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The Role of Institutions, Islamism, and Militaries in the Outcomes of the Arab Spring: The Cases of Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria

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The Role of Institutions, Islamism, and Militaries in the Outcomes of the Arab Spring: The Cases of Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria

Olivia Delmonico[1]

Abstract. During the Arab Spring in 2011, much of the Middle Eastern world faced a series of uprisings demanding democracy and equality. Most of these attempts at revolution desperately failed, with some nations faring far worse than before. Some, however, remain more stable than others, with Tunisia being the sole full success. This article delves into the varying causes of the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria. These countries respectively represent the good, the bad, and the ugly outcomes of the Arab Spring.

Through a thorough analysis of other literature on the subject, I conclude that the success of modern Arab revolutions depends entirely on three factors: institutional disposition, involvement of the military, and the role of Islamism. In understanding the importance of these factors, the international community can learn how to effectively react to situations similar to that of 2011 and perhaps prevent horrific atrocities like that of Syria.

Introduction

What is now known as the Arab Spring consisted of a series of revolutions in the Arab world beginning in 2010. Though reasons for these revolutions vary from country to country, protestors in most cases were seeking to implement democracy, equality, and a stronger and more inclusive economy. Both violent and nonviolent protests occurred in at least twenty different territories, with major uprisings occurring in six nations: Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. With the majority of conflict slowing by 2013, it appeared that most protests of the so-called Arab Spring resulted in revolutionary failure due to being repressed by violent and often deadly governmental authorities. Both the successes and the failures of the Arab Spring are represented by the conflict and results that occurred in three countries: Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria. Respectively, these nations represent the good, the bad, and the ugly outcomes of the Arab Spring. In analyzing the rebellions and ensuing results of each country, it is clear that three factors are responsible for the achievements and deficiencies of each revolution: institutional disposition, use of military power, and role of Islamism.

This article will answer the question of why Tunisia succeeded, Egypt somewhat failed, and Syria failed entirely. Unlike other studies that separately

address the issues and results of individual countries, this study will analyze three very different nations and the consequences of their revolutions. Tunisia and Egypt are frequently compared because they are often-cited cases in the literature on the Arab Spring, but Syria is often disregarded as a disaster. Many see Syria as a lost cause and consequently ignore the factors that led to Syria being considered a failure. These factors, however, were at play in each country experiencing a revolution and, thus, knowledge of the involvement of these elements in a horrific situation like Syria is important to preventing another. This paper will delve into the components that contributed to Syria's downfall, Egypt's middle ground failure, and Tunisia's success, including the roles of institutions, the military, and Islamism in each country. It will become apparent that the severity of each of these factors is responsible for the current situations occurring in the modern Arab world. In addressing these elements and their contributions toward the very different circumstances currently at play in the Middle East, the diplomatic community can begin a productive discussion on how to facilitate stability in these countries, as well as how to prevent atrocities from happening again.

Revolutions, Institutions, and Democracy

Tariq Ali defines "revolution" as "a transfer of power from one social class (or even a layer) to another that leads to fundamental change."[2] By this definition, failed attempts to overthrow a government are not considered revolutions. As a result, the events of the Arab Spring in Syria constitute a failed attempt at a revolution. This is because Bashar Al-Assad remains in power. Tunisia and Egypt experienced success in forcing their respective governments out of power.

A revolution can be considered a failure when it does not result in the desired change that caused the revolution in the first place. This usually involves the overthrow of a government due to demand for democracy, followed by that government being replaced with a non-democratic regime. In explaining why revolutions often fail, Karl Fitzgerald writes, "Revolutions usually finish in confusion…because, after the smoke and confusion of battle, a hastily patched up government may have given little thought about what comes next."[3] He goes on to prove his point by criticizing the French Revolution of 1789, in which revolutionaries wished to break free from monarchy and end the mass control by the wealthy, land-owning elite. However, not long after the end of the revolution, Napoleon declared himself emperor and the land-owning elite still amassed power. Fitzgerald writes that

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[2] Tariq Ali, "What is a revolution?" *Counterpunch,* September 4, 2013, https://www.counterpunch.org/2013/09/04/what-is-a-revolution/.

[3] Karl Fitzgerald, "Do Revolutions Work?" *Earthsharing*, October 25, 2011.

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the French could have achieved their goals if they addressed land taxation in a formal, planned way. Yet in being so inundated with ideas of being free from the monarchy, the French let themselves revert to the same conditions under which they had suffered before.

Fitzgerald goes on to explain the similar faults in the Russian Revolution. Here, too, revolutionaries wished to depart from economic inequality and severe mistreatment by the government. The spread of communism was thought to be a cure for these problems, but the eventual leadership of Joseph Stalin only resulted in "massive assassinations and failed economic plans cost[ing] something like thirty million lives."[4] In the cases of both France and Russia, the goals of their respective revolutions were never achieved; rather, each country ended up in a condition similar to, or worse than, how they began.

In *Do Revolutions Create Good Governments?* Eli Rosenberg seconds Fitzgerald's sentiments. Revolutions, "don't always lead to favorable…outcomes," writes; "In fact, there's a long and varied history of revolutions in the world producing leaders equally if not more repressive than those they deposed."[5] Rosenberg references several failed revolutions, including that of Fidel Castro's Cuba and Mao Zedong's China. Both regimes began as communist revolutions and resulted in severe human rights abuses. In the former case, Castro imprisoned political opponents and censored the Cuban media. In the latter, Zedong established a method of land reform that consisted of beating wealthier peasants to death and giving their land to the less wealthy. Through this, the squashing of rebellions, creation of labor camps, famine, and other methods, Zedong is thought to have killed more people than Adolf Hitler. Indeed, according to researchers at Princeton University, Zedong is believed to have caused between forty and eighty million deaths.[6] Both Castro and Zedong, however, began their rule as revolutionaries with promises of ending inequality. In both cases, the institutions put in place and run by these individuals, including but not limited to the secret police and the military, caused more harm than good to their respective nations.

In an interview with National Public Radio in February of 2011, Simon Schauma of Columbia University affirms the idea put forth that revolutions pose the risk of failing and leaving a nation in worse condition than before. He states, "If you don't redirect and harness all that popular energy strategically against the institutions of power, you end up, actually, sitting in your own prison…you become a kind of museum of failed revolutionary energy."[7] Schauma confirms the idea put forth by

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Eli Rosenberg, "Do Revolutions Create Good Governments?" *The Atlantic*, January 28, 2011.
[6] Valerie Strauss, "How Many Died?" *Washington Post*, July 17, 1994.
[7] Neal Conan, "The Elements of a Successful Revolution," NPR, February 07, 2011.

Fitzgerald and Rosenberg: a successful revolution requires meticulous planning. If this effort is not exerted, it is clear that revolutionaries run the risk of not only failing to affect the desired change, but also the risk of permanently damaging the nation they vowed to fix.

In the Libyan Revolution of the Arab Spring, revolutionaries potentially damaged the country beyond repair after their killing of then-President Muammar Gaddafi. Though transitional programs did exist in the immediate aftermath, revolutionaries were not prepared to deal with the rebuilding of a torn-apart nation. In *A Critical Analysis of the Security Crisis in a Post-Gaddafi Libya,* Olajide Akanji states, "The failure to develop a coherent post-war peace-building and reconstruction agenda has undermined the political process, and the peace, stability and development of the country."[8] In the case of Libya, the revolution seemed successful because a dictator was eliminated and a transitional government was put into place. However, the revolutionaries' failure to recognize the necessity of rebuilding a peaceful Libya after a civil war has caused the future of Libya to be less than ideal.

In the cases of post-conflict Cuba, China, and Libya, democracy struggles to survive in nations built on the oppression of their people. Some countries like these claim to have implemented democratic procedures, but the truth is often otherwise. As a result, democratic nations must find a way to measure whether democracy is truly being implemented. In *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century,* Samuel Huntington states that he supports what he calls a two-turnover test, meaning that a country must have had two peaceful transitions of power to be considered a true democracy.[9] While transitions are different from revolutions, their success in a revolutionary country can help measure whether a revolution in the name of democracy was successful. If there has been a revolution for democracy in any given country, according to Huntington, that revolution would be successful if the country subsequently passes the two-turnover test. If the country fails to pass this test, the revolution failed to instate a democratic process. Tunisia is the only nation that faced protests during the Arab Spring to have passed this test.

Islamism

In analyzing countries that have passed this two-turnover test, Huntington questions whether democracy can exist in non-Western cultures, stating that democracy has its base in the West and that it is relatively new to other cultures. In understanding Huntington's position on culture having a role in whether democracy can take root

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[8] Olajide Akanji, "A Critical Analysis of the Security Crisis in a Post-Gaddafi Libya," *Africa Insight* (2015): 2.

[9] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

anywhere, one must also understand the Western-culture thesis put forth by George Kennan: "Democracy, in short, is appropriate only for northwestern and perhaps central European countries and their settler-colony offshoots."[10] In defending this thesis, Huntington puts forth that certain cultures are hostile to democracy, with the most notable being Islamic. He tells that, though principles in Islam like egalitarianism and individualism are congruent with democracy, Islam: "rejects any distinction between the religious community and the political community…Fundamentalism Islam demands that…[Islamic scholars] have a 'decisive vote in articulating…all governmental policy.'"[11] According to Huntington, Islam's demand of precedence directly contradicts the rules of democracy. It is for this reason that so many Muslim countries have had issues forming and keeping a democracy. This does not, however, mean that revolutions and democracy cannot work in any majority Muslim nation. Rather, it means that a country determined to form a democracy must give up any theocratic elements. Citizens of a democratic nation can follow whatever religion they wish, but the government and law cannot be inherently religious.

In understanding the difficulty in merging Western life, democracy, and Islam in today's society, many are attempting to form boundaries between Islam as a religion and Islam as an ideology. Islam as an ideology would refer to its political uses, as well as its current use in terrorism. In *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam*, writers Abbas Barzegar and Richard Martin put forth that the terms "Islam" and "Islamism" should be used to describe different ideas. While Islam would describe the religion, Islamism would be "defined broadly to include, without being limited to, the possible use of force," Donald Emmerson argues.[12] The writers are attempting to portray Islam and extremist Islam as two different things, one being a religion and the other being an ideology. In doing so, they are contradicting Huntington's view that Islam and democracy cannot coexist. Here, two different Islamic schools of thought are brought into consideration, with one being accepting of democracy and the other not. This is because Islam itself has no objection to democracy. However, when Islam is made political, extremist leaders often use fear to force a population into following a politically motivated agenda. This idea is present in places like Saudi Arabia, where the presence of a theocracy and religious police force allow for the government to oppress women through forced veiling and the need to be accompanied.

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[10] Ibid, 23.

[11] Ibid., 28.

[12] Donald K. Emmerson, "Inclusive Islamism: The Utility of Diversity," Abbas Barzegar, *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 26.

Though Huntington does put forth that it seems as if Islam and democracy cannot function together, he does reference countries that were almost successful at allowing the two to coexist, like Turkey and Lebanon. These nations, through attempts to limit the involvement of religion in government, were close to having both Islam and democracy present. Despite this, democracy in both countries eventually gave way to military coups or the rise of extremist organizations. Through these examples, when compared to unsuccessfully democratic nations like Pakistan, it is clear that certain levels of Islam are more compatible with democracy than others. Those present in Turkey and Lebanon, for example, have a better chance of creating a hospitable environment for democracy than those existing in Pakistan. In understanding what creates these different schools of Islamic thought, it is necessary to examine the prominence of Islam in the political system.

In understanding Islam's power in any given country, one must examine the different types of Islamic movements. *The World Almanac of Islamism* describes three different kinds of Islamic political movements: moderate movements, Salafi movements, and militant jihadism.[13] The first refers to movements with Islamic values that can blend in with a democratic society, while the second refers to movements that have the goal of forming a Caliphate, but only through education and nonviolence. While the first has room for the Western world, the second hopes to change the Western world or find a place in which Muslims can practice without the influence of the West. Militant jihadism, the extreme form, however, recommends the use of force to spread the message of Islam. These groups detest the existence of the Western world and often exist in the form of terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. Different types of Islamism and Islamic political movements allow for varying levels of acceptance of democracy and revolutionary ideals and, thus, have an effect on whether or not phenomena like the Arab Spring would be successful.

Role of the Military

In addition to institutions and religion, it is important to understand the role of the military when assessing the success of a revolution. Because many revolutions are stopped by force from the government, the military often has a large role in the outcome of revolutionary protest. In an interview with National Public Radio in February 2011, Neal Conan stated, "The idea that we in the United States have, that the purposes of armies are to fight and win wars, is not necessarily true in much of the world, where the purposes of armies are to keep the regime in power."[14] The idea

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[13] American Foreign Policy Council, *The World Almanac of Islamism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).
[14] Conan.

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of the military in developing countries having much more power over citizens has a tremendous effect on the outcome of a revolution because when a dictator has an entire army on his side, he likely has access to more weapons and more people than revolutionaries do.

In *The Role of Armed Forces in the Arab Uprisings,* Derek Lutterbeck explains that nearly all Arab countries have military-based regimes. He goes on to say, however, that the role of each of these militaries varies significantly from one country to the next. The fact that most militaries are automatically on the side of the regime immediately makes any attempt at a revolution that much more difficult because, if need be, revolutionaries must now create an army large enough and skilled enough to fight a trained one. Lutterbeck writes, "While all Arab regimes facing challenges from pro-democracy movements have called upon their militaries to confront these popular uprisings, the armed forces have responded quite differently across the region, ranging from openness to, and even support for, protest movements to internal fracturing or firm support for the regime in power."[15] The importance of the military's position is crucial, as the military can often end an uprising in minutes if it is on the side of the government. On the other hand, if the military sides with the protesters, they can become seemingly invincible.

The importance of the military in revolutions is not unique to the Arab Spring. In *The French Revolution and the Role of Napoleon Bonaparte*, writer Haroun Alfarsi states that the revolution began as a coup d'état.[16] The military's decision to overthrow the government had much to do with the revolution actually taking leaders out of power. Had Napoleon not been commander in the army, he would likely not have had the power to truly cause change in France. His access to the military allowed for him to direct the revolution in any way he wished. The same success of ousting a leader using the military can be said of the Russian Revolution. On their own, citizens would not have had the power or the numbers to overthrow an entire regime and its army. Once a leader loses armed support, he or she often begins to lose the fight against revolutionaries as a whole. In analyzing the role of military forces in the Arab Spring, it will become clear that how the military was involved played a large role in whether the revolution turned into a massacre or a success story.

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[15] Derek Lutterbeck, "The Role of Armed Forces in the Arab Uprisings," *Arab Uprisings and Armed Forces: Between Openness and Resistance,* Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (2011), 5.

[16] Haroun Alfarsi, "The French Revolution and the Role of Napoleon Bonaparte," *Version Daily*, August 06, 2016; accessed March 1, 2018, http://www.versiondaily.com/french-revolution-and-the-role-of-napoleon-bonaparte/

Findings

Tunisia. Tunisia achieved independence from France in 1956 and was declared a republic and succumbed to a military coup over thirty years later. Following the constitution, this coup made prime minister Zine El Abidine Ben Ali the president of the nation. Ben Ali's Tunisia was characterized by high unemployment, severe corruption, and repression of protests against the president. On December 17, 2010, a twenty-six-year old street vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi, lit himself on fire in protest of the corrupt government. When his fruit cart was confiscated by a female municipal officer, which had happened in the past, Bouazizi was unable to pay a bribe to keep the cart. Fuming, he went to the governor's office demanding his scales back and, when denied entrance, poured gasoline over himself and questioned, "How do you expect me to make a living?"[17] Bouazizi then dropped a match on himself, effectively starting a revolution.

Though Mohammed Bouazizi would not die until January 4, 2011, civil protests against the Ben Ali regime began shortly after the self-immolation. This reaction was not only in response to the suicide of the young vendor; it is widely perceived as a delayed reaction to WikiLeaks' publishing of several confidential documents depicting corruption and repression of citizens by Ben Ali's regime. The release's summary states, "The economic impact is clear, with Tunisian investors—fearing the long-arm of 'the [Ben Ali] Family'—forgoing new investments, keeping domestic investment rates low and unemployment high."[18] It continues, "Seemingly half of the Tunisian business community can claim a Ben Ali connection through marriage, and many of these relations are reported to have made the most of their lineage."[19] The Tunisian government soon blocked this release, as its citizens were always subjected to harsh censorship. However, the leak's impact remained known worldwide, as well as by many Tunisian citizens, and was published in European, American, and Arab newspapers. The summary concludes with, "The lack of transparency and accountability that characterize Tunisia's political system similarly plague the economy, damaging the investment climate and fueling a culture of corruption."[20] When Mohammed Bouazizi lit himself on fire, it was in response to both unemployment in the region and government corruption. Combined with the revelation of corruption in the country, the death of the young man was able to ignite a reaction in many Tunisian people.

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[17] Rania Abouzeid, "Mohammed Bouazizi: The Man Who Set Himself and Tunisia On Fire," *Time*. January 21, 2011.
[18] WikiLeaks, Refs G, H. https://wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/06/08TUNIS679.html
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

In the month following Bouazizi's death, protests over inflation, unemployment, and corruption spread throughout the nation. Nineteen percent of the Tunisian workforce was unemployed in 2011.[21] While some protests remained peaceful, all were met with attempts to break up the groups. On January 14, 2011, as protests continued, Ben Ali dissolved his government and declared a state of emergency. He later fled the country, ultimately arriving in Saudi Arabia. Parliamentary speaker Fouad Mebazaa was found to be the heir to the presidency and was given sixty days to organize elections. Even after the transition of power, protests continued, calling for the banning of Ben Ali's political party and the ousting of the transitional government put into place by his successors. The government eventually gave into these demands and, in October 2011, free elections were held in Tunisia. Former dissident and well-regarded human rights activist Moncef Marzouki being elected to the presidency marked the end of Ben Ali's hold on the nation. Today, Tunisia passes the "two-turnover test" for fledgling democracies put forth by Huntington, meaning that the country can be seen as a consolidated democracy due to its having had two peaceful transitions of power. The nation passed this test in October of 2014. Today, Tunisia is widely recognized as the only functioning Islamic democracy in the Middle East, as well as the only success of the Arab Spring.

In understanding that many revolutions of the Arab Spring resulted in dismal failures, Tunisia's success is very often questioned. In analyzing the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria, however, it is very clear that the roles of governmental institutions, Islamism, and the military are directly responsible for the countries' respective successes and failures. In the case of Tunisia, the government stepped down when it saw extreme uprisings. While its labor union worked to help both sides, its Islamist parties remain far from fundamentalist, and its military took a noble approach to the demonstrations. It is for these reasons that Tunisia remains the only success of the Arab Spring.

Egypt. The Egyptian revolution began on January 25, 2011. Protestors took to the streets to protest the rule of president Hosni Mubarak, demanding that he be taken out of power. Protestors from all walks of life all over Egypt were protesting the economic turmoil and lack of political freedoms in the country. This culminated in the form of demonstrations, marches, strikes, civil disobedience, and occupations. Youth groups online organized many of these events, which quickly drew thousands of attendees.

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[21] Trading Economics, "Tunisian Unemployment Rate 2005-2018," https://tradingeconomics.com/tunisia/unemployment-rate

The rule of Mubarak began in 1981, when his predecessor was assassinated. His party maintained a one-party rule by implementing a continual state of emergency. Law under this state of emergency extended police powers, limits non-governmental activity, suspends constitutional rights, and permits several other human rights violations. Despite criticism, Mubarak asserted that this state of emergency was necessary to keep groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, which he labeled a terrorist group, suppressed. By warning against terrorism, Mubarak successfully prevented parliamentary elections from taking place, thus making any rule change nearly impossible. Had Mubarak stayed in power, his son would have inherited his rule.

Police brutality, including torture, was commonplace in Egypt. In the name of preventing terrorism, many activists were wrongfully imprisoned and left without the right to object to such imprisonment. In addition to the violation of rights and wrongful continuation of power, Egypt was plagued with widespread corruption throughout the rule of Mubarak. Many powerful businessmen were appointed to powerful government positions in exchange for their support. In late 2010, nearly forty percent of Egyptians lived on less than two United States dollars per day.[22] Unemployment in the nation was rampant, and most Egyptians felt failed by the government.

Following a call to action on social media, thousands of people arrived in major cities across Egypt on January 25, 2011. This continued for weeks while Mubarak maintained his position that he would not resign. Military presence in many cities was increased, while curfews were imposed and ignored. On February 10th, 2011, Mubarak announced that he would delegate some of his powers to his vice president, asserting that he would remain the head of state. The next day, the vice president announced Mubarak's resignation, leaving the rule of the country in the hands of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Elections were eventually held, with the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi being named president.

Within a year of Mohamed Morsi's inauguration, protests against him began as well, due to his extremist Islamic views and his wish to usurp all power. He attempted to pass legislation that would allow him unlimited powers. Protests continued until his overthrow in 2013. Reeling from many issues, Egypt today remains unstable. Whether or not any of the actual goals of the revolution have been met is debatable. Fareed Zakaria states, "I recently asked a secular, liberal Egyptian from Cairo…whether the current regime feels like a return of the old order. 'Oh no,'

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[22] Gokhan Akcesme, "Economic Motives Behind the 2011 Egyptian Revolution," *Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive* (2014).

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he said, 'This one is far more brutal, repressive, and cynical than Mubarak's.'"[23] Despite the removal of both Mubarak and Morsi, Egypt is still not stable. It is, however, not the most horrific example of a revolution in the Arab Spring.

Egypt's institutions and Islamism allowed the revolution to fail. A rich network of mosques and corrupt businessmen in Egypt allowed for extremist parties to have the resources necessary to broadcast views to the everyday Egyptian. Despite having an authoritarian taken out of power, Egyptians were unable to move forward simply because an Islamist extremist party stepped into rule easily. The sense of Islamism in Egypt portrayed through the Muslim Brotherhood is extremist and came to power by exploiting the views of everyday, non-extremist Egyptians. Despite the failure of the revolution, however, Egypt does not represent the most horrific aftermath of the Arab Spring in the way that countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya do. This is mainly due to the military's role in the revolution. In Egypt, the military took the side of the protestors, thus saving the nation from thousands of civilian deaths.

Syria. Protests began in Damascus, Syria on March 15, 2011 over demands for democracy and the release of political prisoners. Along with inspiration from other Arab Spring protests, this followed the arrest of a thirteen-year-old boy for drawing anti-governmental graffiti.[24] The Syrian government responded to these protests by firing into crowds. For months, protests continued with the government continuing to inflict violence on its own people. In July, several defected military officers announced the formation of the Free Syrian Army, an opposition force with the goal of taking al-Assad out of power.

Despite attempts by the United Nations to facilitate peace in Syria, conflict continued to the level of a full-fledged civil war. Islamist groups, like the Islamic State, soon entered the conflict with the hopes of gaining territory and power. The hold of important areas like the Shaar oil field by Islamist groups led to more and more conflict. As the civil war intensified, other world powers began to contribute to the war. Many Western countries, after knowledge of Assad's use of chemical weapons spread through the United Nations, took the side of rebel groups. Russia and Iran, on the other hand, backed al-Assad. With so many well-equipped world powers on either side of the conflict, violence increased.

At the end of 2017, the Islamic State in Syria was said to have been defeated by Syrian, Russian, and American forces. Despite this, the conflict in Syria continues to escalate. On April 7, 2018, a chemical attack was carried out on the city of

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[23] Fareed Zakaria, "Why Democracy Took Root in Tunisia and Not Egypt," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014.

[24] Kareem Fahim, "A Faceless Teenage Refugee Who Helped Ignite Syria's War," *New York Times*, February 8, 2013.

Douma, killing seventy people and injuring at least five hundred. The Syrian government denied any involvement in this attack. The United Nations Security Council, due to opposing views from Russia and the United States, could not adopt any resolution regarding inquiry into the attack. Following this, the United States, United Kingdom, and France carried out airstrikes against Syrian government targets, mostly thought to be bases for chemical weapons.

The protests in Syria began peacefully with citizens demanding democracy and the release of political prisoners. As the government continued to fight with the protestors, however, these demands eventually changed to the calling for al-Assad to step down. The president refused to do so, forcing the conflict to escalate. Today, many groups are involved in Syria's civil war, which has created an international refugee crisis. The oppressive governmental institutions of Syria, the presence of extremist Islamic groups, and the role of the military in crushing civilian uprisings ensured that the Syrian revolution would not be successful. Rather, these factors forced Syria into a full-fledged civil war.

Institutions

Tunisia. President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali ruled Tunisia while embracing all of the power and luxuries that come with corruption. He attempted to suppress protests, and did so successfully, for many years. The leader wished to continue with this process throughout the 2010-2011 protests, even implying so in a television address on December 28, 2011, in which he put forth that the protests were unacceptable and would be met with the utmost "firmness of the law."[25] Ben Ali wished to crush any opponents and, when it appeared that he could not do so, he tried to discredit them.

Though the leader did denounce the motives of many protestors by deeming them violent, the president did seemingly attempt, or put forth the image that he was attempting, to understand the demands of those uprising. In an attempt to quell the unrest, Ben Ali visited Mohammed Bouazizi in the hospital in late December. The very next day, he removed his communications secretary to replace him with the minister for youth and sport. In the following weeks, the distraught leader promised the creation of 300,000 jobs and an emergency program to "Create jobs and provide 'means of subsistence' for youths that have been out of work for long periods."[26] Though many accuse Ben Ali's promises as a mere façade, his outward willingness to recognize the problems causing the protests was significantly helpful in Tunisia's eventual recognition and solution-building for said problems. This recognition gave

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[25] Bilal Randeree, "Tunisian President Warns Protesters," *Al Jazeera,* January 03, 2011.

[26] "Tunisian President Removes Ministers After Protests," *Al Arabiya,* December 29, 2010.

credit to the protesters and the issues that they wished to address, while also acknowledging the government's role in solving these problems.

The rule of Ben Ali and his party was characterized as being completely corrupted. For this reason, it was not likely that the country could evolve with this ruler or his party in power. The timing of Ben Ali's decision to step down allowed Tunisia to have time to rebuild without massive atrocities. With protests beginning on December 18, 2010 and the president resigning on January 14, 2011, the revolution lasted a total of three weeks and six days. Ben Ali's resignation, though it may have been in vain, ensured that the Tunisian protestors were not simply violently crushed; they received the result that they wanted without facing mass extermination like the protestors in Syria were forced to endure.

Following Ben Ali's ousting, prime minister Mohamed Ghannouchi was briefly president. Courts then decided that parliamentary speaker Fouad Mebazaa was the rightful heir of the position. Both men attempted to establish a transitional government. Protests, however, did not stop, as the Tunisian people wished to have a government free from Ben Ali's party. Under the Tunisian Constitution, Mebazaa was given sixty days to put elections together. With the election of former dissident Moncef Marzouki months later, the reign of Ben Ali's party came to an end.

Governmental forces in Tunisia, particularly those related to Ben Ali, were known as corrupt and oppressive. Despite these traits being prevalent throughout the Arab World, Tunisia remains the only country to successfully escape from these forces and enter democracy. This is because these corrupt leaders, while they briefly did attempt to suppress the rebellion, eventually gave in to the demands of the Tunisian people. Ben Ali saw no way to control his country and left, while Mebazaa simply respected the rules put forth in his constitution. The mild nature of these dictatorial institutions allowed for Tunisia to embrace the revolution and its aftermath.

In addition to somewhat moderate authoritative governments, Tunisians in the time of the revolution had the privilege of having a national trade union center as powerful as the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT). The trade union became part of the National Dialogue Quartet, a group made up of UGTT, The Tunisian Human Rights League, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade, and Handicrafts, and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers. Together, these groups worked to address the national discord that followed the revolution.[27] According to Stanford historian Joel Beinin, the UGTT is "the single most important reason that Tunisia is a democracy today."[28]

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[27] "The Nobel Peace Prize for 2015," Nobelprize.org, October 10, 2015.

[28] Safwan Masri, "Workers and Soldiers: The Role of Institutions in Tunisia's and Egypt's Revolutions," *Modalties of Revolt*, October 24, 2017,

The importance of trade unions in Tunisia can be traced back to the 1920s, which is to thank for Tunisia's robust civil society, another factor to which the nation's success can be attributed.[29] With well over half a million members dispersed throughout the country, UGTT has power and influence over many Tunisian people. With its original goals having to do with employment and the uprising's cry out for job opportunities, it is not surprising that the trade union was involved in the revolution. Mohamed-Salah Omri states, "The fit between the revolution and UGTT was almost natural since the main demands of the rising masses, namely jobs, national dignity, and freedom had been on the agenda of the union all along."[30]

The presence of UGTT helped facilitate the revolution through its being a common factor among Tunisians from different areas of the country. Large protests were held in front of UGTT centers. At these centers, protesters were able to articulate their demands and do so peacefully and with credibility. Without UGTT, it is very likely that the movements following Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation would have never spread as quickly and effectively as they did.

While the trade union was helpful to the revolution itself, it was particularly useful as a mediator in post-revolution disputes. Most politicians trusted UGTT to have such a job and also respected its ability to voice its opinion while doing so. Omri writes, "UGTT's role was crucial in the framing debate, steering decision-making in the chaotic period, starting the Council for the Protection of the Revolution, and serving as a meeting place of all the parties at a time when parties were either small, insignificant politically, or formed recently."[31] Following the mediations, the civil society made up of members of UGTT worked to piece the country back together. When Ben Ali left a power vacuum in Tunisia, the trade union was able to step in and turn a chaotic revolution into a democratic transition. Without the role of UGTT in the revolution, the rebel cause would have had trouble both articulating itself and reaching different areas, while new parties would have struggled to make themselves known. This could have left a void to be filled with extremists were it not for the civil society that took hold of the nation. Without the UGTT, Tunisia may have never ended up being the only success of the Arab Spring.

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http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/uprising1313/safwan-masri-workers-and-soldiers-the-role-of-institutions-in-tunisias-and-egypts-revolutions/

[29] Ibid.

[30] Mohamed-Salah Omri, "No Ordinary Trade Union: The Role of UGTT in the Tunisian Path to Revolution and Transition," http://www.academia.edu/19291239/No_Ordinary_Union_The_role_of_UGTT_in_the_Tunisian_path_to_revolution_and_transition

[31] Ibid., 23.

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Egypt. While Tunisia could thank its major trade union and the civil society formed by it for help throughout the revolution, Egypt could not do the same. Economic grievances and workers' demands played just as important a role in Egypt's revolution as they did in Tunisia, but workers in Egypt were not given a network in which to voice their concerns. The Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) had previously been rendered "politically impotent" by the Mubarak regime and, thus, had only supported one strike through decades of protest.[32] Both before and during the revolution, Egyptians saw the union as corrupt and as a symbol of the regime. The union was seen as a tool for corrupt political control. For this reason, ETUF had no place in the demand for democracy and equality.

While protestors in Egypt were being worked against by their very own trade unions, they were also being targeted by the State Security Investigations Service (SSIS), an internal security agency. Prior to and throughout the revolution, the agency was protested against for their role in the torture, kidnapping, and murder of anyone that questioned the government. At one point, protestors broke into the SSIS headquarters and attempted to steal documents with information that they believed to contain evidence of the crimes committed by the agency.[33] As protestors continued to defy the agency, they also continued to disappear. By March 2011, the SSIS was blamed for over 1,200 disappearances.[34] The role of the SSIS did prevent the Egyptian Revolution from being very successful, as it ensured that many protestors of the regime would disappear, creating fear among all Egyptian people.

Syria. When protests became too much for the Tunisian and Egyptian presidents to handle, they chose to step down. This did not, however, occur in Syria. Bashar al-Assad, despite calls for him to resign from his own people and from several other world powers, remains the president of Syria. This is representative of the corruption, addiction to power, and overall pride not only of the president, but in Syria's political institutions as a whole. The failure of Syria's political institutions to enforce accountability and protect the people of Syria is a major cause of the escalated situation currently happening there.

Freedom House rates Syria's electoral process as zero out of twelve, meaning that there is no legitimacy to the process electing officials to power.[35] Despite the

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[32] Safwan Masri, "Workers and Soldiers: The Role of Institutions in Tunisia's and Egypt's Revolutions," *Modalties of Revolt*, October 24, 2017.

[33] Carlstrom, Gregg. "A Step Toward Prosecutions?" *Al Jazeera.* March 06, 2011. l

[34] El Sirgany, Sarah. "Unknown Fates for Hundreds of Egyptians Missing Since Revolution." *CNN.* October 10, 2012.

[35] "Syria," Freedom House, 2017; https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/syria. Freedom House bases its ratings on how well any given nation complies with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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ongoing civil war, elections were held in Syria in 2012, with Assad having an opponent for the first time. Syria claimed having nearly seventy-five percent voter turnout, with the president receiving nearly ninety-percent of the votes.[36] Much of the Western world viewed this election as a farce, considering more than a fifth of the voting population is thought to have been displaced due to the civil war.

There are several other governmental institutions, other than electoral processes, that lack accountability, fairness, and transparency. This is especially true of the police force and prison systems of Syria. Even before the armed conflict began in 2011, any person attempting to question the legitimacy of the government could face imprisonment or death.[37] A main reason for the initial protests was the people's demand for the release of political prisoners. Many resolved to take to the streets after the arrest of a young boy for drawing anti-government graffiti.

Syria's electoral processes and other governmental institutions were created in a way that allowed the government to amass and abuse power with little to no consequence. If Syria had more effective political institutions put in place, like regulated free and fair elections, corruption like that of al-Assad would not have been spread so easily with no accountability. The lack of balance in the Syrian government allowed for a dictatorship to take hold.

The institution of sect in Syria has also contributed to conflict in the nation, almost ensuring clashes. The religion of Islam has two main sects: Sunni and Shia. Followers of each type disagree over the caliph that is said to be the successor of Prophet Muhammad.[38] Though this conflict has existed for centuries, it remains the cause of many violent clashes, including attacks by Sunni Islamist groups like the Islamic State on Shia Muslims. Alawites are considered a sect within the Shia sect.

Conflict between the Syrian population and the government over religion began in 1973, when Bashar al-Assad's father and predecessor, an Alawite, put forth in a new constitution that the president of Syria does not necessarily have to be a Muslim.[39] This caused nationwide outrage, but especially infuriated Sunni terrorist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite a series of armed revolts, the government survived. Today, al-Assad, also an Alawite, claims that his government is secular but takes a firm stance against Sunni Muslims, due to factions like the Muslim Brotherhood. Sunni Muslims make up nearly three-quarters of Syria's population, making Assad's favoritism for other sects incredibly ostracizing for a very large percentage of the population. Despite Alawites making up less than ten percent of Syria's population, Assad's supposedly secular government has favored them. This

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] John Harney. "How Do Sunni and Shia Islam Differ?" *The New York Times*, January 3, 2016.
[39] Ibid.

minority was once ostracized by Sunni Muslims, making the majority of the population incredibly frustrated by Assad's preferential treatment, which includes the appointment of Assad-supporting Alawites to military officer and other governmental positions.[40] The anger and disenfranchisement of Sunni Muslims over the minority-ruled government has led many to attempt to overthrow the government through rebel forces, including extremist groups like the Islamic State. This sectarian conflict has greatly contributed to the start of the Syrian Civil War. It has also led to Shia countries like Iran being involved on the side of the government. The institution of sect in Syria has not only ensured conflict; it has allowed for many different factions to become involved in the war.

Islamism

Tunisia. In Tunisia, as it is with much of the Arab world, Islam is a deciding factor when it comes to laws, the government, and human rights. People often blame the theocratic nature of Saudi Arabia's government for its frequent human rights violations. It is not surprising that Islam is a topic of conversation when questioning why Tunisia remains a moderate success. According to Fareed Zakaria, the question of why Tunisia succeeded while Egypt failed is a simple one. He states, "The most common [answer] is that Tunisia's Islamists were just better than Egypt's."[41]

The main Islamist political party in Tunisia is Ennahda, a movement originally inspired by the Iranian Revolution and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Zakaria goes on to tell why Ennahda is one of the most modern Islamist parties in the world, stating, "Ennahda has not tried to institute sharia, has declared its respect for Tunisia's progressive laws on women's rights, and voluntarily ceded power this year to a technocratic, national unity government when faced with popular protests."[42] The willingness of this political party to participate in democracy has made it much different than its Egyptian counterpart, as Ennahda is a political party that can function in a human rights-conscious democracy, while the Muslim Brotherhood is unable to do so.

Though Ennahda has existed since 1981, its modern connotation refers to its involvement in the 2011 revolution. In the wake of the revolution, leaders of the party were seen attempting to find a place in the new country by meeting with prime ministers and taking part in demonstrations. At this time, the party urged Tunisians that it did not intend on making Tunisia a theocracy. Rather, it wanted to join in its

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[40] Fabrice Balanche, *Sectarianism in Syria's Civil War*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018.

[41] Fareed Zakaria, "Why Democracy Took Root in Tunisia and Not Egypt," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014.

[42] Ibid.

new democracy. In addressing the fears of many Tunisians, spokesman Samir Dilou stated: "Our party is not a religious party. We are a modern party against the background of an Islamic worldview…We do not want a theocracy. We want a democratic state shaped by the idea of freedom, and people should decide for themselves how to live."[43] From the beginning of Ennahda's involvement in the aftermath of the Tunisian revolution, it declared itself less authoritarian than any other Islamist party in the Arab world. Because of this, it was able to acquire support among many Tunisians who had rebelled in the name of seeking a free and fair government.

Many authoritarian Islamist parties will often make promises of democracy and then abandon those ideas when they come to power. Ennahda was elected due to its platform, but did not let go of its principles after this. When the government run by Ennahda officials was criticized due to poor economic performance and lack of control among fundamental Islamist groups, it agreed to step down in favor of a technocratic government that would help to facilitate free and fair elections, as well as draft a new constitution. Ennahda's willingness to step aside was unprecedented for Islamist parties in the Arab world, as much of them often refuse to do so and respond with violence. This commitment to democracy shows that the party is truly the most modern Islamist party to have any place in the Arab Spring. If the leaders of Ennahda did not possess the humility necessary to let the people dictate their own government, Tunisia could have faced yet another major conflict.

The commitment of Ennahda and its supporters to democratic principles was further demonstrated when the party did not put forward or endorse any candidate in the November 2014 presidential election. Because of this party's willingness to accept defeat and, thus, its commitment to the people of Tunisia, the nation has successfully completed free and fair elections *with* the involvement of an Islamist party. In many nations in the Arab world, religious parties and fair elections simply cannot coexist due to the hunger for power possessed by most religious leaders. In the case of Ennahda, Tunisia was able to move past a potential major conflict thanks to the party's willingness to do what was best for the country.

Egypt. The rich network of mosques and Islamic associations in Egypt made it incredibly easy for parties like the Muslim Brotherhood to reach the everyday Egyptian through advertisements, demonstrations, and other means. In *Counting Islam*, Tarek Masoud states, "Islamists were able to defeat secular parties…because they could piggyback on the country's rich Islamic…to reach everyday citizens.

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[43] Larbi Sadiki, "Why Is Tunisia's Ennahda Ditching Political Islam?" *Al Jazeera*, May 24, 2016.

Secular parties [couldn't]…so they turned to the army."[44] Islamist propaganda in Egypt supported the election of an extremist authoritarian just after the ousting of another authoritarian. The lack of resources for secular parties left them disenfranchised and pushed these parties to overthrow their Islamic counterparts with the help of the military.

Similar to the case of Tunisia, the Islamist party won the first election after the revolution. However, the Muslim Brotherhood was not comparable to Tunisia's Ennahda. While the latter supported secularism, democracy, and the wishes of the Tunisian people, the former switched its views as soon as it came to power. President Morsi almost immediately became more authoritative than Mubarak had been. The Muslim Brotherhood had been looking to come into power for decades and was able to do so when Mubarak left a power vacuum in Egypt. The presence of political Islam in the nation doomed Egypt from the start, as this politically motivated, wide-reaching organization was given nearly unlimited access to all resources necessary to run a campaign and become elected. Had more moderate parties, like Tunisia's Ennahda, had the capabilities that their extremist counterparts possessed, it is likely that an extremist would have never been elected, thus leaving room for a moderate party like Ennahda.

Syria. Islamism also had a large role in Syria's unrest. Islamists remain on several sides of the conflict, including that of the Islamic State and the rebel groups. A Syrian faction of the Muslim Brotherhood has asserted itself in the fight against al-Assad.[45] Despite its claim to not have a very large amount of influence in the fight, the faction is said to have control of at least one quarter of the Free Syrian Army through its funding.[46] This does allow for the Brotherhood to have a considerable amount of say in the actions of the militia. However, spokesmen for the group have said that they do not plan on undermining democracy, nor do they wish to play a large role in the future of Syrian government.[47]

On the other side of the spectrum remain Islamist groups like the Islamic State that hope to utilize a power vacuum left in Syria to institute an Islamic caliphate. The al-Nusra Front, a faction of Syrian rebels, has the same goal of creating a caliphate for Sunni Muslims. Together, The Islamic State and the al-Nusra Front have claimed hundreds of terrorist attacks. The involvement of these extremist groups has considerably added to the violence and death toll of Syria. The presence of these

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[44] Tarek Masoud, *Counting Islam* (April 28, 2014).

[45] Liz Sly, "Syria's Muslim Brotherhood is Gaining Influence Over Anti-Assad Revolt," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2012.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

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groups has also led many world powers, like Russia, to support Bashar al-Assad despite his alleged human rights violations. This is because it is believed that if Assad is taken out of power, Islamist groups will take advantage of the situation to form a caliphate in Syria.

Islamism has added a great deal of influence to the situation in Syria. While some groups have used it merely politically, others have used it violently. If the diplomatic community is to address the situation in Syria, it will have to understand the ideological factors motivating several of the groups involved.

The Role of the Military

Tunisia. In many cases of revolution, the military plays an important role in the success or failure of the existing government. In most nations, the military is controlled entirely by the head of government and, thus, can often act against civilians when given orders to do so. In Tunisia, the military played a drastic role in the success of the Tunisian people, as it rejected orders to attack civilian protest and instead protected the revolution. Had the Tunisian military used force against protestors, it is likely that the revolution would have never progressed to the exile of the former president.

During and even before president Ben Ali, the military's role was a modest one; it did not make political decisions and was even banned from joining the ruling political party. The military had never attempted a coup, something that is quite common in many North African countries, and mainly focused on border defense. According to Zoltan Barany in *Comparing the Arab Revolts: The Role of the Military*: "Ben Ali's Tunisia was a police state. As in many other sultanistic regimes, it was a place where the regular military found itself overshadowed by far larger, more amply funded, and more politically influential security agencies run by the Interior Ministry."[48] In order to keep the military generally happy, Ben Ali sent several of his military officers to the United States for training. There, many were exposed to the standards of civil-military relations in a democracy like the United States. By the time of the Arab Spring, the military had little to no stake in the government and, thus, had no reason to go against civilians in favor of the regime.

The independence of the military was portrayed when protests against President Ben Ali became too much for the Presidential Guard and his gangs to handle, the leader ordered General Rachid Ammar, the army chief of staff, to deploy troops "in support of the regime's security detachments."[49] General Ammar refused

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[48] Zoltan Barany, "Comparing the Arab Revolts: The Role of the Military," *Journal of Democracy*, October 2011.
[49] Ibid., 31.

this order and soon placed his troops in between governmental forces and protesting civilians, effectively saving the Tunisian revolution. The army's refusing to fire upon protestors directly contributed to the success of the Tunisian revolution. Had the army taken the side of Ben Ali, it, along with the nation's other security forces, would have violently crushed protestors and perhaps crushed the entire revolution. Without the support of the military, democracy in Tunisia would not have been possible.

Egypt. In analyzing the role of institutions and Islamism in the Egyptian Revolution, it seems unclear why the country did not end up in as abysmal a situation as Syria. This idea, however, becomes clear when one looks at the role of the military throughout the revolution. Though the military did not explicitly side with protestors the way that of Tunisia did, it did not side with the regime either. The military did not play an active role in the beginning of the revolution. Rather, it opted out of firing at protesters and stopping them from filling Tahrir Square. However, when Mubarak unleashed extensive violence on protestors on February 2, the regime lost all credibility and soldiers quickly took the side of the protesters.

The siding of the military with the protesters can be blamed on several factors, including the extensive reliance by the regime on police forces and the fact that Egypt's conscripted military was so involved with society that many soldiers would have likely refused to fire upon protesters.[50] Similar to the Tunisian military, their Egyptian counterpart did not find itself incredibly loyal to the regime, nor did it find it just to fire on civilians. The refusal of the military to give in to the demands of Mubarak saved countless civilian lives. This, along with the allowing of protesters to enter prominent spaces like Tahrir Square, ensured that the protests and revolution would live on. Were it not for the military's decision to not side with the regime, Mubarak could have easily squashed any uprising, ensuring that democracy would never come to Egypt. Despite the amicable nature of the military, however, the Egyptian Revolution still faced problems elsewhere and, thus, would not live to be as successful as its Tunisian counterpart.

Syria. The military has played a considerably important role in the current situation of Syria. While the military in Tunisia and Egypt refused to fire upon protesters, that of Syria did and continues to inflict violence upon civilians. The Syrian military has acted as a police force for the president and has "cracked down on the popular uprising, without a splintering of the armed forces."[51] Rather than out of devotion to the president, many defectors of the Syrian military have cited fear as a reason that

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[50] Barany.
[51] Lutterbeck, 45.

troops choose to obey orders and fire at civilians, stating "soldiers who refused to shoot protesters were themselves executed by their superiors."[52] Through the use of fear, the Syrian government has formed a grip on its military, ensuring that the trained group stays on the side of the president.

In addition to fear tactics, much of the military chooses to stay on the side of Assad because both he and the military are made up of Alawites, a sect of Shia Muslims.[53] Most protesters, however, are Sunni Muslims. The tension between sects, no matter how miniscule, has been a contributing factor in the military's decision to side with the government. The Syrian government's position as a ruling minority ensures that leaders like Assad are fearful of losing power, for they understand that if they do lose power, they will be punished for their actions. This is reminiscent of point put forth by international relations theorist Reinhold Niebuhr that states that political life will constantly swing between tyranny and anarchy.[54] According to this theory, those who come to power are so afraid of the anarchy that will follow a revolution that they must cling to power as long as they can. This has ensured that Assad and the minority military will fight the attempted revolution as hard as they can, or else face retribution.

In addition to the military's role in dismantling a revolution in Syria, defectors of the Syrian military have also played a large part in ensuring that conflict continues to escalate. Defectors from the Syrian military founded the Free Syrian Army, one of the main rebel groups in the nation. The Free Syrian Army has made large contributions to the fights against both Islamist parties and the Syrian government. This force, however, may not have been founded if it were not for those who decided to leave the Syrian military and work against it.

The military's decision to side with Bashar al-Assad and inflict violence upon protesters has, without a doubt, made the Syrian protests among the most deadly of the Arab Spring. If it were not for this decision, Assad may have stepped down in the same way the presidents of Tunisia and Egypt did. However, those who did defect from the military are the ones that continue to battle the Syrian regime over the rights of the Syrian people. The military, its decisions, and its defectors have all played an incredibly important role in leading Syria to its civil war.

Conclusion

Through the case studies of Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria, it is apparent that the factors contributing to the success or failure of their respective revolutions boil down to three

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[52] Ibid., 48.
[53] Zoltan.
[54] David Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge: 2012).

elements: institutional disposition, the presence of Islamism, and the role of the military. Tunisia's robust civil society, its moderate Islamists, and its depoliticized, autocratic military all helped to form the nation's democracy as the only successful result of the Arab Spring. Egypt, however, was saved from catastrophe only by the military's conscious decision to stand with protesters. In the case of Syria, however, institutional corruption, extremist Islamists, and an oppressive military with strong allegiance to the Assad regime have contributed to the nation becoming a war zone.

If the diplomatic community is to address the failing nature of states like Syria, it must not only understand why Syria failed; it must examine the factors that led countries like Tunisia to success. In understanding the factors resulting in the successes and failure of the Arab Spring, the international community can learn more about the causes, effects, and factors of the modern revolution. By understanding these factors, the diplomatic community can attempt to prevent situations like Syria from occurring again through international policy enforcement regarding oppressive governments and military systems. Similarly, when a revolution is taking place, the international community can attempt to facilitate actions like those that were taken in Tunisia, including the involvement of institutions like trade unions and the government's acknowledgement of issues and willingness to listen.

Due to the failing nature of many countries in the Arab world following the Arab Spring, it is not likely that the fight for democracy in the Middle East is over. Protests, attempted revolutions, and oppressive government involvement are likely to occur again. With the knowledge of what causes successes like Tunisia and failures like Syria, the diplomatic community can begin to learn how to react swiftly and strategically.