UNDERSTANDING THE MILITARY BEHAVIOR IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: BEFORE AND AFTER THE ARAB UPRISINGS*

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Abstract

Understanding the military behavior in the Middle East and North Africa requires a comprehensive approach that explains and also connects the history of military behavior with the recent developments within the region. That paper provides a chronological framework that explains different military behaviors in history and during the time of social upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa. This study claims that the military has always been an important part of the politics in this region. Before the 2010-2011 Arab Uprisings, the military was the mainstay of the autocratic regimes. However, during the 2010-2011 Arab Uprisings, public protests achieved to get the military support in some cases. The protests again proved how the army's involvement shaped the course of the mass uprisings and the end of the authoritarian regimes. So, the military changed, still change, and will probably continue to change the course of the politics in the Middle East and North Africa. However, this paper does not claim that military power is the only power that rules the states alone. But rather it claims that the power controls and shapes most of the states and their regimes in the Middle East and North Africa.

Key Words: *Civil-Military Relations, Military Behavior, Middle East, North Africa, Arab Uprisings*

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* This article is derived from a forthcoming book to be published in 2023 by Routledge
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ORTADOĞU VE KUZEY AFRİKA'DAKİ ASKERİ DAVRANIŞI ANLAMAK: ARAP AYAKLANMALARI ÖNCESİ VE SONRASI

Özet

Ortadoğu ve Kuzey Afrika bölgesinde askerin davranışını anlamak, askerin tarihte ve son olaylardaki rolünü açıklayan ve aynı zamanda ilişkilendiren kapsamlı bir yaklaşımı gerektiriyor. Bu makale, Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika'da askerin tarihin farklı dönemlerinde oynadığı rolü ve son toplumsal protestolar sırasında sergilediği tutumu açıklayan kronolojik bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, ordunun bu bölgedeki siyasetin her zaman önemli bir parçası olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Ordu, 2010-2011 Arap Ayaklanmalarından önce otokrat rejimlerin temel dayanağıydı. Ancak 2010-2011 Arap Ayaklanmaları sırasında bazı ülkelerde rejim karşıtı halk protestoları askerin desteğini almayı başardı. Protestolar, ordunun olaylara müdahalesinin otoriter rejimlerin sona ermesini ve kitlesel ayaklanmaların gidişatını nasıl değiştirebildiğini bir kez daha kanıtladı. Dolayısıyla Ortadoğu ve Kuzey Afrika'da ordu siyasetin gidişatını değiştirdi, değiştirmeye devam ediyor ve muhtemelen değiştirmeye devam edecek. Ancak bu makale, askerin devletleri yöneten tek güç olduğunu iddia etmemektedir. Daha çok bu silahlı gücün, Ortadoğu ve Kuzey Afrika'daki devletlerin ve rejimlerin çoğunu kontrol ettiğini ve şekillendirdiğini iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Asker Sivil İlişkileri, Askerin Davranışı, Orta Doğu, Kuzey Afrika, Arap İsyanları*

Introduction

The years 2010-2011 represented a revolutionary moment for the Arab world. As the people of the Arab world, who had lived under anti-democratic regimes for decades, started to demand democratic reforms and systemic transformations. The states' national armed forces played an important role during the myriad of demonstrations that took place over the course of the year and had the option of using their power against demonstrators or siding with demonstrators. Each state experienced a restructuring of civil-military relations once the armed forces chose sides within the Arab uprisings.

First of all, this paper aims to present a chronological framework to help analyze different military behaviors in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In addition, this study claims that historical records and the 2010-2011 events demonstrate that the states' internal and external conditions have an impact on the variation of the military behaviors in MENA. But, the military is also having power that shapes and changes the states' conditions. So, the military can be analyzed both as an affecting and affected power in different countries, at different times and at different extents. To demonstrate that, first, I explore the military behaviors in the Middle East and North Africa from the 1950s to the early 2000s. Secondly, the 2010-2011 protests and military power linkage are examined to capture the complexity of the variation in military behaviors.

In terms of methodology, I use chronological analysis of a research subject. That means the origins, development, and transformation of the military institution is examined from the early 1950s to the 2010s. I collect my data from primary and secondary sources to demonstrate the historical and contemporary account of the military behavior in MENA.

The military power: from the 1950s to 2000s

The military has been one of many important protagonists in the Middle Eastern and North African states. Until World War I, several MENA states fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, from the early 16th century until the early 20th century. After the war, the states were able to emancipate themselves from the hegemony of the empire, but they struggled to establish fully liberated nations. Following the empire's collapse, however, the states eventually found themselves subject to European powers: France, Spain, Italy, and Britain. The extended foreign rule had forced the states to fight against external threats and their internal proxies to win and sustain their independence.

After World War II, MENA states finally achieved their liberation after a long and hard struggle. As each nation moved towards independence through diplomatic negotiations or armed struggles. Following the struggle for independence, the Arab nations faced new external and internal oppositions as follows: Israel and foreign-supported kingdoms. The military became very important in these states because most of the states earned their in-

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[1]   For syntactical reasons, the terms "army," "armed forces," and "military" are used interchangeably throughout this chapter and this study.

dependence largely because of their armies' involvement in conflicts against external and internal actors at different levels (Pollack 2002). In the eyes of the people, army personnel had sacrificed their lives for the people's independence.

Despite the similarities between the histories of the various MENA states, their differences make it unlikely to categorize all of the states using one model. State, society, and military structures differ in each country, as well as the states' stance on international relations. For example, Algeria received its independence from France through a military struggle, but Tunisia gained its independence using diplomatic negotiations.

In each case, however, military forces played important roles in shaping the systems of the Middle Eastern and North African states. Kamrava classified the states, according to the military's role and position, as follows: (a) democratic states under civilian authority where the military plays an important role in the political domain (Israel and Turkey); (b) inclusionary states where regular military forces are controlled and passivized by the regime's loyal military forces (Iran, Iraq, and Libya); (c) exclusionary states where military officers have left their barracks to become the civilian rulers of their states (Egypt, Syria, Tunisia); and (d) monarchies that rely heavily upon foreign mercenaries (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates) or tribal forces to maintain their positions of power (Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia) (see Table I) (Kamrava 2000).

Table I: Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East and North Africa in 2000

Tribally dependent monarchies		Autocratic officer-politicians			
Oil monarchies	Civic-myth monarchies	Mukhaberat states[2]	Military states	Dual militaries	Military democracies
Saudi Arabia Kuwait Bahrain Qatar UAE Oman	Jordan Morocco	Syria Egypt Tunisia Yemen	Algeria Sudan	Iran Iraq Libya	Israel Turkey

Source: Kamrava (2000, p. 71)

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[2]   Mukhaberat states mean police or intelligence states (Kamrava 2000).

In the following part, I explore the history of civil-military relations in the MENA region by dividing scholars' works into three different parts: (a) military coups, (b) coup proofing, and (c) ruling but not governing.

a) Military Coups: From the 1950s to the 1980s

Armed powers played a significant part in the restructuring of their states from the 1950s to the 1970s. Huntington asserted that "in these early stages of political modernization, the military officers play a highly modernizing and progressive role" serving as something of a "midwife" during the transitional period (Huntington 1968, p. 203). However, in the post-independent period after the 1950s, the military in the MENA states usurp and maintain power with frequent coup d'états. As Be'eri explained:

Since March 1949, until the end of 1980 there [in the Arab world] have been 55 coups, approximately half of them successful, the remainder abortive (Be'eri 1982, p. 70).

Steven Cook cited Huntington's 1968 work, Political Order in Changing Societies, as he discussed the impact of the frequent coup d'états: "Violence and instability in a given society was the result of 'rapid social change and rapid mobilization of new groups in politics coupled with the slow development of political institutions'" (Cook 2007, p. 4). In the same work, Huntington defended the military's transitional role. In Gaub's words:

Huntington endorsed the highly politicized military as the bearer of modernization, explaining military coups as a normal step towards modernity. He claimed that once the military accomplished its role as a midwife, stable institutions would be established and the armed forces would naturally retreat into the barracks (Gaub 2013b, p. 222).

In contrast to Huntington's idealistic views of the military, the politicized army powers' uncontrolled and ambitious actions in the MENA states destabilized the region and led to egregious depravity within the borders of each nation. During this period, the military established structures that resembled strict versions of garrison states. The lack of civilian authority and democratic state institutions led the armed forces to take power in the transitional period.

In the post-independence period, the military power used its advantage of being the sole organized power within the newly independent states. Moreover, consequent developments demonstrated that military power aspired to have a power that was covering much more than an interim period. The military behavior was demanding an authority that should be survived in the post-independence period though. According to that behavior, the military deserved to control the post-independent period since the military was the founder and even the owner of the states.

The heyday of the coup d'états declined after the 1980s (Taylor 2014, p. 35). Were the armies replaced with democratic institutions, or did they voluntarily become subject to civilian authorities?

b) Coup Proofing: From the 1980s to the 2000s

After many coup d'états, the people who moved into power sought to protect themselves against the same fate by developing a pre-emptive defense against future coups. As Be'eri explained, "The ruling Arab leaders in the seventies had carefully studied the art of coup-making, particularly those among them, who themselves had seized power in this way; they learned to take preventative measures to forestall their recurrence" (Be'eri 1982, 78). To this end, the rulers developed a coup-proofing strategy. Quinlivan defined *coup proofing as* "the set of actions a regime takes to prevent a military coup" (Quinlivan 1999, p. 133). While specific coup-proofing strategies vary by case, Quinlivan identified five structural features of the approach: "the exploitation of family, ethnic, and religious loyalties; the creation of parallel militaries that counterbalance the regular military forces; the establishment of security agencies that watch everyone, including other security agencies; the encouragement of expertness in the regular military; and, funding" (Quinlivan 1999, p. 135).

Like Quinlivan, Albrecht discussed the "integration" and "segregation" of coup-proofing strategies. Albrecht defended the idea that "during times of systemic regime crisis, integrative coup-proofing is more effective than segregation" (Albrecht 2014, p. 6), and posited that if military officers became loyal to the ruling regime by sharing some of the governing responsibilities, they would be more protective and supportive of the civilian authority (Albrecht 2014). Albrecht showed the different military positions of Syria and Egypt in 2011 to support his argument. While Syrian military officers have stayed loyal to their ethnically linked rulers; the Egyptian military leaders have deserted their rulers. "The concordance of the military's regional, ethnic, or religious composition with that of the protesters' appears to be a critical factor motivating defection" (Grewal 2019, p. 267).

Feaver (1996 & 1999) explained that civilians typically expect military powers to protect them from external and internal threats. Feaver categorized these civilian expectations as functional and relational goals, respectively (Feaver 2003, p. 62). In the Arab states, once the external threats were no longer an issue, after the early 1980s, the civilian leaders began to pay more attention to the relational goal of defending against internal threats (e.g., a military coup d'état). To this end, the rulers of certain Arab states-initiated coup-proofing strategies designed to emasculate their armed forces and maintain their rule. Rukavishnikov and Pugh explained that in a democracy, rulers would have attempted to create a military force "for and within democracy" (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2006, pp. 148-149). However, the MENA states' leaders instead created anti-democratic armies those were loyal to the sitting regime, an effort that manipulated and corrupted the armed forces.

Rulers of most of the MENA states obtained the bulk of their funding from natural resources (gas and oil) and foreign aid, which increased after the 1970s. Rulers in energy-rich states like Libya and Algeria effectively used the non-tax income to create their own loyal military forces, providing economic privileges to military leaders in exchange for their loyalty to the regime. Conversely, energy-poor states used their geostrategic positions to obtain foreign aid and investments. Tunisia and Egypt, for example, received economic and political support from the European states and from the US to develop secular, pro-Western government structures. As such, these energy-poor states also neutralized their own armed powers by giving them economic perks or marginalizing them by restricting their economic and organizational competence (Brooks 2013).

Although the number of coups lessened after the 1980s in response to these strategies, the MENA nations continued to suffer from abject underdevelopment. While their coup-proofing strategies lessened the probability of military coups, authoritarianism remained intact within most of the MENA states, although the new power center had shifted to civilians or civilianized military forces. In essence, the coup-proofing policies created military-backed authoritarian powers at the cost of democracy. The ruling regimes manipulated the military for the sake of their own interests, and coup-proofed military powers rubber-stamped the newly formed system. "From about 1970 and onwards, the role of the military [challenger] changed into becoming the principal protector of the (still authoritarian) regimes" (Hansen and Jensen 2008, pp. 30-31).

Feaver's armed servants model provides an ideal perspective for examining this coup-proofing period. During this time, civil authorities became the employer, and the armed forces became their loyal employees. In these states, the strengthened civil authoritarian powers created armies loyal to the regime; while in democratic states, the armies are supposed to be loyal to the state (Gaub 2013a, p. 5). Furthermore, instead of creating objective civilian control over the military, civil authorities formed mechanisms of subjective civilian—but still authoritarian—control across the MENA region. The new trend in the MENA states was civilianized authoritarian regimes, which fostered stable, undemocratic civil-military relations. These symbiotic relationships also garnered the support of international superpowers, the European Union and the United States, because the authoritarian rulers and their militaries excluded radical Islamists from the system and kept the region stable. International actors subsidized the states in exchange for the promise of a secure and stable region. The anti-democratic states used the trade-off as blackmail for international legitimacy (Gelvin 2012, p. 5). Brooks noted the important role that the military played during this period: "The fact that regimes have successfully managed political military relations does not necessarily imply that the military's importance has diminished. The armed forces remain powerful behind the scenes constituencies, whose support must be maintained and opposition guarded against" (Brooks 1998, p. 74).

c) Ruling but not governing: The New Age of Military Forces

As both the internal and external threats abated, Arab rulers sought to protect their existence in power. While they mostly proofed their armies from coup d'états, they also sought to garner their support. The new role of the "incumbent regime's guardian" kept the armies' role in the political scene even more limited than in previous years, and "a new symbiotic relation" developed between military and civilian powers (Rubin 2001, p.53; Herspring 2009, p. 669).

On the other hand, Cook (2007) conducted a study of Egyptian, Algerian, and Turkish political systems and found that in each case, the armies of the states ruled but did not govern. Cook noted that in each of these states, the military apparatus took pains to exclude strong Islamist powers from the political arena, including the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria after a 1992 election victory, the Welfare Party in Turkey after success in the 1995 general elections, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after 1952 "Free Officers" military coup (Cook 2007). "The 'balance' between officers and civilians, demonstrating how officers in the Middle East can rule but not govern without ever having to step beyond the boundaries of their barracks" (Cook 2007, p. 8).

Finer (1962) labeled these regimes "military supportive states," because their survival depended upon their military's support. In other words, the man was on horseback. Perlmutter noted that these states represented a praetorian model in which "the military tends to intervene in the government and has the potential to dominate the executive" (Perlmutter 1969, p. 383). These types of armies prefer to "operate from behind the scenes as a pressure group" (Perlmutter 1969, p. 396). It is important to note, here, that military support for civilian and democratic rulers is a normal and an expected process. However, the problem is how to distinguish military support from military imposition. In the MENA states, the civil-military balance worked to the mutual benefit of civilian authoritarian rulers and military powers but excluded the rest of the society from participation in the political arena. Several anti-democratic states fell after the Soviet collapse, but military-supported authoritarian regimes in the MENA region continued to maintain their power base. Bellin explained that Arab leaders in the region maintained authoritarianism as an exception through the "robustness of the coercive apparatus" (Bellin 2004, pp. 144-146). Even though the robustness lasted a very long time but someone had to stop the authoritarianism for the sake of national interest, justice, and freedom.

Military involvement in the Arab uprisings: Pro-state and Pro-regime

State leaders in several Arab countries countered numerous anti-governmental riots throughout their history. Recent examples include the 1977 bread and 1986 central security forces riots in Egypt, the 1981 economic-based upheavals in Morocco, and the 1983 bread and 2008 minor riots in Tunisia (Achcar 2013, p. 94). However, none of these anti-governmental protests brought about a revolutionary change in their states. According to Bellin, the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East was the result of (a) the fiscal health of the coercive apparatuses, (b) the low level of institutionalism of security, (c) the enduring international support for the security establishments, and (d) the weak social protests against the ruling regimes (Bellin 2004, pp. 144-146). In addition, Gause stated that the stability of the Arab dictatorships resulted from "the military-security complex" and "state control over the economy" (Gause 2011). Moreover, rich oil reserves, foreign aid, and state leaders' rigid control over the economy created strong, state-run, central economic structures. All of the above factors eliminated strong opposition and the probability of change in leadership.

However, the 2010-2011 Arab uprisings were a prominent change in terms of changing the path of several cases, as happened in Egypt and Tunisia. These states proved a prominent exception because protestors were able to remove anti-democratic rulers by forming a de facto alliance with military forces. In essence, the protectors of the autocratic rulers sided with the people on the street. These uprisings, and the role the military played in them, opened a new page in the literature on civil-military relations in the MENA states. As Taylor explained, "Previous models of civil-military relations [treated] the military as the progenitor of political intervention or the stalwart defender of the regime, not as the arbiter of massive popular upheaval" (Taylor 2014, p. 40).

Bellin, also, recasts the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle Eastern states after these seismic changes. She explained, "Two factors proved primary in the Arab spring: the institutionalization character of the military and the level of social mobilization" (Bellin 2012, p. 131). Institutionalized military forces avoided costly actions, such as shooting the

mass protestors, for their own institutional benefits. Moreover, nonviolent social protests received significant support from different sections of society (Dunne 2020). According to Bellin, the aforementioned factors led to the change of regimes in Egypt and Tunisia recently, as they did previously in Brazil (1985) and Argentina (1983) (Stepan 1988). In contrast, weakly institutionalized or patrimonial military forces and violent protests engendered different results, as in Libya and Syria.

Gause also stressed the importance of the level of institutionalization and the professionalization of the military. In addition, he argued that the social upheavals received the support of the military forces in places with a homogenous social composition, as in Tunisia and Egypt. In contrast, diverse societies, like Syria and Bahrain, failed to achieve success because of sectarian divisions within the societies (Gause 2011).

Gause also noted the role that energy resources played during the protests and stated that the oil-rich states (e.g., Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) protected themselves against social upheavals, except Libya. Gause explained, "Qaddafi's example establishes that oil money must be allocated properly, rather than wasted on pet projects and hare-brained schemes, for it to protect a regime" (Gause 2011). On the other hand, according to Gause, the energy-poor states, such as Tunisia and Egypt, experienced the backfire of the privatization policies in their economies after the 2000s. These policies had created a new super-wealthy and crony capitalism among close colleagues and relatives of the leaders, which also increased the public revulsion.

Like Gause, Springborg (2014) underlined the importance of institutionalism and professionalism during the uprisings. He states that Tunisian and Egyptian militaries were more institutionalized, cohesive, and professional than were Yemen's and Libya's armies. As a result, military forces in Tunisia and Egypt cohesively defected from their rulers, while those in Yemen and Libya eventually fragmented.

Albrecht took a different approach, using the coup-proofing perspective to explain the varying outcomes during the uprisings. Albrecht noted that Mubarak's Egypt "neglected personal bonds with the military" and instead developed corporate-based relationships by giving the military forces economic power, i.e. "economic coup-proofing" (Albrecht 2014, pp. 11-12; Makara 2013). Bashar Assad's Syria, conversely, developed a different strategy, establishing ethnic, familial, and religious-based personal links with military officers that resulted in "a communal military" (Albrecht 2014, p. 12).

Albrecht et al. also analyze the military coups and the post-uprising terms by classifying the military behaviors as "elite and combat officers coup" (Albrecht et al. 2021, p. 8). According to that classification, elite officers' coups (from above) mostly create new authoritarianism. However, combat officers' coup (from below) has more chance to lead to a transition to a democracy (Albrecht et al. 2021, p. 1). Sisi coup in 2013 is an example of how the post-Mubarak term had resulted in another dictatorship (Dunne 2020). Sisi was a top officer and wanted to establish an anti-Muslim brotherhood government. Moreover, he held and won elections after his coup to survive his military governance and received financial aid from the US (Grewal and Kureshi 2019).

Parsons and Taylor (2011) dissected the army's behavior in the Arab uprisings using two perspectives: political restraints and the interests of the military. The researchers contended that the high level of interest along with the low scale of restraints increased the likelihood of the military's intervention in politics. If both restrictions and interests were at either the low or high end of the scale, the army might have split or tentatively supported the protestors. According to Parsons and Taylor, because of the different degrees of restrictions and interests for military forces, various behaviors emerged in the Arab uprising states (see Table II).

Table II: The behavior of the armed forces in Libya, Tunisia, Syria, and Egypt.

	Restraints High	**Restraints Low**
Interests High	Outcome: Ambiguous; Fracture or Side with Regime Libya "fractured support" Other: Iran	Outcome: Side with Protestors Tunisia "ambitious support"
Interests Low	Outcome: Side with Regime (regime doubly secure) Syria "fervent support" Others: Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen	Outcome: Ambiguous; Fracture or Side with Protestors Egypt "reluctant support"

Source: Parsons & Taylor (2011, p. 33)

These findings from the existing literature indicate that the Egyptian military developed a pro-state behavior to protect its economic and social standing by backing the winning side of the conflict: the revolutionaries. Researches indicate that the Egyptian military controlled around 40 percent of the Egyptian economy at the time of the uprising (Brooks, 1998; Lutterbeck, 2013). Before the revolt, former President Hosni Mubarak's son Gamal was preparing to succeed his aging father in a few years (Barany, 2013a, p. 69). Gamal never served in the army, and he was a strong defender of the privatization of the army's assets, a policy that threatened the army's main economic interests (Gelvin, 2012, p. 40). While the Egyptian army saw the revolutionaries as a viable alternative to Gamal, Springborg noted that in their support of the protestors, they were still protecting the regime:

The raison d'être of the Egyptian military is to sustain itself, and by so doing, any regime that rests upon it. This is the only duty it can be said without reservation to have effectively discharged, even in the crisis of 2011, when the military preserved the regime by severing its head (Springborg, 2013, p. 103).

The post-Mubarak term developments agreed with the above arguments. Since General Sisi staged a military coup against an elected Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Morsi in July 2013 (Croissant 2018). The Egyptian military staged a coup against Muslim Brotherhood once they felt that the pro-Islamist government would endanger the pro-secular military's political and economic interests (Feldman 2020). That means the Egyptian military secured its interests in 2013 as it did in 2011.

As Grewal and Kureshi noted, "General Sisi pushed through a new constitution strengthening the institutional privileges of the military by, among other clauses, limiting parliamentary oversight of the military's budget to the heads of two parliamentary committees and granting the military a veto over of the choice of Defense Minister for the next eight years" (Grewal and Kureshi 2019, p.1025). However, the key difference between the military behaviors was that the military ousted the president of the autocracy in 2011, while the same military ousted democratically elected President Morsi in 2013 (Koehler and Albrecht 2021). Tunisia provides another striking case of civil-military relations, because the Tunisian military, like the military force in Egypt, declared its support for protesters (Albrecht et al., 2021). However, unlike the Egyptian military, the Tunisian military had little to lose (Grewal 2019). Brooks provided the following explanation:

The decision to refrain from using force against the Tunisian protesters therefore occurred in a context in which the military had little to lose (and potentially some to gain) from abandoning Ben Ali, while protecting him would have introduced significant costs to the military (Brooks 2013, p. 207).

To coup-proof their military forces, Ben Ali and his predecessor Bourguiba controlled the Tunisian army by excluding military personnel from the political arena and creating counterbalance police and security forces (Brooks 1998). While the Egyptian rulers coup-proofed their army mostly by rewarding it, Tunisian leaders chose the strategy of counterbalancing.

The professional, cohesive and institutionalized structure of the Tunisian military; unarmed and decisive protests; and the energy poor structure of the Tunisian economy played a significant role in the military's pro-state decision to support the protesters. The Tunisian army held high interests and little to lose by supporting the people against the Ben Ali regime. As Grewal stated, "Those officers who were less satisfied with the political power afforded to the military by the regime were more supportive of defection" (Grewal 2019, p. 267).

While Ben Ali had established a substantial police force with his internally- and externally-sourced economic income, he did not have any non-tax revenue from energy resources to help him become economically independent from his society and the external interests. He developed close relationships with representatives from the Western liberal world for the economic benefits they provided—most notably with France, a long-term ally. According to Ritter, Ben Ali found himself in the "iron cage of liberalism," as his relationship with the liberal world prevented him from using lethal force against the unarmed protestors (Ritter 2015).

However, the post-Ben Ali term has also failed to build a strong and effective democratic regime in Tunisia. Even though the Tunisian military did not intervene in the post-Ben Ali term, the political parties' weaknesses and pro-longed coalitions in that the Tunisian parliament have led to weak coalitional governments and postponed the solutions (Grewal and Hamid 2020). Tunisia has not produced a real and long-term solution to its political, social, and economic problems (Feldman 2020). Albrecht et al. warn Tunisian politicians by saying the prolonged political, economic and social crisis can encourage people to invite a military intervention into Tunisian politics as an immediate solution (Albrecht et al. 2021).

In contrast to Tunisia and Egypt, the split within the Libyan army caused a nearly 9-month civil war, and NATO's responsibility to protect (R2P) military intervention. On the one hand, Gaddafi defended himself with his relatives, close friends, and tribal-connected paramilitary forces; on the other hand, foreign-supported armed protestors and defectors from the Libyan regular armed forces fought until the end of Gaddafi's regime. The foreign intervention ended this civil war and Gaddafi's term in October 2011.

The quick meltdown of the Libyan regular military forces proved that they were much less professional, institutional, and cohesive than their Tunisian counterpart (Gaub 2013b). More important, the Tunisian military forces developed a pro-state behavior while the Libyan military forces developed a pro-regime behavior. The long-term struggle against the internal and external forces also demonstrated that Gaddafi had his own patrimonial loyal forces that fought until the end with him. The energy resources were critical in helping Gaddafi establish and maintain his own loyal forces during his 42-year rule. Furthermore, armed protestors, unlike in Tunisia, and their consequent violence were another difference between the Tunisian and the Libyan uprisings. As a result, Libya experienced an armed revolution, while Tunisia's rebellion was largely nonviolent.

Conclusion

In this paper, first of all, I presented the importance of military power in the Middle East and North Africa by exploring military involvement in the history of the countries respectively: Coup lover, coup-proofed, ruling but not governing power, and pro-regime or pro-state power. The history also shows that the role of the military cannot be analyzed without taking the states' internal and external conditions into account. That means the role that the military played was the reason and also the result of the countries' unique conditions. In the 1950s, when the countries received their independence from hegemonic powers, the military played a structuring and decisive role for the infant countries. As the countries' institutions developed, the military role also changed: from ruler to supporter.

2010-2011 Arab uprisings once again verified the fact that the military power was a principal player who would have a significant effect on the conclusion of the accounts. In Tunisia and Egypt, the pro-state military had sided with the protestors and the long-term rulers were forced to leave their positions (Sarihan 2021). However, the pro-regime military behavior in Libya and Syria concluded civil-strives and ongoing state crises as the day of 2022 (Sarihan 2021). That implies that in the time of conflicts and divisions, which part is backed by the military power, that part most probably becomes the winner, at least not a loser. In MENA, the military backed-winner had long time been anti-democratic rulers until the 2010-2011 protests. The Arab uprisings have created a new page that the military power can also move along with the pro-democratic parts.

To recapitulate, the 2010-2011 social upheavals proved that national armies played an important role in the outcome of social protests, as they decide whether they will defect, defend, or split. This paper began with a discussion of the civil-military relations in the MENA region from the 1950s to the 2000s. I ended the paper with an examination of the literature on the behavior of military forces during the Arab uprisings. My study aims to fill that gap by exploring the importance of military power and the different military behaviors from the early days of independence to the Arap uprisings. The military has always been an important part of Arab societies but to different extents and different shapes.

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