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Military Defection in the MENA Region: Lessons learned from the Arab Spring

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1. Introduction

Mass uprisings erupted all around the Arab Region after protests in Tunisia in late 2010 and early 2011. In December 2010 Tarek al-Tayed Mohamed Bouazizi set himself publicly on fire after harassment by the police. Bouazizi's action sparked uprisings all over the country, protesting the economic conditions under the Ben Ali regime. These protests managed to overthrow the regime with the help of the military (Brownlee et al, 2015). The wave of uprisings this created became known as the Arab Spring. Movements in multiple countries managed to overthrow the regimes. However, not all movements were successful. In the case of Syria, for example, the military did not defect from the regime and successfully helped President Bashar al-Assad to counter the protests and to stay in power.

This seems the confirm prior research which suggests that the response of the military has a determining role in the success or failure of mass uprisings (Russell, 1974). In the cases of ant-authoritarian mass uprisings in the Philippines in 1986 and Indonesia in 1998, for example, the military's decisions to defect and to support the uprising was crucial for the success of both uprisings and for the fall of the dictatorships. On the other hand, during mass uprisings in China in 1989 and Burma in 2007, the militaries decided to support the regime and thus to suppress the uprisings. The military possesses the resources to make a success out of or counter any uprising, which makes the support of the military crucial in anti-authoritarian uprisings (Lee, 2014). It is thus important to know what drives the decision of the military to support mass uprisings and why in some cases the military supports the regime.

This thesis addresses this central problem with reference to the Arab Spring. Why did some militaries in the Arab Spring defect when anti-authoritarian mass uprisings erupted, while others did not? Analysing the behaviour of the military in Egypt and Syria during the mass uprisings will provide us with theoretical insides into military defection. With the eruption of anti-authoritarian mass uprisings in Algeria and Sudan, this research is still very relevant.

The first part of this research focuses on analysing the existing literature to get a better understanding of military defection in the Arab Spring. By summarizing and reviewing the literature, a theoretical framework is created which within this research will be executed. After that, the methodology and the background of the cases will be discussed. On the base of two hypotheses focusing on in- and out-groups and economic incentives, the behaviour of the militaries in Egypt and Syria will be analysed. Finally, the results of this analysis will be compared and discussed in the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

To understand military defection in the Arab Spring, it is important to place military defection in a broader context to get a better understanding of the phenomenon. Existing literature on the subject comes from various contexts and focuses on different dimensions. Scholars researching military behaviour do not only focus on the Arab Region but also on Asia and South America. A wide range of countries is already researched in different timeframes. Besides that, research is conducted from different perspectives. Where some researchers look from a social movement perspective, others focus on military defection in a coup-proofing context. A wide range of scholars will therefore be discussed to create a complete picture of the existing literature.

McLauchlin (2010) researches military defection during the 1977-1982 Muslim Brotherhood uprising in Syria, the 1970 civil war in Jordan, and the 1978-1979 Iranian revolution. The article makes a distinction between two strategies to keep military loyalty, namely individual incentives, like punishments and rewards, and a policy of ethnic preference within the military. His research shows that the strategic decision to defect is related to ethnicity and individual incentives. Military defection however stays an underexplored subject. McLauchlin therefore recommends that his findings should be put in a broader context to see whether his conclusions correspond with larger scale research.

Where McLauchlin only focuses on the policies that are specifically used by the regime to ensure the loyalty of the military and undermine their integrity, Lee (2014) uses civil-military relations as a broader concept. To understand military defection it is important, according to Lee, to research interactions between the regime, the armed forces, and civil society. Earlier work has mainly focused on authoritarian state-society relations, not on dynamics within the regime. Armed forces have been bystanders in many of these works. Lee explains in his book, *Defect or Defend: Military responses to Popular Protest in Authoritarian Asia*, how and under what conditions the armed forces will defect from autocratic regimes when mass uprisings erupt. Lee's research is based on new institutionalism or the positive theory of institutions, focusing on China, Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines His research shows that the type of authoritarianism influences the likelihood of military defection. Personalistic authoritarian institutions are more fragile, they lead to more discontent within the military, which in turn, makes defection more likely.

Lee argues that this argument not only accounts for the cases he researched, but also for the Arab Spring countries. The argument works for Egypt and Tunisia, but not for Syria, Bahrain and Libya even though these countries have personalistic authoritarian regimes. A possible explanation for this, according to Lee, is the ethnic diversity of these countries, an

argument that corresponds with research conducted by Nepstad (2015), Bou Nassif (2015) and McLauchlin (2010). The ethnic diversity in these countries is reflected in the militaries, where there is sectarian division.

Bellin (2004) and (2012) has a different view on authoritarianism. In her 2004 article 'The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective', she examined why countries in the Middle East where so resistant to democratization. She concluded that the overdevelopment of the coercive apparatuses in combination with other factors, which increase the capacity of this apparatus, was responsible for the persistence of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. Even if these coercive apparatuses were forced out by for example international forces, authoritarian regimes would not develop into democracies, because of the lack of state institutions.

However, the Arab Spring and its consequences came as a big surprise for many authoritarianism scholars. Even though recent events also confirm some long existing stands on the dynamics of authoritarianism, it also suggests new theoretical insights in the subject. Namely, where some regimes persisted as expected, others fell despite of their highly developed coercive apparatus (Bellin, 2012). In a new article, Bellin discusses the implications of the Arab Spring on her research in 2004. Even though scholars did not see the fall of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East coming, the Arab Spring confirms earlier analyses that the behaviour of the coercive apparatus has a determining effect on the persistence of authoritarian regimes. Also, the earlier developed logic behind military defection is confirmed in this context. The military decision to defect is based on a cost-benefit analysis taking into account the military's mission and institutional interests. Lee's (2014) claim about personalistic authoritarian rule can be a factor but is not sufficient to explain the phenomenon.

Since this research is going to focus specifically on the Arab Spring, it is important to get a better understanding of the literature focusing on this context. In *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform,* Brownlee, Masoud and Reynolds (2015) focus on the reasons behind the breakdown of regimes in the Arab Spring. They find a relationship between hereditary regimes and the presence of oil wealth, on the one hand, and regime persistence in the Arab Spring, on the other. The presence of oil wealth provided the regimes with money and resources to buy loyalty and invest in the military, where hereditary regimes were able to build bonds with the coercive apparatus over long periods of time, making defection less likely. Both factors thus create a loyal coercive apparatus. These were not the only factors, but they stood out. Next

to regime breakdown they also look into the democratic success in Tunisia and why other countries did not manage in their democratization attempts.

Nepstad (2013) looks at a smaller number of cases to better understand the causes of military defection. In her article, she focusses on the following question: what factors influence the likelihood of military defections during a nonviolent conflict? By researching three different cases, namely Egypt, Bahrain and Syria, Nepstad tries to answer this question. She looks at these cases mainly from a social movement perspective. Within her research she identifies ten factors that foster or discourage military defection, of which economic and political benefits, and the military's perception of the fragility of the regime, are viewed as the most influential.

Varol (2012) discusses the 2011 uprising in Egypt comprehensively in his research into the so called 'democratic coup d'état'. His fieldwork in Egypt led to the conclusion that some military coups are more democratic because they respond to the will of the people to overthrow authoritarian regimes and provide free and fair elections. The reasons behind military defection and the coup in Egypt are discussed in detail. The Egyptian military was a very popular institution. They even had large political and economic privileges and shares in commercial interest. It was to be expected that the military would lose these privileges in the case of Mubarak's succession by his son, Gamal Mubarak. Gamal was known for his plans to reform. This became a real option when protest erupted, and Mubarak made a promise to not run for another term. The fear of loss of privileges is identified by Varol as an important reason behind the military defection and following coup in Egypt.

Van Dam (1996) studies Syria, specifically the developments under the Assad regime. In his book, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Assad and the Ba'th Party*, van Dam explains, among other things, the Alawi dominance in Syria and how they came to power. There are many different religious and ethnic groups in Syria. However, more than 50 percent of the Syrian population consists of Arab-speaking Sunni Muslims, whereas the Alawis are a religious minority of only 11.5 percent.

Despite these numbers, minorities rose over the years, and the regime and high-ranking positions in the military and public sector are dominated by Alawis for almost 50 years. When the Assad family came to power in the 70's, it was accompanied by an increase in sectarian, regional and tribal division. This sectarian polarisation was also visible within the armed forces. Other factors also played a role, but sectarian, regional and tribal relations became key to maintaining power and for self-preservation. Van Dam concludes that without these ties, the Ba'th party and the Assad regime would not have been able to persist.

Albrecht (2015) also focuses on Syria. He discusses, in his article, if coup-proofing strategies work. By analysing civil-military relations in Egypt and Syria, he tries to explain the behaviour of the military during the mass uprisings in 2011. In a broader perspective Albrecht also wants to identify which coup-proofing strategies work under which circumstances. His research shows that neither hereditary succession or highly developed coercive apparatus ensure loyalty. Meanwhile, a similar social background and personal bonds will create loyalty, so it needs to be incorporated in all coup-proofing strategies. The Syrian model is therefore more successful in preventing a coup, because of the sectarian division in the military and the involvement of officers in politics.

3. Theory

The literature in the previous chapter give an insight in military defection in the Arab Spring. However, these articles are not sufficient on their own to explain the differences in military behaviour in Egypt and Syria. Thus, it is important to build a theoretical framework with the relevant articles to answer the research question. This research is especially relevant because of the ongoing mass uprisings in Algeria and Sudan. In Algeria, the military is already turning against the regime of President Bouteflika. The behaviour of the military will also be key in these uprisings. This research can give us insights in why and how these and future situations will unfold.

Research question

Existing research shows the important role of the military in the outcome of mass uprisings. However, as Nepstad (2013) recommended, more research on military defection is needed to understand the complex phenomenon. Bou Nassif (2015) and Makara (2013) did research military defection to some extent, but mainly focused on coup-proofing. Military defection though is a returning subject in existing literature. However, there is still no comprehensive theory on which factors influence military defection. Therefore, I want to specifically focus on the causes of military defection in authoritarian regimes in the Arab Spring, since scholars were not able to predict the fall of these regimes (Bellin, 2012). The research question will therefore be: 'Why did some militaries in the Arab Spring defect when anti-authoritarian mass uprisings erupted while others did not?'. I will focus on Egypt and Syria in the Arab Spring in this research.

My research will thus focus on the military, but in several studies the term coercive apparatus is used. Coercive apparatus is a very complex concept, which needs some explanation. Under a regime's coercive apparatus, there are multiple forces like the different branches of the military, police and even palace guards. This is however not all since authoritarian regimes spilt and multiply the institutions linked to these forces, to control each other and prevent coups. Coercive apparatus is therefore a very complex and far-reaching concept. However, when mass uprisings arise, the most important actor is the military (Bellin, 2012). Since this research focusses on mass uprisings, this concept will be limited to the behaviour of the military.

Theoretical Expectations

Multiple scholars researched the persistence of authoritarianism, including Bellin (2012) and Lee (2014). Lee claims that personalistic authoritarian rule increases the chance of military defection when mass uprisings erupt. There is a relationship between personalism and vulnerability, which creates circumstances for military defection, both in Asia and in the Middle East. Bellin (2012), on the other hand, concluded that not only the prerequisites of democratization lacked in the Middle East, but that the presence of a strong coercive apparatus ensured the persistence of authoritarian regimes. Scholars agree that the military has a determining effect on the breakdown or persistence of authoritarian regimes during mass uprisings. However, they differ from one another in what way it has an effect.

In Lee's (2014) research, the existence of personalistic authoritarian rule is the explanatory factor in military defection. This claim does however not work for the Arab Spring, since the military in Syria remained loyal despite of personalistic rule. According to Bellin, the organization of the military within an authoritarian regime affects military defection, not the type of rule. When the military is organized along patrimonial lines, loyalty to the regime is created through blood, ethnicity or religion (Bellin, 2012). It is thus expected that countries in which the military is organized along patrimonial lines will not defect, whereas countries where this is not the case the military will defect when mass uprisings erupt.

This claim is also supported by other studies who take into account the ethnic composition of the military, of which patrimonial organization can be a part. Nepstad (2015) McLauchlin (2010) and Bou Nassif (2015) all say something about this. Nepstad (2015) concludes that in the cases of Bahrain and Syria, ethnicity plays an important role. In Bahrain, the largest part of the military shares the regime's dominant Sunni religion. In Syria, the military elites are part of the Alawi sect, the same sect as the Assad family. Both regimes consist of minorities who have privileges compared to the rest of the population. This creates identity-related loyalties which can explain why the military did not or did only partly defect. In the case of Syria, there were defections, but mostly by Sunni soldiers (Nepstad, 2015). These soldiers did not have the same privileges and thus would not have felt the loyalty that other soldiers felt.

Meanwhile in Egypt, the population almost completely consists of Sunni Muslims, so there are fewer religious divisions than in Syria. There were also not any regime dominant religions or sects. However, there where groups who had privileges in comparison with others. The military was one of these in-groups. Regimes create these groups to establish loyalty and prevent coups (Albrecht, 2015). The military had access to economic advantages. However, the

possibility of losing the advantages explains why they became part of the out-group and defected (Bou Nassif, 2015). In Syria, the Alawi were part of the in-group and in Bahrain, this were the Sunnis corresponding with the relationship between in-groups and loyalty Existing research thus shows us that not only patrimonial organization but, even broader, the creation of in-groups will make military defection less likely.

Bellin (2004) and (2012) argues that more factors play a role in military defection. There is a logic behind military defection. In mass uprisings the decision to intervene is not about capacity but about the will to intervene. The military see itself as responsible for 1) defending the country, 2) maintaining security and order and 3) looking out for their own interests. These institutional interests can be split into the securing of economic interests, protecting the image and legitimacy of the military and maintaining internal cohesion, discipline and morale. The military elites make a cost-benefit analysis based on these factors before making the decision to intervene or not (Bellin, 2012).

Securing economic interest, as a factor in military defection, is something that is also argued by Nepstad (2015) and Varol (2012). Varol, who researched the uprising in Egypt in 2011, finds that the military did not only take into account protecting its legitimacy by not firing on unarmed citizens, but also economic incentives. The Egyptian military had large shares in commercial interest protected by the Mubarak regime. The scale of mobilization of protestors and the promise of Mubarak not to run for another term led to defection. The military was aware of the pending succession of Mubarak by his son, who was known for his plan to reform the military and the commercial interests they possessed (Collombier, 2011). This claim is also supported by Nepstad's research. In Syria, the Alawi dominance and the corresponding economic incentives affects Alawi loyalty on the one hand and Sunni defection on the other hand. In Bahrain, the financial rewards and citizenships granted to Sunni immigrants leads to loyalty, where in Egypt, the fear of loss of financial benefits leads to defection. Economic incentives are therefore an important driver to take into account.

Based on existing literature, we can thus expect that in- and out-groups, among other caused things by patrimonial organization, and economic incentives will have an affect on my research.

Conceptualization

Conceptualization is very important for conducting research. This way no misunderstandings can arise about the context and meaning of the concepts. It also makes it possible to replicate the research. The most important concepts in my research are military defection, in- and out-groups, personalistic authoritarian rule, patrimonial organization and economic incentives.

Military defection

Military defection is defined in different ways by different authors. According to McLauchlin (2010) military defection is: 'whether government soldiers, instead of fighting for the regime, desert or fight for the opposition' (2010, p.333). Makara (2013) instead uses a more global definition, namely: 'the armed forces' unwillingness to fulfil the orders of the regime' (2013, p. 338). The definition of Makara is better suited for my research, because defection can also be passive which fits better in the definition of Makara. Instead of actively turning against the regime, the military can also defect passively by not fulfilling regime orders, such as using lethal force against protestors.

In- and out-groups

Within a regime a distinction can be made between an in- and out-group. People who belong to a regime's in-group relate and feel part of the same group as leaders and members of the regime because they have something in common. Most in-groups share some sort of identity with the ruler. This can be a shared ethnicity or religion, but this does not have to be the case. Regimes create in-groups and mobilize these people to secure their power and create mutual interests. By providing members of the in-group with certain advantages, these in-groups will feel loyalty towards the regimes. Where in-groups have certain privileges, people belonging to the out-group will not have same privileges and will therefore not feel the same level of loyalty (Bou Nassif, 2015).

Personalistic authoritarian rule

Both Bellin (2012) and Lee (2014) discuss authoritarianism in relation to military defection. Authoritarianism is a form of government with a strong centralized authority. It is characterized by repression to assure obedience. Within this concept, a distinction can be made between personalistic authoritarian rule and power sharing among the ruling elites. Personalistic regimes are those in which "persons take precedent over rules, where the officeholder is not effectively

bound by his office and is able to change its authority and powers to suit his own personal or political needs the state is a government of men and not laws" (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982).

Patrimonial organization

The way the military is organized has a large effect on their behaviour. A distinction can be made between institutionalized militaries and militaries that are organized along patrimonial lines. In patrimonially organized militaries, the military elite is connected to the regime by ethnicity, blood or sect. The regime rewards jobs and other advantages to people who belong to their 'group' (Bellin, 2012). Loyalty towards the regime can then be exchanged for personal gain.

Economic incentives

Economic gain drives people's behaviour. Some financial rewards are for everybody. This includes general financial rewards like salary and insurances. This is however not counted as an economic incentive. Economic incentives are economic gains due to affiliation with the regime. People who do not have any affiliation with the regime will not get the same benefits as people who do. Examples are priority for housing and special clubs. Your affiliation provides these benefits, benefits which will be lost when your affiliation is lost.

Creating a theoretical framework is one of the first steps in conducting research. Hence, I sought to elaborate the possible causes of military defection based on existing theories. The conceptualization of the important concepts in the research helps to demarcate the research question. The next step is determining which research design is suited for this research.

4. Research Design

Methodology

In this research, two cases will be compared to understand the phenomenon of military defection in the Middle East and North Africa. To answer the research question, it is important to find a useable methodology to compare cases and find the causes of military defection. Therefore, a comparative qualitative research method shall be used. Within this type of method, a distinction is made between the Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) and the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD). The MSSD compares cases that are as similar as possible in as many features of their system as possible and only differ from each other on the dependent variable. In this case, the dependent variable is military defection. On the contrary, a MDSD seeks to present the strength or weakness of a relationship between two variables by testing their validity in a range of two or more different settings (Hague & Harrop, 2013). By selecting two cases which only differ from each other on the dependent variable, causes of military defection can be identified. Case selection is therefore important for this design.

Case selection

The selected countries in this research are Syria and Egypt. These cases fit into the Most Similar System Design because of their similarity. The clearest similarities are the situation of both countries in the Arab Region, the presence of authoritarian regimes and large Muslim populations. The authoritarian regimes are quite similar. Both regimes had personalistic features, a dominant political party (the Ba'th party in Syria and the NDP in Egypt) and a central role for the military within the regime. They also both experienced anti-regime mass uprisings in 2011, among other things caused by similar levels of repression of civil liberties. These uprisings also had common features like protest size, goal and tactics, namely nonviolent mobilization. Something that is seen as important by Brownlee et al. (2015) and also plays a role in these countries, is the absence of oil wealth.

Syria and Egypt differ from each other, however, in the way the military reacted to the mass uprisings. In the case of Syria, only a part of the Syrian military defected, while the rest helped the regime to end the anti-authoritarian mass uprising. On the other hand, the Egyptian military defected by staging a coup which indirectly led to the success of the mass uprising.

These countries are, because of their extensive similarities, suitable for a comparative case study with the MSSD. These cases also fit into the theoretical framework since the lack of

comprehensive theory on military defection in the Arab Spring can be researched and developed with these two cases.

Background on Egypt

The success of the Tunisian movement inspired protest in Egypt. The Egyptian people gathered on Tahrir square on 25 January 2011 to protest the bad conditions under the Mubarak regime. Mubarak had ruled the country for three decades with his authoritarian regime. Discontent was mainly caused by the high unemployment rate, corruption and political repression (Nepstad, 2013). As the numbers grew on Tahrir square, the regime called upon the riot police, notorious for their brutal repression tactics. Tear gas, rubber bullets and eventually real bullets where used to supress the protestors. Even mobile services and the internet where disrupted to prevent communication between protestors. These measures where however not sufficient, since protestors did not back down and their numbers kept growing day by day (Varol, 2012).

Unable to counter the protestors, the police had to retreat after which the military stepped in. In an attempt to please protestors and restore the peace on the streets, Mubarak made several television appearances in which he made Omar Suleiman his vice president and promised to not seek another term. Protestors where not satisfied, and protests continued, calling for the resignation of Mubarak. The involvement of the military in policing the protest did not have the desired effect. The military even made a statement that it would not fire upon peaceful protestors, which even led to an increased number of civilians protesting (Brownlee et al, 2015).

Under the impression of continuing protests, high-ranking military officers decided to act. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), a body normally chaired by the president, met independently from Mubarak. On February 15, the SCAF released a communiqué stating that it would protect the country and ensure the demands of the people including free elections, a new constitution and, if possible, the end of the State of Emergency. Following this message, Hosni Mubarak resigned from his office and the SCAF took over power (Varol, 2012). The stance of the military and its defection thus played an important role in the fall of the Mubarak regime.

Background on Syria

After the Egyptian uprising, multiple countries followed. The last major uprising in the Arab Spring happened in Syria. In Syria, there was also dissatisfaction caused by high unemployment rates, human rights abuses and bad living conditions. Protests started in February 2011 on a small scale and scattered around the country. These small protests developed on March 15 into the first large protests. Bashar al-Assad's regime responded with extreme violence, killing multiple protestors. Security forces used snipers and tanks to suppress the protests. The violence inspired more to join the protests. The violence of the Assad regime forced opposition forces to go partly underground, every following attempt to push reforms met with reciprocal violence (Brownlee et al, 2015).

Not all soldiers were willing to shoot protestors, causing tens of thousands of soldiers to defect. The soldiers who defected where mostly Sunni recruits. In Syria the ruling class consists of Alawis, a small offshoot of the Shi'ite Islam. Alawis make up only about ten percent of the population, but since the Assad family is Alawi, high ranking positions within the regime are filled with people from their religious sect. The rest of the population mainly consists of Sunni Muslims, which make up about 75 percent of the population. The Alawi dominance caused discontent among the largest part of the population. Sunni soldiers, who had mostly low-ranking positions, where faced with a dilemma. Following orders meant shooting their own people. This dilemma caused the defection of many Sunni soldiers. When the attacks on civilians grew more vicious, more Sunni soldiers defected (Nepstad, 2013).

There were not only anti-regime protests in Syria. In the weeks following the start of the uprising, people frequently held pro-Assad demonstrations. These people supporting the regime were mostly Alawis, those who had most to lose should the regime fall (Starr, 2012). The Alawi sect had many benefits under the Assad-regime, which explains the loyalty of Alawi soldiers. Defection was therefore very uncommon among Alawi soldiers, especially among high-ranking officers. The defection of a substantial number of Sunni soldiers notwithstanding, the military managed to stay relatively intact in the higher ranks which enabled them to supress the uprising.

The difference between the Egyptian and Syrian uprising can be easily identified. Where the coercive apparatus of Egypt turned against the Mubarak regime, a large part of the Syrian forces kept their loyalty towards the Assad regime, resulting in the fall and persistence of these regimes.

Hypothesis

The theoretical framework has identified different causes of military defection. Based on the existing literature we can formulate two hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is based on the phenomenon that the ethnic composition of the military has an effect on the loyalty of the military and therefore the likelihood of defection. Regimes create in- and out-groups to stabilize and ensure their power. These groups are often linked to ethnicity and identity. By mobilizing these in-groups and providing them with benefits, the regime creates a group that will be loyal. Bou Nassif's (2015) research shows that identity-related loyalties play an important role in the decision-making behind defection. In the case of Bahrain, there is a Sunni dominant regime. The largest part of military personnel consists of Sunni Muslim soldiers, which make up only around 30 percent of the population. Most of these soldiers are immigrants which are granted citizenship and financial rewards. These soldiers are therefore highly loyal to the regime, since the fall of the regime would lead to the end of Sunni dominance, which explains why they did not defect (Nepstad, 2015). Also, in Syria the military defected only partly. Soldiers which belonged to Assad's in-group stayed loyal, while soldiers who were part of the out-group largely defected.

The presence of in- and out-groups is among others caused by the type of authoritarian rule. Bellin (2012) and Lee (2015) both argue something about the effect of the type of authoritarian rule. Where Lee claims that personalistic authoritarian rule leads to disaffection and divisions within the military, which creates favourable conditions for estranged senior officers to defect when mass uprisings erupt, Bellin states that personalistic rule, can lead to patrimonial organization, which creates loyalty. When militaries are organized along patrimonial lines, there are thus less likely to defect. Even though the Assad regime in Syria had personalistic features the military stayed largely loyal. Lee's research conducted in Asia does therefore not work in the Arab Spring according to Bellin. If we follow Bellin's logic, we can conclude that military personnel part of a regime's in-group is not likely to defect.

I. Military personnel will be less likely to defect if they belong to the regime's in-group.

Economic incentives are also important drivers in the decision to defect. As we see in the case of Egypt, the fear of loss of their financial benefits, played a large role in the military's decision to defect (Varol, 2012). Also, in the case of Bahrain, soldiers who remained loyal to the regime were motivated by economic incentives like financial rewards and citizenship (Nepstad, 2015). Thus, according to existing literature, economic considerations play an important role in military defection.

II. Economic benefits create regime loyalty which makes defection less likely.

The independent variables in this research will therefore be in- and out-groups and economic incentives.

5. Results & Analysis

Hypothesis I: Military personnel will be less likely to defect if they belong to the regime's in-group

In Egypt the military had a close relationship with the Mubarak regime. The regime provided the military with enormous political and economic privileges. Industries and commercial assets controlled by the military made up around five to fifteen percent of Egypt's economy (Kirkpatrick & Shane, 2011).

At first glance, it can thus be said that the military was part of the regime's in-group. However, the military elite and senior officers where primarily benefiting from this wealth. Mid-ranking and junior officers got considerably less. Even though these officers made more than people working in the civilian sector, they were still struggling financially (Bou Nassif, 2013). Mubarak's patronage system ensured only the loyalty of the military elite, not that of the whole military. Younger officers did not have shared interests with the regime. When the mass uprisings erupted, low-ranking soldiers where supportive of the mass mobilization, hugging protestors. A group of fifteen officers even defected publicly. The military elite, still loyal to the regime, therefore feared large scale defection (Bou Nassif, 2015).

The military elite was at first not sure what side to support when the uprisings erupted, uncertain if their privileges and position would be maintained under the regime. So they gave Mubarak some time to handle the situation (Taylor, 2014). However, the announcement that Mubarak would not run for another term and would likely be succeeded by his son Gamal, changed the stance of the military elite. High ranking officers opposed a hereditary power transfer. Under Hosni Mubarak the military had, as said, a lot of privileges. However, Gamal Mubarak was known for his plans to reform, which would affect these privileges (Varol, 2012).

Slowly, the military as a whole became part of the out-group. The interests of Mubarak did no longer correspond with the interests of the military. Among others, internal cohesion was at stake because of the discontent of lower ranking military personnel with the regime. They were not prepared to use force against protestors. Also, economic interest where not assured for everyone in the military, hereditary succession even threating the benefits of the military elite. Shooting nonviolent protestors would, in addition, severely damage the reputation of the military, causing less legitimacy with the people. Since the Egyptian population consists almost completely of Sunni Muslims, Mubarak could not organize the military along patrimonial lines. Loyalty was thus not based on a shared identity, making that

these factors caused the military to go from a regime in-group to an out-group, losing their loyalty for the regime (Bellin, 2012).

During the Syrian uprising (2011) the military defected only partly. In Syria there are many different ethnic and religious groups. The largest group consist of Sunni Muslims. However, the regime is Alawi dominant. The Alawis are a subgroup of Shiite Islam and make out eleven percent of the Syrian population. Defections mostly took place among Sunni soldiers. In the Syrian military we see a sectarian division. High ranks are filled by the Alawi sect, the same sect as the Assad family. Meanwhile, lower ranks are mostly filled with Sunnis. This Alawi dominance is reflected in the entire regime. The Assad family surrounded itself with loyalists from the Alawi sect. They had mutual interests and shared aversion towards the Muslim Brothers and other Islamic organizations. The minority Alawi population are located in the regime's in-group, where the largest part of the population, consisting of Sunni Muslims, are in the out-group (van Dam, 1996).

By organizing the military along patrimonial lines, Assad made sure that the interests and future of the military elite and the regime were intertwined. This sectarian division in the military explains why there was a different reaction within the military. Among the defectors, Sunni soldiers were the largest group. Being part of the out-group, meant that there was not much loyalty towards the regime. When the uprising erupted, these soldiers were faced with a dilemma between loyalty towards the regime or towards their own people. Protestors were mostly Sunni and minority groups. The order to shoot protestors, therefore meant that many Sunni soldiers decided to defect.

Where minority groups and Sunni's revolted against the regime, the Alawi population held pro-regime demonstrations (Starr, 2012). Alawis in Syria were provided with many privileges. Persistence of the regime becomes an important driver for the military, since regime survival is key for their own positions. Protecting the regime's interests, and thus their own, then becomes the most important goal (Bellin, 2012). When the mass uprising erupted and the survival of the regime was jeopardized, the military had a significant reason to stay loyal and defend the regime (van Dam, 2011). The Alawis in the military therefore stayed loyal. Especially in higher ranks the number of Alawi was substantial. In 2000, when Hafez al-Assad died, 90 percent of all generals were from the Alawi sect (Bou Nassif, 2015). There were even parts of the military that were fully Alawi like the Fourth Armoured Division (Bellin, 2012). Assad even made sure that all officer positions and key logistical support positions were mostly

filled with Alawi, not only the top brass (Makara, 2013). The Assad regime therefore had enough forces left to repress the uprisings, despite the defection of Sunni soldiers.

In both countries we can see that when the military or part of the military is or becomes part of the out-group, they are more likely to defect when mass uprisings erupt. In Syria, the Sunni soldiers where always part of the out-group, where in Egypt the military came to see itself as the out-group due to differences in their vision. Where in Syria the in-group stayed large enough to suppress the uprising, in Egypt the whole military eventually became part of the out-group, due to the loss of mutual interests, and defected. Therefore, this hypothesis applies for both countries and is correct.

Hypothesis II: Economic benefits create regime loyalty which makes defection less likely

The Mubarak regime knew not even one attempted coup until 2011. This is unprecedented in Egypt, where his predecessors had a more turbulent rule. This can be explained by the patronage system. Under the rule of Nasser and Sadat there was already such a system to some extent, but Mubarak expanded it. Where Nasser appointed important bureaucratic positions to the military elite and Sadat was founder of the military economic empire, the Mubarak regime provided the military with enormous political and economic privileges (Bou Nassif, 2013). They even had officers' clubs and a boat on the Nile for the air force. Industries and commercial assets controlled by the military are estimated around five to fifteen percent of Egypt's economy. (Kirkpatrick & Shane, 2011). It is not certain how much of the economy is controlled by the military, but some estimations even go up to forty percent (Gelvin, 2012).

This patronage system was used to maintain the loyalty of the military. Not every type of officer received the same privileges. High-ranking officers got appointed to well-paid bureaucratic positions and sometimes even received generous cash payments or commissions. Only the top brass did very well under Mubarak rule. Mid-ranking and junior officers got considerably less. Even though they had some privileges compared to people working non-military jobs, they struggled. The regime did provide a health care system for the military, but despite housing facilities officers still had to wait long time before being appointed an apartment. But even these officers stayed loyal because of the foreseeable future. When these officers would rise in ranks, extensive privileges awaited (Bou Nassif, 2013).

However, when the uprisings erupted in 2011, the military, against expectations, did not stay loyal to Mubarak. In addition to the factors discussed previously, the fear of losing their economic interest played an important role in this decision. Hosni Mubarak's promise to not

run for another term, meant that after his term ended his son, Gamal Mubarak, would likely succeed him. The military were opposed to Egypt becoming a country with hereditary succession. They especially despised Gamal because he never completed military service. Mubarak and his two predecessors were all military men, understanding and taking into account the interests of the military (Hashim, 2011). Gamal was besides that known for his plans to liberalize the economy and making the private sector grow. He was surrounded by an inner circle of businessmen, which the military saw as a rival elite. This elite felt as a threat to the military's economic businesses (Collombier, 2011). In the case of Gamal succeeding his father, the military elite had a lot to lose and thus severally opposed these plans (Anderson, 2011). When the prospect of Hosni Mubarak surviving the uprisings declined and the changes grew that Gamal would rule, the military acted. The military elite believed the economy would survive even without Mubarak, because of its autonomy (Albrecht, 2015). Looking out for their economic interest, the military put aside their loyalty towards the Mubarak regime and defected.

In Syria, the military did not have access to the same economic privileges as the Egyptian military died. Where the Egyptian military controlled a substantial part of the economy, in Syria this was not the case. When Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father, something changed. It was officially not allowed for senior officers to be involved in business, but Assad turned a blind eye and even encouraged to entwine business networks and military networks. The military elite used their power for financial gain for example by trading protection for rewards (Bou Nassif, 2015).

The Syrian military's economic involvement came about through informal and non-institutionalized means. Political privileges provided for the military's elite wealth instead of production of produce like in Egypt. They were mostly involved in smuggling, economic ventures in Lebanon and currency manipulation. You could not speak of a military economy in Syria, since military personnel received advantages on an individual level. Even these privileges were only provided to Alawi personnel. Where in Egypt military personnel mostly were provided with benefits after their service, like being allocated important bureaucratic positions, in Syria they received these privileges while in service, which made sure that the loyalty would stay within the military. The Syrian military elite believed that their economic advantages would not been preserved without Assad (Albrecht, 2015). Their loyalty to the regime was thus necessary to ensure their economic privileges, which explains why they did not defect. Sunni soldiers did not receive these economic privileges, there was no reason for

them to stay loyal, since no economic advantages were at stake. The prospect of economic privileges in the case of a Sunni dominant regime could even have driven defection.

In both cases we can see that the military is driven by economic incentives. When economic advantages are jeopardized, the military acts to protect their interests. Where in Egypt, the military was at risk of losing their advantages if they stayed loyal, and therefore defected, in Syria the Alawi military personnel was going to lose their privileges if the regime fell, so they stayed loyal and helped the regime to supress the uprising. Therefore, this hypothesis applies for both countries and is correct.

6. Conclusion

Existing literature on military defection provided a theoretical base for this research. Two hypotheses where created, focusing on answering the question: Why did some militaries in the Arab Spring defect when anti-authoritarian mass uprisings erupted while others did not? This research shows that militaries will defect when anti-authoritarian mass uprisings erupt when they are or become part of the out-group, are not organized along patrimonial lines and when there is a risk of losing economic benefits. In both Syria and Egypt, the tested hypotheses are applicable. The difference in military behaviour in both countries can be explained because (1) in Egypt the military had a chance of losing their economic benefits if the regime persisted, while in Syria the military would have lost their benefits if they defected, and (2) in Syria, a large part of the military personnel consisted of Alawi, the regime dominant in-group, while in Egypt the military became part of the out-group because their interest did no longer correspond with the interests of the regime.

This research is still relevant even after many years past since the eruption of the Arab spring, especially for the developing situations in Algeria and Sudan. It can predict the behaviour of the military to some extent and how these uprisings will unfold. This knowledge can help international actors in their decision-making regarding these countries or help other regimes to prevent military defection.

There are also however some pitfalls in this research. Despite their similarities, there are also some difference between the cases, next to the different reaction of the military on the uprisings. In Syria, there was hereditary succession, something that had not occurred in Egypt. The way the militaries are equipped is relatively similar. Both have much power and a close relationship with the regime. However, there are sectarian divisions within the Syrian military. These cases are therefore not the most perfect cases to use in a Most Similar Systems Design. Also, because of the low number of cases, it is uncertain if these conclusions apply for other countries. It is therefore recommended for further research that it is repeated with a larger number of cases. This can be done with quantitative research method or a larger comparative research. Broader empirical research will provide a substantiated theory.

7. Literature

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