatry into the repertoire of contention against the state. Minorities within the state, primarily Christians and the Alawites refrained from the protests and supported the Assad regime. The state utilized its impressive coercive capacities in order to reconquer territory from the protesters and "used a selective distribution of violence in order to deepen sectarian fault lines among the protesters, and thus to divide and isolate them" (Pinto 225, 2013). The sectarian character of the conflict was exacerbated by the regime as

Assad and the security forces looked to strengthen communal divisions and create a climate of fear among the segments of society (Haddad, Wind 413, 2014).

The regime also targeted Sunni Muslims even if other communities participated in protests, while repression still occurred against other minorities but was implemented covertly through the internal intelligence and security apparatus. This strategy employed by Assad is indicative of the regime's threat perception, however the violence against the protesters that was intended to eliminate the challenge only escalated conflict further: "The resulting resentment over the unequal distribution of violence among the various communities reinforced the possibility of sectarian strife, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the violence that the state claimed was necessary to crush sectarianism became the very mechanism through which sectarian tensions were inscribed or enhanced in the social tissue" (Pinto 226, 2013). The high degree of repression and brutality used by Assad revealed that the regime's strategic choice to hold on to power would be violence and coercion. Despite the increased levels of violence in certain cities where protests were rampant, it did not eliminate the threat and protests continued: "This situation generated a spiral of violence that sharpened and deepened tensions and fault lines in both the opposition and the regime" (Pinto 228, 2013).

The Syrian people took to the streets of Hama, Homs, and other major cities throughout the country to peacefully express their grievances like their Arab counterparts around the region. Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, the military and security forces did not tolerate the peaceful dissent and quickly began to crackdown on the protesters in a dramatic show of coercive force. This calculated decision to use force was highlighted in the city of Der'a which was subject to economic mismanagement by the regime which led to high levels of poverty and unemployment. What made matters worse for residents and the protesters who took to the streets in Der'a was

the large presence of the security apparatus mingled with an extremely volatile population that demanded change. The Syria case demonstrates that “increasing poverty, decreasing governmental investments and services in rural regions, violent repression, and resource-draining corruption” (Pinto 206, 2013) are primary causal factors motivating dissent. When demonstrators in Der’a was killed, Assad made no credible efforts to address indiscriminate killings, instead blaming the violence on conspiracies and “Salafi armed bands” (Aita 294, 2015). “Bashar al-Assad showed no willingness to negotiate; and Der’a had only to choose between backing down without any consolation or going further in its uprising” (Aita 294, 2015).

It should be noted that in the initial phases of the uprising Assad did seek accommodative measures and concessions toward the opposition, including the promise to combat corruption, allow greater press freedom, the release of some political prisoners, and the relaxation of certain religious laws to appease pious Muslims, amongst other concessions (Pinto 208, 2013). Here we see that the Assad regime attempted to accommodate the opposition with the goal of ending the uprising and avoiding the fate of his Arab counterparts across the region. However, along with the mild concessions that were offered to the movement, it was mixed in with a steady increase in repression, in the dynamic model of the repression-concessions nexus. It became clear that the concessions were toothless and there was to be no compromise with the regime as the military began to violently repress the dissidents in the street, which is a primary causal mechanism in the militarization of the conflict. As Lichbach asserts: “Repression frustrates demands and fosters a sense of injustice. A hard core of the opposition group might become highly dedicated, organized, and deadly” (Lichbach 270, 1987). The increase in repressive tactics fuels the collective action needed by the dissenters to gain strength in numbers from increased participation, thus repression in the Syrian case was counterproductive and actually stimulated

further dissent. This is in line with the “Law of Coercive Responsiveness” whereby actions taken by one side, in this case, the violent repression of the state, only triggers a similar response from the opposition.

The role of the military in the Syrian conflict was and remains one of the most significant variables in the transformation of the opposition movement into a radicalized and armed opposition. At the start of the uprising, of Syria’s 200,000 active troops, 70 percent were Alawites, and Alawites constituted nearly 80 percent of the officer corps, according to a Stratfor report on Syrian military defection. Splits and fractures within the military began to surface, proving that the reputational and normative costs for many members of the armed forces were simply too high to incur in order to remain in power and protect the regime of Assad. When the Free Syrian Army was created in July 2011, FSA Commander Colonel Riyad al-As’ad called on more members of the army to defect, saying that the armed forces had come to represent “gangs that protect the regime” and that security forces that indiscriminately targeted civilians and cities would be considered legitimate targets by the FSA (Haddad, Wind 413, 2014). The leader of the FSA was indicating the pervasive sentiment among rank-and-file soldiers that did not belong to the ruling Alawite identity. Individual soldiers from the Sunni minority made the daunting decision to defect in response to the regime’s indiscriminate use of violence while the Alawite soldiers and leaders remained firmly on the side of Assad, ensuring the regime did not collapse. “The continuous defection of soldiers and a few high-ranking officials—mostly Sunnis—from the Syrian army led to the militarization of the protests” (Pinto 231, 2013) as the Free Syrian Army was created by military defectors who sided with the opposition. The Free Syrian Army was able to make some impressive gains against the regime, taking the fight into some of Syria’s largest cities, most notably Aleppo, which became the most crucial contested territory in the

entire conflict. Echoing the Law of Coercive Responsiveness, the Free Syrian Army mounted extreme pressure on the regime in Aleppo, and Assad resorted to the bombardment of neighborhoods in order to prevent the FSA from gaining control of the city. The civilian population of Aleppo was subjected to constant indiscriminate targeting by the armed forces as the regime placed a high cost on the population of the city for the presence of the FSA. The negative sanctions the regime placed on civilians in Aleppo was a strategic choice by Assad to reveal the costs of supporting the opposition and induce compliance from a terrorized population. A rational calculation, but one that could be called a strategic error, as it further radicalized the opposition. The miscalculations explained earlier in this research that increased repression can provoke severe backlash was on display in Aleppo as the heavy-handedness of the regime's response to the opposition caused the FSA and the rebels to respond with similar levels of violence.

The fracturing of the military with many defections among high ranking officials and also lower ranked soldiers is one of the primary causal mechanism that led to the militarization of the armed conflict. The moral costs of continued repression and firing on innocent civilians became too high for many soldiers, and "as military attacks on civil resisters grew more vicious – with an estimated 8,000 protesters killed by 2012 – the rate of defections increased" (Nepstad 344, 2013) and by the spring of 2012, an estimated 60,000 soldiers of the 300,000 strong Syrian armed forces had defected (Nepstad 344, 2013). Why did so many defect from the regime while much more continued to remain loyal to Assad and protect his grip on power? Here we must examine the institutionalization and the identity of the armed forces. The sectarian identity of the Syrian armed forces is revelatory as to the question of military defection and loyalty. We know that if the coercive apparatus is patrimonially organized, or in other words, the interests of the military

are interdependent with the survival of the regime then the military will remain loyal to the protector of its institutional interests. Those that are outside this patron-client based system within the military are more likely to defect and fracture the armed forces because they no longer feel safe and their survival hinges on joining the opposition.

This complex structural composition is a hallmark of the Syrian armed forces and the state itself. Syria is a predominantly Sunni Muslim nation, or approximately 75 percent of the population (Nepstad 344, 2013). Only 11 percent of Syrians are Alawite, which is a small offshoot of Shi'a Islam (Nepstad 344, 2013), yet the Alawites are disproportionately represented in the highest positions of power within the state and security forces, with 90 percent of Syria's military officers belonging to the Alawite sect (Nepstad 344, 2013). The Assad family belongs to the minority Alawite sect and filled the most important positions in the state with loyalist Alawites. "All institutions are subordinate to the ruling family through informal networks based on kinship and (Alawite) sect" (Pierret 64, 2014). Members of Assad's family, including his brother, held key positions in the military. Other close allies from the Alawite sect were in powerful positions in the mukhabarat (Pierret 64, 2014). In essence, the Assad family and their Alawite allies are the state of Syria. This sectarian division explains the fracturing of the armed forces. The cost of defection for Alawite members of the armed forces was too high because their vested interests and survival were intimately tied to the regime, whereas non-Alawite members perceived the expected benefits of regime loyalty and firing on innocent protesters to be substantially lower than the cost of defection. Nepstad concurs and states "Alawite officers who control the military are unlikely to oppose Assad since their fate is tied to his...if Assad is deposed, Alawite dominance and privilege are likely to be lost, too (Nepstad 344, 2013). Rank-and-file members of the armed forces are largely Sunni and identified with the Sunni opposition

rather than the Alawite dominated state. Regime orders to fire on civil resisters caused the moral quandary of reputational and normative costs of indiscriminately targeting member of your own religious sect. Bellin also reiterates that shooting on the protesters challenges many of the military's core interests because "using lethal force against civilians threatens to undermine the image of the military as defender of the nation, especially if the crowds are representative of the 'nation' and cannot be dismissed as distinctly 'other' along class, sectarian, or ethnic lines" (Bellin 132, 2012). It is hard to make the argument, in the regime's favor, that the protesters did not represent the nation when the majority of the nation is Sunni Muslim while the state apparatuses are dominated by a minority religious sect. Such orders to fire on peaceful protesters who resemble your familial and sectarian ties comes into direct conflict with the military's core interests of maintaining internal cohesion, discipline, and morale.

Another important variable is the structure of the international system or alliance formation and the effects of external actors on the conflict. The international community has and continues to be deeply divided over the Syrian conflict which escalated into full-scale civil war. The Assad regime enjoys the backing of many key regional and global powers, primarily Iran and Russia, respectively. Along with China, Russia and Iran oppose the removal of Assad from power and continue to support the Syrian armed forces (Pinto 233, 2013). This is a pragmatic and rational strategic choice based on foreign policy realism and these powers aversion to foreign intervention in the affairs of sovereign states. The United Nations is also plagued by institutional paralysis with Syria's primary international backer, Russia as well as China, wielding veto powers over the UN Security Council and blocking any resolution drafted by the Council (Nepstad 345, 2013). Russia's only naval base in the region is located in Tartus, Syria, and it is the remaining footprint Russia has in the Middle East from its past Soviet-era history.

Losing this last vestige of Russian power would be a serious blow to Moscow's ability to project power and influence in the region. It was clear that there would be no major western intervention to assist the Syrian opposition while Assad's regime was further bolstered by the direct intervention of Russia on the side of the government in 2015, in addition to continued funding from Iran and assistance from Hezbollah, which only enabled the regime to repress even more and lowering the costs of coercion due to the firm backing of an international power patron and regional allies.

Syria's path dependent history of repression and cooptation must be viewed through the lens of power politics in a region that is critically important to U.S. and western interests. The region is a top priority for global powers because of its oil and location surrounding the State of Israel. The U.S. and the western world want to ensure the free flow of oil, protection of Israel, and containing the threat of Islamic extremism. These efforts generally come at the expense of democratization in a highly repressive region. In the case of Syria, although it has some trappings of democracy, the constitution stipulates that the ruling Baath Party receive half the seats in Parliament, opposition to the president is not tolerated and there are no checks and balances against the Bashar al-Assad (Lesch 272, 2007). Power is concentrated solely in the hands of Assad, including the use of force against threats to the regime. The State of Emergency Act that was declared on March 9, 1963, passed after the Baath Party came to power, was originally intended to deter against the threat from neighboring Israel. Since then, the law has been used to stifle internal dissent and challengers to the regime (Lesch 275, 2007).

Syria, along with the other autocratic regimes in the region, survived because they gave their citizens and the international community a stark choice, between stability and chaos under Islamic Rule: "Their reasoning was that there were really only two political choices – the

autocrats you know or the Islamic extremists you fear” (Soherwordi, Ikram 62, 2011). For decades, people living under these despotic regimes were complacent and tolerated abuses such as suppressing free speech and assembly and other valuable civil liberties, in exchange for the statist economic policies that maintained a decent standard of living and stability in a tumultuous part of the world. People living under these conditions began to think differently with the advent of social media and the diffusion of protest movements around the region: “The people, for the most part, tolerated these tyrannical rulers because they could see no other viable alternatives but since the advent of modern technology, especially the Internet, the Arab populace realized how bereft their society was” (Soherwordi, Ikram 63, 2011).

The Syrian case demonstrates that the regime was sufficiently threatened under intense pressure from the mass protests that surfaced throughout the country and the subsequent militarization of the opposition that repression became the only option to ensure regime survival. Despite the substantial defections within the armed forces by disenfranchised Sunni conscripts who refused to fire on their own people, the patrimonial based composition of the military-dominated by the Alawites held firmly loyal to the regime and prevented further disintegration or regime collapse, enabling Assad to rely solely on coercive mechanisms to respond to the opposition.

The fact that the Syrian uprising, which initially began as peaceful protests but quickly descended into a spiral of violent conflict and eventually civil war, can be attributed to Assad’s decision to put down the challengers with repression. Assad still retained some level of legitimacy early on and the demonstrators did not target Assad or demand his removal, but rather, craved democratic reforms (Hinnebusch et al. 228, 2016). Had Assad adopted other more accommodative measures at the early stages of the movement, by either offering more

substantive concessions or identifying with the plight of the protesters, the country could have avoided civil war. Assad's threat perception impacted the decision to use repression as opposed to concessions and this calculation was influenced by the contagion effect of the mass uprisings that toppled regimes in other parts of the Arab world. The regime had come to the conclusion that "rebellion had ousted presidents in Tunisia and Egypt because regimes had used insufficient repression" (Hinnebusch et al. 228, 2016). In the game-theoretic framework where costs and benefits of repression are weighed, repression was viewed as the optimal choice to ensure regime survival. Also, the strategy of the opposition to provoke the regime reinforces the Repression-Dissent nexus, whereby "once the government had responded to demonstrations and attacks on public buildings with excessive force, a tit-for-tat process of escalation began, which rapidly expanded the protests from their start in Dar'a to other towns and suburbs where the deprived or aggrieved were concentrated" (Hinnebusch et al. 231, 2016).

Assad's threat perception and the survival of his regime compelled him and the military to escalate violence against what was otherwise peaceful demonstrators. One factor contributing to the heightened threat perception was the regimes constant fear and paranoia about foreign conspiracies being involved in the conflict, which has been a common theme in Syrian discourse and throughout the region regarding "Western imperialism" (Hinnebusch et al. 235, 2016). The excessive regime violence in response to the threat perception altered the preferences of the protesters, who initially were demanding democratic forms but as a result of indiscriminate violence demanded the ousting of Assad, and the survival of the Assad dynasty was in doubt (Hinnebusch et al. 231, 2016). The calculation to use repression not only radicalized the movement but also increased collective and movement participation. Once the opposition became militarized, it was easier for the Assad regime to increase the use of repressive force as

the threat grew larger and larger. “In this sense, it was the opposition that fell into the trap, because once they were seduced into departing from their commitment to non-violence, the regime no longer felt the need for restraint” (Hinnebusch et al. 232, 2016).

The social movement structure and strategies exercised by the protesters interacted with the regime’s strategy, and as discussed in the theoretical portion of the research, the opposition changed its tactics once the regime began to violently repress dissenters. The opposition was “prepared...to provoke the regime into increasing its repression to a level that would turn the majority of the population against it, or that it might bring about a split in the regime” (Hinnebusch et al. 232, 2016). In this case, the opposition was successful because the change in tactics in response to repression increased regime repression which in turn increased the collective action that is necessary to sustain social movement success. The strategic interaction of repression and escalatory violence also succeeded in gaining many key defections from the Sunni conscripts within the military, although the high ranking Alawite majority of the armed forces remained loyal to the regime (Hinnebusch et al. 232, 2016). Fragmentation and fracturing among the myriad of opposition groups are one of the reasons for the lack of success against Assad, who continues to hold a monopoly on power. The inherent weakness of the opposition reflects the divisions within Syrian society: “Both opposition and society suffer from divisions and fragmentation based upon ethnic, religious, regional, socioeconomic, and other differences” (Zisser 70, 2013) and this benefits Assad as the challengers are unable to mount a sustainable effort to topple the regime.

Syria is a paradigmatic example of the dangers of state-sanctioned violent repression against peaceful anti-government protests. The regimes calculations, based on a rationalist perspective of the threat perception to the Assad regimes dynastic rule only militarized the

opposition, increased collective action, and altered the preference structure to demand an end to Assad's ironclad rule. The calculations of the patrimonially and sectarian-based armed forces contributed to this dynamic, with the Alawites remaining loyal to the regime and escalating violence while the largely Sunni troops were reluctant to use violence against their own sect and many defecting to the opposition, providing the movement with an armed wing. This highlights the moral dilemmas military personnel face: on the one hand, maintaining internal order and cohesion and upholding the values of the military, and on the other disobeying orders from the regime and placing your own life and family at risk. When the reputational and normative costs exceed the benefits of regime loyalty, members of the armed forces will defect. The Assad regime also benefited from external support from international patrons, regional allies and the West's unwillingness to intervene on the side of the opposition in the name of the responsibility to protect. This model shows that Assad's proclivity for repression against his own people as opposed to offering substantial concessions formulated through the Repression-Dissent nexus was based on the threat he perceived to his rule and the belief that such repressive behavior would eliminate that threat and sustain his authoritarianism.

### **The Kingdom of Jordan**

The Kingdom of Jordan was another authoritarian regime that experienced popular mobilization during the Arab Spring revolts. Although Jordan is one of the more moderate regimes within the region, according to Freedom House's rankings, Jordan is still ranked as not free with a score of 5 on civil liberties, 6 on political rights, and 5.5 overall freedom. When the Emirate of Transjordan was declared in 1921, it experienced a number of rebellions, protests, and uprisings. "It ultimately disciplined coercively most of the tribal formations within the new state during the 1920s, and subsequently incorporated them into the institutional base of the

regime beginning in the 1930s (Rish 283, 2014). The Kingdom was highly skilled at consolidating its rule by co-opting various tribes and forming a ruling coalition of the key elements of Jordanian society (Rish 283, 2014). Despite its earlier authoritarian state-building policies, the Kingdom enjoyed a relatively free and open society after gaining independence from the British in 1946. Jordan featured multiparty elections, independent newspapers, and a great deal of freedom of expression in the political sphere (Schwedler 247, 2013). Jordan remained highly selective in its use of repression when demonstrations emerged, even if they directly challenged the monarch. The Muslim Brotherhood was the primary antagonist against the Hashemite dynasty following independence and mobilized rallies against the government and certain policies (Schwedler 247, 2013). The situation grew tense in the 1960s after the failed wars against Israel with the influx of Palestinian militias under the umbrella of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO staged mass demonstrations and rallies against the monarch and was increasingly perceived as a major threat to the regime that should be suppressed. Using the common playbook many regimes used throughout the region, the King blamed the protests and instability on external agitators that were a threat to Jordanian sovereignty (Schwedler 248, 2013). The confrontation between the government and the PLO backed demonstrators resulted in the bloody period known as “Black September” where thousands of militia members were killed. While Palestinians under the PLO suffered the greatest, the Muslim Brotherhood surprisingly remained absent in the struggle and continued to support the Jordanian monarchy. Jordan continued to be a bulwark of stability experiencing only small, short-lived demonstrations as the kingdom looked to further liberalize its political, social, and economic sphere. Jordan’s state-formation trajectory falls in line with neighboring authoritarian regimes based on the “social contract.” “Regimes disciplined their populations and

provided them with their economic needs in return for the latter's complacency regarding the absence of political freedoms as well as public accountability and transparency" (Rish 290, 2014). Any segment of society that chose to rise up in opposition, was met with coercive state violence.

Similar to Syria, Jordan's Arab Spring uprising began in the rural periphery where economic grievances were most predominant (Amis 172, 2016). Also similar to the Syria case, it appears as if policies deliberately sought out and implemented by the state were major causal factors that led to such economic grievances, as privatization pursued near the end of King Hussein's rule led to dramatic reductions in public services and employment opportunities, underdevelopment, agricultural decline, exasperated by high commodity prices toward the end of the 2000s (Amis 172, 2016). These economic policies most severely impacted a small town called Dhiban, and much like Dar'a in Syria, became the focal point of movement activism.

Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets in what was called the March 24 Youth, calling for bread, freedom, and social justice, but not targeting the regime and looking for the end of the Hashemite dynasty. Although The Kingdom's Arab Spring protest was largely peaceful and nonviolent, there were instances of low-level violence perpetrated by police and internal security forces. Daraq riot troops began arresting dozens of protesters and hundreds more were injured and one fatality, which happened to be the only death during the entirety of Jordan's turmoil (Schwedler 244, 2013). However, protests continued into the thousands and remained nonviolent and peaceful as the regime attempted to co-opt the opposition and established a civil and respectful relationship with the protesters: "On many occasions, police distributed cases of water to protesters and chatted with them as they hovered casually around the margins of events" (Schwedler 244, 2013).

With protest movements raging across the Middle East North Africa region, with some, as in Syria, devolving into civil war, it was important for the regime and King Abdullah II not to cross the threshold that would trigger a violent backlash from the peaceful demonstrators. What's important in this calculation is that the protest movement did not seek the overthrow of the monarchy, as had taken place in some of the neighboring Arab Republics: Protesters "demanded constitutional reform, a reduction in the king's power, and a revised electoral system and law, but virtually no voices demanded an end to the monarchy itself" (Schwedler 245, 2013). And while the Syrian marginalized Sunni majority rose up against the minority Alawite regime, Jordan's restive Palestinian minority did not mobilize against the state (Schwedler 245, 2013). An important element in the Jordanian Arab Spring protests was this lack of participation from the country's large Palestinian minority. Palestinians hesitance to mobilize can be attributed to economic and ethnic lines. According to Tobin, Palestinians in Amman felt the protests weren't their fight and preferred to identify with the overwhelming majority of Jordanians in Amman who chose not to participate (Tobin, 2016). Palestinians were also very aware of regional events, seeing the carnage taking place in Syria and Libya, of a highly sectarian nature, and the overall chaos that was gripping the entire region: "Seeing the experiences in neighboring countries solidified such unity and loyalty to the status quo" (Tobin, 2016).

Developments around the region, such as the fleeing of Ben Ali from Tunisia, who had ruled the North African country since 1989, further emboldened the protesters, as "symbiosis with regional developments made escalation inevitable" (Amis 174, 2016) as traditional political parties came out to join the protests. In response to the large-scale demonstrations and their demands for constitutional reform, King Abdullah II sacked his government, "a time-honored shock-absorption tactic that only added to the sense of momentum" (Amis 174, 2016). The King

provided further tangible concessions to the movement by amending the Public Gatherings Law, which regulated the ability to popularly mobilize. The new amendment legalized demonstrations without the need for prior regime approval, while the new government appointed by the King announced major concessions to teachers' union (Amis 175, 2016). These positive developments coincided with an expansion and organizational strength across diverse sections of the country, with new reformist alliances joining the fray in addition to already established movements that had been active across Jordan for decades (Amis 175, 2016). As protests grew, movement activists felt "protected" by the events of the Arab Spring and gained international recognition alongside their Arab counterparts protesting around the region: "The roots of the Jordanian movement were there before the Arab Spring, but the Arab Spring gave it strength" (Amis 176, 2016).

As previously mentioned in the theoretical section of this research and briefly stated earlier in this case study, the movement objectives proved to be a critical aspect of Jordan's Arab Spring experience and heavily influenced the regimes calculations. It was the peaceful and non-threatening organization of the demonstrators that was able to interact with a regime that was not predisposed to use violent repression; "Keenly aware of societal divisions, and the potential for instability and communal rivalry in a situation of drastic upheaval, activists made clear from the start that they did not seek revolution" (Amis 176, 2016). Unlike the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, where the movement demanded the ousting of the ruling regime, and Syria and Libya which also demanded the ousting of the regime which descended into civil war, the Jordanian protesters demonstrated their desire for national unity and not violent regime change and revolution. The threat perception for the Jordanian monarchy never reached an existential level. It's also important to note the angst and frustration of the protesters were directed toward

appointed ministers within the government, not the King or the royal family (Amis 176, 2016). Distinctly different from the other Arab Spring cases, the Jordanian regime was much more tolerable of dissent and was not predisposed to use violent repression, thus the military was never called in to repress the demonstrators. Instead, the police and Darak forces were the primary repressive agents.

While the Jordanian Spring continued to remain peaceful and nonviolent, events across the region were spiraling out of control as the once-promising Spring darkened, with the resignation of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt on February 17, the Bahraini internal security forces firing on mass protesters, martial law declared by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as Saudi troops invaded the small island and civil wars erupting in Syria and Libya, the regional contagion effect was inescapable. The increased participation of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had longstanding activist roots in the Kingdom and benefited from the historical preexisting social networks it had created over time, which harnessed the solidarity of tribal structures and local communities outside Amman and became hotbeds of contentious engagement. The civil war in Syria also had a depressing effect on the cohesion of the Jordanian opposition, with the Muslim Brotherhood strongly supporting Syria's opposition and leftist and Arab nationalists backing the Assad regime.

The contagion effect also applied to the ruling regime, with the Jordanian monarchy mirroring tactics implemented in the monarchial counterpart of Morocco. In Morocco, the ruling dynasty looked to defuse popular dissent through a regime led reform process. Some of the reformist amendments that were proposed by the monarchy and approved by the parliament included amendments that established "new bodies to monitor elections and legislation, and nominally expanded civil liberties, but did not affect the overall concentration of decision-

making power in the hands of the King” (Amis 183, 2016). King Abdullah II still retained the powers to dissolve parliament, ratify laws, appoint the prime minister, cabinet, and the Senate, and still commanded the armed forces. Unlike Morocco, the concessions offered to the public were not put to a popular referendum and were elite-driven and the reform elements were incremental and ultimately did not affect systemic change. Mixed in with these mild concessions to the movement, covert repression was employed by the regime, with arrests and detention of certain activists while others were beaten by police for verbally defaming the King and crackdowns on media as well (Amis 184, 2016). This dynamic model of repression and concessions was the primary tactic utilized by the regime, offering mild accommodations simultaneously with covert repression by the state and outsourced intimidation by gendarmes with at least complicit official approval from the state.

The Jordanian case provides a valuable study of the effects of external actors influence on domestic events and the monarchies abilities to remain in power. Unlike the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, Jordan does not possess the abundance of natural resources so critical to providing public goods to its citizens to prevent mass uprisings. Jordan is considered a bulwark of stability in the tumultuous Middle East that was lit on fire, and the Gulf monarchies, spearheaded by Saudi Arabia, unveiled a \$5 billion fund to prop up the regime. A critical juncture took place in November 2012 when the government suddenly cut subsidies on oil derivatives that led to overnight price increases of over 30 percent for transport and heating fuel, and more than 50 percent for cooking gas (Amis 187, 2016). This regime policy increased collective action and more Jordanians took the streets, hardening the opposition further with some even calling for a change in government, which was unprecedented rhetoric. Unlike neighboring regimes, the Kingdom never crossed a threshold of repression that radicalized the opposition to resort to

violence or armed opposition. This was a calculated strategic imperative of the regime to exercise restraint. The police and internal security forces never reached the level of lethal force to fully squelch the movement which proved to be a deciding factor in preventing the militarization of the opposition into a Syrian style armed rebel force. Although there were mild clamors at various points for regime change, it never dominated the discourse of the movement and the Hashemite dynasty was never fully under threat of collapse from the protesters, underscoring the importance of movement goals and preferences. The incentive structure for the opposition never reached the level it did in the Arab Republics that demanded regime change, as the status quo of the Jordanian monarchy was mostly acceptable (Rish 296, 2014). Ultimately, the Jordanian struggle was a question over the nature of the constitutional monarchy, not the very existence of the monarchy (Rish 297, 2014).

The Jordanian monarchy carefully controlled its coercive tactics, using covert repression when it felt protesters had crossed an unreasonable threshold. The Jordanian experience showcases that the regimes “skillful combination of permissive and punitive response – and the opposition’s reluctance to provoke a potentially divisive and destabilizing situation of all-out change – appeared to bring the country back from the brink” (Amis 189, 2016). The Jordanian regime was pragmatic in its approach to the various protests movements, allowing some and suppressing others. Known groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and other political groups were permitted, but the March 24 Youth movement and their tactical use of mass public sit-ins at major locations presented a threat to the regime and made the group more susceptible to security force repression (Schwedler 260, 2013). The nature of the protest demands and the scope of those who mobilized did not alter the threat perception of the regime, thus, the regime was able to avoid severe coercive measures to put down the demonstrations. What also impacted

movement objectives were regional events, most notably the violent civil wars in Syria and Libya and the subsequent NATO intervention on the side of the rebels in Libya case. These cases dissuaded some existing and potential collective action to protest, with many in society realizing that “uprisings do not always result in smooth transitions and the result could instead seem too high a cost for regime change” (Rish 306, 2013). The bitter sectarian divide in the Syrian civil war also dissuaded further collective action in Jordan because Jordanians did not want to descend into the chaotic sectarian conflict as neighboring Syria, which could spell the end of the Jordanian monarchy (Rish 306, 2013). Given these variables and the timidity of the movement, unfortunately for the Jordanian people, they never achieved the intended goals that were initially desired once the uprising began. The regime offered concessions in order to placate and limit the resistance of the opposition, with no real intention of radical reform or democratization, but rather, a rational choice to offer toothless measures that did not alter the balance of power between the regime and the protesters. Although the events in Jordan were reflective of the region-wide grievances against authoritarian regimes that suffered through economic malaise and a commitment on the opposition not to resort to violence, the “uniquely moderate Spring did not bear fruit...it was exploited and thwarted by an intransigent regime” (Amis 190, 2016).

Jordan’s Arab Spring trajectory was fundamentally dissimilar from Syria because the military never fully involved itself in the game between the regime and the opposition. The military was unquestionably loyal to the monarchy and there were no splits within the ruling class or defections to the opposition. This is attributed to the King’s distribution of power among the coercive apparatuses and their regional importance to the war on terror. Upon ascending to the throne after his father’s death, Abdullah II made efforts to shore up the independent base of the coercive institutions to prevent dissenters or detractors from challenging his rule (Rish 300,

2014). There was a dramatic expansion of the Special Forces, which Abdullah II headed before becoming king, and the creation of the Darak Force that were separate from the military and police (Rish 300, 2014). The amount of state resources and patronage provided to these coercive institutions is what keeps them loyal.

Jordan's peaceful relationship with Israel and the treaty that ended decades of hostility between each state is vitally important in this calculation and "there is little doubt...as to the lengths to which external powers allied with the Hashemite regime will go to in order to prop up the regime in the face of a mass-based movement to overthrow it" (Rish 306, 2013). Jordan is unique in the Arab world because of its formalized peace treaty with Israel, and it was the only Arab regime to actually conduct indirect and secret negotiations with Israel throughout the Arab-Israeli wars (Ripsman 88, 2016). Despite the rivalry and decades of conflict, there were overlapping issues that brought both sides together. Bilateral cooperation was possible because Israel and Jordan shared similar common interests. Each feared Palestinian nationalism as it posed an existential threat to Israel and Jordan. Palestinian nationalism represented an attempt to delegitimize Israel and threaten its very existence and also threatened the survival of the Hashemite Kingdom (Ripsman 88, 2016). The survival of the Jordanian monarchy was paramount for Israel because the collapse of the monarchy could result in an unpalatable Islamic regime that would undermine Israeli existence (Ripsman 88, 2016). Jordan and Israel also depended on each other for cross-border cooperation, especially the critical water supply agreement. (Ripsman 88, 2016).

The Israeli-Jordanian rapprochement can be attributed to a rational calculation on both sides that conflict and confrontation were no longer in the best interest of each state. There was nothing to be gained from continuing a cycle of renewed conflict in the post-Cold War era. Israel

considered Jordan a minor player in the Arab-Israeli struggle and was not as profound of a threat as other regional players such as Iraq, Syria, or Iran and Jordan strongly desired better relations with the United States (Ripsman 95, 2016). “It made sense, therefore, to terminate the conflict with Jordan—especially since an agreement would cost Israel quite little—thereby securing Israel’s longest land border in order to concentrate on more pressing threats” (Ripsman 95, 2016). Jordan would provide a strategic buffer against the larger threats of Iraq and Iran and would crack down on Palestinian nationalism that could destabilize the entire region. Iran proved to be the largest threat in the region and the possibility of a nuclear Iran might very well obliterate the State of Israel: “Under these circumstances, carrying on a pointless rivalry with a state such as Jordan, with which Israel had so many overlapping interests, would be counterproductive” (Ripsman 95, 2016). Jordan also had reasons to fear its neighbors more so than Israel, as Israel was invested in the survival of the Jordanian monarchy against its greater perceived threats. The historic peace agreement between the two former rivals allowed Jordan to focus on other threats in the region and King Hussein requested significant U.S. assistance in exchange for making peace with Israel. The Kingdom did not join the U.S. led international coalition against Saddam Hussein to expel Iraq from Kuwait, and this decision cost Jordan dearly as it lost millions of dollars in U.S. aid. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia followed suit and canceled all aid packages to Amman (Jamal 47, 2012). The Clinton administration was amenable to such an agreement and provided significant political, economic, and military incentives to sign a peace agreement and also promised to cancel all Jordanian debt, which amounted to a one-time grant of nearly \$700 million (Ripsman 97, 2016). Following the treaty, Jordan would continue to receive economic benefits from the U.S. which helped a struggling economy grow.

Also important to the monarchy was the resumption of military assistance which the Kingdom desired in order to ensure its stability and survival. Jordan lacked the up-to-date military hardware and technology that was needed to respond to the growing and evolving threats within the region: “After the treaty’s signature, the United States would classify Jordan as a major U.S. non-NATO ally, effectively the same status as Israel and Egypt” (Ripsman 98, 2016). The culmination of this agreement placed Jordan as a moderate, pro-Western regime and this was essential if Jordan was going to receive the economic and military benefits needed to ensure regime survival. King Hussein’s calculus in making peace with Israel is clearly in the fashion of the rational actor model: it is clear that, in making peace with Israel, King Hussein was more concerned about Washington’s reaction than he was about Jerusalem’s. U.S. hegemonic leadership, therefore, was of paramount importance in the transition to peace (Ripsman 98, 2016).

Jordan’s peace agreement with Israel and its relationship with the United States are the cornerstones of Jordan’s foreign policy and its survival. The relationship King Hussein built with the U.S. was carried on after his death by his son, Abdullah II. The U.S. became Jordan’s economic and security guarantor, and “without such support, Jordan’s well-being could be jeopardized” (Jamal 49, 2012). This strategic relationship was solidified after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, and King Abdullah II adamantly supported U.S. efforts in the war on terror. “This strategic importance is what facilitates the accrual of rents to the Jordanian regime” (Rish 303, 2016). Jordan is not blessed with natural resource wealth and its purchasing power, employment opportunities and income generation are weak and it is important for regional players and the U.S. to provide Jordan with the necessary funds in order to keep the monarchy afloat in an extremely volatile neighborhood. “The plethora of direct aid in the form of budget support, and

foreign-funded projects – whether they be from the Gulf states, the United States, or international institutions – has created rent flows that have helped smooth out some, even if not all, of the potential political challenges to the regime” (Rish 303, 2016). Jordan’s decision to firmly back the U.S. in the war on terror helped increase U.S. economic aid to the Kingdom, facilitating impressive economic growth rates (Jamal 49, 2012). Jordan’s relationship with the U.S. was based mainly on dependence and the U.S. was looked at for greater security guarantees, especially as the threats from terrorism increased. Jordan continued to rely on the U.S. for economic assistance and Jordan emerged as a valuable intelligence partner, providing information on al-Qaeda after 9/11 (Jamal 51, 2012). Amman also did not want to make the same mistake it made in 1991 when it sided with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and did not participate in the Gulf War international coalition, and was a key site for the U.S. to launch its invasion of Iraq in 2003.

It’s important to reiterate that the Jordanian military was virtually on the sidelines during the entirety of the monarchy’s Arab Spring episode. The police and internal security forces were the primary agents of social control and protest policing, exhibiting forms of violent repression in some limited cases. As the previous sections outline, the Jordanian army’s reliance on its relationship with the United States and the substantial financial and material benefits of that alliance was far too great to risk. It seems as though the structural composition of the Jordanian armed forces is irrelevant. Lutterbeck notes that the Jordanian military, along with the other monarchies in the Gulf, features militaries that are drawn from the indigenous tribes and are fiercely loyal to the ruling regime (Lutterbeck 31, 2013). A conclusion can be drawn, at least in the Jordanian case, that external support from the United States, along with the movement’s lack

of demand for the monarchy's overthrow were more important variables than the level of institutionalization of the armed forces.

Jordan shares similarities with Syria and benefited from reliable external support, but the objectives from its respective allies were vastly different. Syria's external support is propping up the Assad regime and enabling Damascus to continue its brutal civil war. Without foreign funding from Iran, Hezbollah, and most importantly Russia, the regime might not be able to survive and the consequences for Assad and his ruling clique are unknown. In Jordan, foreign funding, primarily from the Gulf and the U.S. is also propping up the regime, but Jordan upholds its international reputation for being a responsible player, and its Western funding is critical to this. If the regime were to violently crackdown on peaceful protesters, it would likely result in severe normative and reputational costs and condemnation from the U.S. and the West. It is in the best interests of the King and his regime to refrain from violent repression of mass protesters and to seek accommodative measures to ensure the stability and endurance of the Hashemite dynasty.

## **Egypt**

The Egyptian people have long been subjugated by oppressive military strongman throughout much of Egypt's post-colonial independence. Power was consolidated and expanded in Egypt immediately after independence by the Gamal Abdel Nasser regime. Nasser increased the capacity of the police, security forces, and military (Sika 77, 2014). The regime was predicated on state-led developmental programs based on nationalizing private enterprises, guaranteeing state employment to high school and university graduates, and national insurance programs that would form the foundation of the Arab world's social contract (Sika 77, 2014). Executive authority and the power of the military was further increased under the rule of Anwar

Sadat in 1970. When Hosni Mubarak took power, he inherited an extremely powerful presidency: “Mubarak inherited Sadat’s engineered creation and doubled down by reinforcing the presidency’s hierarchical command over the state’s institutions. The bodies were hollowed out and existed to implement the presidential consensus in a top-down fashion” (Sika 78, 2014). The Egyptian presidency had dictatorial powers over the executive, legislative, the courts, and could declare a state of emergency without any oversight.

Mubarak increased the capacity of the coercive institutions, specifically the police and internal security forces, in response to domestic terrorism and international terrorism after 9/11. The Interior Ministry also gained greater powers, as it became the focal point of domestic coercion and guarantor of stability (Sika 79, 2014). With this increase in power, the state became more repressive and human rights abuses skyrocketed, but the U.S. turned a blind eye toward such gross abuses for the sake of fighting terrorism. The cooperation with the Mubarak regime post 9/11 can be seen through the prism of the war on terror. The U.S. thought its interests would be better served by an authoritarian’s promise of stability rather than the chaos and instability that generally is associated with electoral politics in developing countries (Collins, Roth 10, 2014). The Interior Ministry’s expansion of power came at the expense of the military, which at one point was responsible for ensuring domestic tranquility. This transference of power played a pivotal role in the calculus of the military during the 2011 uprising: “it is hardly surprising that the army refrained from using force against civilians when the Ministry of Interior was unable to suppress the uprising on 25 January 2011 due to the unprecedented numbers of mobilized individuals” (Sika 90, 2014).

According to Freedom House’s 2012 scores, the country was classified as not free, with a ranking of 5 on civil liberties, 6 for political rights, and 5.5 for overall freedom. Egypt, like its

Arab counterparts, experienced dire economic malaise that contributed to the uprisings against the longtime rule of President Hosni Mubarak. Also similar to neighboring countries, Egypt's population rose dramatically to more than 85 million by 2009 with 50 percent under the age of 30, of whom 60 percent were unemployed (Bassiouni 55, 2016). Also, an estimated twenty million Egyptians lived at, or below, the poverty line (Bassiouni 55, 2016). This severe economic crisis coupled with rampant corruption from a regime that was highly extractive and didn't provide adequate services or welfare to alleviate the pain Egyptians were suffering. The regime was also extremely repressive, under the leadership of Habib el-Adly, head of the feared interior department, and used violent repression to suppress opposition and protect the regime.

The interior ministry protected the oligarchic nature and business interests of the regime, which was central to remaining in power. Military men had ruled the country since shackling off British domination and removing the monarchy in 1952, with the state's ruling oligarchy consisting of mostly military and former military personnel, their relatives, friends, loyal politicians, and senior bureaucrats (Bassiouni 55, 2016). This type of patron-client relationship had expanded under Mubarak's rule to include a growing business class who dominated the economy and public life through corrupt practices (Bassiouni 55, 2016). Egypt had also grown vastly unequal over time, and "by 2011 it was unofficially estimated that 200 families owned 90 percent of Egypt's private-sector wealth" (Bassiouni 55, 2016). Egypt's educational opportunities had also been diminished as dramatic cuts to education mandated by the international financial institutions pushed the country back to 66 percent adult literacy (UNICEF 2003). As a result, Egypt dropped precipitously on the UN Human Development Index, ranking 101<sup>st</sup> among countries, with poverty rates skyrocketing and 10 percent of the population dropping out of schools between 2006-2008 (UN Development Program and Institute of National

Planning 2010). By the time of the twenty-first century, “Egypt’s human capital, industrial infrastructure, and extensive resources had been dismantled or drained by vampiric national rulers and international exploiters, and the nation was left to languish...and forced to wallow in inequality, illiteracy, degradation, and futurelessness” (Amar 27, 2013). Social mobilization had also been a repertoire of contention for Egyptians throughout the years, including mass uprisings against British occupation in 1919, pro-democracy demonstrations in the first year of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s rule, and an emerging pro-democracy movement called Kefaya brought peaceful protests against the Mubarak regime in 2003 and slowly built an organizational structure that demanded reforms from the Mubarak regime (Bassiouni 55, 2016).

The protests against the Mubarak regime began on January 25, 2011, as millions of Egyptians flooded the streets in what was called a “Day of Rage” on National Police Day. Organizations such as the April 6 Youth Movement, Kollea Khaled Sa’eed, Kefaya, and Mohammed El Baradei’s Coalition for Change initiated the mobilization that took place early on in the revolution (Korany 256, 2014). These organizations were joined by a disparate lot of young liberal-leftist activists that included younger, lower ranked members of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had declined to participate. With the help of social media, citizens from all segments of society gathered peacefully to demonstrate the corruption and repressive abuse perpetrated by the state police and security forces. Tahrir (Liberation) Square became the focal point for the revolution as the movement opted for methods of civil resistance as had been done in neighboring Tunisia. The movement had a specific nonviolent character, including; “a revulsion against political violence; an awareness of the success of some ‘people power’ movements, a belief that only by eschewing the use of violence could large numbers be mobilized; a desire to match moderate and constitutional ends with moderate means; and

perhaps, too, an awareness that by using such means they had a better chance of exposing the brutality of the police, and also by avoiding the army's hostility, perhaps by even engaging its support (Bassiouni 57, 2016). Even as the regime looked to enter into negotiations with the opposition, those who were invited to participate were not representative of the largely spontaneous and unorganized protesters (Raggal, Ezzat 91, 2015). Because of the lack of strategic alliance between different revolutionary forces, Mubarak "succeeded in breaking down any possibilities of organizing the masses in political terms, and the negotiation process turned out to be a tool for dividing revolutionary forces instead of being a tool for managing their differences" (Raggal, Ezzat 91, 2015). The movement also deliberately choose nonviolent peaceful resistance in the early stages of the uprising with the hope that the coercive institutions of the state would not be provoked to violently repress the demonstrators. It was a fundamental tactical decision employed by the movement that forced the regime to decide whether or not it would resort to repression to ensure regime survival.

The peaceful demonstrators took to the streets in overwhelming numbers knowing full well the threat posed by the security apparatuses. And although the Egyptian example of the Arab Spring did not spiral into violent civil war, there were still examples of low levels of violence that could have easily dissuaded the protesters from collective action and taking to the streets. Security forces arrested and detained many activists, subjecting some to harsh mistreatment and torture and tear gas was used extensively to halt demonstrators or break them up completely (Bassiouni 58, 2016). Some of the repression used by the police force was met with mild violent resistance from the protesters, which in turn prompted the regime to release state-sponsored paramilitary thugs to incite violence among the protesters. But the security force crackdown, like the Syrian case demonstrated, caused a backlash and only incited increased

collective action among the population. The military was also called into Tahrir Square and other hot spots within the country once the security forces began to fragment and ultimately flee. However, the military didn't fire on protesters and many demonstrators saw the military's presence as a source of protection against the regime and the security forces, with protesters chanting the slogan "People and Army are One." The military also made clear it would not fire on protesters, releasing communiques emphasizing that the demands of the protesters were legitimate and that "there will be no security action taken against the honorable people who rejected corruption and called for reform" (Lutterbeck 38, 2013). Although the Egyptian uprising is largely considered peaceful and nonviolent, it was not without significant loss and tragedy. During the uprising which lasted from January 25 until Mubarak's ousting in February, an estimated 800 demonstrators were killed and more than 1,200 injured (Bassiouni 59, 2016).

It is critically important to understand the military's role in the uprising and their strategic calculus to remain on the sidelines and not use mass repression to put down the peaceful protesters, as the military in Syria had done. It should be noted that Mubarak did send out troops into the streets, but instead of cracking down on the protesters, the military defended them and protected them from the hated police and the paramilitary forces, and "On January 29, 2011, the military once again revealed that it was siding with the movement as soldiers openly refused to shoot at civil resisters" (Nepstad 342, 2013). As it became clear that the military was not willing to incur the costs of firing on peaceful protesters, collective action among the population increased and eventually, 1.5 million people were in the streets demanding the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. The regime decided to opt for the concessions strategy, with Mubarak pledging not to seek reelection, but the offer proved shallow and protests continued, with the eventual removal of Mubarak from office.

Unlike other military's throughout the region, Egypt's military has been described as a professional and meritocratic institution (Lutterbeck 36, 2013). As Bellin's research indicated, military's that are highly professionalized, and not structured along ethnic or sectarian lines, will be less likely to fire on innocent protesters, as it is antithetical to the institution's mandate of upholding peace, order, and stability. The military's decision not to intervene was not merely due to normative and reputational costs, but it was a rational choice to protect its vast financial interests, that were put in jeopardy once the Mubarak regime began to lose its legitimacy and grip on power, specifically "the military was on the verge of losing significant assets if Mubarak stayed in power and handed the presidential office over to his appointed successor, his son Gamal" (Nepstad 342, 2013). The military's deep integration in the economy was developed over several decades, as the institution acquired valuable real estate and other industries, with some estimating the military controlled 40 percent of the Egyptian economy (Gelvin, 2012; Hammer, 2011). Some of the other industries the military gained control over including electronics, consumer goods, infrastructure development, and of course tourism (Lutterbeck 37, 2013). The large resources and wealth obtained by the military received no oversight and it is not subject to any measures of accountability, which of course increased the amount of corruption. It was simply too risky for the military to remain loyal to a regime that threatened its enormous business interests. Although post-Mubarak Egypt falls outside the scope of this research, the military's actions after Mubarak was removed from power illustrate that their intentions were not altruistic or based on reputational concerns: "The military's equivocation and ambivalence toward the agenda of the protesters in 2011, and its subsequent actions during the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)-led transition that followed Mubarak's ouster (including the concerted effort to preserve and enhance military prerogatives) suggest it was far from open

to reform” (Brooks 15, 2017). And it was Mubarak himself that allowed the military to prosper so greatly from its business holdings in order to keep the military loyal and prevent defections. “As long as he was in power, the military would prosper; thus officers had a vested interest in protecting his regime” (Nepstad 342, 2013). However, if Mubarak’s son took power and implemented privatization policies that would undermine and dismantle the military’s business holdings, that would shatter the loyalty of the regime and create the incentive structure to defect on the side of the uprising. “The military in 2011 simply exploited an opportunity to sideline Mubarak, and forestall the succession of his son Gamal to the presidency” (Frisch, 2013). This proves that the economic interests of the military outweigh not only its loyalty to the regime but also the moral questions of firing on innocent, peaceful demonstrators.

As the police and security forces continued to repress the demonstrators, it slowly eroded the regime’s position both domestically and internationally. The movement’s commitment to nonviolence was also significant: “Popular support for the demonstrators increased, thanks to their restraint and civility, and international opinion moved perceptibly against the regime” (Bassiouni 60, 2016). If the protest movement grew violent against the state, it could be framed by the regime as an existential threat from regional terrorists who seek to overthrow a secular government and impose an Islamist regime. This is a common strategy for regional autocrats, and it’s currently the framing strategy of the Assad regime in Syria. Assad claims the rebels fighting his secular government are all terrorists and must be defeated. Egypt’s movement was committed to nonviolence and that placed the burden of using coercive force on the Egyptian regime. A state that has close ties to the U.S. and the West that would resort to brutal and indiscriminate violence against peaceful protesters would not be received well, triggering harsh sanctions or possible even outside intervention. However, the regime’s strategic calculus to

selectively repress through the interior ministry and its strategy of outsourcing violence through state-sanctioned thugs, led to a loss of support from key international actors, primarily the United States and Europe, which had tended to support and uphold the Mubarak regime because of its bulwark of stability, support for the war on terror, and perhaps most importantly, its continued implementation of the 1979 peace agreement that brought conflict to an end with Israel. Alliance formation or the support from external actors proves significant once again in the Egyptian case. Ultimately what prevailed were regional strategic aims of the United States: “Privileged over the popular demands for social justice, democracy, and human rights were dominant interests promoting access to oil, strategic military access to the airspace and the Suez Canal, a friendly voice among Arab nations toward Israel, and access to the local economic market” (Collins, Rothe 10, 2014). The U.S. firm support for Egypt was rooted in a rationalist *realpolitik* viewpoint as is typical in U.S. foreign policy discussions. As Collins and Rothe state, “Friendly dictators are preferred over a democratically elected but unfriendly regime, regardless of the stated support for democracy and human rights found in formal and public discourse” (Collins, Rothe 16, 2014).

The Obama administration held on to support the regime until it became politically unpalatable to do so, and President Obama eventually called for the resignation of Mubarak. President Obama’s call for Mubarak’s ouster proved to be a critical juncture for the military establishment: “If Egypt’s military chose to side with Mubarak and defy Obama, the armed forces might have jeopardized the \$1.3 billion in aid it received from the United States on an annual basis” (Nepstad 343, 2013). The military determined that it was not in their financial interests to prop up the regime and risk losing the sophisticated military hardware provided by the United States. Obama’s defection from the alliance further undercut the regime’s stability

and legitimacy, and that created the perception, within the military, that the regime was fragile and could no longer be supported. The situation in Egypt differed from Syria (and Libya) because there were no splits within the military with large-scale defections among officers to the protesters which creates the conditions for civil war. Rather, it became clear that defectors would not be punished, and “the Egyptian military as a whole shifted its support from the regime to the movement” (Nepstad 343, 2013). There were no splits or defections, the entire institution defected and sided with the movement, with no high ranking officials willing to sanction repression on peaceful demonstrators. “The Egyptian military has consistently been part of the wealthy elite and is deeply ingrained in the country’s political system” (Collins, Rothe 17, 2014). The military was not prepared to lose its privileged economic and political status in Egyptian society. The internal security forces, mainly the police remained loyal and employed repression in an attempt to squelch the resistance, but that apparatus was not nearly as large or powerful enough to challenge the military’s presence and support of the people. “In short, the Egyptian military’s decision to side with the nonviolent movement was shaped by economic motivations, the perception of regime fragility, and the belief that defections would not be punished” (Nepstad 343, 2013).

## **Bahrain**

Bahrain is a small authoritarian Gulf monarchy that experienced mass protests during the Arab Spring, although the Bahrain case received much less media attention than some of its regional counterparts. Bahrain, like its neighbors, is classified as not free by Freedom House’s 2012 ranking, with a score of 6 on civil liberties, 6 for political rights, and 6 on overall freedom. Despite it being a tiny island in the Gulf, Bahrain’s regional significance is undeniable. In 1981, Bahrain, alongside Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Qatar came together

to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which is a regional integration institution aimed at forging closer economic and political ties among the six monarchial states. The group holds about 40 percent of the world's oil reserves and 25 percent of the world's natural gas (Hanieh 73, 2013). The Gulf's status as the world's main supplier of oil and gas and its position as a major source of capital renders the region fundamental to modern capitalism. Because of this, "there has been a shared interest to ensure that the GCC remains fully aligned with the interests of the world market (Hanieh 74, 2013). The Gulf, and Bahrain's interests have been deeply intertwined with the United States and factors greatly into U.S. foreign policy-making in the region. Regional command center known as U.S. Central Command was established and stationed on U.S. Navy ships from which the U.S. can protect its interests and project power in the region. The U.S. Navy base and the Fifth Fleet that's located in Bahrain was crucial in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Another important variable to understand Bahraini society and the overall protests that emerged are the sectarian divide that characterizes Bahrain. The Kingdom is ruled by King Hamad and the al-Khalifa family, who are Sunni Muslims. The majority of the population are Shi'a Muslims, who have remained largely poor and discriminated against by the ruling Sunni elite. Bahrain is a neopatrimonial state and state-society relations are based on loyalty, and the legitimacy of those within the ruling elite is based upon the relation to the ruler (Meijter, Danckaert 213, 2015). The foundation of the state is propped up by the rentier nature of the state, where its significant oil revenues go directly to the ruling elite and are distributed among its allied patrons. This Shi'a – Sunni divide is further complicated by the rapid yet uneven neoliberal reforms instituted in the Kingdom that greatly advantaged the Sunni elite at the expense of the Shi'a majority (Hanieh 75, 2013). The result was a disproportionately high

amount of poverty and unemployment levels via the disenfranchised Shi'a population. It is also important to note that Shia's were banned from serving in the security forces. Sunni Arabs were actually imported from around the region to serve in the security forces and granted lavish financial rewards and citizenship, further alienating the Shia's. Bahrain has a relatively small army and it must compete with institutional rivals within the security forces, in the classic security force fragmentation model outlined earlier. These competing security agencies are established partly out of mistrust, but also "in order to satisfy the ambitions of various ruling-family members and to keep different family factions in balance" (Barany 35, 2011). The military, dominated by Sunnis, is not considered a national force, but a force to protect the ruling family and Sunni elite business and political interests. Unlike the Arab Republics, Bahrain does not employ a conscript-based armed forces "because its ruling elites do not want Shias bearing arms and receiving military training" (Barany 35, 2011). Many within the Bahraini Defense Force and the country's security and police force consists largely of foreigners who are granted citizenship and are more willing to shoot at demonstrators who pose a threat to the regime. (Meijter, Danckaert 213, 2015). These individuals have no preexisting ties to the society in which they are called upon to repress, thereby eliminating any moral or ethical quandary faced by military members in Egypt or Jordan. As Syria demonstrated, when the military and security forces are structured along sectarian or ethnic lines, the regime is more likely to use repression against its own citizens that aren't among the in-group ruling elite.

Protests began on February 15 with thousands gathering into the Pearl Roundabout, which became the Tahrir Square of the Bahrain uprising. The grievances that brought many in Bahrain out in the streets were common in the region. Bahrainis were looking for greater social, political and civil rights and the end of economic inequality, repression, patron based economics

and widespread corruption” (Meijter, Danckaert 219, 2015). Inspired by regional events in Tunisia and Egypt, protesters expressed their grievances with demands ranging from constitutional reform to greater economic opportunities to calls for the fall of the monarchy (Fakhro 90, 2016). It wasn’t long before Bahraini security forces and the military rolled in to clear the roundabout of protesters, killing three civilians in the process (Fakhro 90, 2016). In response, the al-Wefaq opposition bloc within parliament resigned and the February 14<sup>th</sup> Youth, an anonymous online group, escalated demands and called for the end of the regime (Fakhro 90, 2016).

Unlike the movement that rocked the Jordanian monarchy, the opposition in Bahrain began to call for the ouster of the regime. A prominent political figure, Hassan Mushaima returned to Bahrain from exile in February 2011. He helped establish a radical new splinter group called the al-Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy that would operate outside the state’s control and apply pressure on the regime to reform through mass mobilization. Mushaima and his allies called for the toppling of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic in its place (Fakhro 93, 2016). Any hopes for reform or accommodates were dwarfed with growing calls for regime change and hardliners within the ruling family who controlled the coercive institutions were committed to using repression against the opposition. The call for regime change altered the threat perception of the monarchy and “the call for a republic heightened anxiety among the loyalist community that the protest movement was adopted radical positions and seeking to impose an Iranian-style republic in Bahrain (Fakhro 93, 2016). Demonstrations increased as all segments of society became mobilized and camped out in front of various institutions ministries within the state demanding reforms and the resignation of certain political

figures. The demonstrations also took on a sectarian divide, with Sunni pro-government demonstrators clashing with anti-government protesters (Fakhro 95, 2016).

As protests continued to mount and spread, the regime escalated its repression against the opposition. On February 17, government troops killed five and wounded hundreds more at Pearl Roundabout and reports surfaced the police were targeting doctors, medics, and preventing ambulances from evacuating injured protesters (Hanieh 79, 2013). The escalated repression had a similar effect as the crackdown in Syria. Increased repression radicalized protesters as the movement altered its preferences and began calling for the downfall of the monarchy, which elevates the regimes threat perception and increases the utility of more violent repression. Along with stepped up repression, the regime employed a mix of tactics it had used against challenges in the past, mainly, violence, divide-and-rule tactics and empty promises of financial aid and political reform (Hanieh 79, 2013). The regime also looked to dominate the narrative of the opposition, highlighting the sectarian nature of the protesters as polarizing the country and pushing the country into a sectarian conflict. Despite the government's rhetoric and the Shia dominated protesters, Sunnis participated as well because of the same underlying grievances and experienced the same violent repression as their Shia counterparts. Not only did the movement alter its preferences in openly calling for the ousting of the monarchy, but the protesters began to challenge the powerful financial district which severely threatened the financial stability that the regime promoted to outside investors (Hanieh 81, 2013). King Hamad shifted the narrative of the opposition and blamed the movement on an Iranian-led conspiracy fomented over decades that sought to bring down the regime (Hanieh 81, 2013). Assad used similar tactics in Syria, only blaming the United States and the West for fomenting dissent and plotting to overthrow his regime.

A critical juncture in the Bahrain case occurred on March 14. The contentious dynamic of the Shi'a – Sunni divide and escalated violence culminated in the military intervention of the GCC states spearheaded by Saudi Arabia. The robust intervening force was comprised of one thousand Saudi army and national guard troops, five hundred police from the UAE and some Qatari police as well (Hanieh 81, 2013). This illiberal and authoritarian alliance intervened with the intent to squash the Bahraini uprising and prevent a contagion effect of mobilization that might spread throughout the Gulf region. It was simply unacceptable for the GCC coalition to have a member state subjected to the mass mobilization and chaos that had metastasized throughout the Arab world. The regime implemented a three-month emergency law the next day and security forces raided and cleared Pear Roundabout, the focal point of the uprising. The Bahraini security forces, bolstered by the GCC intervention committed gross human rights violations to suppress the uprising and remain in power. These atrocities took place while the United States remained largely silent. King Hamad announced he would be holding a “national dialogue” with the opposition that was commended by President Obama (White House 2011).

Like the accommodative measures adopted in the other Arab monarchies, the concessions offered by King Hamad rang hollow and the problems facing Bahrain society persisted: “high levels of unemployment and inequality, sectarian discrimination against the Shia majority, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the ruling clique and a handful of Sunni tribes around it all continued to characterize Bahraini society” (Hanieh 83, 2013). The concentration of wealth amongst the royal family, their allies, and most importantly the security apparatuses was essential in the regimes rational calculus to use repression to remain in power: “This polarization of wealth and power was necessarily backed up by the regime’s repressive apparatus and its decades-long persecution of popular movements and political opposition (Hanieh 83, 2013).

The challenge posed by the opposition, in terms of the threat to the ruling regime and the financial viability of Bahrain and the ruling elite was severe enough that repression, augmented by the regional intervention of the GCC, was essential to holding onto power. The Sunni dominated military of Bahrain did not split and experience mass defections as happened in Syria. The Sunni military remained loyal because the institution had a political stake in the regime maintaining power. Had the Khalifa family been removed, the economic privilege granted to the Sunnis would have likely been overturned by a possible Shi'a dominated transition government, "thus, troops, who are mostly Sunni, feared that regime change would undermine Sunni political dominance and sectarian privileges" (Nepstad 344, 2013). The economic incentives also prevented the imported Sunni Muslims from around the region to remain loyal to the regime, fearing defection would cost them rent benefits and their lives.

The international context also contributed significantly to the regime and the military's calculations and willingness to use repression to stabilize the regime. Whereas in Egypt the United States turned on Mubarak and the possible threat of the military losing out on critical aid provided by the U.S., Washington as well as the EU remained relatively silent on the Bahrain atrocities, especially compared to the righteous claims of human rights abuses that other regimes perpetrated. The United States saw no benefits in continued support for Mubarak which allowed the military to completely defect as an institution and side with the opposition. In the Bahrain case, "the United States had been reluctant to condemn or sanction Bahrain, largely because this nation hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and the USA does not want to jeopardize a key strategic military post in the Middle East" (Nepstad 344, 2013). U.S. complicity is also complicated due to Washington's reliance on Saudi oil and any condemnation of a key GCC member would complicate U.S.-Saudi relations. The cost-benefit analysis for Bahraini troops weighed heavily in

favor of remaining loyal to the monarchy and violently repressing the opposition. Also similar to Syria, where the loyal Alawite army exercised no restraint against a largely Sunni armed opposition, the Bahraini security forces had no incentives to refrain from violence against protesters who were primarily Shia. The protesters did not represent the entirety of the ruling regime, causing no normative or reputational costs for the violent crackdown.

## **Conclusions and Takeaways**

The Arab Spring movement of late 2010 and early 2011 represent the power of people's movements and popular social mobilization. The people of the Middle East North Africa region had been subjugated and oppressed for decades since the decolonialization period. The regimes of this part of the world were legitimated and upheld through the social contract of providing generous state welfare benefits and public employment that had kept populations in check for so long. Although, as outlined, there were many instances of pockets of resistance in various Arab states, the dominance of the coercive apparatuses of the state was paramount and always protected each regime from internal divisions and challenges. This part of the world seemed immune to the wave of mass uprisings and subsequent democratization that took place during the tail end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This tight hold on power was eroded by the devastating economic conditions and stagnation that spread throughout the region, with many of the declining economic indicators being a direct result of state-led policies or through international financial institutions. The multitude of grievances highlighted by an economically depressed society that was fueled by rage and anger over decades of oppression and crony corruption was the trigger to spark a region-wide movement that took dramatically different courses in neighboring countries. The hypotheses outlined in the introduction of this paper and the following theoretical construct of the research were proven largely correct. What is

most important in this interaction between regime and challenger is the regimes ability to maintain power and what resources and methods it will use to ensure the survival and endurance of the regime. The cost-benefit analysis propagated within the rational choice paradigm illustrates that the regime will do whatever it takes to remain in power, including the use of violent repression if it will guarantee regime survival. The most important variable in this calculation is what the military will ultimately do. And what the military chooses to do rests on a number of factors. A significant indication of which way the military will lean rests in its rational economic interests, generally through state-sponsored rents and private goods. If the military's economic assets and interests are protected by the regime, the military will remain loyal. If their interests are no longer protected by the regime, the rational choice is to defect to the opposition and refuse to fire on peaceful protesters. An institutionalized military, based on conscription of recruits that reflects the demographics of society, and that operate in a rules-bound system where professionalism and merit are rewarded, is less likely to repress an uprising. It's also noteworthy that core interests of the military matter, and whether or not the armed forces views itself as a defender of the nation and desires to protect its image, prestige and national legitimacy. In this case, it is less likely to resort to repression. We see this in the case of Egypt where it became no longer tenable to uphold the Mubarak regime because their interests were not protected. In contrast, a military that views itself as the defender of the regime is more likely to back the regime at all costs. In addition to these economic assets, the ethnic or sectarian composition of the armed forces matters significantly. When a military is patronmially based, when military leaders are linked to the regime through ethnicity, religion or sectarian ties, and when professional advancement is based on cronyism and loyalty to the regime, the military is more likely to embrace the regime under duress, defend the leader and fire on protesters. Syria

demonstrates this case, with the higher ranking officials of the Syrian armed forces belonging to the state-dominated Alawite sect of Shi'a Islam, who remained loyal to the Alawite Assad regime. This was not the case for lower-ranking officials who were predominantly Sunni and identified with the mass population who reflected their sectarian identity. This led to some defections among the Sunni troops who were not protected or provided the incentives to remain loyal. But the Alawite sect hung on, which was crucial in propping up Assad. And this eventually led to civil war. In contrast to Egypt, where the ethnic composition of the military reflected the people who took to the streets in opposition to the Mubarak regime. When a military is patrimonially comprised as in Syria, it is more likely to be that the regime will hold the loyalty of its ethnic or sectarian compatriots, while losing the support of rival sects.

Alliance formation and the involvement of external actors will also impact the regimes decision to use violence or opt for concessions. The Assad regime could count on continued and substantial financial support from Iran, Hezbollah and most importantly, Russia. These external actors fuel the coercive apparatus of the Assad regime, allowing him to continue his crimes against humanity via his own population. Egypt and the Kingdom of Jordan represent the same dynamic from a different perspective. Egypt relies on billions of dollars in U.S. military aid and would lose out on considerable funding and resources if it defied U.S. demands to not abuse human rights and kill its own people. Thus, it was a rational choice decision for the military to remain on the side of the protesters, not fire on its own people that reflect its ethnic makeup, and ensure continued U.S. support. The same can be said for Jordan, where the military relied on U.S. and European support to uphold an island of stability in a turbulent region and protect a pro-Israel monarchy. It was never a question of whether the armed forces of Jordan would violently repress its people and fire on protesters. Rather, it employed selective repression where it was

possible and mixed in with policy concessions to the opposition that would create the veneer of actual reforms while ensuring the survival of the monarchy, which was never legitimately challenged from the movement. However, the poor economic conditions that characterized each Arab Spring country does not necessarily explain away why an authoritarian regime resorts to repression in the face of mass opposition. But rather, it indicates the erosion of regime legitimacy, which is grounded in sound economic policy and a social contract that provides and protects citizens from market failures. The dynamics of the social movements are critical as well. The Jordanian opposition never asked for the removal of the monarchy and was thus, never a severe challenge to the Hashemite Kingdom and King Abdullah II's dynasty. The opposition and Jordanian people hold the monarchy in high esteem and did not seek its overthrow, but rather, mild and not unreasonable democratic reforms. This altered the threat perception of the regime, understanding the movement's goals and objectives being narrow in scope. The Egyptian people wanted the removal of Mubarak, who had repressed them for decades and let the economy tank as millions of Egyptians suffered while Mubarak and his cronies profited. This threat perception compelled Mubarak to send out his police and internal security forces who remained loyal and escalated violence against the civil resisters, but the fate of the movement ultimately rested with the intervention of the military on the side of the movement and far exceeded the power and resources of the hated security forces. Bahrain proves that the sectarian and religious divides within the country mattered most, as a largely Shi'a revolt calling for an end to the regime was intolerable to the Sunni monarchy. In Syria, the opposition initially only called for democratic reforms, similar to Jordan, it wasn't until the regime deliberately sought to violently repress the movement that caused defections within the military to join the opposition, which triggered the civil war.

There are limitations in this research and it's important to highlight the inevitable pitfalls of qualitative, case study research. One notable limitation is the external support variable. My research clearly indicates that external support is crucial to a regime. But it doesn't necessarily tell us how the regime or the military will behave. Egypt and the Kingdom of Jordan are two extremely important allies of the United States. The U.S. has many interests in upholding those regimes and each receives substantial financial and military aid. The U.S. has leverage with those regimes, and Egypt and Jordan did not want to jeopardize their financial windfall. The military refused to fire on protesters, and in the case of Egypt, facilitated the exit of Mubarak. On the other hand, Bahrain, another close U.S. ally and also a key player in the Saudi orbit, violently repressed its uprising, with significant assistance from Saudi troops. It appears the interests of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain outweighed whatever reservations the United States had about repression against the opposition, which was fairly muted on the part of the U.S. because of its key role in the War on Terror. So in the cases of Egypt and Jordan, U.S. support can be said to have reduced potential violence. In Bahrain, U.S. acquiescence and Saudi support facilitated violent repression. In Syria, external support from Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah (along with other Shi'a militias) has proven critical to the survival of the Assad regime. Assad may not have survived if it wasn't for Russia's direct intervention in 2015.

Another limitation is, of course, an institution like the military is not a unitary actor, it is comprised of individuals, who have their own interests and values. In Egypt, the military remained neutral for a period, as the hated police and security forces committed acts of violence on protesters. It wasn't until violence severely escalated that the military firmly stood on the side of the opposition. When we talk about the structure of the military, we noted that professionalized military's based on conscription that represents the population and has high

levels of institutionalization will be less likely to repress opposition. A military based on patrimonialism, where the military is structured along clan, ethnic, sectarian, or religious bonds and is deeply tied to the regime, the army is more likely to use repression to protect its interests and the regime that supports it. Although the Egyptian army was professional and based on conscription, there was still tremendous corruption and cronyism. Its interests were protected by the regime, but it was independent of the presidency and operated virtually on its own, with no oversight or accountability. Once the untenable position of Mubarak became all too clear, it was too risky to continue to support him and jeopardize its business interests. Lutterbeck sums up the confusion and contradiction inherent in the Egyptian armed forces:

“While some elements of institutionalization have certainly been present in the Egyptian military, such as its high level of professionalism, its general functioning according to meritocratic principles, and its overall commitment to the national interest, there are also important patrimonial characteristics, as evidenced in particular by its traditional hold on the Egyptian presidency, and its privileged status as a very important economic actor in Egypt, which too has ultimately been a result of its intimacy with the country’s regime” (Lutterbeck 39, 2013).

These limitations notwithstanding, the role of the military is crucial in determining the success or failure of an uprising. Whereas Syria and Bahrain demonstrate that the loyalty of the armed forces allowed autocrats to cling to power even in the face of massive unrest, Egypt shows how the decisions of the military can make or break a revolution.

My objective with this research is not merely to complete a master’s thesis and finish the graduate program. The Middle East region has been of great interest in my academic career and I closely followed the events of the Arab Spring movement and the subsequent counterrevolutions

and civil wars that broke out. I set out to discover why so many similar repressive regimes responded to opposition in various ways. But I did not undertake this project with the limited and narrow scope of only applying my findings to the Arab Spring cases. I think the research can be applied to authoritarian regimes throughout the world and the options they face and employ will look similar to the responses of the Arab Spring regimes. If we apply my model to the current situation in Venezuela, I would closely examine the role of the military in Venezuelan politics. What is the sectarian divide, if there is any at all? More importantly, are the economic interests of the military protected by the regime? If so, the military will likely continue to prop up the Maduro regime. However, the economic situation in Venezuela has been plunging for years, and the resources of the military may diminish as a result, causing the armed forces to side with the protesters and refusing to fire on demonstrators. I think the model I've outlined will help researchers understand why a regime behaves in a certain way. My ultimate goal has always been real-world applicability, and as a journalist, I'm not merely interested in what happens but more importantly why an event occurs and how it can be explained.

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