**Death Knell for Democracy?: Civil-Military Relations in 2013 Egypt and 1991 Algeria**

The July 2013 coup that ousted Egyptian President Mohamad Morsi should not come as a surprise.  In fact, the Arab Spring highlighted the endurance of authoritarianism in the Middle East.  Through a comparative examination of the relationship between the military, Islamists, and politicians in Egypt in 2013 and in Algeria in 1991, we ask: What will democratization look like in a post-Arab Spring Middle East?

Both Egypt and Algeria are excellent case studies to examine the interplay between the military, politicians and society. This relationship is one of continued conflict, so to help identify the necessary factors for democratic consolidation, one can use the civil-military relations literature to best delineate what conflict and cooperation will look like in a post-Arab Spring Middle East. Democracy in the Middle East will not occur rapidly; in fact, the military in both Egypt and Algeria have ensured a transition that respects the status-quo instead of liberalization.

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**WORKING DRAFT**

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*Nationalism, that magnificent song that made the people rise against their oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day that independence is proclaimed. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a program. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness—Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth* (1963, p. 203)

*Above all, military role expansion and military coups are politically driven processes; by the same token, the achievement of civilian supremacy over the military must be politically led. Military establishments do not seize power from successful and legitimate civilian regimes. They intervene in politics…when civilian politicians are weak and divided, and when their divisions and manifest failures of governance have generated a vacuum of authority—Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (1996, xxix).

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On July 1, 2013, Egyptian President Mohamad Morsi was given 48 hours to resign after months of violence engulfed Egypt. The coup by Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was the culmination of a year of conflict between the Egyptian military and the Muslim Brotherhood and its political party—the Freedom and Justice Party. Conflict between the military and politicians effectively began after the momentous events of January 2011. The Egyptian military formed an institution, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), to guide Egypt’s transition to democracy; however, once the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) won and Morsi took office, Morsi appointed MB loyalists and replaced the head of the SCAF Field Marshal Mohammed Tantawi with a pious Muslim general whom Morsi felt would assist in Morsi’s Islamist agenda for Egypt.

As protests increased throughout the country and Morsi excluded his political opponents, the Egyptian military, as defender of Egyptian nationalism, stepped in. With Al-Sisi’s recent announcement that he will be running for president in the upcoming elections in May 2014, the democratic transition is threatened and history tells us that conflict is likely to increase.

To help understand why the military has dominated the democratic transition process, this paper argues that conflict is the result of institutional structure, actor’s choices, and international support, which are endemic to the Middle East resulting in the endurance of authoritarianism.

First, an overview of civil-military relations in Egypt and Algeria will be presented, highlighting the positions of each major actor during the 2011-2013 period in Egypt and the 1991-2 period in Algeria. The December 26, 1991 parliamentary election saw the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) win 181 out of 232 seats in the first round. However, the Army forced then-President Chadli Bendjedid to resign and the remaining rounds of the elections were cancelled. A five-member committee, the High State Council (HCE), ruled the country until new elections could be held. New elections were not immediately held; instead, the military sought to improve its control of Algeria’s institutions, but not before the country was engulfed in civil war until 1998.

Third, the influence of the international actors, such as the US, Soviet Union/Russia, and IMF will highlight the importance of economics in the democratization process of Egypt and Algeria. More specifically, foreign aid and loans precipitated attempts at liberalization inciting conflict within the country and allowing the military to consolidate its control. Finally, a comparison of Egypt and Algeria will highlight the continuing presence the military will have in the failure of the democratic transition process moving forward, as both militaries use the established institutional structure to preserve their interests and limit political participation to not be seen as losing the title of defender of nationalism.

**Democratic Transitions in the Middle East**

Why have democratic transitions and consolidations not happened in the Middle East? In a special edition of the journal *Comparative Politics*, Eva Bellin did a survey of 21 states of the Middle East and found that the failure of democratization in the region is a result of a lack of a strong civil society, a lack of market economies, adequate income and literacy levels, a lack of democratic neighbors (with the exception of Turkey), and a lack of democratic culture (Bellin 2004: 141). By no means is the Middle East without these features; the problem is that they are continually repressed by the state. Specifically, she argues that these Middle Eastern states’ coercive capacity is fostering robust authoritarianism and prohibiting a transition to democracy. (Bellin 2004: 143). What does the state’s coercive capacity look like? Essentially, the answer lies in the strength of the state and the state’s capacity to maintain a monopoly on the means of coercion. Bellin quotes Theda Skocpol (1979), “If the state’s coercive apparatus remains coherent and effective, it can face down popular disaffection and survive significant illegitimacy, ‘value incoherence,’ and even a pervasive sense of relative deprivation among its subjects” (Bellin 2004: 143). The strength, coherence, and effectiveness of the state’s coercive apparatus, Bellin continues, “distinguish[es] among cases of successful revolution, revolutionary warfare and nonoccurrence” and could be applied to democratic transitions to see if the state’s coercive apparatus had the will or capacity to crush the democratic process (Bellin 2004: 143).

Since the 1950s and 1960s, regimes in the Middle East were studied for a number of reasons; namely, debates on the causes and consequences of military coups, modernization, and early studies of nationalism and postcolonial state building. However, since the 1980s, scholarship on the Middle East has been marginalized within the study of developing countries and, even more, in the broader field of comparative politics (Posusney 2004, 127). The literature during the 80s and early 90s was influenced by the successful democratic transitions occurring throughout Southern and Eastern Europe and Latin America but studying cases that symbolized the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East were “almost completely absent from the most important works on political transitions, including those that explicitly focus on the developing world” (Posusney 2004, 127).

The endurance of authoritarianism is the subject of a book by Council on Foreign Relations scholar Steven Cook (2007) entitled *Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria and Turkey*. The author examines the Egyptian, Algerian, and Turkish militaries use of democracy as a façade to prolong their rule. Each state has used, according to Cook (2007), “A democratic façade of elections, parliaments, opposition press, and the ostensible guarantee of basic freedoms and rights in these countries’ constitutions [to] . . . provide dedicated counter-elites (in the present cases Islamists) the opportunity to advance their agendas” (x). Although, at the first sign of success by the Islamists, the military regimes step in to nullify the results. Cook argues this pathological pattern of including and excluding Islamists reflects the stability of these regimes (x). To best understand why democratization has not taken hold in the Middle East, Cook highlights the relationship between what he calls the military enclave of military elites and civilian politicians in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey and proscribes what external actors could do to influence this relationship.

For Cook (2007), the military is an organization with varied interests and because of its “high modernist” nature it is the only institution with the necessary skills needed for modernization (15). There are a hierarchy of interests—lesser-order interests, core-parochial and institutional interests, and existential interests—which influence the military’s relationship with civilian elites. Encroachment on these interests by civilian elites are met with varied responses by the military enclave, especially if the military’s core interests relating to the economy, foreign and security policy, the political and state apparatus, and nationalism are infringed upon. These are considered core interests because:

1. For military elites, economic independence is the best way to achieve economic development;
2. The military is an institution in Egypt, Algeria and Turkey where the formulation and execution of security policy remains the sole province of the officer corps;
3. The military enclaves have embedded within these political systems various means of control and have demonstrated that protecting the integrity of these tools is of primary importance;
4. The military uses nationalist narratives to depict officers as the vanguards of a struggle against colonialism, external aggression, and the realization of the ‘national will’ (Cook 2007, 18-28).

Furthermore, a democratic façade is established that allows the military to “rule but not govern” as the military uses “the presence of pseudo- or quasi democratic institutions allow[ing] authoritarian leaders to claim that they are living up to their oft-invoked principles about democratic governance with practice” (Cook 2007, 134-5). In describing the Egyptian, Algerian, and Turkish cases, Cook (2007) highlights the friction between Islamists and the military and says that predicting precisely when a military will exert its influence is difficult. Ultimately, the author is defining the unfolding battle over control of state institutions in the Middle East and the persistence of authoritarianism in the region.

Stephen I. King (2009) explains the wide ranging outcomes of openings in authoritarian regimes by grouping these outcomes into five variables: 1) There are macro-structural level variables influencing regime outcomes, such as economic development, national culture, and international forces; 2) At the domestic level, there are social groups defined by socioeconomic position and changes in the balance of power among them; 3) Institutional level examines formal domestic organizations and their rules and procedures. This includes political parties, the military, and state bureaucracies; 4) A social-group level encompasses social movements, ideological factions within the military, regime hard-liners and soft-liners, and moderate and maximalist oppositions; and 5), the leadership level examines elite choices (18-19). Put simply, King argues that a structural and actor based approach best explains the democratic and authoritarian outcomes of political transitions. Through an examination of policies, ruling coalitions, political institutions, and legitimacy in Egypt, Algeria, Syria, and Tunisia, King (2009) examine the reconfigured authoritarian rule on the welfare of millions of citizens of the Middle East and North Africa.

Accordingly, this paper will examine the influence of actor-based and structure based approaches that have influenced the civil-military relations between politicians, the military, and society in 2013 Egypt and 1991-2 Algeria. Understanding the similarities and differences between these states will help in understanding the democratic transition process and the influence the international community has had in the endurance of authoritarianism.

**Civil-Military Relations in Egypt**

The Egyptian military’s involvement in politics dates back to Gamal Abdel Nasser’s coup in July 1952. Nasser championed Pan-Arabism, which advocated Arab unity through the use of socialist principles, alliances, and, to a lesser extent, economic cooperation, among the Arab states of the Middle East and North Africa with explicit backing by the Soviet Union. Nasser and the Free Officers developed the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) to run the country. Members of the officer corps were appointed to senior positions in the bureaucracy and the public sector to assist the RCC in implementing Nasser’s revolution. It was a revolution in name only, as Nasser overhauled the entire political system by emasculating all political parties, tried and imprisoned key politicians, and created a new constitution, which established a new presidential system (Osman 2010, 44-5). As Ibrahim A. Karawan (2011) notes, “Often the president also assumed the posts of prime minister, commander of the army, head of the National Security Council, ruling party chief, and chairman of the judiciary” (44). Put simply, the Egyptian president’s power derives from the support of the military.

The development of Egypt’s new institutions was met with repeated criticism from the Left, who saw Nasser and his colleagues as exchanging one imperial relationship with the British for another with the US (Cook 2011, 52). The other main challenge came from the Right in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood was initially established as a religious outreach association, or *da’wa*, “that aimed to cultivate pious and committed Muslims through preaching, social services, and spreading religious commitment and integrity by example” (Rosefsky Wickham 2011, 92). The Brotherhood became a countrywide political movement heavily involved in Egypt’s struggle for independence and as a voice for Egypt’s disenfranchised advocating for a religious state and *sharia* law (Osman 2010, 82). In short, the political challenges from the Left & Right would characterize the next sixty years of struggle over the central ideological and organizing principles of Egyptian state and society:

Although the Officers rigged Egypt’s institutions to serve their interests, they were never able to embed in the minds of Egyptians a set of ideas around this political order. The Officers’ distinct lack of ideological convictions or anything but the most rudimentary guiding principles made them vulnerable to other political forces selling more comprehensive, emotionally and materially satisfying notions of what Egyptian society and politics should look like. The consequence was a seemingly never-ending political conflict between the defenders of the political system the Free Officers founded and their opponents that produced no small amount of political alienation, economic dislocations and—at times—violence.

By 1967, Nasser’s Pan-Arabism generated significant economic development and addressed social ills gaining support from Egyptian society. However, Egypt’s defeat in the Six Day War would mark a turning point where the regime’s prior appeal, based on universal education, guaranteed employment, economic and social development, and geopolitical power had lost its luster (Cook 2011, 104). Students and workers came out to protest and as violence increased, Nasser confronted the protesters with the security forces to maintain order and he positioned himself as a reformer by the retrial of certain air force officers and the creation of the March 30 program, a 10 point program for a new constitution (Cook 2011, 104-5).

The above reforms are systematic of the civil-military relationship in Egypt since Nasser’s death in 1970—political repression mixed with limited liberalization that served the regime. Sadat removed military officers who would likely challenge his policies and he reached out to the Muslim Brotherhood, since they would be an asset in the de-Nasserization of politics and society. Sadat opened up the political system to allow multiple parties; however, liberalization created “a political system with a hollow core and a dynamic periphery, in which Islamists barred from contesting power within the formal party system diverted their activity to institutional outlets outside the regime’s control” (Rosefsky Wickham 2002, 64). Furthermore, Sadat introduced the *Infitah* (opening) policy to open up competition in the Egyptian economy and the military took advantage of this by establishing businesses in defense, manufacturing, industry and agriculture. According to Cook (2011), “Although the socialist discourse remained, and the state would contine to be the primary economic actor, *Infitah* made it clear that Egypt’s future economic development lay with the private sector, foreign investment, and integration of the Egyptian economy with the outside world” (137).

Sadat and his Vice President, Hosni Mubarak, went to US and European capitals several times between January 1980 and October 1981. Sadat requested and received $3 billion of military credits from the US. This began a 30 year relationship between the US and Egypt, making Egypt the second largest recipient of US foreign aid behind only Israel. Despite Sadat’s attempts at political and economic reform, domestic opposition grew. Sadat’s assassination in 1981 by a member of Islamic Jihad for signing the Camp David Accord with Israel would bring Mubarak to power and continue the consolidation of presidential power.

Mubarak consolidated his power by limiting the influence of opposition parties, reinforcing the power of regime loyalists (bourgeoisie, rural notables, and bureaucrats). He also reformed the Political Party Law, which allowed Muslim Brotherhood limited participation in politics. Mubarak’s success in consolidating his power can be attributed to his relationship with the military and the economic and military aid received from the IMF and US. Since 1973, the military’s role in politics had been downgraded. According to Robert Springborg (1989), “Not only had its size and role been reduced, but the debate about additional duties the military might perform as its defense role contracted had produced few tangible results” (97-8). In part the Egyptian economy during the 1980s and 1990s was to blame. Egypt had a growing population and a GDP of slightly less than $900. There was also significant foreign debt and rising unemployment. As a result, in order to arrest the continued deterioration of the economy, Egypt, the IMF, and US officials agreed to a reform program to bring public debt under control, privatize the state-owned sector, and, overall, make the country attractive to private investment to improve job growth (Cook 2011, 159). Aid also continued to flow from the US along with debt forgiveness to the tune of $20 billion and Washington convinced the Europeans to forgive half of Cairo’s debt owed to Europe. (Cook 2011, 161).

Economic liberalization for Egypt increased the military’s involvement in the economy. The military continues to own companies that include: water, olive oil, cement, construction, hotel and gasoline industries, military and defense arms manufacturing. Such property “is a ‘fringe benefit’ in exchange for the military ensuring regime stability and security” (GlobalSecurity.org, 1/29/11). More significantly, economic liberalization helped to ensure the base of Egyptian military’s power. First, military-controlled industries were considered untouchable, meaning they were exempted from liberalization policies. Second, the military-controlled companies had access to easy and cheap state financing and third, military officers acted as middle-men for foreign corporations and domestic companies willing to invest in Egypt’s economy (Yildirim 2013, 61).

Additionally, under Mubarak, the political space oscillated between openings and closings to opposition parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. For Mubarak, according to Stephen I. King (2009), regime legitimacy could be increased “….by conducting multiparty elections while utilizing the state party to maintain power and control and state patronage to rebuld a coalition of support” (103). In other words, Mubarak’s National Democratic Party (NDP) had been transformed “from a populist party to one that caters to economic elites, increasing a trend that began in the 1970s under Sadat” (King 2009, 92). The Muslim Brotherhood stands as the main opposition and was allowed to participate in 1999 and 2005 parliamentary elections, but faced a harsh wave of repression after the 2005 election. As Sadat had done before him, Mubarak allowed limited opposition parties and movements to gain representation in the National Assembly and maintain a limited presence in civil society, as long as the regime’s party, the NDP, maintained a two-thirds majority.

However, the Mubarak regime consistently imposed restraints on the political parties and movements to organize and contest elections. Toward this end, the state manipulated the 2010 election in favor of the NDP winning 97 percent of the seats to set the stage for a potential succession plan with Mubarak’s son Gamal (a businessman, whom had been groomed to potentially replace his father). According to Dina Shehata (2011), “Not only did the country’s opposition strongly oppose the succession plan, but many important factions within the state bureaucracy and the military were also skeptical. As 2010 came to a close, the country’s ruling edifice was beginning to crack” (143).

**The Arab Spring & Egypt’s Transition to Democracy**

Protests began on January 25, 2011 that have become known as the Arab Spring. Underscoring the protests was the inequality present in the Egyptian economy. After witnessing the ouster of Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, the blogosphere, Twitterverse, and Facebook groups sprang up in response to the Mubarak regime imprisoning an activist. On National Police Day, youths were scheduled to visit Tahrir Square to protest, but thanks in part to social media, the crowd began to swell within the square. Day after day the protests moved first from the young university students, to shopkeepers, technocrats, attorneys, and teachers. It was not only the poor, but youth, and middle class Egyptians were upset at the lack of jobs and economic opportunities in Mubarak’s Egypt. Consequently, the protestors formed the Coalition of January 25 Youth and presented a series of demands to the regime: “the resignation of Mubarak, the lifting of the state of emergency, the release of all political prisoners, the dissolution of parliament, the appointment of a government of independent technocrats, the drafting of a new constitution, and the punishment of those responsible for the violence against the protestors” (Shehata 2011, 143).

In an attempt to quell the protests, Mubarak ordered the security services to shut off the Internet, which forces more students and citizens into the streets. Fearing the end was near, Mubarak sent the security services into Tahrir Square to try and disperse the crowds. The protests grew so large that the military was forced to step in, fearing for the stability of the regime.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) forced Mubarak to step down on February 11, 2011 and on February 13, 2011 the constitution and parliament were dissolved. Field Marshall Tantawi appointed Vice President Omar Suleiman (a former intelligence officer, and ally of Mubarak) to head the interim government until new elections could be held in September 2011. The elections were later postponed to November 28-2011-January 11, 2012. The election ushered in the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) after the transitional phase headed by the SCAF.

In late 2011-early 2012, parliamentary elections for both the lower and upper houses of parliament were held. The Brotherhood won 45 percent of the seats in the People’s Assembly (the lower house) and 58 percent of the seats in the Shura Council (upper house). The al-Nur Party, won 25 percent in both the lower and upper houses. The largest liberal party, the Wafd, won only 7.5 percent of seats in the lower house and 8 percent in the upper house, while an alliance of liberal parties known as the Egyptian Bloc won 6.7 percent of seats in the lower house and 4.5 percent in the upper house (Rutherford 2013, 43-4).

The presidential elections were held on May 23-24, 2012 with thirteen candidates competing. In the days leading up to the election, there were five candidates in contention: Mohammad Morsi, a senior Muslim Brotherhood leader representing the FJP; Abd al-Monam Abu al-Fatuh, a prominent reformer who used to be a member of the Brotherhood; Hamdin Sabahi, a Nasserist; Amir Moussa, Mubarak’s former foreign minister from 1991-2001 and secretary general of the Arab League from 2001-2011; and Ahmad Shafiq, a former military officer who served as prime minister under Mubarak (Rutherford 2013, 44). Morsi won the election with 24.8 percent of the vote, and Shafiq’s 23.7 percent forced a runoff on June 16-17. According to Bruce K. Rutherford (2013), “Morsi was seen as a machine politician who lacked the charisma and political skill needed to unify the country. Shafiq’s commitment to the goals of the revolution was in serious doubt . . . . [because] he was the figure most associated with the Mubarak regime” (44). As a result of the outcome, the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) declared the election law governing the parliamentary elections unconstitutional. In response, the SCAF dissolved the People’s Assembly. This action by the SCAF was met with criticism by the Brotherhood who “asserted that the SCC ruling and the SCAF decision to dissolve the People’s Assembly were politically motivated efforts to deny the Brotherhood the political power that it had earned at the ballot box” (Rutherford 2013, 45).

Nevertheless, in the runoff, Morsi beat Shafiq with 52 percent to 48 percent of the vote. The SCAF accepted the results. Rutherford (2013) sums up the significance of the election for Egypt: “For the first time in Egypt’s 5,000 year history, the country had an elected national leader . . . . [that] promised to be the president of all Egyptians and to build a new Egypt that is ‘civil, national, constitutional, and modern’” (45). Morsi, however, would continue to come into conflict with the SCAF, who issued several amendments to the de-facto constitution that increased the SCAF’s power at the expense of executive and legislative power. By issuing the amendments, “the SCAF made clear that it planned to play a central role in the development of the political and legal system at least until a new constitution was adopted and a new lower house of parliament was elected” (Rutherford 2013, 45). In short, the military’s apprehension is best illustrated by then Defense Minister Tantawi’s comment that “’the revolutionaries are our sons and brothers, but probably lack a clear and comprehensive understanding of the situation’” (Kandil 2012, 195).

Consequently, in August 2012, President Morsi dismissed General Tantawi as Defense Minister, in part, because since the Arab Spring, the military’s status has been the subject of a tug of war between Morsi and the Bortherhood, the SCAF, and the military (Fahim and El Sheikh, 8/13/12). In purging Tantawi, President Morsi “leaned on the support of a junior officer corps that blamed the old guard for a litany of problems within the military and for involving the armed forces too deeply in the country’s politics….” (Fahim and El Sheikh, 8/13/12). Tantawi, as part of the old guard, was insisting on broad political powers, while the new defense minister, Field Marshal Abdul-Fattah al-Sisi was seen as someone who would cooperate and likely except a minimum influence for the Egyptian military in a new Egyptian democracy—a veto over foreign policy issues and control over its economic empire (Fahim and El Sheikh, 8/13/12). Put differently, al-Sisi, as a pious Muslim, was someone whom Morsi felt would be more likely to cooperate with the FJP’s political agenda.

Morsi’s time in office was deemed to be biased and authoritarian. Morsi was accused of excluding political rivals from his team and declared himself immune to rulings by the courts. The Brotherhood “rammed through an unpopular Constitution, alienated all the rich Gulf States, except Qatar, flirted with Iran, and set teeth on edge in Washington….[and] [m]ost importantly, the Brotherhood failed to turn around the economy” (Daily Beast, 11/12/13). The die had been cast by Morsi and violence spread throughout Egypt culminating in June 30, 2013 demonstrations where millions took to the streets on the anniversary of Morsi’s election to demand his ouster. In response there were a number of pro-Morsi demonstrations and security forces were called in to break up many of their protests.

Al-Sisi stated that the military would not be silent in the face of increased violence. On July 3, 2013, the Egyptian military deposed Morsi after giving the government 48 hours to reach accommodation with various political actors. In essence, the Egyptian military, whose institutional interest is the protection of the Egyptian state, intervened against Morsi, because al-Sisi felt that Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood were not taking part in a national dialogue. Referring to mass protests that had occurred throughout the country since November 2012, when religious minorities and secular parties walked out of the constitutional assembly, al-Sisi stated, “I expected if we didn’t intervene, it would have turned into a civil war” (Washington Post, 8/3/2013).

However, since the July 2013 coup, clashes have occurred between security forces and pro-Morsi supporters. In March 2014, al-Sisi resigned as defense minister and declared his intention to run for president in June 2014. Al-Sisi has received support, not surprisingly, from the SCAF and is predicted to win the upcoming election (BBC News, 1/27/14). What does this portend for democracy in Egypt? To help answer that question, we move to discuss the role of the military in Algeria, a North African country with a similar history of one-party rule and military involvement in a democratic transition.

**Civil-Military Relations in Algeria**

From 1954-1962, Algeria found itself in one of the bloodiest wars for independence of the 20th Century. The war was launched in response to years of French colonial rule which had begun in 1830 turning Algeria into a “settlement colony” (Quandt 1998: 15). Algeria is a multiethnic society comprising Arabs and Berbers and as a French “settlement colony” was forced to assimilate with European colonists (*Pied Niors*) who settled in the major coastal cities of Algeria. There were farmers, shopkeepers, and administrators—a fully articulated European society with an identity of its own (Quandt 1998, 15). Algeria was considered an integral part of France and as a result of the settlement policy, Algeria’s traditional leaders had been driven away from politics, their land taken away, only to be replaced at all levels of power by Europeans. This colonial relationship with the French would be the spark for various uprisings that culminated in the 1940s with the first expressions of Algerian nationalism.

Algerian nationalism is expressed in populist overtones, blending national symbols with themes from the Middle East, such as Arab revival and Islamic reform (Quandt 1998, 16). As the driving force behind the Algerian War of Independence, nationalism drove a revolution that was not only against the French, but also against political institutions. According to political scientist William Quandt:

Like populists everywhere, these self-appointed fighters for their country’s freedom saw themselves in heroic light, sacrificing all for the people. Those who represented parties were seen as self-interested and divisive; they weakened the common will, playing into the hands of the French, who were skilled at divide-and-rule politics. The revolution, they hoped, would unify the masses and lead to a break with the past. To a large extent it did. But it also sacrificed the incipient democratic tendencies in Algerian political life for a kind of radical populism that eventually came to be seen as responsible for many of Algeria’s problems (Quandt 1998, 18-19).

A group called the *Front de Liberation Nationale*, or FLN, became the populist face of the Algerian nationalist movement. Interestingly, within its ranks were socialists, Islamists, Berbers and Arabs, peasants and intellectuals; what bound them together in a common cause was nationalism.

The FLN was composed of committees, cliques, and clans with intense rivalries resulting in several distinct centers of power: guerrilla *mujahideen*, the leaders of the military regions (or *willayas*), the *Armee de Liberation Nationale* (ALN), the Provisional Government (*Le Government Provisoire de la Republique Algerienne*, or GPRA), and prominent personalities who were jailed at the start of the war of independence (Quandt 1998: 20). At the end of the war, a power vacuum was created resulting in each of these groups attempting to influence Algeria’s development. The military, the self-perceived leaders of the revolution, felt that as a disciplined body with a monopoly of force, and as a national organization was in the best position to lead the development of an independent Algeria.

The ALN became the *L’armee Populaire Nationale* or ANP and “its military nature makes the army the best organized and only truly national (that is, drawing from the entire population) group in the country; its organization gives it special interests to watch over and defend; its successor relation to the . . . ALN makes it the strongest political institution to grow out of the revolution; and its past performance and beliefs (namely, Fanonism) shows it unafraid to use its power to defend the Revolution or its own interests” (Zartman 1973, 212). The ANP, during these early years, was heterogenous with officers forming clans with like-minded officers. More specifically, ANP officers came from the wilayas, the ALN, and postwar recruitment and coalesced into two main groups—an old guard and junior officers.

The “old guard”, as members of the interior ALN, were guerrilla fighters who fought in the war of independence. Their view of the peacetime ANP was as a military that watched over the “Revolution” and over the interests of those who fought for Algeria’s independence (Zartman 1973: 214). Alternatively, there was an external group of officers in the ALN who organized and trained during the war on bases in Tunisia and Morocco. Some of these officers had experience serving in the French military; therefore, their experience and desire was the development of a professional army to serve as the “watchdog over the Revolution” (Zartman 1973, 214). This group consisted of two officers who would play an important role in the development of Algeria: Ahmed Ben Bella and Henri Boumedienne.

After the war, there was a scramble for power as these young officers and their respective groups opposed politicians in the provisional government despite the government’s negotiation of Algerian independence. Ben Bella won out in this internecine struggle and became president of Algeria with the backing of the army and some of the willaya commands, with Henri Boumedienne becoming Army chief-of-staff. Throughout his tenure in office, Quandt argues, “Ben Bella lacked an institutional base of support when he became president and spent much of his three years in office pitting one faction against another in order to stay in power” (Quandt 1998, 23). Under Ben Bella, the government became increasingly socialist and authoritarian. Boumedienne felt that Ben Bella had strayed from the populist aims of the revolution, because Boumedienne had a reputation as “an ascetic, a strong nationalist, with more of an Arabist education than most of his contemporaries” (Quandt 1998, 23). Consequently, Boumedienne implemented a coup in 1965 overthrowing Ben Bella.

After the 1965 coup, Boumedienne worked swiftly to consolidate his hold on power. Many of Ben Bella’s supporters were pushed aside and the Oujda group (Boumedienne’s men) were installed in the political administration of the country. For Boumedienne, “when the professional control and development of the army are threatened by the government . . . the army must intervene actively to protect its interests and, secondarily, the interest of the Revolution…. [because] [w]ith the government in ‘sure’ hands, the army officers can then return to the task of building up their own organization” (Zartman 1973: 214). Additionally, the FLN was downgraded in importance, the Military Security organization was strengthened, and social and economic policies were designed to win acquiescence (Quandt 1998, 23-4). Boumedienne, until his death in 1978, established and ruled over the prototypical authoritarian regime.

By this time, the military had firmly established itself as the dominant institution in Algeria. The 1970s and 80s would be a time of growth and modernization for Algeria, as agriculture was collectivized, a massive industrialization program was launched, and the oil industry nationalized. Boumedienne and his successors’ goals “were rapid development, the creation of a strong industrial base, and the maintenance of a viable safety net to keep ordinary people satisfied while the state laid the foundation for a modern society” (Quandt 1998, 27). This drive for modernization brought considerable demographic changes, an emergence of new industries and a nation-wide education plan that raised the literacy rate. In effect, by the 1980s Algeria was experiencing a youth bulge.

As a result of both this new youth generation coming of age and their dissatisfaction with one party rule, two conflicting protest movements developed: communists (including Berber identity movements) and Islamic parties, most notably the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). In addition to protesting the government, the two groups clashed with each other throughout the 1980s culminating in the October 1988 uprising that forced President Chadli Bendjedid to concede the end of one party rule and call elections for December 1991. The FIS won the first round of the country’s multi-party elections and the military then intervened and cancelled the second round of the elections. President Benjedid was forced to resign and the military banned all political parties based on religion, including the FIS (Quandt 1998). According to Quandt, “They [the military] were protecting their institutional prerogatives, throwing over an unpopular president in order to survive. The senior officers were protecting a comfortable way of life as well, since many had gotten rich from power. The Algerian generals were prepared to fight—for their lives, their families, their privileges, but also for their country” (Quandt 1998, 60). In effect, the military had determined who held Algeria’s top office in 1965, restored civil order in 1988 and 1991 after serious confrontations between government and civil society, and the military-bureaucratic elite cancelled elections, on January 11, 1992, halting the political liberalization process (Mortimer 1993).

**Black October and Algeria’s Transition to Democracy**

The riots of October 1988—Black October—are considered the spark of Algeria’s efforts at democratic transition. Moreover, the riots were a nationwide youth revolt conducted in response to the deteriorating economic policies of the Chadli regime. Chadli was regarded as a moderate and not identified with any particular faction or clan, nor did he have wide support in the military. In June 1980, he summoned the FLN Party Congress to examine the draft of the five year development plan of 1980-84. The Five Year Plan liberalized the economy and broke up unwieldy state corporations. According to John Ruedy, “By adopting the theme ‘Towards a Better Life,’ the planners and the Congress signaled a new concern with agriculture, social infrastructure, and light industry, and a relaxation of the austerity theme of the Boumedienne years” (233). In reality, though, Chadli’s principal objective was to decentralize the system to be more responsive to society.

However, the First Five Year plan was considered a disappointment, because Algeria’s economic crisis deepened in the mid-1980s, resulting in increased unemployment of consumer goods, and shortages in cooking oil, semolina, coffee and tea (Toth, 194). Additionally, women were waiting in lines for food, while young men milled around in frustration unable to find work. There was also a huge drop in oil prices in 1986. Social unrest continued to increase in Algiers and other cities as the economy foundered from 1985-88. The alienation and anger of the population was fanned by the widespread perception that the government had become corrupt and aloof (Stone 1997, 66).

Consequently, a series of strikes and walkouts in October 1988, by students and workers in Algiers degenerated into rioting by thousands of young men, destroying government and FLN property, spreading around the country, and was met with harsh government repression with more than 500 people killed and 3,500 arrested. The repression increased support for Islamists, most notably the FIS, who began challenging the Chadli regime’s legitimacy.

In response, Chadli dismissed senior government officials and drew up a political reform program, which in essence, became a second Five Year Plan. A new constitution was overwhelmingly approved in February 1989. Of note was the guaranteed freedoms of expressions, association, and meeting. Also, the FLN was not mentioned and the Army was discussed only in the context of national defense, reflecting a significant downgrading of its political status. Chadli’s reform of the constitution was the first step to establishing a multi-party democracy in Algeria. As Benjamin Stone (1997) argues, “Chadli was particularly anxious to repair his credibility which had been severely dented in the October 1988 riots, and intended his role as ‘arbiter of the nation’ to be that of a powerful arbiter between its various factions” (69).

The FIS was formed at this point, despite the constitution prohibiting outright religious parties, because the government chose to interpret the association clause as “allowing associations ‘inspired by Islamic values’”. In local and provincial elections held in June 1990, the FIS handily defeated the FLN, in part, because most secular parties boycotted the elections. Chadli had underestimated the popular support for the FIS, but was confident that he could prevent the FIS from threatening his power base. This belief stems from the FIS’s initial difficulties in fulfilling its frequently ambitious promises, but the FIS would soon win control over Local Councils in all three urban centers, thereby providing relatively efficient social services by improving lost effectiveness. (Volpi 2003, 49).

The Islamist victory in local elections would begin a confrontational period of a year and a half between the Chadli regime and the FIS. The FIS would organize a general strike in response to the Chadli regime’s effort to reform the electoral law prior to the upcoming parliamentary elections, elections, which would ultimately be postponed until December 1991, so Chadli could improve the appeal of the FLN vis-à-vis the FIS. Despite strong presidential powers, Quandt (1998) argues, “Strangely missing from this crisis as it unfolded was the president, Chadli Benjedid. Instead, it was his prime minister, Hamrouche, and the minister of defense, Nezzar, who spoke for the government, and they did not see eye to eye” (56). Hamrouche thought the strike would be acceptable as long as the FIS refrained from violence and did not occupy public buildings, believing that the public would tire of the strike and lose support. Nezzar, however, believed the strike was a threat to the state because “[h]e believed Hamrouche was soft-headed in allowing things to drift and Chadli was too weak to provide a counterweight….One by one, each would be dealt with” (Quandt 1998, 57). Although Nezzar was considered to be less fundamentally hostile toward Islamism, he confirmed the army’s willigness to “’….respond to any organized excesses that might jeopardize the national unity of the country… [and] would not hesitate to intervene and restore order and unity so that force remains in the hands of the law’” (Willis 1997, 184).

Ultimately, Chadli ceded to the military’s wishes. Parliamentary elections were held on December 26, 1991 with the FIS winning 188 seats out of the 232 decided in a straight majority vote (Volpi 2003, 52). Quandt (1998) makes an important point regarding the electoral system chosen:

The electoral system chosen was blatantly unfair. Had the FLN won instead of the FIS, no one would have viewed it as a fair election, since the system was designed to overrepresent the largest party. If proportional representation had been used, turnout would have probably been a bit higher and the FIS might have won some 30 percent of the seats, with the rest going to an array of other parties and independents. No one would have been able to govern without forming a coalition with other parties. The stage might have been set for an important stage in democratization, one in which it might have become clear that there could not be a single winner and that compromise was inevitable for government to work. Not choosing a proportional representation system of voting was one of the worst decisions made by the government (59-60).

Nevertheless, Chadli was willing to share power with the FIS to keep the democratic experiment alive. The ANP was not willing to accommodate Chadli in this regard and voided the election results and forced Chadli to resign. In fact, the election of the FIS in the parliamentary elections was a threat to regime survival. The military had fought for Algeria’s independence and felt it had a legitimate, institutional interest in the political life of the country (Quandt 1998, 61).

The ANP created the High State Council (HCE) to rule the country until new elections could be held. The HCE was led by interim president Mohamed Boudiaf, a former nationalist leader, who spent the years after independence in Morocco. He was assisted by four generals, most notably, Nezzar, the defense minister (Volpi 2003, 57). The generals spoke of the need to safeguard national security, but their real motivation was clear: to stamp out the Islamist movement. For many senior military leaders, “….a FIS government would spell disaster economically and politically for the Algeria they had pledged to defend” (Willis 1997, 245). In short, the military was concerned about Algeria’s colossal debt and investment from foreign oil and gas companies’ exploitation of Algeria’s oil and gas resources, as well as the potential for increasing conflict. Boudiaf “agreed with the military’s ban on the FIS, but he also wanted to have little to do with the . . . [FLN]. Instead, he seemed determined to build a new political movement that would be responsive to his blend of populism and nationalism, untainted by the corruption of recent years” (Quandt 1998, 64).

Unfortunately, Boudiaf was assassinated in June 1992 by one of his bodyguards. According to Volpi (2003), “Although the exact circumstances were never fully brought to light—an isolated act by a supporter of Islamic fundamentalism instigating the army, a military plot to eliminate someone with too great political ambitions—in the public eye Boudiaf appeared to be the victim of the military officers’ behind the scene struggle” (63-4). The remainder of the 1990s would see Algeria engulfed in a bloody civil war as the military alternated between “eradicators” and “conciliators” (Roberts 1995). In short, eradicators thought all out repression was how the state should deal with Islamists, while conciliators were willing to find a political solution based on compromise. Even the Islamists would split into rival factions. Most importantly, Quandt (1998) argues, “What came after Boudiaf resembled bureaucrats seeking to solve Algeria’s crisis by the dual strategy of repression and economic reform. In other words, the ANP entrenched itself in Algerian politics to protect its institutional interests effectively ending the democratic transition.

**Democratization in the Middle East?**

What will democratization look like a post-Arab Spring Middle East? Democracy includes participation and contestation with all citizens having equal access to the political process and certain issues being decided through competition (Dahl 1971). However, in the Middle East, Quandt (1998) argues “While democratization is still a debatable concept in much of the Arab world, most analysts would agree that a substantial degree of liberalization has taken place….The crucial question is whether these measures are an important component of the democratization process, or whether they may become a substitute for it” (154). The cases of Egypt and Algeria are symbolic of similar trajectories taken by the Arab states in the region. There is a history of colonialism, the creation of institutions, conflict both internal and external, the influence of the international community, a youth bulge which leads to a demand for change, a political opening, and conflict between politicians and the military to defend their interests. In short, democratization in the Middle East will be an incremental process where, because of history, militaries and elites will protect their positions in society. Egypt and Algeria highlight the causes of the endurance of authoritarianism and allow us to begin thinking about what factors will be necessary for consolidation of democracy.

Historically, democratic transitions in the Middle East have been influenced by colonialism role in the development of the state. In Egypt with the British and in Algeria with the French, the military was established as the strongest institution in the state. Accordingly, both societies viewed service in the military as a means for upward mobility. As anti-colonial nationalism became an ideological force in both states, the Free Officers overthrew King Farouk in July 1952 and the FLN and ALN fought a war to end French colonialism. In both cases, the result was the creation of authoritarian regimes with militaries as their guarantor.

As the Egyptian and Algerian states developed throughout the Cold War and the post-9/11 era, the militaries of each state were influenced by foreign economic and military aid from the Soviet Union and the United States. Nasser and Boumedienne used socialism and support from the Soviet Union to win acquiescence from the population with the promotion of rapid development and the creation of a strong industrial base. This top-down modernization resulted in new industries and an increase in literacy, but by the 1970s in Egypt and the 1980s in Algeria, their economies could not keep up and both states relied on policies that gradually opened up their economies to western aid from the IMF. For Egypt and Algeria, as with any developing state receiving loans from the IMF, the state must: reduce their budget deficit, remove subsidies, float the exchange rate, raise interest rates, and eventually privatize some of the state-owned industries (Quandt 1998, 153). Although, with the continued receipt of loans from the West, military run industries were often exempt from privatizing and resulted in an increase in corruption and the continuation of cronyism by senior military officers (Yildirium 2013, 61). In effect, this entwined the state’s economy as part of the military’s interests moving forward. The international support of the Soviet Union, US, and IMF provided support for authoritarian regimes, but the Egyptian and Algerian state did not make this largesse available to their respective society.

Consequently, opposition movements and later political parties sprang up to challenge state authority. In Egypt, this movement was the Muslim Brotherhood and in Algeria, the FIS, GIA and smaller Berber movements. Both states’ history is replete with periods of accommodation and repression toward these actors. For the purposes of our discussion surrounding democratic transitions, both the Muslim Brotherhood and FIS used strikes and protests to call attention to the deteriorating economic situation for ordinary Egyptians and Algerians. Moreover, during the late 1980s and early 1990s in Algeria and in 2011-2013 in Egypt a generational shift was occurring both within society but, more importantly, within the military. The significance defined the transition process for Algeria and appears to be doing the same at present in Egypt.

The result of this new youth generation coming of age was dissatisfaction with one party rule and with the deteriorating economy in both Algeria and Egypt the timing was ripe for a political opening. In Algeria, this opening was the Black October Riots of 1988 that forced Chadli to end one party rule and accede to multi-party elections, while in Egypt the Arab Spring brought about the overthrow of the Mubarak regime and the election of Morsi. The result for both Algeria and Egypt were rocky democratic transitions. This rockiness stems from political leaders’ “….interneceine fighting, disagreements, and resoluteness” (Gerbaudo 2013, 110). Both the Algerian and Egyptian militaries used conflict between politicians to step in and protect the interests of the regime, with a military leader attempting to fill the leadership vacuum—Nezzar in Algeria against the FIS and al-Sisi against Morsi in 2013. The result in Algeria was continued fighting between politicians and the military, but also an increase in terrorism from excluded groups, which led to a civil war.

In Egypt, al-Sisi banned the Muslim Brotherhood from politics due to Morsi’s ideological and authoritarian policies against the institutions of the state. Violence increased throughout Egypt since Morsi’s overthrow in July 2013. Also, the absence of secular political forces and weakness of the labor movement in Egypt allowed for youth subcultures to develop that al-Sisi has used to portray himself as the savior of the nation. The effect of this on the success or failure of democratization in the long run for Egypt is aptly stated by Paulo Gerbaudo (2013): “[W]hen people refuse to engage with the state, the space they thereby vacate offers an opportunity for the state’s worst autocratic tendencies” (112). In short, the military has sought to occupy this space in Egypt to “guide” the democratic transition.

**Conclusion**

Egypt and Algeria are two states in the Middle East who share a similar trajectory of political development. An examination of the civil-military relationship has shown both countries to have a powerful military with a history of involvement in the politics of the state. This paper compared the relatively brief democratic transitions in Egypt and Algeria to highlight the institutional, actor, and international factors that have limited the development of democracy in the Middle East.

While it can be argued that the democratic transition is still ongoing in Egypt with the upcoming presidential election in May, the outcome portends not further democratization but an endurance of authoritarianism. History, conflict between politicians and the military, and external support from international actors such as the US, Soviet Union or IMF have assisted the militaries of Egypt and Algeria in consolidating their influence in the country.

In the end, understanding the relationship between the military, politicians, and society in the Middle East is important because democratization cannot happen unless one addresses the failure of political institutions. It is this failure that brings the military in on horseback, so to prevent this or, to hasten the return to the barracks, the strengthening of civil society, political institutions and processes is paramount. As Diamond and Plattner (1996) state in the epigraph above, militaries intervene in politics when civilian politicians are weak and divided, and when their divisions and manifest failures of governance have generated a vacuum of authority. Understanding how this vacuum of authority was created in Egypt and Algeria offers insight into how we might begin to understand what factors will end the endurance of authoritarianism in the Middle East.

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