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Confronting the Square:
Explaining Authoritarian Control Strategies During Civilian Uprisings

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Dedication

For Chloé and Liam, the motivations for everything that I do.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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This dissertation seeks to explain how and why regimes adopt different control strategies during massive civilian uprisings. The 2011 Arab uprisings saw regimes across the Middle East and North Africa respond to protests against the state using a mix of violence and accommodation to demobilize those in the streets. Some regimes carried strategies characterized by high levels of lethal violence against those in the streets, while

others minimized violence while offering a raft of concessions to protesters; some states adopted a hybrid approach. I argue that authoritarian control strategies are a product of the interaction between a regime's past successful dominant control strategies and the level of unity between the executive and the military at the time of the protests. I test this theory by utilizing a small-N, qualitative case study analysis of three Middle Eastern and North African countries that had distinctly different outcomes in terms of their control strategies: Morocco, Tunisia, and Syria. Data was collected from primary and secondary source material, including news reports, scholarly literature, and interviews conducted in Tunis, Tunisia during fieldwork in 2016. I find that regimes tend to adopt historically dominant strategies when civil-military unity exists, however breaks between the military and the executive result in mixed strategies or the termination of the protest phase.

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Chapter 1: Methods of Control and Civil Uprisings

I. Introduction

From Tunisia to Ukraine, massive protests have been organized with demands ranging from economic reform to the ouster of formerly monolithic authoritarian leaders that had enjoyed decades in power. These protests have consistently been met with state-sponsored violence aimed at depressing mobilization, however, the nature and extent of state-sponsored violence has varied greatly across the region. During the 2010-2011 Arab uprising (otherwise known as the “Arab Spring”) responses ranged from numerous concessions in Morocco to decisive and violent in Syria. The effect of these events has inextricably transformed the region in ways not previously seen. Syria remains war torn, and its nearly decade-long civil war has produced a refugee crisis that has had effects even beyond the region. The uprisings produced the region’s first Arab democracy in Tunisia, which continues to develop and grow each year. It has also seen the resilience of the region’s monarchies come to the fore, with potentates in states like Bahrain and Morocco still holding onto power despite the courting of democratic openings in each case. The state of the region today owes itself in many ways to the strategies employed by authoritarians in the region in response to the massive protest that swept the region in those years. This dissertation asks a fundamental question of contentious politics and democratization: why and how do states construct specific strategies of repression during periods of mass mobilization that challenge the existing political regime? This question is also inextricably tied to several relevant questions within the literature on

authoritarianism and contentious politics. For instance, why are some states more violent in their response to protests than others? What causes an entrenched autocrat to make seemingly serious concessions that could pave the way for democratic openings? How does the response of the protesters evolve and change the calculus of the regime over the course of the protest period? The answers to these questions have important implications for understanding how the often-disparate variables identified in the literature interact and influence each other in an active way. By identifying how these constellations of variables relate to and feed into one another, it is possible to advance new ways of thinking about state repression that adopt a more holistic and nuanced approach to regime-side, institutional variables, as well as their effect on and response to variables external to the regime.

To address these questions and concerns, I investigate the cases of Syria, Tunisia, and Morocco during the 2010-2011 Arab uprisings. In analyzing them, I build upon the insights of authors who have investigated the role of history and the military in explaining instances of violence and concession during periods of protest by assessing what happens when these variables interact, as well as well as how the security forces as an institution can both limit and enhance the power of historical patterns of control.

II. Literature Review

The literature on authoritarian regimes, particularly in the Middle East, has gained significant momentum in recent years. The Arab uprisings and their subsequent fallout undoubtedly contributed to the reassessment of authoritarian durability and

democratization in the region. The growing area studies literature also comes at a time in the past decade where the study of the authoritarianism has also expanded. Works by the likes of Svoboda (2012), Gandhi (2008), Slater (2010), Brownlee (2007), and Frantz & Kendall-Taylor (2017) have sought to understand how regimes survive the ebb and flow of opposition and submission from its citizens, which is of paramount importance for understanding the context of events like those seen during the 2011 Arab uprisings.

One of the most notable aspects of authoritarian rule and its durability is the importance of the internal nature of regime alliances and dynamics. As Svoboda points out, “An overwhelming majority of dictators lose power to those inside the gates of the presidential palace rather than to the masses outside” (2012, p. 5). Regime unity can be one of the most important factors when it comes to regime survival and that unity is cast among a variety of actors, from the security forces to economic elites. One of the major ways that authoritarians manage this unity is through the use of political parties. Work by Gandhi (2008), Brownlee (2007), and Frantz & Kendall-Taylor (2007), all emphasize the centrality of the ruling party. Brownlee highlights this in a concise manner by describing the utility of political parties in authoritarian regimes as follows: “When factions of opportunistic leaders are bound together institutionally, the ruling party provides collective benefits for the coalition’s members and draws them centripetally, as it were, to eschew the opposition” (2007, p. 3). The binding together of sometimes disparate interests through institutional unity in the form political parties ensures that those with the most political power are able to maintain that system. Parties are also useful externally. Gandhi (2008) argues that dictators utilize parties and legislatures as a means

of cooptation – bringing opposition groups into the privileged political sphere whilst simultaneously weakening the opposition movement.

The danger from such a system is manifest. Once cracks begin to show in the façade of such an alliance, the regime is vulnerable to collapse from the inside. The term regime here refers to what Pzeworski and Limongi describe as “the locus of decision-making and the property right to the fiscal residuum” (1993, p. 58) – in the case of these the three personalist regimes under analysis here, the state apparatus and the executive. Frantz & Kendall-Taylor (2017) find evidence suggesting this, noting that the formation of parties can also enhance the prospects for democratization. Brownlee (2007) adds credence to this by emphasizing how regimes can rot from in the inside, much in the same way Svoboda (2012) argues. To prevent this, Brownlee says, regimes must organize and structure their systems in a way that prevents internal fragmentation and as a consequence political openings for the opposition. Slater (2010) similarly argues that ordering power, the arrangement of political institution for the management of opposition movements, can have direct consequences on authoritarian durability. If regimes fail to deal with these institutional dangers, catastrophic problems can and will arise.

The study of the Middle East in this context has expanded greatly since the Arab uprisings, with a wealth of scholarship being published by the likes of Bank et al. (2015), Anderson (2013), Hassan et al (2017), Heydemann & Leenders (2011), Sassoon (2016), Josua & Edel (2015), and Volpi (2013). Regime durability has often been at the center of these inquiries, largely in attempt to explain varying outcomes experienced after the

uprisings. Explanations for these outcomes have varied widely. One of the paramount explanations has been the different institutional advantages of the monarchies over the personalist regimes. Anderson (2013) outlines how monarchies tend to have significant distance from their policies, usually through the utilization of intermediary governments, which they can then reshuffle should a policy fail. Though, as she notes, this is problematic as an explanation because we must also assume personalistic regimes share this power. The personalist Assad regime in Syria was quick to offer a reshuffling of the nominal government as a token concession during the first month of protests. In their thorough assessment of the durability of Arab monarchies during the uprisings, Bank et al. (2015) identify three pathways to durability exhibited by the monarchies: linchpin regimes (those that survive due to historical-religious claims, as in Morocco and Jordan), dynastic regimes (who survive through a reliance on rents and family participation, as in much of the Gulf), and outlier hybrid regimes in Oman and Yemen. This is to say that even within the monarchies, variation exists in explaining why they have been so durable.

Other explanations for the durability of Middle Eastern regimes after 2011 are compelling, as well. Volpi identifies that the ability of a regime to channel discontent is critical: “Success requires reform pathways to be made available by authoritarian regimes, contestation can be channeled into non-revolutionary political action” (2013, p. 983). Conversely, Volpi finds, regimes fail when they are not able to subdue protests through concession and lack the intermediaries necessary to channel discontent, thus leading them to rely on the security forces for the final push to demobilize protesters. A host of additional explanations have found support, including the ability of regimes to

negatively frame democracy as an alternative through overt control over civil society and the media (Hassan et al. 2017; Abott 2017), the ability of the state to recombine and adapt institutions to changing circumstances (Heydemann & Leenders 2011), and the nature of state-society relations, particularly the extent to which the society feels jettisoning the regime will undermine its own security (Anderson 2013). In his massive collation of 120 memoirs written by Arab elites, Joseph Sassoon (2016) orients the repressive apparatus of the state at the center of his explanation, arguing that Arab states all shared similar repressive tactics both during and after periods of unrest: widespread torture, publicly assassinations, robust spy apparatuses, and effective management of elite cliques. Eva Bellin's (2012) work on the robustness of authoritarianism in the region also emphasizes the strategic importance of the security apparatus, most notably the military. While the democratization literature post-Arab uprisings is in some ways fragmented, it is important to take note of precisely how important regime unity is to the function of an authoritarian regime, particularly vis-à-vis the security forces. I will argue this is central to how and why regimes adopt different repressive strategies.

III. Theory

The appearance of massive protests forces an executive in an authoritarian regime to construct a strategy to respond. Inaction is rarely – if ever – an option in these circumstances, so a leader must decide the best course of action. I theorize that because executives in authoritarian regimes are fraught with a variety of choices that they must consider, all with potentially dire consequences if incorrectly applied, a heuristic

approach is often the first recourse – that is, a ruler must ask themselves what has worked in the past?

Significant evidence has been found that past experiences in a state inform contemporary strategies. Work by Davenport (1996), Hoover and Kowlewski (1992), and Walker and Lang (1988) have all drawn lines between a regime's past and current actions. Davenport's (1996) study attempts to look at three separate variables from the past that have an effect extemporaneously: changes in the democratic structure, political conflict (coded as a composite variable composed of an index of three events: political strikes, student strikes, as well as protest demonstrations), and dependency (composed of economic variables). Hoover and Kowalewski (1992), like Davenport, find support for the idea that recent past conflict in the form of protest and strikes influences contemporaneous instances of violence, while Walker and Lang (1988) also find that institutional preparedness and capacity of the coercive apparatus in the past has been found to influence repression in the present. It is necessary to take this well-placed emphasis on history and refine and integrate it in the context of other more contemporaneous factors that can mediate its effects, especially in the context of the Arab uprisings. I expand upon this by allowing for the consideration of factors further back in a regime's past beyond the narrow window of roughly seven years laid out by Davenport (1996). Additionally, I demonstrate how this historical influence embeds itself as a heuristic cue for helping regimes understand what has been successful in the past and what can be successful in the present.

Looking to within-state historical norms of how protesters have responded to various government responses reduces uncertainty and gives leaders a reference point from which to judge the merits of various strategies. If violence has quelled protests in the past, leaders may believe there is a strong likelihood that it will work again given similar circumstances. Alternatively, if the state has used accommodation in the past to appease popular discontent, it will be more averse to applying high levels of violence and may be more interested in applying a concession-oriented strategy buttressed by lower levels of incapacitative violence – after all, such levels of protest are rarely without some level of political violence. This heuristic provides the baseline response for the regime – what I refer to here as the *historical baseline*. To borrow a term used by Jacques Hymans in his analysis of the psychology of nuclear proliferation, the choice to use violence can in many ways be a “leap in the dark” (2000, p. 11). There is no way to know what the result of a given action might be, with the possibility of failing and exacerbating the problem an ever-looming threat. The history of repression in the regime provides a signpost that elites can follow to make that leap in the dark slightly less blind. Contrary to Davenport’s (1996) contention that this memory is relatively limited – roughly to seven years prior to the repressive event – I argue that this memory can extend even further. Evidence of this is particularly striking in my discussion of Syria. The insurrection that occurred in Hama in 1982 would likely not be far from Assad’s mind, even in 2011, when he saw protesters taking to the streets in Damascus and beyond. Indeed, the scorched earth tactics that the elder Assad utilized in 1982 reappear yet again in 2011 and have continued to during the civil war. Indeed, by tapping into the patterns that exist

across cases of protest, we can draw the line between strategies used decades prior, seeing those same strategies continue to be utilized in future iterations. Further, even if the recent history has the most acute effect on present strategies, you cannot divorce recent history from a regime's extended history. Context is important because it helps to understand *why* recent historical successes and failures are important, as has been previously discussed in this dissertation.

The baseline does not lead to the outcome directly – i.e. the use of violence in the past does not necessarily lead to the use of violence in the present. The baseline is simply a reference point, a heuristic – i.e. a collection of data points from previous periods of contention that an executive interprets to decide how to move forward during a contemporary protest phase. As we will see in the case of Morocco, new baselines can be established when previous baselines are interpreted negatively. If a previous baseline produces negative externalities – e.g. international pressure, a failure to control protests – then the executive can reassess whether a previous control strategy will be effective in the present. Additionally, even in authoritarian regimes, executive choices must be filtered through institutional channels within the regime, particularly the military. For these reasons, I introduce the role of the military as an institutional check on an executive's chosen strategy. As I will discuss, this is important for understanding why formerly repressive regimes moderate their strategies, why a regime can unleash seemingly unceasing amounts of violence, and why repressive violence is sidelined in favor of concessions. While executives control the reins of power in an autocratic regime, they cannot act without the backing of the military. Periods of massive protest consistently test

this relationship. Militaries are protectors of their institutional prerogatives and will only go so far with the executive when it comes to repression. Officer ties to the middle-class, religious affiliation, and the perceived legitimacy of the regime will all be serious considerations for a military faced with an uprising. Thus, I argue that *civil-military unity* was a decisive feature of the Arab uprisings when it comes to explaining regime strategies. While previously discussed authors like Bellin (2012) and Josua and Edel (2015) have treated the military as central to explaining outcome during the Arab spring, it is often done in isolation or as one of many explanations. I argue that the militaries decision to cooperate or shirk is decisive but must be seen in the context of the executive's preferred strategy, which as I have argued is drawn from the historical baseline response. While identifying the military as central players during protest scenarios is not wholly novel, the caveat that it must be considered that they are reacting to internal machinations and preferences within the regime adds previous undiscussed context and relevance to the variable.

A budding literature in the study of civil-military relations has taken on this very topic, looking at when and how militaries decided to break with their civilian counterparts once other elements of the security forces have failed to contain protests and they themselves are asked to crush those in the streets as a last resort. Pion-Berlin et al. (2012, p. 22) argue that in these "endgame scenarios" the military will ultimately revert into a defensive posture and protect its own institutional interests, namely issues related to "material well-being, professional identity, and organization cohesion." This, Pion-Berlin and his coauthors argue, is heavily influenced by a military's sense of "mission

appropriateness” and institutional self-interest (p. 18-19). The decision to order the military to repress in these end game scenarios is critical and highlights the interaction between the regime and the military. Dragu and Lupu (2017) argue that there is a critical “logic of expectation” wherein the regime can be constrained based on if they believe that other state agents will follow orders. If a regime believes that, for instance, the military “fear(s) the consequences of repression or [has] internalized norms against it” then its repressive strategy will be affected (Dragu and Lupu 2017, p. 7). Additionally, Josua & Edel (2015) find a correlation between the closeness of the military to the regime to the level of incapacitative violence used. This closeness can manifest itself in several ways, but communalism was a critical feature of civil-military unity during the 2011 uprisings. If a regime stacks its security forces with either religious allies or members of the ruling family, especially in the officer corps, militaries will be more likely to defend the status quo. This is critical in states where the regime is composed of a minority, as is the case in Syria and Bahrain. Anderson (2013) articulates this point by showing that a population that identifies with the state irrespective of the current regime in power will feel “unthreatened” if it were to go. Conversely, Anderson argues that if elites rely on the regime because power outside of it will cease to exist, then they will be more willing to brutally repress in its defense.

Division between the regime and the security forces has consequences both in the initial first phase of protest response as well as the evolution and adapted response over time. In the first phase, regimes need the complicity of the security forces to carry out repression – keeping order in the streets, arresting participants, or even attacking those in

the crowd. Unity allows the regime to play out its initial instinct, whether that is a strategy of accommodation or violence. Divisions makes the calculus a bit murkier. If the security forces break with the regime, there are two options: (a) compromise and apply a mixed strategy or (b) the executive must exit in the face of an intransigent military; in some cases, both options play out, one after the other.

While previously discussed authors like Bellin (2012) and Josua and Edel (2015) have treated the military as central to explaining outcomes during the Arab spring, it is often done in isolation or as one of many explanations. I argue that the military's decision to cooperate or shirk is decisive but must be seen in the context of the executive's preferred strategy, which as I have argued is drawn from the historical baseline response. Militaries are central players during protest scenarios, but it must be considered that they are reacting to internal machinations and preferences within the regime. Taken in tandem, these two variables – historical baseline and civil-military unity – interact to produce the primary strategy applied by a regime during periods of massive protest. The give-and-take between the regime's preferences and the military's preferences ultimately lead to a situation where a pliant military allows the regime to carry out its historically preferable strategy or the military forces the regime to moderate its strategy or force the executive to leave entirely. The imagined scenario here is that 1) protests break out, 2) an executive (the locus of power in a personalist regime) assesses previous strategies used in the past and constructs a preferred strategy to address the current crisis (violence or concession), 3) the executive orders the security forces to execute this order, at which point the

military will then decide to shirk or remain unified with the executive, leading to 4) the final outcome. This process can be seen in Figure I.

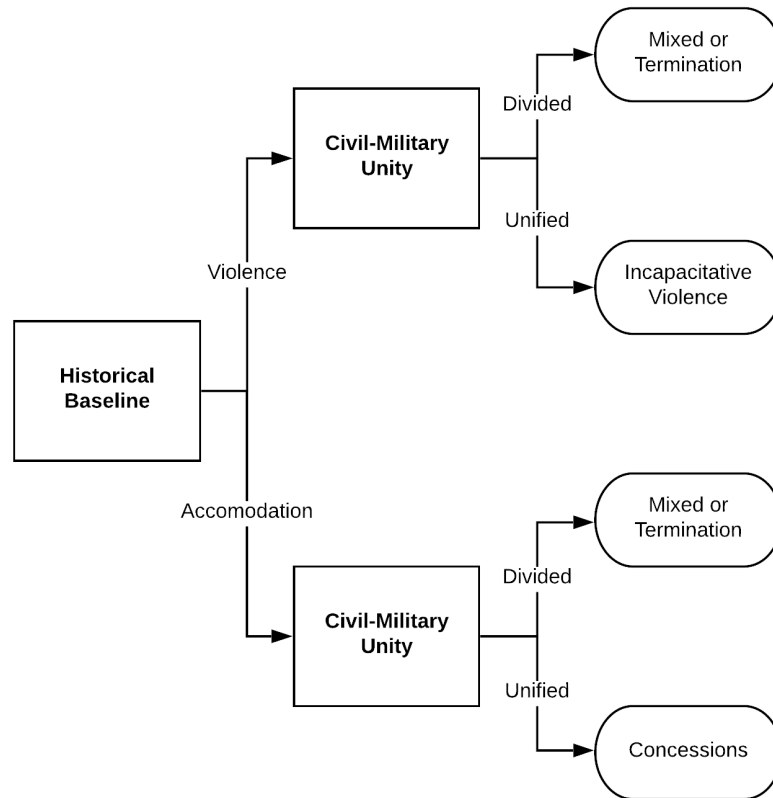


Figure 1: A Causal Model of Key Control Strategies

IV. Variables and Coding

Dependent Variable:

Political repression and the offering of concessions are two sides of the same coin when it comes to a regime’s strategy. The terms embody the analogous “carrot-and-stick” framing that is often used to describe cases where one actor offers various doses of both

punishment and reward in order to obtain a preferred response from another. For the purposes of this dissertation, I adopt Henderson's definition of repression that includes "disappearance, detention, torture, and political killings" (1991, p. 120). This framing of repression encapsulates well the myriad ways in which a regime can seek to gain control over protesters through force and coercion, some more visible than others. Indeed, each of these methods have been a hallmark of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa for decades, though to varying degrees.

Concessions serve as the carrot in a regime's carrot-and-stick strategy for contending with massive popular mobilization. As Chong argues, "When the government finally responds favorably to popular pressure, the concessions it makes quickly remove the impetus behind the movement (1991, p. 159). The nature of the concessions can vary depending on the demands of the protesters and the leverage of the regime.

Authoritarians are no stranger to token concessions during periods of opposition, usually taking the form of the sacking of a local or regional politician. These types of concession are intended to give the illusion that the regime is taking responsibility for its policy choices, but they are often simply a way of passing the buck to expendable political cronies with no real influence. These token concessions are often most notable when the concession themselves are incongruous with the demands of the protesters to a significant degree. If protesters are calling for executive to step down, for elections, or massive changes to the political system, and an executive sacks local governors or other political actors with no meaningful power over these institutions, then these concessions could be described as "token" or insincere. When protests are sizeable and seemingly unceasing,

concessions can go as far as offering limited political openings to the opposition. According to Gandhi (2008), bringing groups into the political fold through political concessions, namely the introduction of a legislature and political parties, can be a useful means of political survival. Make no mistake, though: these openings are often smoke screens for real reform and are typically ways of bringing opposition groups to heel through cooptation. Gandhi and Przeworski (2007) emphasize the effectiveness of institutional control in concessions to control the extent of concessions. This acts as an attempt to co-opt protesters, bringing them into the political fold whilst simultaneously preventing demands from going further than the regime prefers.

Elsewhere, explanations for concessions and political openings have been covered with some depth in the transition (Brownlee et al. 2013 and Stacher 2011) and economic reform (Schwarz 2008) literatures. Brownlee et al. argue that political openings are more likely in states where states like oil wealth and succession is non-hereditary, as elite defection and the breakdown of despotic power are more likely (2012, p. 38). Alternatively, Stacher's (2011) analysis of Bashar al-Assad's succession to power, consolidating a hereditary succession system, was much more influenced by elite decision-making within the regime than previously. Thus, the likelihood of political openings or regime change in even hereditary systems can be tricky depending on internal elite dynamics, much in the same way that I argue here. Additionally, authors like Schwarz found that rentier states are much more resistant to democratic rule, particularly because it "conserve[s] socio-political norms in Arab societies and polities, such as the patrimonial nature of social interactions and primordial loyalties, based on

allocation patterns” (2008, p. 68). Rentierism undoubtedly has an effect on the possibility of democratic opening, though all three cases under analysis do not draw sizeable revenue from rent-seeking behavior.

Scholars attempting to explain why executives use concessions and repression during periods of protest have tended to focus on concession and repression independently – i.e. what explains when a regime uses various forms of repression or what explains why a regime would offer political concessions. Work by Danneman and Ritter (2013), Davenport (2013), Sullivan (2012), and Butler et al. (2009) have investigated the security of the executive’s position, the protection of territory, the presence of organized youth in the opposition, and the role of external militias, respectively. Scholarship assessing the efficacy of human rights treaties has also provided some explanation for repression and political violence. Work by the likes of Hathaway (2002), Simmons (2009), and Sikkink (2011) has analyzed the link between international norms and legal institutions governing repressive behavior in states. Treaties can give political cover by giving the illusion of compliance and membership in the international system, while repressive activity continues domestically. Alternatively, the existence of these instruments can also provide openings for domestic challengers to hold repressive governments accountable for their behavior. Given the cases it is difficult to assess directionality when it comes to treaties and their effect on repression. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Hassan II acceded to several international human rights treaties at the same time that his key control strategy had begun to move away from the use of lethal forms of violence. Did Hassan II cease these tactics out of fear that

instruments in these treaties could be used to punish him or had the decision to change tactics been drawn from his experience in the 1980s and negative externalities produced as a result of those tactics in the early part of the decade? I argue that the latter was the key turning point, as will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

However, as outlined, the explanation of repression is not enough when one does not consider the other key tool in a regime's repertoire: concessions. I build upon these approaches by framing repression and concession as two sides of the same control strategy coin – what I refer to as a regime's *key control strategy*. A regime's key control strategy can favor one or the other over the entire course of a protest, but repression and concessions usually simultaneously comprise some portion of any strategy that attempts to resolve a period of massive popular upheaval. Indeed, it is not a static description but one that changes throughout the protest. Concession and repression are used in response to protest strategies. It is only when a protest has completed or has transitioned into different type of conflict that we get a sense of the predominantly used strategy. Further, this could also capture instances where the regime doles out concessions or repression unevenly – i.e. repressing some segments of the protest, while conceding political or economic benefits to others. While divide-and-conquer strategies are common, they did not feature prominently in the Arab uprisings. This could be an interesting avenue for future research in other instances of protest.

As authoritarian regimes typically apply strategies that utilize both carrots and sticks, the emphasis here will be on what a regime's prevailing strategy is. In order to

code such a variable in a very fluid environment, I will consider two key factors: (1) when a certain level of violence begins to be used and is then normalized – i.e. regularly used in successive protest events - and (2) how substantive these concessions are over the course of a protest phase – i.e. how well do concessions doled out over the course of the protest address the demands of protesters. Concessions are designated as high when the regime frequently – i.e. on multiple occasions and across multiple issue areas – offers substantive political and or economic concessions to protesters over the course of a protest phase. Concessions are moderate when an executive offers some concessions but avoids addressing major overarching demands. Concessions are low when substantive concessions that address the core grievances of the protesters do not figure into the overall strategy of the regime. Given this configuration, the three cases chosen to analyze this question through, as well as their coding can be seen below:

	Morocco	Tunisia	Syria
Key Control Strategy	<i>Concession</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Violence</i>
Concessions	High	Moderate	Low
Violence	Low	Moderate	High

Table 1: Variation on the Dependent Variable

The balance between the two must be considered over the courses of the protest phase. All three regimes used a “mix” of these two strategies but the weight of each must be considered as part of an overall repressive strategy. For instance, in Syria Bashar al-Assad used and normalized a high level of violence within the first week of the protest

and did not shy away from using both the military, gangs, and the police to attack protesters. By the same token, he doled out a regular stream of concessions. If the protest phase for Syria ended in April, it could be argued that Assad used a “mixed” strategy. However, protests did not end until early July when the Free Syrian Army was formed. After an April concession ending the long-standing state of emergency, Assad essentially dropped concessions as a meaningful strategy and doubled-down on his strategy of coercive violence. Given the totality of the protest phase, it is difficult to argue that Assad used a strategy that did not emphasize violence as its key component.

Independent Variables:

Historical Baseline

This variable is coded given a sample of previous protest phases and what a given regime’s strategy was during the period in question. I analyze past protest events during a regime’s history for each case and then make an assessment based on commonly used violence/concessions strategies. The historical baseline will then be coded based on the predominant strategy during these protest cycles: *accommodation* or *violence*. In order to code this variable, I employ a narrative analysis of past protests events in each country, noting the predominant strategy employed by the regime. Past protest events are evaluated based on the effectively dominant instrument used to end a specific event. For example, if a protest event ceased following a large-scale mobilization of the security forces and widespread violence in the form of lethal protest control methods (live fire, physical brutality) and other coercive methods (disappearances, targeted assassinations,

and widespread arrests) that would characterize that event as a violent precedent. Conversely, if a protest event resulted in concessions that met protester demands and were sufficient to demobilize those on the streets, a protest event would be characterized as one where accommodation was used. Given a sample of at prior protest events, a case is coded as *accommodation* or *violence* when the sum of that sample leans in either direction.

I expect regimes that have previously adopted violent strategies with perceived success in the eyes of the executive will adopt violent key control strategies in the present. Violence is normalized and internalized by the security forces over the course of multiple historical confrontations between the state and protesters. Thus, we should expect for violence to be a part of a regime's key control strategy in current protest events if it also was in the past. A regime will be coded along each category if it used a clearly identifiable strategy in the sum of its protest responses, with recent protests weighted heavily.

Civil-Military Unity

Civil-Military Unity is coded along two categories: *unified* or *divided*. A regime is coded as divided when it exhibits visible examples of dissent from the military, typically in the form of shirking orders and remaining in the barracks. In order for an event to be coded as a shirk, there must exist evidence that the executive ordered the military to repress protesters and that the order was denied. We should expect regimes that are highly unified with their military to follow through with their historical baseline with

minimal adjustments, while divided regimes at some point in the protest phase will be forced to change strategy.

These variables produce the following outcomes:

	Morocco	Tunisia	Syria
Key Control Strategy	<i>Concession</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Violence</i>
Historical Baseline	Accommodation	Violence	Violence
Civil-Military Unity	Unified	Divided	Unified

Table 2: An Overview of Dependent and Independent Variables

The primary contribution of this dissertation is to demonstrate that while it has been shown that both history and the military are important when explaining outcome associated with the Arab uprisings in 2010 and 2011. The interaction between these variables has not been studied closely and analyzing them in tandem presents a novel approach to how the inner machinations of an authoritarian regime responds to mass protests. A detailed historical study allows the use of the historical baseline variable to shed better light on these machinations and how the behavior of regimes is normalized over time, as well as challenged at decisive times (see: Morocco). Further, this qualitative study is able to show the connection and inherent tension between an executive attempting to revert to form and adopt a previous strategy in the face of a military that does not see its interests in sync with the executive (see: Tunisia).

As previously discussed, it is not enough for a regime to have a tried-and-true strategy that it will consistently go back to during every protest. That decision is checked by what is often the final arbiter of power in Middle Eastern autocracies: the military. Conversely, the military provides a check on power and can sometimes make final decisions about what action is best, but more often than not it is acting at the behest of the executive; thus, it is incredibly important to consider not just how powerful the military is, but also what political and historical context the decisions that the institution makes come in. The executive will draw from past successes and failures with key control strategies and will enact them to some degree; however, military compliance is key to the success of these strategies, especially if it comes down to the “endgame scenario” and the military is the last line of defense. If the military breaks with the regime, the historical baseline is not enough to explain the outcomes observed.

Other Considerations:

Many of the protests that broke out in the Arab world during 2010 and 2011 in fact began not with calls for the regime to step down, but rather airing general – yet, very serious – grievances ranging from the political to the economic. In most instances, the calls for the regime to step down did not begin until well after the protests were in full swing. As a result, regimes could clearly see at several points that their strategy was producing not demobilization, but rather further dissatisfaction. Once demands begin to incorporate an increasing number of grievances, particularly those related to changes in the existing power structure (transparent elections, the executive’s resignation, economic

liberalization that might threaten economic elites, etc.) then the regime knows that it is running out of options. At some point the regime cannot give any more accommodations because doing so would have the potential to unseat the delicate balance of power and institutions that had kept them in office for so long. Authoritarian leaders are well aware of how far they are willing to go in accommodating the demands of the protesters. Authoritarian regimes exist because of a very complex and intertwined network of political and economic patron-client networks that cannot be disrupted (Owens 2012). Outside of empty promises for future reform, the token sacking of various crony politicians, and minor reforms or openings to the political process, the regime will reach a point at which repression must be increased or the executive must exit. Because of this, I argue that a fixed number of concessions are doled out regardless of changes in the political context, up to and excluding meaningful changes to the political or economic system that would threaten the existing ruling coalition, with the level of violence being the primary “lever” that elites manipulate as protests persist. This departs from work on accommodation and violence by Moore (2000), who puts forth a substitution model where a state will substitute either accommodation or violence depending on the reaction of protesters to the prior policy (either accommodation or violence). Pierskalla argues that states ideally know their optimal policy choices, and will always make decisions towards that end (2010, p. 121). Instead, Pierskalla argues, four scenarios play out in state-protest interaction: repress, escalate; repress, acquiesce; accommodate, escalate; accommodate, acquiesce (2010, p. 123). Empirical evidence from the Arab protests in 2010-2011 suggests that this oversimplifies the interaction. Accommodations were often

given in concert with changes in the levels of violence, rather than sequentially in response to protest tactics as Pierskalla's model suggests.

Elite preference regarding how far one is willing to go to maintain the status quo is to some extent capped. An individual or group of individuals ultimately has some idea of what level of violence will be unacceptable or excessive. Factors that can affect this preference may include personally held ideological perspectives (Mahoney-Norris 2000), institutional association and relationship with the mobilized public, or a rational cost-benefit analysis of the use of violence (Kowalewski and Hoover 1995). This is often most important when it comes to the security forces, particularly the military. The military has a sense of what they are willing to do and not do during civilian uprisings. Military leadership may believe that violence is necessary up until a point, even if they do not participate. For instance, the Tunisian military was clearly not willing to use the power of the armed forces against civilians at the behest of Ben Ali, but they were content to allow regime special forces to fire upon protesters in the villages of Thala and Kasserine – an act that caused a significant amount of the casualties sustained during the revolution. It is also possible that executive preference is capped, as well. A leader may not be willing to risk all out military violence and decide to exit instead. This latter point raises numerous other questions that may not fit within the scope of the present inquiry, but it is reasonable to assume that not all authoritarian leaders will use the military when the end-game arrives.

Alternative Explanation:

Civilian uprisings and state responses are complex and fluid processes that involve a significant number of variables. While there may be multiple factors at play, several of which I will point out here, I argue that they are dominated by the variables I have discussed or insufficient in explaining the universe of cases I have outlined.

Perhaps the most intuitive explanation for state violence is the idea of “violence-begets-violence” – i.e. the state violence is governed by the level of protester violence (Davis and Ward 1990; Carey 2006). Certainly, this is a reasonable claim. Indeed, the normative purpose of the security forces is to maintain order. If protesters begin to riot or get out of control, then the security forces will be more likely to crack down with tougher forms of violence. While this may be true in many cases, even in the cases this dissertation explores, it does not explain by itself how levels of violence are set, nor does it explain instances where protesters are not violent, yet violence is extremely high. If the security forces are using high levels of violence, yet protesters are largely peaceful, then this is an insufficient explanation. This is particularly problematic in cases where protest events begin as peaceful, yet overwhelming violence is used.

It could also be argued that international factors of consequence. Specifically, international actors may put pressure on a regime to mitigate the level of violence it applies (Gurr 1986). While this may exert some influence at the fringes, states are primarily concerned with what is occurring domestically. Particularly in authoritarian regimes where the state is built around the persistence of a particular set of elites, it is

unlikely that the international pressure – whether through sanctions or political isolation – would stop the regime from attempting to ensure its own survival through violence. Evidence of this can be found in Egypt, where the military violently cracked down on protesters in the summer of 2013, despite harsh condemnation from allies in the United States (Roberts 2013) – the country’s primary source of foreign aid. Similarly, states have been shown to be significantly vulnerable to international pressure when they are economically vulnerable and do not have a readily available cache of wealth, often sourced from oil rents (Hufbauer et al. 2009). States would thus be more likely to give concessions when international pressure is applied during periods of economic vulnerability.

Finally, it is possible that the composition of the protesters plays some role in deciding how far the regime will go to stay in power. If the protesters are largely composed of a group that the regime or the security forces have longstanding enmities with, then it is reasonable to assume that violence may be used more freely than in cases where the protests are composed of large cross-sections of society. Work has been done on the intersection of state repression and protester identity by authors such as Davenport (2000), Krain (1997), Olizak and Oliver (1998), and López and Lopez (2001). Some evidence of this exists in Egypt where the military refused to crack down on protesters during the 2011 revolution yet was quick to clamp down on the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood that began protesting after the removal by the military of democratically elected president Muhammad Mursi. The Muslim Brotherhood has historically been a group that the Egyptian military has a long and contentious history with. Despite what

occurred in Egypt, this clearly did not happen in Syria or Libya. The military was quick to clamp down on the enormous protests that had broken out in February and March of 2011 respectively. In both cases, protesters were far from homogenous, yet the military did not make an attempt to discriminate or hold itself back.

Nugent (2017), Beissenger et al. (2015), and Schwedler (2013) have also analyzed the composition and dynamics of protesters as relevant factors to consider. Nugent (2017) argues that shared repressive experience mitigated polarization amongst protesters in Tunisia ultimately led to a unified opposition during the 2010-2011 protests. Beissenger et al. (2015) find similar evidence, arguing that the importance of the cross-cutting nature of Tunisian protesters, particularly that they were not strictly drawn from the middle class, affected levels of repression. It could be argued that the existence of a unified opposition or broad-based movements affects the calculus of the security forces to crackdown by raising the cost of repression; however, evidence in Syria suggests otherwise, as the composition of the protests were largely socio-economically cross-cutting during the protest phase prior to the breakout of civil war in July 2011. Finally, Schwedler (2013) looks at the role of spatial dynamics in the calculus and effectiveness of repression. Schwedler argues that protests in Tunisia began outside of the capital in smaller towns, which provide significant obstacles to repression, not least of which are the smaller streets and the deep local knowledge of protesters. For Schwedler, the space in which protest occurs can affect how repression occurs. It is worth noting that Ben Ali displayed a ruthlessness in the smaller city of Thala that suggested his security forces were not afraid to go into these smaller cities to bring protesters to heel. In fact, it is

possible that the smaller space afforded may have led to the likelihood that snipers were used rather than a ground force of riot officers. In this way, Schwedler's argument does hold some weight; however, I would argue that regimes find ways of maximizing repressive effectiveness during massive protest events. While the tactics change, the choice between violence or accommodation is still in large part decided by the variables I articulate here.

V. Case Selection and Methodology

As stated, this dissertation intends to explain variations in state violence within the Arab uprisings of 2010-2011. Specifically, this dissertation will look at the cases of Tunisia, Morocco, and Syria. These cases were chosen for several reasons. First, all three of these countries fit into what Roger Owen terms "centralized state systems" (Owens 2012) – or republican systems in which authoritarian leaders are propped up by a network of co-opted state institutions involving less hands-on management by the executive relative to other authoritarian systems. These states are also demographically similar in many ways: they are all ethnic Arab majorities, they have heavily Sunni-majority populations, and Arabic is the official language in each state. Finally, each state is heavily reliant upon powerful external allies. Tunisia and Morocco both have close ties with their former colonial overseer, France, as well as open and cordial relations with the United States and other European powers. Syria for its part is inextricably tied to the Iranian regime and relies upon the Iranian government for military and economic assistance. The similarities along the aforementioned metrics help ensure that any

assumptions made about the way in which the state system functions internally are relatively comparable across cases. More importantly, these cases were selected to reflect what John Gerring (2007) refers to as a “diverse-case method.”¹ Such case studies seek to “[achieve] the maximum variance along relevant dimensions...the full range of values characterizing [the dependent variable]” (p. 97).

Gerring’s diverse-case method is particularly useful in gaining leverage over questions with diverse outcomes. The key to the method is the ability to draw a line between similar initial conditions and divergent outcomes. The puzzle that this method solves is precisely how three cases began in a similar fashion but arrived at different end points. All three cases under analysis in this dissertation had similar scope conditions. Each country’s protests were sizeable enough to threaten the regime, with attendance reaching at least 10,000 (and often more) at some point during the protests. Additionally, each protest contained demands that threatened the existence of the regime either in the form of significant constitutional change or outright removal of the executive. Further, all three cases saw protests composed of a broad cross-section of society, not limited to one economic group, religious sect, or social class.

Gerring’s strategy is also very effective in a qualitative setting, especially when paired with a robust process tracing analysis. As a line is drawn between the start and the end of each case, the key variables that differentiate these cases become clearer. Detailed qualitative case studies are also useful at unearthing not only the import of key variables

but also variables that may have not been considered prior. Once that process is complete, you are ideally left with a picture of the three cases that highlights distinctly different outcomes in key variables that led each case's path to diverge from one another.

As will be discussed below, the three cases analyzed in this dissertation exemplify the three points of variation on the dependent variable under study: Concessions (Morocco), Mixed Strategy (Tunisia), Violence (Syria). Of course, these are not the only cases in the Arab spring that fit into this model. Military shirking occurred in Egypt in a way very similar to Tunisia, however violence was much more concentrated and pronounced in a way similar to Syria. The Bahraini monarchy also employed tactics very similar to those of the Syrian regime, with the military carrying out lethal violence against protesters throughout the protests. Libya and Muammar Gaddafi adopted a strategy most similar to Assad and utilized military forces and lethal violence against protesters the day after protests began, subsequently triggering the formation of an organized rebellion and the beginning of a civil war five days after the protests began on February 20th. Finally, Yemen presented similar to Tunisia with dueling demands and concessions between the regime and the protesters, lethal violence from the security forces, and an obstinate executive in Saleh that refused to step down, triggering a civil war in the process. Other cases like Jordan and Algeria were too minor to include in the scope conditions, particularly given the fact that protests never became widespread or reached the threshold of 10,000 participants in a given protest event.

Ultimately, cases were chosen along margins. Morocco exists the only case in the Arab uprisings that was both sufficiently large in size and ended with a strategy emphasizing concessions over violence. For the mixed case, Tunisia and Yemen were similar in both the size of protests and the general composition of the key control strategy: a mix of violence and concession. Tunisia was chosen because of its centrality to the general discussion on the Arab uprisings, as it was the first country to experience protests and set into motion many of the events that transpired in other countries. Further, it provided a case where the military shirked, highlighting the tension between the historical baseline and civil-military unity variables. Egypt potentially situates itself alongside Tunisia as an adopter of a mixed key control strategy. Violence was significant with lethal violence used by militias hired by Mubarak, but the violence was ultimately prevented from escalating by the military's decision to shirk. Mubarak offered various concessions, much in the way Ben Ali did and ultimately stepped down under the same conditions. While both protests were central to the Arab uprising in many ways, Tunisia won out as the case selected based on its role as the catalyst for many of the other protests that spread throughout the region. There was also the issue of practicality in carrying out fieldwork to consider. Tunisia exited the uprisings as a burgeoning democracy, while Egypt descended over the next years into autocratic and military rule with rampant issues related to insurgents. For practicalities sake, Tunisia became the safest option for conducting fieldwork, which supported its inclusion in the dissertation. Libya, Bahrain and Syria fell under the cases where violence was the key control strategy. Libya would generally fit into the model in the same way Syria does, however the protests only lasted

five days before a civil war broke out, leaving little in the way of data points to analyze. Bahrain is a potentially interesting case, as it is another monarchy and also a case where violence was excessive. Syria and Bahrain could both potentially provide good examples, but Syria contrast with Tunisia and Morocco provided clearest example of the variables under examination.

In the context of this dissertation, it becomes evident how the nature of a regime's historical baseline response and civil-military unity interact and mutually influence each other. As this study adopts a systematic approach to understand how these key variables work within the context of a period of mass mobilization, it is important to show how each variable – while important across each case – are influenced by characteristics unique to each regime. The aforementioned variables have consequences for each case, but it is the shirking of the Tunisian military, Morocco's past experience with accommodation, and Syria's unified military and propensity towards scorched earth violence that produce three very different outcomes, even if all three cases began with massive protests calling for political reform. Here the three cases represent the full range of outcomes possible in my typology of key repressive strategies: Concessions (Morocco), Mixed/Termination (Tunisia), and Violence (Syria). Having the full range of outcomes available not only establishes the need for explanation – i.e. what explains this variation – but also potentially helps broaden the applicability of this theory within the universe of the Arab uprisings.

In order to answer the question posed, I will utilize a rich and detailed qualitative case study method. This project lends itself to qualitative methodology nicely, as the key variables involved do not generally translate into quantitative data without a significant loss in nuance and detail. Identifying how historical norms influence present day regime choices and preference will require a significant amount of descriptive data connected through a robust analysis involving process tracing regime choices over decades.

VI. Conclusion

This project seeks to broaden the understanding the use of repression and its converse, concessions, during popular uprisings. Framing these tools as two sides of the same strategic coin prevents too narrow a focus simply on the violent aspects of a regime's control strategy. To do this, I construct a model that incorporates two explanatory variables that are key for understanding how regime chooses to exercise these two levers. Understanding how regime's draw from past experience to inform strategies in the present is imperatively important, but it also must be understood in the context of a powerful check on executive power: the military. The interaction between these two institutions produces the key control strategy applied over the course of a popular uprising. This project will consist of a deeply contextualized and nuanced case study investigation of the three cases utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources, with elite interviews comprising the data for the most detailed case of Tunisia.

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Chapter 2: Evolution and Reform in Morocco

The story of Morocco during the Arab uprisings is one that is not told as often as many of the major cases typically covered, particularly the likes of Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Syria. Indeed, unlike the other notable cases listed here, where media outlets depicted scenes of turmoil, violence, and massive civil unrest, the Kingdom of Morocco seemed to be far from the battlefields of Libya or the political nerve center of Egypt. Despite the lack of wider coverage and the general lack of attention to Morocco as a case in the Arab uprising literature, the kingdom faced circumstances that put it in a situation similar to those being faced by other, better-covered countries facing protests in 2010 and 2011. At the height of the protests in 2011, estimates of the size of protests across the country ranged as high as 37,000 and 40,000 people (Naudé 2011). The Moroccan case offers up an example of how a regime handles challenges to its power via popular mobilization with accommodation, particularly when you considered the bargaining and reforms that the country engaged in over the course of 2011. In contrast to its Levantine and North African sister states, Morocco offers an example of a monarchical system where, while it may have played a part in containing protests at various times throughout the protest phase, violence never became the order of the day for controlling protests. Instead, while protesters flooded the streets from Rabat to Casablanca, King Mohammed VI offered a raft of reforms over the course of 2011. Violence on the part of the security forces remained low and Mohammed VI made concessions in the hopes of staving off the instability that had wracked Libya, Tunisia, Syria, Egypt, and other states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. While not all of these reforms made deep cuts

into the power structure that held the monarchy's grip on power intact, by 2012 they had gone far enough to ameliorate many of the grievances being aired on *les rues marocaines*.

The Moroccan case differs from the other cases in this study in some obvious ways. While the protests taking place in Morocco satisfy the scope conditions of this project, they pale in comparison to, for instance, the iconic images of nearly a million protests on the streets of Cairo. While Morocco houses a relatively large population in comparison to other countries in the region, the size of its protests was not nearly as extensive as those found in the more tumultuous cases. Further, Morocco critically differs from Tunisia and Syria in its power structure, with the former being a monarchy and the latter two states being personalistic authoritarian regimes. Indeed, the monarchy-personalistic divide has been noted at length in the Arab uprising literature (Yom 2012; Yom and Gause III 2012; Bellin 2012). This discrepancy will be dealt with more thoroughly in Section V of this chapter. Suffice to say that while the institutions may have differed, decision-making process related to repression strategies were similarly linear in respect to the source of policy: one man at the top of a hierarchy. Morocco remains comparatively similar insofar as it constituted an authoritarian regime faced with massive protests calling for significant, regime-altering changes. As this chapter will highlight, the more salient difference is in *how* the Moroccan regime and its security forces responded in comparison to the other cases in this study.

This chapter will proceed by first looking at how the protest phase of the Moroccan Arab uprisings played out from the nascent stages in January to the reform period in July. I will then apply my model by looking at three major cases of contentious politics during the reign of the Alawite Dynasty² in Morocco post-independence. For the purposes of this study, I will draw these cases from the reigns of the two most recent ruling monarchs in Morocco, who comprised the vast majority of the country's post-independence political existence: King Hassan II and (1961 to 1999) and King Mohammed VI (1999 to present). This section will also draw lines between the historical evolution of repressive/concessive strategies employed by Mohammed VI and his father. In this first section, I will analyze major cases of protest and rebellion in Morocco during these periods, all of which took place in the northwestern commercial hub of Casablanca: riots in 1965, food riots in 1981, and the Islamist protests against women's rights in March 2000. After looking at regime strategies during these protests, I will move to a discussion on civil-military unity. Section III will focus on three key aspects of the Moroccan regime that made it distinctly united and consolidated in the face of the protests in 2011: the depoliticization of and subordination of the armed forces by Hassan II and the continuity of this strategy provided by his son Mohammed VI. In Section IV, I will coalesce three variables to provide a picture of how the Moroccan case stands as an example managing concessions over violence in the face of massive popular

² An important distinction should be made here between the Alawite dynasty in Morocco and the Alawite government of the Assad family in Syria. While both are nominally Alawites, the Moroccan royal family has historically been practitioners of Sunni Islam while the Assad family practices the more traditional Shia Alawism.

mobilization. Further, I will approach the case from the perspective of several alternative theories, including the so-called monarchy-personalistic divide, violence-begetting-violence, international factors, and the composition of the protests. Finally, I will offer a conclusion in Section V that recapitulates the main observations from this chapter, as well as some caveats and potentially unanswered questions that can be explored in further analyses.

II. Morocco During the Arab Uprisings: January to July 2011

While the regime had for decades worked to open Moroccan politics, even becoming likely the most liberal monarchy in the region next to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, it still had some way to go before it could call itself a true democracy. The royal family's grip on power long preceded French colonial rule, so the authoritarian power structure was largely the central fixture of politics and government. As the rest of the Middle East slowly began to erupt during the Arab uprisings, a cousin of King Mohammed VI articulated that the regime expected the turbulence to spill over into the kingdom: "...We mustn't be deceived, almost every authoritarian system will be affected by this wave of protest, Morocco will probably be no exception. ("Morocco watches nervously as Egypt erupts" 2011). When calls began in February of 2011 to devolve powers from the crown to the legislature and local government, the regime was faced with a difficult choice: respond with violence as so many other states had or continue the reformist tradition established by the late-Hassan II years. In large part, the government opted for the latter, granting more power to the head of the legislature and its parliament.

In this section, I will first look at how protests broke out. Second, I will look at how protests evolved once in the streets. Third, I will look at bouts of repression and the regime response. Finally, I will discuss the concession strategy by the regime.

Before the Streets: January and Early February 2011

As the uprising in Tunisia came to head in mid-January, ejecting Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from office on January 14th, 2011, the rest of North Africa was facing similar murmurs of unrest. Gaddafi had already begun mobilizing the military around the Libyan capital of Tripoli and was outwardly condemning the outcome of the Tunisian uprising (Weaver 2011). The situation in Egypt was escalating by the week as Hosni Mubarak was already conducting massive crackdowns against protesters in late January. Meanwhile, Morocco and Algeria had stayed relatively calm. Despite the lack of massive protests in January, as has been shown the kingdom was no stranger to protest. It seemed inevitable that Moroccans would take to the streets.

The earliest signs of dissent began to stir in late January. As imitations of Mohammed Bouazizi's influential self-immolation took hold across the region, Morocco saw them occurring by the end of the month. According to Farhad Khosrokhavar (2012), between January 22nd and February 2nd, four suicide attempts had been made using the method of self-immolation, with no casualties. One of the most publicized was an immolation carried out by Issan Nadir. A volunteer teacher, Nadir set himself alight in front of the Ministry of Education after demanding paid work (Tremlett 2011a). The impetus for the early self-immolations in Morocco seems to largely have been in reaction

to rising food prices and lack of jobs (“Harper welcomes peaceful Arab uprisings, meets with king of Morocco” 2011).

The internet also acted as one of the primary breeding grounds for dissent, as it so often did during the Arab uprisings. The nucleus of what became the driving force behind the Moroccan protest, the February 20th Movement, started on Facebook in January. As Driss Maghraoui (2016) points out, the Movement was set off by an increasingly politicized youth culture, where the early online organizing involved serious discussions regarding the responsibility of the monarch for the problems Moroccans faced. (2016, p. 195). The largest Moroccan Facebook group called for “a conversation with the king,” and began actively questioning the political status quo in Morocco (Maghraoui 2016, p. 195). While public discontent in January seemed to center around economic grievances, particularly regarding the self-immolations, there was evidence that deeper, more serious discontents were lurking under the surface. These discontents began to boil over in mid-February.

The February 20th Movement

The first major outbreak of protests began to be hinted at in mid-February after the Facebook group started to organize itself around the banner of the February 20th Movement, marking the first major protest. Protesters in solidarity with Issan Nadir set out to the Ministry of Education once again in mid-February, again calling for jobs (Tremellet 2011a). However, the perception among the elite at the time was that these smaller scale protests were normal, a release valve for popular grievances that would

soon dissipate and return life to normal. This was not the case in February of 2011. In the run-up to the protests scheduled for February 20th, flash points began to crop up across the country. In Tangier, a group of rioters attacked a police station and a French business. The attacks were in retaliation for the awarding of a utilities contract to a firm, who was accused of levying heavy tariffs on struggling Moroccans (“Moroccans riot ahead of protests” 2011).

February 20th marked the first day of major massive protests across the country. More than 10,000 people marched in cities across the country, with the vast majority marching in Rabat and the flashpoint city of Casablanca (Erlanger 2011a). In Rabat, protesters marched down the center of the city in droves chanting a range of slogans, including “Down with the dictatorship!” “End the corruption” and “We want change!” (“The Middle East in Revolt” 2011). The seriousness of the movement was made clear by participants, even if it was not already manifestly apparent from the number of people on the streets, with one person telling reporters “This is our Tahrir Square!” (“The Middle East in Revolt” 2011). The image being conjured by the people in the streets of Morocco was potent considering it had been less than a week since Husni Mubarak had stunningly been removed from office after decades in power in Egypt.

As protests escalated over the coming months, the organized groups participating continued to keep the pressure on the government. Protests on February 26th in Casablanca, less than a week after the massive protest on the 20th, drew a respectable 1,000 participants calling for political change, particularly changes to the constitution

(“Casablanca catches protest fever” 2011), with similar but smaller protests taking place in the city a few weeks later on March 14th (“Moroccan police break up rally, hurt dozens-witness” 2011; “Moroccan police break up rally, hurt dozens-witness” 2011). A week prior to the latest Casablancon protests, Mohammed VI had taken to the media to announce his plan to look into reforms (more on this later). This drew the largest protest of the movement up to this point. On the one-month anniversary of the first protests, March 20th, nearly 37,000 people protested in the streets of Casablanca, with smaller but sizeable protests taking place in the capital of Rabat (Karam 2011).

Protests continued into April. The city of Marrakesh was shaken at the end of the month on April 28th when a bomb exploded in a café, leaving 17 people dead (Karam 2011). Moroccan journalist Souhail Karam (2011) reported that three suspects were arrested, with authorities stating that they had ties to Al-Qaeda’s North African branch, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The terrorist attack drew people out once again to the streets to protest terrorism, but also to recapitulate many of the same arguments and calls for constitutional reform that had been outlined in February and March. The attack triggered perhaps the largest amounts of violence May saw similar protests, with major turnouts in Marrakesh, Rabat, and Casablanca. It became clear that the regime was beginning to shift its policy, with police beatings becoming more frequent and more deliberate (“Moroccan police beat up protesters” 2011). The regime seemed to realize that the protests would not fizzle out as quickly as they had previously hoped. This tension between a regime increasingly with its back to the wall and a protest movement refusing to back down came to a head in Rabat and Casablanca on June 5th,

with protester demands swiftly condemning the violent escalation by the regime during the previous month and calling for justice for those who had been killed by police:

“There was a lot of violence, and we are now calling a halt” (Jay 2011a).

Violence and Repression in Morocco During the Arab Uprisings

Protests were largely controlled and not nearly as contentious as those found in Syria and Tunisia. This is not to say that there were not periods of confrontation between the security forces and the protesters but protests for the most part were peaceful. The major protests on February 20th that jumpstarted the movement were perhaps most importantly indicative of the trend for most of the large-scale protests that occurred over the course of uprising. National Public Radio correspondent Tom Gjelten covered the February 20th protests and remarked that demonstrations had been relatively peaceful despite some troubles in Tangier and Fez (“Morocco’s Protests Take a Peaceful Turn” 2011). Similarly, protests in Casablanca on April 25th in response to the constitutional reform plan outlined by the king were both sizeable and peaceful, though plain clothed police officers were frequently mingling amongst the crowds (Jay 2011b). An analysis of the protests by Stratfor, an American publisher and intelligence company, observed that “Unlike the protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square, which grew over time to approximately 300,000 at their peak, the Moroccan demonstrations have so far been relatively peaceful and organized” (“Moroccan Protests and the Monarchy's Response” 2011)

Despite this, there were occasional instances of rioting and property damage that occurred throughout the protests between February and July of 2011, though most of the

protest violence was isolated. The day after the successful protests of February 20th, football hooligans and thugs engaged in acts of rioting and vandalism across the country, particularly in the towns of Fez, Tangier, Larcharch, and Marrakesh, where the police say “troublemakers” had vandalized schools, as well as attacked and set fire to somewhere around 33 public buildings (Tremlett 2011b). Perhaps the most notable violent incident to take place during the uprising was the bombing of a café in the tourist city of Marrakesh. According to the New York Times, diners had been sitting out for lunch when a suicide bomber set off a bomb, killing 13 people and injuring dozens (Slackman and Mekhennet 2011). The attack was not attributed to protesters, though determining who conducted the attack was difficult. There was some speculation that it was the work of Al Qaeda or the Polisario Front, but neither group claimed responsibility. In either case, the incident sparked fears that the king may hold off on reforms, though these fears never came to pass (Slackman and Mekhennet 2011). Other instances of violence cropped over the course of May and June, with violence breaking out most notably during protests on May 30th and June 21st (Jay 2011a; Lazare 2011).

What is clear is that for the most part, protests and the response from the regime were controlled and peaceful. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that the bombing of the Marrakesh café on April 28th would have provided impetus for most authoritarian regimes to halt reforms and intensify the crack down, perhaps even call in the military. The king and the security forces – for the most part – responded through crowd control. Of course, this is not to say that violence was not utilized by the police. Death toll estimates on the part of the security forces are difficult to pin down but at least six were

killed between the first major clashes in February and clashes when the crackdown intensified at the end of May. This is also not counting the hundreds injured due to brutal crowd control measures used throughout the uprising. But it is not inaccurate to say that compared to what happened in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen, Morocco was an example of give-and-take between protesters and regime.

Concessions: From Promise to (Partial) Fulfillment

While still most certainly an authoritarian regime, Morocco was by many measures the most liberal state facing protests during the Arab uprisings. Morocco held a “Partly Free” rating from Freedom House in 2011, while both Tunisia and Syria received the categorization of “Not Free”. This fact in some ways placed the regime in a difficult position. The country had been holding parliamentary elections since the early 1990s and the king himself had attempted to resist the typical monarchical pomp and circumstance of his office to, in some degree, shift attention towards democratic institutions. When protests broke out in February 2011 calling for democratic reforms, the regime had to balance the demands of protesters against maintaining its grip on power. The earliest indication that the regime was going to respond to the grievances of the protesters came three weeks after protests began on March 9th, as Mohammed VI gave a speech outlining the regime’s plan for reform. Among the main concessions acknowledged in the king’s speech was a reform of Article 19 of the Moroccan constitution, which grants the monarch near-absolute authority. According to Lisa Abend (2011), the king articulated the road to reform would continue as follows:

“he would appoint a commission to revise the constitution, and instruct its members to come up with measures to increase the independence of the judiciary and improve the separation of powers. Most critically...Mohammed promised to hold free elections, and allow the head of the party that wins the most vote to become prime minister. The draft devised by the commission will also be submitted for approval to a general referendum.

Additionally, the king promised to strengthen women’s rights and political participation, a major demand of the women’s movements participating in the protests (“Morocco announces constitutional reform plan” 2011). At face value, this seemed like a major package of reforms that would make serious changes to the visage of Moroccan political institutions. On the other hand, the reforms promised were typical of the time-buying strategies that autocrats so often used to placate dissent long enough to gain back control of the streets. It would yet be seen if Mohammed VI would live up to the loftiness of the concessions being laid out, particularly given the pace that they would be laid out at over the next couple months. Perception reigned supreme here, and Moroccans would continue to push on in April and May.

Several concessions trickled out over the months of April and May. A month after his speech, the king also conceded the releases of over 190 political prisoners in Moroccan jails, including Islamists and Sahrahwi activists (“Maroc: le roi Mohammed VI grâcie 190 détenus” 2011). According to the French daily *Le Monde*, the king released the 190 political prisoners in response to a memorandum submitted to him by *Le Conseil*

nationale des droits de l'homme (National Council of Human Rights) (“Le roi du Maroc gracie 190 détenus, dont des prisonniers politiques” 2011). The regime also organized a meeting to discuss youth involvement in politics in the coastal town of Bouznika on May 25th. Attended by then Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi, the meeting was the first major step by the regime to elaborate on a previous strategy known as *la Stratégie Nationale Intégrée de la Jeunesse* (The National Integrated Youth Strategy) (“Les jeunes marocains travaillent avec le gouvernement pour élaborer les politiques en faveur de la jeunesse” 2011).

The shape of the regime’s concession repertoire finally coalesced in June. Mohammed VI once again took to television to outline his proposed steps towards democratic reform. His speech articulated two key concessions: (1) the prime minister would gain new power over the parliament, including the ability to appoint officials and cabinet members, as well as the ability to dissolve parliament; (2) the judiciary would no longer be headed by the king and would become independent (Erlanger 2011b). Many criticized some of the reforms that were not outlined in the speech. For instance, the king remained the absolute authority in the country as it pertains to religious and military matters (Erlanger 2011b). Mohammed VI also suggested changes in the new constitution would include the enshrining of “social justice” (although the specifics of what this might have at the time were unclear) and what he termed “dignified citizenship,” the latter likely aimed at mollifying Berber grievances (“Morocco's King Mohammed unveils constitutional reforms” 2011). These reforms and the new constitution were scheduled to be put to a national referendum on July 1st. The reforms were successfully passed despite

a boycott from some activist groups with nearly 98.5% of the vote and a turnout of roughly 73% (“Morocco approves King Mohammed's constitutional reforms” 2011). Elections were eventually held four months later on November 25th, 2011, bringing Abdelilah Benkirane and *le Parti de la justice et du développement* (Justice and Development Party) to power. According to a 2011 report by the National Democratic Institute, elections were “procedurally sound and transparent” (2011, p.6) with some unverified irregularities such as vote-buying being raised by some segments of the population. Relative voter turnout also increased for the election, topping out at 45%. While the report acknowledges that that these improvements “may have been more reflective of Moroccans’ wishes than in previous elections,” ultimately, the high proportion of protest votes and the calls for boycott led the election to fall short of meeting the aspiration of the protesters. While the elections largely demobilized street protesters in 2011 and met many expectations for reform, they did not yet go far enough in acceding to their demands.

III. Historical Baseline: Contentious Politics in Morocco

This section will analyze three key cases of contentious politics in Morocco over the course of King Hassan II’s rule and his son, King Mohammed VI’s. As has been discussed, history plays a decisive role in how despots react to periods of popular mobilization. This is evident in Syria and how violence was always the order of the day for the Assad family. Similarly, it is evident in Morocco. The Moroccan case also provides a striking example of how the historical baseline variable highlights the use of

heuristics as learning tools to inform present decisions. If violent repression produces stability with little negative externalities, it is an appealing choice the next time Moroccans take to the streets. Conversely, if violence produces short-term stability but significant negative externalities, the regime must learn from its mistakes and reform. The Moroccan case demonstrates this trend well.

After breaking away from the French in 1957, the first monarch of Morocco in the post-independence era, Mohammed V, began the difficult process of reconstituting some semblance of a security apparatus. Because French *colons* had constituted the vast majority of the apparatus prior to independence, the new Moroccan security forces – both police and military – had to be drawn from rebel fighter groups and militias. Mohammed V's task was particularly difficult given that in addition to building a security apparatus from scratch, he had to deal with an ongoing, much larger battle being waged next door in Algeria. Guerillas in Algeria were often using the mountainous border region inside the Moroccan border to wage campaigns against the French. The government of Mohammed V was in a difficult position, as many in Morocco were sympathetic to the Algerian nationalist cause. An Algerian Liberation Army chief once told New York Times correspondent Marvine Howe that “All we want from our Moroccan brother is freedom of movement and logistics” (2005, p. 95). For the most part, Mohammed V granted these requests, formally and informally. Indeed, with any independence struggle, security becomes of primary concern. This was no different in Morocco. As Douglas Ashford writes in 1959,

“newly independent countries, Morocco included, place a very high value on keeping ‘public order’. The fundamental explanation is...that when life may be taken without check, not only does the political system itself cease to function, but the society may also be disintegrating” (p.11).

Thus, it stands to reason that one of the first major periods of popular mobilization, would reflect this security struggle that the Alawite Dynasty had been facing.

Many of the major periods of contention in Moroccan politics came in the northwestern city of Casablanca. Just an hour down the A3 highway from the capital city of Rabat, Casablanca has been the site of several protests and riots over the course of post-independence Morocco’s existence. As recently as November 2015, 10,000 people took to the streets of Casablanca to protest economic conditions for the working class and the policy of Morocco’s Head of Government, Abdelilah Benkirane (Arbaoui 2015). But prior to February 2011, Casablanca was witness to two key protest events in May 1981 and March 2000. The remarkable observation about these protests is how the strategy of regime evolve: from a policy of iron-fist politics not dissimilar to other violent autocrats to one of balanced appeasement approaches. I argue that the policy applied during these periods led to the strategy that Mohammed VI utilized during the protests of 2011: one of concession and control.

Casablanca Riots: March 1981

The Moroccan economy was struggling in the 1980s. The economy has long relied on the commodities market, particularly the production of phosphate and rock

mining. When an economic slump hit those markets in the 1970s, the Moroccan economy began to buckle under the weight of the lost income and economic downturn. Coming off the back of diplomatic success involving Moroccan mediation between Israel, the United States, and Arab governments, Hassan II was looking to parlay that nationalistic high into something tangible for the citizens of Morocco. In 1973 the government laid out its so-called Five-Year Plan to raise growth to 7.5 by increasing exports 10% each year, fueled by a capital injection from the state to boost tourism and irrigation for the agricultural sector (Pennell 2000, p. 345). The Five-Year plan had two clear goals outlined by the Hassan II government: (1) maximize economic growth and (2) achieve greater economic equality across socio-economic strata of Moroccan society (Lawless and Findlay 2015). Indeed, there was reason to be optimistic in the early years of the plan. The commodity market – particularly phosphate – did not see a downturn until the late-1970s. In 1974, prices actually rose relatively quickly, injecting significant capital into the Moroccan economy (Lawless and Findlay 2015). The Moroccan government, however, remained short sighted in its buoyant view of the economy. The uptick in phosphate prices encouraged them to shift priorities and inject significant cash into various sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture and defense. This coupled with poor targeted investment in irrigated sectors of the agricultural economy at the expense of rain-fed sectors, leading to a sharp downturn in key food-producing sectors, including the wheat industry (Lawless and Findlay 2015).

Additionally, the state control of the economy and its ensuing mismanagement led to a variety of policies that harkened back to old colonial rule. The state expropriated

300,000 hectares of land in order to provide virtual fiefdoms for regime loyalists, including military officers, urban merchants, and politicians (Pennell 2000). This in part explains the over-emphasis on injecting capital into the irrigation sector. According to Pennell, “two big holding companies jointly owned by the state and exceptionally wealthy individuals such as the royal family, controlled 40% of the orchards and 80% of the vineyards. They received the benefits of investment in irrigation...” (2000, p. 346). On the other hand, low-income agricultural workers and land owners saw only a drip of support from the regime. Because of this imbalance, by the end of the 1970s not enough food was being produced to meet the needs of an expanding Moroccan population. It also contributed to the view of regular Moroccans that the regime was corrupt, plagued by cronyism, and only intent on lining the pockets of the royal family and its allies. Any good will the regime had built up in the early 1970s, particularly in light of the numerous coup attempts against Hassan (more on that later), was dwindling away in the face of rising food prices and a seemingly corrupt political and economic elite.

By the 1980s, Morocco had reached out to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help get its balance sheets under control. The IMF, under strict terms, lent the Moroccan government \$1.2 billion with the intent to restructure its foreign debt (Markham 1981). As the IMF so often does with developing countries seeking help with balance of payments crises, it asked Morocco to undergo a strict austerity program by trimming public expenditures. Part and parcel of the IMF’s request was the end of public subsidies for major food items, including sugar, butter, oil, milk and bread. According to Markham (1981), the decision to end the subsidies was done with no consultation

between the monarchy and the cabinet or the elected members parliament. The end of these critical subsidies, coupled with a sagging agricultural sector and a prevailing view that the regime was out of touch with the average Moroccan, even stealing from them, led to surges of resentment and anger that manifested themselves in *les émeutes de pain* – or the bread riots of 1981.

Referred to as “Black Saturday” by Washington Post, June 20th, 1981 marked the beginning of a general strike led by union leaders and supporters, marching against the rising food prices (Cooley 1981). In a similar vein to the riots of 1965, protesters quickly got out of hand and took their anger out on public property. As one rioter was heard shouting “the government takes our bread to pay for the Sahara,” the sense that resentment against the regime for raising prices on average Moroccans at the expense of a territorial quagmire the regime had been engaged in for years was something permeating the thought process of several protesters (Cooley 1981). New York Times reporter James Markham (1981) observed that, “roaming mobs stoned buses and assaulted symbols of wealth: banks, pharmacies, grocery stores, and sleek automobiles.” Reports of the security forces – both the police and the military – opening fire on protesters quickly spread throughout Morocco and media. Violence from the security force was reported to have been widespread throughout several districts of Casablanca, including Derb Sultane, Ain Chock, Sbata, Ben Msik, Sidi Othman, and others, where riot police are said to have invaded the districts and fired upon protesters (“1981, les émeutes de pain” 2010).

The repression by the Moroccan government in June 1981 was widespread and varied in application. Journalist Hamsa Tassouli (2017) reflected upon the June 1981 riots by noting the scale of mass incarcerations and the lockdown of key union and political parties were common, with many protesters crammed into unventilated rooms of vastly inadequate size and many perishing from suffocation as a result. Gendarmerie and police tactics also included the seizure and banning of newspapers and other media outlets (Tassouli 2017). The riots had to be stopped at all cost, and the gendarmerie forces that arrived were equipped with riot gear and weapons, asking “if there was enough ammunition” to do what was necessary to quell protests (Tassouli 2017). Tallies in the aftermath ranged from 60 (government estimates) to 667 (opposition estimates). As part of *L’instance équité et réconciliation* (The Equity and Reconciliation Commission) created by Hassan II’s successor, Mohammed VI, it would later be determined that roughly 114 Moroccans had been killed a result of the riots and the ensuing repression (Garçon 2005). The refrain had become all too familiar for challenges to the state. Though protests would break out for similar reasons yet again in 1984, Hassan’s rule up through the 1980s was already becoming known as *les années de plomb* (The Years of Lead). The Hassan regime was soon learning its limits in terms of how far it could go with austerity measures and human rights abuses. In both 1981 and 1984, the government reacted to the widespread discontent with policy concessions. Both the austerity measures set for May 1981 and later those experienced in 1984 were abandoned by the government in response to the reaction of Moroccan citizens (Alam 2011). In response to the 1984 protests, Hassan abolished a new tax on agriculture altogether. (Pennell 2000). After

1984, Morocco would be set upon a path that would culminate in serious reforms by the government in both its political institutions and its strategy for confronting dissent. “The Years of Lead” would soon be a relative thing of the past.

The intersection between this phase of the Hassan II regime and its later phase in the late 1980s must seem through the lens of cause and effect. The pattern that arose in the late-1970s and early 1980s was one where the regime would install harsh austerity policies, which would spark public reactions like those seen in 1981 and later in 1984. The murder of 114 protesters by riot police and gendarmerie in the former case bought the regime what at the time seemed to be stability. The use of live ammunition, widespread physical brutality, and inhumane detention conditions for protesters during the June 1981 riots were key tactics for the Moroccan security forces to demobilize protesters in cities like Casablanca and the Rif, but the pattern was rearing itself again once the 1984 protests broke out in similar fashion. It became clear that a violence-centric control strategy was buying stability, but only in the short-term. In addition to the fact that Hassan II could not simultaneously pursue austerity and quash dissent with violence, that very violence was bringing international condemnation in the form of increased scrutiny on the country’s human rights record.

If you are Hassan II in the late 1980s, looking at the tumult at the turn of the decade is instructive. Strategies that placed emphasis on lethality and coercion, including free use of live ammunition against protesters and the brutal detention of those apprehended in conditions that ultimately killed many of them, were not effective in

keeping dissent under control and its austerity policies were similarly unamenable to the task. In effect, the regime is fighting three fronts during the early 1980s: 1) the Moroccan people, 2) the struggling economy, and 3) international pressure. In order to ensure that the Hashemite regime survived, Hassan II would need a reckoning in facing all three of these issues and to search for ways in which he could address one front without losing ground on the others. It had become clear that the use of lethal protest control tactics, particularly the free use of live ammunition against non-violent protesters, was a) only a short-term solution for keeping protesters off the streets, b) unsuccessful at facilitating and pushing through unpopular austerity policies, and c) increasingly inviting international scrutiny. Economic success through increased liberalization and a more concessionary control strategy would be the way forward. If the regime was going to avoid further outbreaks of protest and get the economy under control, it would need to course-correct.

Islamists and the Casablanca Demonstrations: March 2000

The 1990s saw the birth of a new era for the Hassan regime and its approach to governance. In many ways, the opening of Moroccan politics and a taming of the security apparatus had begun in the 1970s. Several parties began to form, relaunch, or rebrand through new leadership, including changes to the Communist party, the *Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme*, Istiqlal, and the infamous National Union, which renamed itself the *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaire* (Socialist Union of Popular Forces – or the USFP) (Pennell 2000, p. 347). While elections remained heavily managed, the party system of

Morocco was developing and simultaneously laying the foundation for the democratization policies of the 1990s.

On the economic front, the Moroccan economy began to turn around in the late 1980s. Tourism was booming thanks to major investment and development of major coastal beach resorts and the regime had negotiated favorable trade deals with the European Community, its main trading partner (particularly, France and Spain). By 1995, the IMF had released a rave report on the successful turnaround of the Moroccan economy. Entitled “Resilience and Growth Through Sustained Adjustment: The Moroccan Experience,” the report cited 1993 as a watershed year for the Moroccan economy: the year Morocco balanced its books. According to the IMF, two key factors had led to the successful rejuvenation and realignment of the Moroccan economy: (1) aligning demand with available resources and shifting resources towards developing the private sector, and (2) dismantling government controls to allow the free market the ability to allocate resources (Nsouli 1995). According to the IMF, it was the hands-on policies of the state that had been drowning the economy by “hindering the growth of aggregate supply and [distorting] the pattern of demand (Nsouli 1995, p. 30). Though Moroccans had suffered the growing pains of the 1980s reforms, they seemed to have worked. Morocco’s economy was on the upswing at the turn of the decade, and this new found economic optimism was beginning to bleed into the state’s position on human rights.

Morocco's improved international image through its liberalization contributed greatly to this turn around. In large part, the balance of payments crisis that hit the country in the late 1970s, coupled with Hassan's intention to stabilize and grow the economy, pushed Morocco into a period of great international connectedness. Increased trade integration with Europe, close relationships with international monetary institutions, and an increasing diplomatic presence led to a greater willingness by the Moroccan government to be brought under the wing of the international community. Indeed, up until the mid-1980s, Hassan II's human rights record had been notably poor. The security forces were all too willing to fire into crowds and conduct physical assaults against protesters when faced with dissent, even if behind the scenes Hassan seemed willing to be flexible on certain policy issues. As Morocco's international stature grew, its human rights record came under scrutiny. An international campaign drew attention to the pattern of disappearances and torture that had been conducted under Hassan II ("Human Rights in Morocco" 1995). Human Rights Watch produced a report in 1995 that claimed, "hundreds of Moroccans were subjected to politically-motivated arrests and sentenced to unfair trials" (p.8). Further, the report broadly confirmed that the government and security forces oversaw "inhumane" detention conditions in both known and secret prisons, as well as systematic torture that "many did not survive" (1995, p.8). A series of other interlocking pressures eventually forced Morocco's hand in taking reform seriously, including closer ties with France, increasing pressure from international institutions, and calls from the United States to address the issue of political disappearances and prisoners ("Human Rights in Morocco" 1995).

Reform was well underway by the early-1990s. As of 1991, nearly 350 political prisoners were being held in Moroccan prisons, many of them Sahrawis, political dissidents, and ex-military accused of plotting against Hassan II (Morocco: A Pattern of Political Imprisonment, 'Disappearances' and Torture" 1991). However, as Waltz and Benstead point out, Hassan II oversaw massive, legitimate reforms:

“hundreds of political prisoners were amnestied, scores of individuals inexplicably reappeared as inexplicably as they had disappeared up to fifteen years earlier. More than 150 Saharans, “disappeared and presumed dead, emerged from secret prisoners in the Moroccan South. The notorious prison fortress of Tazmamert was razed, and its surviving inmates gradually reclaimed life” (2006, p. 174).

Not only that, but the regime took serious steps to better integrate itself into the international human rights framework. In 1993, the Moroccan government ratified several major conventions (albeit with some reservations), including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (“III. Background: The State of Human Rights in Morocco,” 2005). Additionally, Hassan II created several political institutions designed to improve the kingdom’s human rights record: The Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH) and the Ministry of Human Rights (“Human Rights in Morocco” 1995). Finally, and perhaps most relevant, the

regime abrogated a major law restricting protest. On July 5th, 1994, the king relaxed the law known by its longwinded title as the “law of 1935 relative to demonstrations contrary to order and offenses against the respect for authority.” Like many draconian repressive laws, it was designed by the French to control Moroccan nationalist movements during the colonial period, only later to be co-opted by Hassan II to justify crackdowns during periods of popular mobilization (“Human Rights in Morocco” 1995).

The effects of the austerity measures on the state use of violence are particularly interesting considering the literature on the effects of austerity on state repression. The literature on austerity has found evidence that greater austerity measures lead to greater levels of unrest. Work by Alesina and Perotti (1996) and Morrison et al. (1994) respectively found that income inequality leads to unrest and that budget cuts in 23 African countries during the 1980s led to higher likelihood of social unrest. Similar evidence was found by Haggard et al. (1995) note that IMF interventions (similar to the case of Morocco) tend produce instability. Ponticelli and Voth (2011, p. 3) find significant evidence that a link exists “between the magnitude of expenditure cut-backs and increases in social unrest.” It follows that greater unrest leads to higher likelihoods of repression. Morocco did experience some protests and strikes, most notably in 1984 and 1990. Violence was a prominent fixture in both cases with 33 killed in 1990 and over 100 in 1984 (“33 Dead in 2-Day Riot in Morocco Fed by Frustration Over Economy”). The events in Morocco do not necessarily call into question the literature on austerity – there were indeed protests and unrest during the austerity period. The important difference is in looking at the *process* rather than the *outcome*. As Morocco underwent the process of

austerity in the 1980s, the regime of Hassan II still freely utilized disappearances, mass arrests, riot control, and the firing of live ammunition against those voicing dissent. However, repression produced two key issues for the regime: international attention was increasingly on the regime and 2) protesters continued to take to the streets in subsequent iterations of protest during the 1980s. As the economy began to rebound in the late-1980s, that control strategy was not sustainable if it intended to maintain that economic growth. Violence and repression only brought a cooling effect to the economy. With the economy on the upswing and social stability restored, Hassan II “locked-in” this new equilibrium by changing the regime’s policy going forward.

With the addition of overtures towards greater political openness, including major elections in 1993, Hassan II had – admittedly under pressure from the international community – made serious attempts at reforming the security state he oversaw for over thirty years. After 38 years that saw the development and evolution of a post-colonial state, Hassan II died of a heart attack just after turning 70 on July 24, 1999. Taking his place was his son, Mohammed VI. In truth, the rise of a new monarch could have potentially posed serious problems for plans set underway by Hassan II before his death. However, Mohammed VI’s ascension to the throne in many ways codified and improved upon what his father had started. Mohammed VI came into office as a reformer. While Mohammed VI will be discussed in more detail in the next section, it is important to note that his rise to power marked a continuity between the later reformist years of his father and the years that would lead up to the Arab uprisings in 2011. The first test of the new

reform-minded Morocco and its young king would come in March of 2000 in the ever-prominent flashpoint city of Casablanca.

A year prior to the protests, in an attempt to work towards adherence to CEDAW and as one of Hassan II's last major reforms, a new Family Code had been written that sought to limit (though not outright ban) the practice of polygamy. As part of the *Plan d'action national pour l'intégration de la femme au développement* (Plan for the Integration of Women in Development), the new reform proposed major changes to the status of women in Morocco, including the abolition of polygamy, wife repudiation, guardianship of women who have attained majority, equal division of property acquired during major, and family courts (Harrak 2009, p. 4). While well received internationally, a newly emboldened conservative Islamist movement sought to push back against the changes proposed by the new Family Code, particularly the changes in the status of women. On March 12th in Casablanca, two rival protests took to the streets: women's groups in support of the changes and Islamist hardliners. The latter dwarfed the size of the supporters' group, with the Islamist Justice and Spirituality movement led by Abdesslam Yassine able to mobilize an estimated 500,000 supporters ("Rival rallies over women's rights" 2000). Islamists moved through the streets chanting "We defend Islam with our bodies and souls. Men and women are equal before God" ("Moroccans and Women: Two Rallies" 2000).

In stark contrast to every period of protest faced by Morocco since independence, the protests were carried out peacefully and with no repression from the state. There are

several important and notable aspects of this outcome that must be discussed. First and foremost, the lack of violence by the security forces is overwhelmingly the most evident product of the reforms began by Hassan II and continued by his son. The director for the Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch, Sarah Leah Whitson, had this to say about the behavior of the security forces:

“In the past, the Moroccan security forces have sometimes resorted to considerable violence to disperse important protests. But today, the security forces permitted Moroccan citizens to protest peacefully to claim profound changes in the manner in which their country is governed’ (“Maroc: Des milliers de personnes ont manifesté en faveur de réformes” 2000).

Indeed, the Moroccan security forces failed to exhibit any of the characteristics of the security apparatus that had so brutally attacked protesters by opening fire with live ammunition in 1965 and in the June riots of 1981. This is even more remarkable considering the sheer scope of the protests. Upwards of 600,000 people had taken to the streets of Casablanca. Regardless of the issue, that level mobilization is significantly larger than those experienced by the country previously. The composition of the protests also highlighted the regime’s restraint. As was previously noted, the Islamists had been mobilized by the Justice and Spirituality movement (SJP). The SJP and its founder and leader Sheikh Yassine, had been a thorn in the side of Hassan II. Yassine was a vocal critic of the king in the 1970s, writing letters and organizing against the regime on a frequent basis. As a reaction to this, Hassan II imprisoned Yassine via house arrest for the

duration of the 1980s and outright banned the SJP in 1990 (Yükleyen and Abba 2013). This is all to say that the SJP was an organized opposition to the crown, not some upstart Islamist movement. Similarly, the fear of Islamist movements in MENA regimes, particularly in North Africa, is well-documented. One need only look to Algeria and Egypt and the relationships between Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Armed Islamic Group to find evidence of this tension.

That Mohammed VI and the security forces tolerated with significant restraint a massive mobilization by an opposition Islamist movement that held past animosities towards the regime is in and of itself clear evidence of how the regime had learned from its mistakes. Indeed, the Moroccan case is a microcosm of how the historical baseline variable explains the evolution of a regime's key control strategy. Hassan II had become known for using violence during his reign, especially during the events of the early 1980s – and 198, in particular. The historical baseline breaks following 1981 because while *les années de plomb* bought short-term stability, it succeeded in isolating the regime internationally in the long-term. By the 1990s, it became evident to Hassan II that the bloody past of the regime had only served to put the kingdom under pressure and weaken its standing. If it were to open itself to the world, it would need to reform. Once Mohammed VI was tested in 2000, it was not violence that he returned to, but a new strategy that embodied the spirit of reform adopted by Hassan II in the 1990s. While it may be tempting to attribute the break in 2000 to international factors – for which they are certainly, at least in part, responsible – it would neglect the importance of how

regimes learn from previous strategies based on the outcome that they produced. This will be discussed in further detail in Section IV.

As noted previously, perhaps Mohammed VI's most visible, if in many ways problematic, commitment to the liberalization reforms of his father was the formation of a truth commission in 2004 that was designed in order to "listen and record the narratives of those who were victimized by the state and, then, provide redress for the harm incurred to them" (Loudiy 2014, p. 90). The commission had a mandate lasting two years and heard public testimony from victims and their family members about their experience under the repressive apparatus of Hassan II. According to Fadoua Loudiy, the pursuit of justice and reconciliation sought by the commission was hamstrung in two key ways: 1) Hassan II's memory had to be "protected" and thus could not be named as responsible for the victim's experiences, and 2) individuals responsible for the torture (read: members of Hassan II's repressive apparatus) could not be explicitly named (2014, p. 91). The 2004 commission and its conduct are a reminder that while the Alawite regime had made some effort to reconcile its brutal past, it often did not go far enough – it was and is still, after all, an autocratic regime.

III. Civil-Military Unity

As articulated in the previous chapter, a key factor that allows a regime to carry out its historical precedent is how unified the regime is regarding its key control strategy. A more unified regime allows for the preferences of the elite players, in this case Mohammed VI, to carry out their preferred strategies. In the case of Morocco, the lead up

to the Arab Spring came on the back of decades of reform, sometimes in the face of very difficult circumstances that have caused other authoritarian regimes to slip back to the violent ways of the past. Coming into office as a reformist, Mohammed VI carried the torch laid out for him by his father in the waning years of the Hassan II era. Similarly, years of upheaval and coup attempts in the 1960s and 1970s led to a restructuring of the armed forces that made it more pacific and more loyal to the royal family. As such, I argue that two key factors enhanced the restrained parameters for repression laid out by Hassan II in his later years and Mohammed VI in his early years as king: (1) the major military restructuring carried out by Hassan II in the 1970s largely depoliticized the armed forces and removed them as a check on executive power, allowing the precedent to take its course; and (2) Mohammed VI carried these values over when he ascended the throne and improved upon them, further depoliticizing the military and bringing its interest even more in line with the royal family.

Hassan II's Realignment and Restructuring of the FAR

The relationship between the crown and the *Forces armée royale* (FAR) had always been close in post-independence Morocco. Indeed, this was by design. Mohammed V took steps in the early part of his rule to bridge the two institutions, particularly because he faced challenges from the upstart nationalist Istiqlal party. These overtures to the military and the eventual overlap manifested itself in a variety of ways, specifically in the naming of Mohammed V's son Hassan (Hassan II) chief of staff of the FAR, naming a royalist as minister of defense, asserting the king's role as supreme

commander of the armed forces, as well as frequent public appearances by the royal family in military fatigues (Willis 2014, p. 81). In general, Mohammed V's strategy vis-à-vis the armed forces was par for the course as far as newly minted authoritarian regimes go. Knowing politics would be volatile, co-opting the institution as soon as possible made sense. Mohammed V drew officers who had been trained by the French during the colonial era, giving early officers an apolitical stance on civil-military relations, at least for the time being. Additionally, many of the missions that the military carried out were outward-looking in nature. The early officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of the *Forces Armée Royale* (FAR) cut their teeth on the border conflict between Algeria at the outset of the latter's post-independence era, and later the occupation of the Western Sahara and the ongoing conflict with the POLISARIO Front ("Military Cultural Study: Morocco" 2012). It seemed reasonable that Mohammed V and his son, Hassan II, would establish a subordinate military given the nature of the military mission in the post-colonial era.

The relationship between the military and the crown changed drastically in the 1970s, leading to a series of coup attempts that nearly took the life of Hassan II and upended the Alawite Dynasty. On July 10th, 1971, Hassan II's birthday, somewhere between 1,000 and 1,400 rebel soldiers stormed the royal palace of Skhirat in Rabat during the king's party, opening fire on guests. According to reports in the aftermath, 100 attendees were left dead while 125 others remained injured ("Tentative de coup d'état dans le palais de Skhirat, au maroc" 2016). United States ambassador to Morocco, Stuart W. Rockwell, was in attendance that day and recalled that the Hassan II had managed to

escape the banquet hall and hide in a little-known men's room with other close allies; he was never found by those carrying out the coup ("The Birthday Party Coup Attempt on Morocco's King Hassan II" 2014) After opening fire on the guests, thirty truckloads of soldiers loyal to the king arrived at the palace, leading the mutineers in the palace to realize that they had been duped by the coup-plotting officers ("Crush Revolt in Morocco" 1971). Soldiers apparently dropped their guns and pledged loyalty to the king while the mutinous officers fled the scene in military jeeps ("Crush Revolt in Morocco" 1971). All told, 150 rebel soldiers were killed and 900 others were captured by the military loyalists to the crown ("Tentative de coup d'état dans le palais de Skhirat, au maroc" 2016). The coup marked the first major insurgence from a rogue wing of the FAR. Hassan II mused in the aftermath that outside forces were stoking subversive passions in the country, particularly the Libyan government, who later pledged to support the will of the Moroccan people if they chose to challenge the regime ("Crush Revolt in Morocco" 1971). The following day, after a full night of investigation and interrogation, three generals and several officers allegedly involved in the coup plot were executed via firing squad in secret behind the military barracks in Rabat ("Morocco Executions Told" 1971).

The following year marked the perhaps the most dramatic coup attempt carried out by the military, though it was notably less supported internally in the FAR. During a return trip from a personal outing to France, Hassan II and his advisors were aboard a Boeing 727 jetliner bound for Rabat. On their descent into the military airport in Rabat, four F-5 jets bearing the royal seal positioned themselves alongside the plane. Aboard the

plane was the inspector general of the French police, Raymond Sasia. In an interview decades later, Sasia recalls his reaction: “I quickly thought of a Libyan coup. At the time, relations between Khadhafi and the king were stormy” (Airault 2015). The F-5s quickly opened fire on the plane, causing massive damage and several casualties onboard. As some of the jets broke off to strafe the airfield where Hassan II’s Boeing intended to land, the king himself got ahold of the radio and posing as a mechanic sent word to the pilots carrying out the attack that the king had been mortally wounded along with the co-pilot of the plane – a stroke of brilliance that not only caused the attacking planes to disengage but also allowed the heavily damaged royal jetliner to land at the airport, sans one engine (Gregory 1999). Perhaps most shocking was the revelation that one of the most notorious faces of the Moroccan security apparatus, General Oufkir, had led the coup attempt. The story goes that Oufkir soon visited the royal chambers of Hassan II and found the king’s mother distraught and asking what had happened. Marvin Howe writes of the tense meeting: “Received by the king’s mother, Oufkir said, ‘Oh, Lady, I swear to you I had nothing to do with all this but you’ll see, they’re going to blame me for everything.’ For the monarch, this amounted to a confession” (2005, pp. 111-112). Oufkir was later found to have allegedly committed suicide, but evidence from his body suggested he had likely been executed by the regime. Further, Oufkir’s family was sentenced to a desert prison where they remained for over a decade and a half before escaping and being pardoned soon after (Macleod 2001).

Hassan II took several steps designed to declaw the military and prevent further coups. This was accomplished in five key ways: (1) the ministry of defense was

abolished along with the position of defense minister (whose responsibilities now resided with the king), (2) the military was depoliticized, (3) military commanders were removed from all centers of political power, and (4) the FAR was subordinated to the Royal Gendarmerie, a parallel military/police organization with its own navy and air force (Barany 2016). Additionally, Hassan II barred unsupervised meetings and debates within the military – a restriction that still applies to this day. Zoltan Barany remarks that, “The army’s accountability to the Gendarmerie is so complete that, for instance, if military commanders intend to move a convoy of vehicles, they need to secure the permission of the head of the Gendarmerie” (2016, p. 160). Moreover, since 1972, the Gendarmerie has been headed by a close friend and loyalist to the royal family, General Hosni Benslimane. The subordination of the military to the Gendarmerie, the restrictions on political participation for active duty soldiers, and the check on military power by a loyalist of the regime, effectively neutralized the Moroccan military as a force in politics, forcing it to toe the line when it came to regime policy.

In terms of more political reforms to ensure his supremacy, in 1972 Hassan reworked the constitution to realign the foreign policy and legitimacy of government with the crown (Park and Boum 2016). More importantly, Hassan’s strategy for ensuring that the monarchy maintained a politically powerful and leveraged position over the military was to play up nationalistic sentiments. In Hassan’s view, bringing Morocco together under the banner of one nation, one people, would tie the military’s hands in the event some dissatisfied officers or cadets were considering taking the reins of power. C.R. Pennell described Hassan’s new dilemma thusly:

“...Hassan knew he had to rebuild the Moroccan political system and forge a common purpose with the nationalist opposition...An attempt was made to do that by mobilizing support around the issue of Moroccan identity, by restating the national concept of the independence of all of Morocco as a single state” (2000, p. 333)

To this end, he refocused the nation’s attention – and, also quite effectively, the military’s – on the problem of the Sahara. A year after the coup, Hassan II organized a conference with the presidents of Algeria and Mauritania to emphasize the right of self-determination for Saharans, banking that the indigenous people of Western Sahara would vote to join Morocco at the UN either way (Pennell 2000, p. 336). Additionally, three years after the coup, Hassan organized what became known as the Green March, an event that culminated in Moroccan citizens marching 10 kilometers into the Western Sahara and symbolically claiming it as Moroccan territory (Park and Boum 2016, p. 9). According to Pennell (2000), this move was effective in causing the opposition parties and many Arab government to rush to support Hassan II’s claim to the Sahara.

The military mission in Morocco slowly began to shift from one centered around political infighting to one focused on nationalism and the role of the country in Western Sahara. The second half of the 1970s saw the political tension growing in the Sahara. In 1975, Morocco annexed the territory. Soon after, the Polisario Front claimed independence and governorship over the territory. With most Arab states in opposition to Sahrawi independence, the Moroccan military became more enmeshed in the conflict, moving

further southward into the territory to assert Moroccan authority (Pennell 2000, p. 342). As war broke out between Morocco and the Polisario, military expenditures skyrocketed. Between 1985 and 1990, total military manpower increased from 149,000 to 192,500, as well a 40,000-man increase to its land forces alone (Cordesman and Nerguizian 2009, p. 24).

Not only had Hassan realigned the Moroccan military's mission towards external threats in the Sahara, but he also set to work buying their loyalty. In the aftermath of the coups, the Moroccan military was granted significantly more latitude in its investments into the economy. Zoltan Barany (2016) observes that the military is highly encouraged to invest in the Moroccan economy, supported in large part by the frequent granting of supremely lucrative licenses for various economic activities, including fishery licenses, transportation, and sand extraction. Additionally, the reduced political influence in the aftermath of the coup attempts of the 1970s led to compensation from the government in other ways. In exchange for the reduce political role of the army, pay for high-ranking officers and some middle-ranking officers were increased significantly.

Mohammed VI: Continuity in Moroccan Civil-Military Relations

As has already been discussed at length, the decade preceding the young Mohammed's ascension to the throne was marked by major moves by Hassan II and the regime to liberalize and improve the human rights record of the kingdom. Mohammed VI came to power after the death of his father in 1999 and framed himself as a reformer, someone interested in opening up Moroccan politics even further than it had been in the

1990s. This reformist language was similarly backed up by Mohammed VI's relationship with the military. Having already been politically marginalized by Hassan II, the military enjoyed significant economic benefits that ensured loyalty and subordination.

Mohammed VI not only continued this trend but enhanced it.

The relationship between Mohammed VI and the military was tested in the early 2000s. According to Zoltan Barany (2016), a schism erupted between senior and junior officers regarding the perceived lack of promotions and the difficulty in acquiring them. Mohammed VI managed this by inserting himself into the situation, opening more pathways to advancement for the disgruntled middle-ranking officers – a strategy that largely appeased the small, dissatisfied cadre (Barany 2016, p. 161). Additionally, while keeping the marriage of interest between the crown and the military intact, he also moved to back the military's position in the Sahara. On his first visit to the Western Saharan capital of Laayoun, Mohammed VI declared,

“Morocco shall not relinquish an inch of its Sahara territory, which is inalienable and indivisible. We are convinced of our full sovereignty over every inch of this land which stands protected by our Royal Armed Forces, the members of the Gendarmerie Royale, and the Auxiliary Forces, and the National Security Forces” (Howe 2005, p. 274).

Military Quiescence and Repression

The successful shift by the regime that realigned the armed forces mission towards external factors and to depoliticize them was important precisely because it

reoriented the military's attention away from internal repression. A military that is not obsessed with putting down dissent gives the regime more latitude to pursue a strategy that is more oriented towards concessions. This is not necessarily to say that had the armed forces not been reoriented there would not have been concessions (there were concessions even in those early protests under Hassan II). But it does lead to a security force that is more unlikely to use violence in excessive ways. Consider the military's repressive strategy during 1965 when General Oufkir rode a helicopter and wantonly sprayed crowds with bullets. This was a direct result of a politicized military bent on defending the regime. With the military depoliticized in later years, the regime was able to utilize a new strategy that relied more on the Moroccan police forces and less on the military than in previous years. A politically-involved military means a higher likelihood that they will be one of the first options to put down dissent in the streets. The FAR's orientation towards the question of the Sahara and other external factors mitigated this possibility.

IV. Restraint and Reform During the Moroccan Uprising and Alternative Explanations

As has been discussed, the Moroccan Arab uprisings were largely peaceful and exemplified serious attempts on both sides to reform the political system of the country. Even if one can admit that the regime of Mohammed VI did not go far enough in forming what many protesters wanted, something along the lines of a true constitutional monarchy in the vein of the United Kingdom, the events of 2011 still suggest that history and the

reformist policies of Mohammed VI and Hassan II held sway in the face of circumstances that challenged the royal family's grip on power. Buttressed by a depoliticized, subordinate military, and confronted with largely peaceful protests, the regime engaged in a strategy that focused less on violence than its rivals and more on serious reforms that would liberalize Moroccan politics and improve the conditions of civil society.

The historical variable I have utilized to explain regime strategies during periods of popular mobilization does not simply mean that what a regime has done it will always do. Regimes are looking to the past for heuristics to help give a pathway forward. This is particularly why it is important to look at several examples of popular protest during a regime. In the case of Morocco, the first two cases in many ways mirror what one would expect from authoritarian despots: overly reliant on violence and quick to stamp out dissent when it rears its head. The context, of course, is important. The riots of 1965 were during a period of regime consolidation. Hassan II had brought the military close to the regime and was quick to use them to crush dissent amongst two powerful groups during this time: student movements and leftists. And so, violence was used as the primary strategy. Similarly, in 1981 Hassan had just come out of a tumultuous decade that began with a massacre at his birthday celebration and an assassination attempt involving the air force. The same decade ended in a war with the Polisario Front in the Western Sahara. When dissent came to a head in 1981 over the economic reforms agreed to with the IMF, Hassan II again showed why the period just following the coup attempts was known as The Years of Lead.

One important thing to note about these two cases of violence is not just that the context helps us explain why the use of live ammunition and mass incarceration were the preferred methods of repression (these were politically dangerous, unstable years for the regime) but that Hassan II worked in many ways to negotiate. His deals with Bouabid, the release of the coup plotters in 1963, the deals with the leftists in 1965, and the move to scale back the austerity measures imposed in 1981, showed at least a minor degree of willingness to offer concessions. But in 2000 when droves of anti-regime Islamists took to the streets in defiance of the new Family Code, Mohammed VI need only look back to 1965 and 1981 to see what violence had achieved. Indeed, Hassan II had made these observations in the early 1990s when he began his liberalization program. Violence had brought about political strife and a damaged international reputation that made economic liberalization difficult. And so, in 2000 Mohammed VI opted to show restraint. The Casablancan protests became one of the first examples of how the newly liberalized regime could use protest as a safety valve for political dissatisfaction. This pattern would continue throughout the first decade of the new millennium and into the protests of 2011.

The military, an institution that had historically posed problems for the royal family, was also free from political influence by the time the Arab uprisings came about. The political drama of the early 1970s had given way to a military curtailed by Hassan II, subordinated to the royal family and the monarchy, and directed towards external threats in the Sahara rather than internal political issues. And so, when the Arab uprisings began in 2011, there was little chance that the military would break with the regime. It had

already been indebted to it economically and the officer corps relied on the economic benefits and perks the regime offered. Regime unity remained intact.

It would also not be terribly presumptuous to assume that other militaries in the Middle East may have taken steps to quell the protests that broke out in February 2011. Protesters were essentially threatening their way of life, the regime's way of life, by calling for wide-ranging democratic reforms. While the protesters were clear and decisive about their demands, they rarely engaged in the lethal violence that had been displayed by Moroccan protests in the past. In contrast to the riots in Casablanca in 1965 and 1981, protests were peaceful with only the only major outbreak of violence coming in April when Al Qaeda struck a café in Marrakesh with a bomb attack, an act of violence not perpetrated by Moroccan protesters and in all likelihood an attempt by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to take advantage of the political upheaval in the country at the time by sowing further discord and potentially expanding its operation. Moreover, police and the security forces handled protests with restraint, with many protests either being carried out without incident or handled with non-lethal crowd control measures like tear gas. Some physical violence perpetrated by the police occurred in the latter stages of the protest, with the physical beating of protesters occurring with more frequency after the bombing in Marrakesh. Despite the uptick in the use of physical assault after the bombing, taken as a whole the tactics of the security forces were focused on crowd control and did not use any lethal violence or live ammunition against protesters. The regime's utilization of concessions also proved effective. Within a few weeks of the protests, Mohammed VI laid out a vision for reforms that, while at the time seemed to be autocrat speak and

empty promises, largely came to fruition in July of that same year. Significant democratic reforms were undertaken with the new constitution and a referendum that passed with significant popular support, a process that led to new elections and a new parliament. While those reforms may not have gone as far as many protesters had been demanding, they were still some of the most– if not *the* most – significant reforms taken by any of the states that experienced protests during the Arab uprisings. This strategy came from an understanding of what had worked in the past, and with a unified regime-military relationship and largely peaceful protests, it thus follows that the case be categorized as low-violence, high-concession.

Alternative Explanations

If this model explains why the regime employed the strategy that it did, it is important to understand why more common, one-dimensional explanations are insufficient for explaining this case. The four alternative explanations all offer contrasting explanations but either find no evidence in the case of Morocco or only offer a partial, incomplete explanation. I will deal with each of them in turn here.

The Monarchies vs. The Personalistic Regimes: Much has been made of the relative success and survivability of the monarchies during the Arab uprisings. While Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria all either saw their executive ejected from office or their country descend into civil war, the monarchies of the Gulf, along with Jordan and Morocco, all saw their regimes survive. The several factors have been offered to explain this. Among them, the use of oil wealth to woo the popular will (Yom 2012),

constitutional reform (Bank 2014), the comportment of the security apparatus (Bellin 2012), willingness to use violence (Tétrault 2011), and foreign patronage (Yom and Gause III 2012). What is clear from these explanations is that some of them only partially fit the case of Morocco or do not at all. The regime survived because of constitutional reform, to be sure. But its use violence was restrained. The security apparatus was comported in line with the State and the Moroccan government relied on deep economic connections with foreign governments, but oil wealth or lavish spending never factored in. Further, these studies are all asking a slightly different question: why did the monarchies *survive* while personalistic regimes descended into chaos? This study asks why these particular *strategies* were employed as opposed other options. To that end, these arguments also fail to explain why violence was restrained or why Morocco's concessions were so far-reaching.

Violence-Begets-Violence: There is some evidence that violent protesters were met with violence, but there were also several instances where peaceful protests were met with excessive violence, particularly near the end of May when the regime began to be firmer in its dealing with protesters. If the lack of violence by the security forces is explained by this theory, then we should expect violence where protesters were rowdy and no violence where protesters were not. The low levels of violence employed by the security forces seemed to be consistent across both peaceful and more contentious protests. Similarly, so often is the case that protester resistance will be met with not just violence in kind, but overwhelming violence (in Syria for example). The regime had several opportunities to co-opt rioting or the defacement of public property as impetus for

a larger, broader crackdown. Even after the terrorist attacks, few would have been surprised if Mohammed VI had abandon reform entirely. Speaking to the New York Times after the Casablanca bombing, Marwan Shehadeh, an Islamic extremism expert in the region, “raised the prospect that the government would point to the violence as a reason to delay its promised reform...” (Slackman and Mekhennet 2011). But despite all of this the regime pushed forward.

International Factors: As was previously discussed, international factors likely played a part in Morocco’s hedge towards concessions. The reforms and liberalization of the regime during the 1990s and early 2000s were predicated on the idea of greater international cooperation and integration – being accepted into the international community. The regime was able to turn its economy around by the end of the 1980s because it bowed to international pressure to reform its human rights and economic records. However, international factors help point us toward concessions but they do not provide the entire picture. The easiest way to determine the difference is to look at another regime that enjoyed significant international cooperation and patronage while also experiencing massive protests: Egypt. While not covered in this study, Egypt is a case of high violence and low concessions. Protesters were faced with daily violence by the Mubarak regime, and potentially could have faced even greater cost if the military had bowed to the will of the president and cracked down. Egypt is a country that receives one of the largest aid packages in the world to the tune of roughly \$1.5 billion from United States coffers (Plumer 2013). If international patronage was enough to tie the hands of a despot, then Mubarak would not have carried out the violence that he did.

Thus, there must be other factors that determine why a regime would opt for concessions over violence.

As it has been made clear, the move towards more international connectedness after the economic malaise of the 1980s led to a reassessment regarding how political violence would be meted out against the Moroccan public. It is tempting to argue that international factors played more of a roll in the regime's policy shifts than, as I argue, the historical baseline. This temptation would be misguided precisely because it mistakes the nature of how regimes use history as a heuristic for creating policy. Regimes do not rigidly adhere to the practices of the past. Because Hassan II used violence in previous circumstances, this does not ensure that violence will be the primary prescription during every major protest. The *outcome* of these policies is critical guidepost that influences the regime's decision regarding whether or not to use violence. When violence works and produces the desired outcome, then this strategy will remain the dominant choice in future protest events. However, when violence produces adverse effects, including international isolation and economic decline, then regimes will reassess the utility of such a strategy. In the case of Morocco, the violence-heavy approach applied by Hassan II in 1965 and 1981 are very different in that respect. In 1965, cracking down produced quiescence and established regime control (albeit temporarily). In 1981, the violence of the protest was directly followed by one of the most difficult economic periods in Morocco's post-colonial economic history. It is not that the international factors are not important – indeed, they are – but they fail draw a line between violence and how regimes learn from that violence. It is critical to understand how executives reflect upon

previous controls strategies, as Hassan II did. A violent control strategy was directly contributing to Morocco's increasing isolation and was simultaneously ineffective at keeping people off of the streets while pushing through austerity. International factors are only part of wider puzzle when attempting to understand why regimes use repressive strategies. These international factors did not spring from nothing; they are the direct product of a strategy that isolated the Hassan II regime.

Composition of the Protesters: It could be argued that perhaps the regime did not crack down because of the composition of the protesters. Perhaps because the protests were composed of a large cross-section of society, this deterred the regime from overt violence. There are a few reasons why this is not a compelling reason for explaining the reliance on concessions. First, there were plenty of groups that were clearly mobilized in the protest that had antipathic relations with regime in the past. Leftists, students, and Islamists all made themselves visible parts of the protests. These were groups that the regime had in the past not been afraid to levy violence against. Additionally, other States faced large cross-sections of protesters as well. Egypt and Syria are both states that faced enormous uprisings on scales that in many ways dwarfed those seen in Morocco. However, in these cases both Assad and Mubarak were not afraid to be use indiscriminate force against people on the streets, with the former using all of the security forces at his disposal and the latter utilizing the police and militias. Even in the case covered in the next chapter, Tunisia, the protests were large scale and participation varied across socio-economic class and profession; yet, Ben Ali was still willing to use violence to pressure

protesters off the streets. If the evidence of other regimes is any indication, the composition of the protests mattered little when it came to whether or not to use violence.

V. Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the decision to use a concession-heavy strategy was a product of two key factors. First, the regime evolved its repressive strategy towards concessions as a product of the dual current of its overuse of violence in the past and international pressure to improve its economic and human rights records. When low levels of violence were effective in the early 2000s, the regime had found a strategy that avoided the political and reputational costs of violent repression but also ameliorated the animosity in the streets. Second, the military was kept in line with the regime's low-violence strategy through the reforms enacted by Hassan II and continued by his son Mohammed VI. Depoliticized, focused on external threats, and economically reliant on the status quo, the military did not break from the regime. These factors together led to a strategy that put reform and concession first and violence second. Not only was reform at the forefront, but the regime followed through on many of its promises. Though not the as far-reaching as had been hoped, the strategy appeased many – but not all – of the protesters in the streets.

A main concern with this analysis is the bounding of the protest timeline. Protests carried on in occasional spurts well into 2012. For the purposes of parsimony and clarity, I have ended the analysis with the implementation of the reforms carried out in July of 2011. While it could be argued that protests continued and further concessions were

given, the reforms of July 2011 were easily the most substantive on offer. Similarly, while protests did break out in the months after the referendum and the adoption of the modified constitution, they never reached the regularity and size seen between February and July of 2011. For these reasons, it seems appropriate to bound the protest phase after the referendum and adoption of the constitution. Further research can disaggregate some of these variables, particularly the perception of the regime during the protests.

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Chapter 3: Between Violence and Appeasement in Tunisia

I. Introduction

Tunisia was truly the ember for what a blaze of protest and revolution that would race across North Africa and the Middle East in the months following the December 2010 protests. What started as a period of agony and rage following the self-immolation of Tunis-based fruit vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi would soon turn into a period of upheaval that would claim despots from Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and, of course, Tunisia. From the early days of protests in Sidi Bouzid that followed Bouazizi's self-immolation, the threat to the increasingly embattled regime of Zine Abidine Ben Ali continued to grow in the face of massive resistance in streets. In some ways, the protest phase played out like it had in so many other countries during the Arab uprisings: protesters were beaten back, often shot at by police. In other ways, it differs from most cases: seeing his regime crumbling in front of him, Ben Ali is shut down by the military when he requests an immediate crackdown – only one of two cases where this occurred during the uprisings. Knowing his position remains precarious, Ben Ali offers a raft of unprecedented extensive political reforms. Despite the late drama that unfolded in Tunisia, Ben Ali's reforms are rejected, the military refuses to uphold the status quo, and Ben Ali is forced into exile in Saudi Arabia where currently resides today.

Despite being the first major protest and revolution during the Arab uprisings, the response by the state managed to occupy a middle ground between concession and violence. Both strategies were used throughout the protest period which began on

December 17th and ended with Ben Ali's flight from the capital of Tunis to Saudi Arabia on January 14th, 2011. While the physical assault of protesters was not uncommon during the protests, particularly by Tunisian special forces and the police, by the end Ben Ali had made far-reaching offers of reform which were too little, too late. The military had already refused to protect the regime and protesters had crossed a threshold that would not allow them to back down without claiming Ben Ali's entire regime. In this way, Ben Ali's government was markedly more violent than the regime of King Mohammad VI in Morocco but never reached the heights of indiscriminate violence that Bashar Al-Assad's forces committed in Syria. Similarly, while concessions were offered in Tunis that exceeded the hollow claims of Assad in Syria, they did not carry the same weight and scope that Mohammad VI's offerings did in Morocco. All told, the Tunisian government's response was both violent and marked by some fairly remarkable concessions; thus, it occupies the middle-space in this three-case study.

This chapter will begin by assessing how the Jasmine Revolution played out from December 2010 to January 2011. This will include an analysis of the repressive episodes that occurred during the revolution, as well as concessions offered by the Ben Ali regime, culminating in Ben Ali's last pledge to make electoral and media reforms, just a day before he was exiled. Further, Ben Ali's relationship with the military will also be highlighted to show how Ben Ali fostered a contentious relationship with the military that ultimately failed to stand up to the pressure of protester demands in 2010, leading the regime to offer serious concessions in a last-ditch attempt to save itself. I will then assess competing frameworks for understanding the choices made in Tunisia by Ben Ali and his

cohort, including arguments asserting that violence-begets-violence, international actors, and the composition of the protest lay out how the continuity between the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Habib Bourguiba laid the foundation for the former's response to the protests sweeping the streets of Tunisia in mid-December of 2010. Finally, I will conclude by tying these theoretical threads together to form a picture of what led the Ben Ali regime to take the stances that it did throughout the protest.

II. The Jasmine Revolution: December 2010 to January 2011

Though the Tunisian uprising's liberal ethos and mission would spread to the corners of the Arab world and unseat longstanding dictators in the process, it did not begin with such a goal in mind. Indeed, protests in Tunisia began as calls for economic reform. Economic malaise had gripped the Tunisian economy by the end of the first decade of the new millennium and Ben Ali's regime no longer could stand on its economic successes to keep dissent under control. It was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi that famously sparked the revolution. Bouazizi's sacrifice served as a stark image of the economic failure of the Ben Ali regime and the corruption that had continued to run rampant within it. It was only weeks later that it became clear that the cries for reform and economic relief would turn into a condemnation of the regime itself and calls for Ben Ali to leave. This section will trace the three key phases of the protests from the early days of mid-December 2010 to the groundswell of demonstrations that eventually pushed Ben Ali from power nearly a month later. This section will also track the use of violence by the regime and the nature and timing of its concessions.

Phase One: Mohamed Bouazizi and Sidi Bouzid

To say that the protests were sudden or that they came from nothing ignores the years and years of corruption and abuse that many Tunisians suffered under the Ben Ali regime. By the time Mohamed Bouazizi was abused, insulted, and humiliated by the police in Sidi Bouzid, similar events had already played out not just in Sidi Bouzid, but in cities and villages all around Tunisia. It is precisely for this reason that Bouazizi's martyrdom struck such a chord in the hearts of Tunisians and Arab citizens living under despots across the region: they saw their own experience, pain, and anguish in Bouazizi's actions. For the purposes of this study it is worth delineating the beginning of the revolution as the day Bouazizi self-immolated, considering the wave of popular protest it set off in its wake. As the story goes, Mohamed Bouazizi is was a fruit vendor in Sidi Bouzid. Like so many Tunisians, he was jobless and struggling to make ends meet. Much of the local economy relies on a tomato factory which, much like the jobs in Gafsa's mining basin, require political and social connections to gain employment (Rohr 2011). As a result, many Tunisians turn to unofficial means of making money, smuggling and selling goods not 'officially sanctioned' by the state. Even though these trades are often illicit, they provide the only means of income in an economy where getting the official permits can be a long and arduous process that too often leads to nothing. Such was the case of Mohamed Bouazizi. Bouazizi sold fruit out of a wooden cart at a local market in Sidi Bouzid when a municipal inspector by the name of Faïda Hamdi confiscated his electronic scale (Rohr 2011). Soon after, in a fit a frustration and hopelessness, Bouazizi took his cart to the office of the governor and set himself ablaze.

Bouazizi's self-immolation transpired on December 17th, 2011. What followed was a string of disparate and largely disconnected, self-interested movements that organized to contest the corruption that the government had been engaging in, highlighted by Bouazizi's symbolic action. As Amin Allal points out, the protests began as far from something of a national movement, evidenced by the map of flashpoint demonstrations leading up to 2011:

“Gafsa...Ben Guardane...Sidi Bouzid...They revealed what the Tunisian “economic miracle” had concealed from view: regional disparities, and the economic and social marginalization of large swatches of the population that were deprived of social protection because they had no access to the official employment channels’ (2013, p.188)

As has been discussed at length, the Tunisian economic successes after the turn of the century were largely relegated to coastal areas and failed to trickle down to the interior, where many of these struggling villages and towns were located. After Bouazizi, protests and riots broke out in these areas rather than the major population centers, like Tunis and Sfax. Initially protests were largely peaceful and in solidarity with Bouazizi. In the days after his self-immolation, protesters gathered in front of the same governor's office and conducted sit-ins and other non-violent signs of solidarity with the plight of Bouazizi (Willis 2016). Protesters also threw their goods on the steps of the of the governors' office in frustration and anger (“Violences à Sidi Bouzid après une tentative d'immolation” 2010). The response was muted, and the government chose to ignore these

grievances, while the police systematically attempted to break-up the peaceful protests using physical violence and crowd control methods.

Within days, events began to escalate. Police brutality carried out against peaceful protesters had riled the emotions of locals and soon riots began to break out in response. Over the weekend of December 18th and 19th, it was reported that roughly several hundred youths began attacking local police stations and damaging property, leading to an increased police presence in Sidi Bouzid and scores of arrests (“Riots reported in Tunisian city” 2010). The Ben Ali government’s response was muted and attempted to minimize what was spreading from Sidi Bouzid. In my interview with Riad Ferjani, he characterized the initial response as follows:

“There were three moments in the response of the regime. The first moment, nothing happens. There [was] nothing. And they tried to constrain, to censor the information [about what was happening Sidi Bouzid]. So, in the official TV and [in] the media, there was ... nothing. It was [as if] Sidi Bouzid... was another country.”

Officially, the government released a press release arguing that “the immolation [was] a ‘painful’ but ‘isolated’ incident” and it “[expressed] outrage at attempts to take it out of its context and exploit it for unhealthy political ends” (“Public suicide attempt sparks angry riots in central Tunisia” 2010). The government was attempting to minimize the outcries and protests in the same way they had contained and minimized the protests in

Gafsa in 2008. There was no acknowledgement that the economic demands in the interior were going to produce any meaningful concession from the government.

Protesters in this first phase were largely demonstrative and in lockstep with the sentiments that Bouazizi sacrificed himself for: economic justice and an end to a corrupt economic system that prevented the average Tunisian from finding meaningful employment. Police became more overtly coercive, utilizing tear gas and riot control methods to quash protests, along with the mass arrest of participants (Hassan 2010). This quickly provoked violent responses, including throwing stones at government buildings, from Tunisians who were all at once insulted and angered by the failure of the government to acknowledge their grievances (Hassan 2010). Tensions would escalate on December 27, 2010 and send the protests in to their most violent and precarious phase.

The Second Phase: Escalation and Expansion

Protests were beginning to spread to other parts of the interior. Thala and Kasserine, cities that would eventually be the sites of some of the worst atrocities in of the uprising, were the cities that would follow Sidi Bouzid (Perkins 2014). As the protests began to spread, the police became more assertive and violent in their dealings with protesters. On December 27th, one of the first major protests gripped the capital of Tunis. According to news reports, some 1,000 protesters took to the streets of Tunis, staging demonstrations in front of the UGTT's where fights broke out between the police and the participants. During these confrontations, a man died by throwing himself onto electrical pylons, with another protester having been shot by police only a few days prior (Borger

2010). These contentious flashpoints were no longer relegated to the periphery – they were at the heart of Ben Ali’s power in Tunis and they were actively courting one of the most powerful organizing forces in the country: the UGTT. The protests were not contained in the way those in Gafsa and Ben Guardane had been, which meant that the grievances of protesters in the interior could not be hand-waved away as limited and particularized.

As the new year came and protests became more frequent, the Ben Ali regime moved into what Riad Ferjani referred to in my interview with him as the “discredit phase.” It was in the second and third weeks of the protests that the regime began to attempt to undermine the motivations of the protests. For instance, according to Ferjani, the regime began to discredit Bouazizi as a drunk. Ben Ali also actively referred to protesters in adversarial terms, such as “extremists” and “mercenaries who resort to violence and disorder” (Borger 2010). The regime’s media strategy was typical of many dictators attempting to shape the public’s perception of the those in the streets. Just a month later, Muammar Gaddafi would proclaim that Libyan protesters were co-opted by Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden, saying, “They give them pills at night, they put hallucinatory pills in their drinks, their milk, their coffee, their Nescafe,” (“Gaddafi says protesters are on hallucinogenic drugs” 2011). While not as eccentric as Gaddafi, Ben Ali took a similar tack: protesters are thugs and deviants, not to be followed or supported.

By the end of the first week of January, protests had not abated, and the protesters were becoming increasingly frustrated with the inaction and failure of the Ben Ali regime

to respond to their demands. Finally, on January 4th, the man who had set the entire movement into motion, Mohamed Bouazizi, succumbed to his wounds in a Ben Arous hospital. Bouazizi's death renewed the fervor that had swept the interior of the country in mid-December. By this point, Bouazizi was an icon of the desperation and anger that had been felt by thousands of Tunisians. According to the French daily *Le Figaro*, "a crowd estimated at 5,000 people walked behind his coffin shouting [for] vengeance... 'Farewell, Mohamed. we will avenge you!', 'Your blood will not have run for nothing'" (Pelé 2011). Motivation to challenge the Ben Ali regime was born anew and the regime knew it. Bouazizi's death upped the stakes for all involved, triggering the uprising's shift into its third and final phase.

Phase Three: Violence and a Panicked Regime

Up until the death of Bouazizi, the regime had certainly not shied away from repression. Though it was not nearly as overt as the Syrian government would a few months later, the police were willing to use lethal force as called upon. Police brutality, including physically beating protesters, was a regular fixture of scuffles between protesters and the security forces, with the latter going as far as to use live rounds. By December 31st, roughly three Tunisians had been killed by the security forces, with dozens arrested during clashes (Ben Bouazza 2011). Once Bouazizi passed, the regime moved into panic mode. Ben Ali was keenly aware of what would happen should the iconic figure die because he understood Bouazizi's centrality to the uprising's narrative. Ben Ali was much derided by protesters for visiting Bouazizi in the hospital along with a

gaggle of photographers nearly two weeks after the original incident occurred. Ben Ali had also actively tried to coopt Mohamed's family, inviting them to the presidential palace. According to Bouazizi's mother, "The invite to the presidential palace came very late... We are sure that the president only made the invitation to try to derail the revolution" (Ryan 2011a). Thus, it is no surprise that when Bouazizi did expire, the regime ratcheted up its efforts to contain the protests, leading to by far the most violent period of uprising.

From January 8th to 12th, the western cities of Thala and Kasserine would be the sites of some of the most indiscriminate violence organized by the Ben Ali regime, its internal security apparatus and the police. Between the 8th and 12th of January 2011, 21 people were killed by security forces (Ryan 2011). The tactics employed by the security apparatus were altogether intricate and devious. In one instance, the security forces entered a *hammam* (a traditional woman's sauna) and launched several cannisters of teargas, whilst simultaneously preventing the women and children from leaving for a prolonged period (Ryan 2011a). According to a local who was in Kasserine when the security forces entered the city, their goal was to antagonize the youth and potentially set up the pretext for a violent crackdown: "They were doing that so that boys would come to protect their mothers, so they could shoot them" (Ryan 2011a).

New members of the security forces began appearing in Thala and Kasserine, dressed in uniforms that looked more professional and cleaner than the police that had been engaging in largely crowd control measures. Along with the arrival of these

mysterious new enforcers came a new threat: snipers. The massacres at Thala and Kasserine largely occurred as people poured into the streets to protest the behavior of the security forces, with masked men positioned on rooftops firing into the throngs of people. A member of the UGTT reported that “it’s chaos in Kasserine, after a night of violence, sniper fire, looting and theft of shops and homes by plainclothes police who then pulled out” (Ayad 2011). Similarly, when I asked Riadh Ferjani about the violence in Thala and Kasserine he responded, “It’s not [just] violence. It’s war crimes. They...killed people.” In an interview that I conducted with Taoufik Bouderbala of *Le Comité Supérieur des Droits* (The High Committee of Rights), who oversaw a commission assessing the violence of the uprising, he remarked of these events that perhaps there was an overlap between the police and the special forces carrying out the massacre: “The policemen, they went up on the buildings and they [became] snipers, they killed people.” Regardless of who killed the people in Thala and Kasserine (even today this is still a question contested by the current democratic government), the casualty list was definitive: 21 people were killed with live ammunition, with the death toll rising to 22 after a seven-month-old baby succumbed to a collapsed lung caused by teargas (Ryan 2011a).

While a fraction of the overall death toll, the massacres at Thala and Kasserine signify the most overt move by the Ben Ali regime to crackdown on the protests. The security forces showed no intention of hiding what was happening or attempt at ending the protests through other means. When snipers took to the rooftops of the neighborhoods in these two cities, the regime was intent on not only executing protesters, but also instilling fear. Uniformed police firing into crowds, while horrifying, provides a focal

point for protesters to react to. With snipers, the gunfire seemingly comes almost from nothing. Planting that uncertainty was undoubtedly seen as a beneficial effect of the new tactic.

Ferjani also confirmed the tactics of the police whereby they would pose as vandals in order to lay a pretext for aggression and violence:

“It was very, very organized. Violence. Vandalism. So, the violence of the regime ... It was the way to confront the protesters and it was also the way to discredit them. It is to employ people who, at the end of each demonstration...they burned, they vandalized, they stole [from] shops, etc. And that's the regime, it's not the people.”

This tactic manifested itself in the reaction of the regime in the media, as Ben Ali and other regime officials often denounced the vandalism and rioting, using them as an opportunity to provide warnings for further police action. A representative of the Interior Ministry responded to the violence in Kasserine by laying the blame at the feet of protesters:

“[Kasserine was] the scene of acts of violence and destruction perpetrated by groups attacking two police stations with incendiary bottles, sticks and iron bars. After various summons and shooting in the air, the police used weapons in an act of self-defense” (Ayad 2011).

Ben Ali also used this media strategy in a far-belated and failed attempt to position himself as a savior in his final hours. In his final speech on January 13th, Ben Ali lamented, “Enough firing of real bullets. I refuse to see new victims fall!” (Ryan 2011b). In this way, Ben Ali was attempting to step in as the patriarchal leader of the state. However, circumstances had escalated too far.

Concessions: Too Little, Too Late

Ben Ali’s concessions were peppered in small doses throughout the protest campaign. As Riadh Ferjani remarked in our interview, the regime’s first phase was to ignore the protests: “The first moment, nothing happens. There is nothing.” Second, the regime would discredit the resistance while peppering in some reforms. Third, and ultimately too late, the regime would promise the world. However, as Ferjani put it, “it was too late ... ‘Yes, we will do economic reforms’, when the protest movement spread over the whole country.” He carried out many of the token concessions, including the reshuffling of his cabinet, including the sacking of the Minister of Communication, Oussamma Romdhani, and the promise of future economic reform, within several weeks of the protests breaking out (“Le président Ben Ali remanie le gouvernement après les émeutes sociales” 2010).

After censoring and ignoring the first phase of the protests, the regime finally responded. One of the first things that the Ben Ali government offered in the face of economic demands in the early stages of the protests was the creation of roughly fifty-thousand new jobs, which would have only serviced around a third of the unemployed in

Tunisia; thus, even this early offering was inadequate (Gelvin 2012). Later, Ben Ali “upped the ante” and began to offer the future promise of political reforms and an end to internet censorship (Gelvin 2012, p. 43). However, it was only after the violence had become unbearable that, in his January 13th speech, Ben Ali promising “deep and comprehensive changes,” which included the following: a reduction in the prices of commodities and foodstuffs, full media freedom, independent investigations into corruption and bribery, a promise not to run for president again in 2014, and various democratic reform (“Tunisian Dictator’s Final Speech – English Translation” 2011).

To be sure, the regime was not hesitant to offer reforms. Despite its refusal to acknowledge the protests in their earliest stages, the regime offered direct economic reforms in the form of jobs and food subsidies. On the same day that Ben Ali announced the sacking of his communications minister, he ordered Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi to enact a plan that allocated 4.5 billion dollars towards creating jobs for university graduates – a key demand of the protesters (“Tunisian minister fired after unrest” 2010). Aside from the sacking of regime cronies, the regime also intimated that it would consider political reform during that final speech. If Ben Ali was to be believed, his final speech promised a full transformation of the Tunisian political system. From this perspective, Tunisia could potentially be seen as a case where concessions were quite generous. I would argue that context and timing are important here. While the regime offered some pointed economic reforms that directly addressed major grievances, it did so only after ignoring the protests for several weeks. Additionally, the major raft of reforms that Ben Ali offered in his final speech reeked of desperation and promise

without a likelihood that the regime would follow through. Ben Ali knew the end was near and his final speech can largely be considered an attempt to salvage what he could before being forced into exile. While some reforms were relevant and even likely, the host of reforms offered in the end were difficult to take seriously by most Tunisians. It had already become public knowledge by that point that Ben Ali had asked the military to crack down on Tunisians and it was similarly public knowledge that the military had effectively refused that order. Ben Ali's planned reform package strained credulity in a political environment where he had lost face with both the Tunisian people and the military. How could it have been taken any other way than to be seen as a man pleading for his political life by offering the sky to the throngs of people in the streets across Tunisia in the hopes that he could buy himself a bit more time? Indeed, even if Ben Ali was serious about these promised reforms, he had already lost the political war. After Thala and Kasserine, it was much too late to accept anything short of Ben Ali's resignation.

III. Continuity and Evolution: Contentious Politics Under Bourguiba and Ben Ali

In some respects, it is not terribly surprising that Tunisia became the kindle which lit the Arab uprisings alight in 2010 and 2011. The country had a history of protest and resistance against its leaders, particularly under its revolutionary leader Habib Bourguiba. Like other Francophone North African colonies, it also had its revolutionary spirit embedded in its culture from the early days of French devolution and, ultimately, independence. This spirit cropped up multiple times during the reigns of Bourguiba and

Ben Ali, but three protests stand out as notable cases studies for understanding how regime response in 2011 was shaped by both the latter and former's experience with protest. Two of these cases represent hitherto the most remarkable cases of protest in Tunisia up to the Arab uprisings: the General Strike and ensuing riots of 1978 and the so-called Bread Riots of 1984. Both were the most decided rejection of post-revolutionary government under Bourguiba and his Neo-Destour Party. The riots of '78 and '84 were the first signs of how Bourguiba, the armed forces, and the police would address challenges in the streets to Neo-Destourian rule, and the result was one of the first indications that the regime would not hesitate to use violence. Third, I will look at how Ben Ali confronted his long-delayed first revolt and protest in the Gafsa Mining Basin in Western Tunisia near the Algerian border. The worker revolt in the face of an economy that had become increasingly stratified during Ben Ali's rule marked the embattled president's primary challenge and in retrospect would presage what was to come in 2011. The strike and revolt in Gafsa was the first sign that corruption at both the local and national level was beginning to capture the economy to the detriment of the average Tunisian citizen.

The General Strike of 1978

The Neo-Destour Party led by Habib Bourguiba had come a long way since independence two decades prior. Social, economic, and political reform had transformed the former French colony into one of the more successful post-colonial states in the region. One fixture of Tunisian politics that continued to play a critical and intricate role

in protests and challenges to the state was the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* or the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT). Unions have historically been incredibly influential from an organizational standpoint in Tunisian politics, both pre-independence and post. Farhet Hached, the original chairman of the UGTT, was a central figure in the union's fight against French colonialism and pushed hard for independence before he died in 1952. The UGTT's role continued to be central to Tunisian politics after the French abandoned the colony to focus on regrouping its forces to hold onto the embattled Algeria. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the UGTT had taken hard left turn as union activism began to radicalize. In the early 1950s, the UGTT coordinated with a student organization known as the *Union générale des étudiants de Tunisie* or the General Union of Tunisian Students (UGET), who had become incredibly active in Tunisian politics. The latter organization began to, as Mohamed Salah-Omri points out, "supply the UGTT with its most radical elements at the low and middle-levels of the organization" (25).

Concurrently, Bourguiba was heading towards a program of economic quasi-liberalization in the early 1970s that would partially open Tunisia to international markets and attempt to make the country more competitive. This program known as *infitâh* (openness), was combination of liberal economic reforms and protectionist policies that attempted to find a middle-point between full-blown economic liberalization and policies that would be more palatable to the powerful union base. Tunisia had been a largely state-driven command economy, so the model being adopted attempted to retain some of that identity while offsetting the negative economic consequences of those policies that had compounded throughout the prior decade. However, this openness was spurred by an

aggressive push by the government to, as Eva Bellin puts it, “sweeten the pot” for private sector investors (1994, p. 431). Several rounds of public ‘sweeteners’ were offered, including tax breaks, credit, protection from foreign competition, and guaranteed government contracts (Bellin 1994, p. 431). The economy began to take the shape of a hybrid where there simultaneously existed a private sector investment composed of small, industrial businesses, protected public sector jobs characterized by large, government-controlled firms, and foreign-controlled offshore export sectors (Ayadi and Mattoussi 2014).

Initially, the UGTT agreed with the government and signed on to work with Bourguiba at the turn of the decade. The UGTT eventually entered into an agreement with the government to support the liberalization push and to “share the benefits of economic growth” (King 2009, p. 178). At the same time, the UGTT was rapidly expanding and its base was becoming larger and more active. By 1974, the UGTT had become the third most powerful actor in the country behind the regime and the military (Wilder 2015). This rise in fortunes for the UGTT coincided in the mid-1970s with a decline in both the state of the economy and the popularity of Habib Bourguiba. The optimism from the early part of the decade and the push to open the economy did not trickle down as the years passed. The Tunisian economy had in general raised the standard of living to some of the best in the region and growth continued to escalate throughout the decade. However, it became clear that the average Tunisian was not reaping the benefits of this success. Discontent began to take root amongst Tunisians by

the mid-1970s. The gap between the rich and poor continued to be a sticking point in an economy that was increasingly becoming top-heavy (“January 1978 General Strike”).

Against the backdrop of a discontented union base, the economy began to slow. To salvage its work with the government and to protect its base, the UGTT negotiated with the government and received some assurance that workers would be protected, and wages would be maintained. However, it was understood by the UGTT that these were not merely assurances but guarantees (“Déclenchement d'une grève générale en Tunisie”). Sensing discontent, Bourguiba quickly moved to silence union activism by going after the heads of the UGTT. Bourguiba sent out militias to various branches of the organization in late January of 1978 to quash the leadership of the organization. The head of the Sfax branch of the UGTT, Abderazzak Ghorbal, was arrested by Bourguiba's men, pushing the union's leader, Habib Achour, to launch a call for a general strike that would wrack the nation and represent one of the first major challenges to the Bourguiba regime post-independence (“Ce jour-là: le 26 janvier 1978, le « Jeudi noir » paralyse la Tunisie de Bourguiba”).

Tensions escalated quickly. To be sure, Bourguiba had already signaled that force would be a tool used to bring the unions under control. The previous October saw strikes break out in the town of Ksar Hellal. Textile works began a general strike in response to changes in management, which was initially rebuffed by police. However, once the strike expanded to include family members and began to take on the qualities of a mass protest, the army stepped and cracked down on the strike (Gana 2013). The regime had shown

that it had no qualms about using the military to ensure order. By the time the general strike of 1978 broke out, Bourguiba responded in much the same way he had to the Ksar Hellal strikes months prior. On January 25th, with pressure mounting from Bourguiba's government, Achour famously warned Bourguiba that he must release union prisoners or that "Tunis will burn" (Boukhatiya 2018).

Clashes broke out the following day on January 26th, 2018 and continued into the next day. The result was a brutal crackdown on protesters by the Bourguiba government, meted out primarily by the armed forces. Radhouane Abdelali remarks that the violence was so stark that Tunisia had not seen so much blood flow even in the entirety of 1953 (2011, pp. 28-29). The resulting violence has been characterized in the annals of Tunisian resistance as *Jeudi Noir*, or Black Thursday. Exact figures regarding the number dead vary depending on sources, but they range anywhere from 46 to 400 (Rollinde 1999; Abdelali 2011). What is certain is that the armed forces were brutal in their crack down of the strikers. Many more were injured and over 1,000 strikers were arrested by the state (Abdelali 2011).

The violent crackdown on the strikers and the subsequent repression were not dissimilar to other dictators facing crises. However, Bourguiba attempted to sweeten the deal for critics of his increasingly authoritarian policies by liberalizing electoral laws. To present the image that the regime was in support of greater political competition, electoral laws were changed the following year to allow for two candidates to run in each district rather than one. Of course, it is worth mentioning that both candidates had to be approved

by the ruling party, but the change suggested that Bourguiba's regime had taken somewhat seriously the dissatisfaction showcased in 1977 and 1978, if not because the PSD agreed with the criticisms of the strikers, then because it knew Tunisians taking to the streets in masses could only be trouble both political and economically. Indeed, the prices of basic goods skyrocketed because of the strikes in 1978. According to Abdelali, the price of coffee increased 30%, sugar by 20%, and oil by 10% (2011, p. 29).

Les émeutes du pain – 1984

The economic underpinnings that existed during the 1978 general strike failed to produce improvements in the economy after 1978. The economy of Tunisia continued to suffer and eventually it was thrust into the hands of international lenders who were tasked with putting it back on even footing by the end of the following decade. The Bread Riots of 1984 were a culmination of simmering distrust of the Bourguiba government and dissatisfaction with its handling of the economy. Bourguiba's popularity had already begun to wain in the late-1970s, and his regime's failure to address the growing disparity in income between the rural interior and the developed coastal region had become increasingly apparent.

The end of the 1970s – both before and after the General Strike of 1978 – saw economic growth but it was mainly limited to the coastal areas of the country. The rural interior saw itself quickly falling behind those living in the areas set up for resource extraction and tourism. Thus, the discontent that resulted in 1978's strike also continued to boil over in the ensuing years. This problem was exacerbated by sluggish growth

country-wide at the beginning of the 1980s, mainly due to decreases in productivity and economic mismanagement by the Bourguiba regime (Ayadi and Mattoussi 2014). The country's trade balance began to plunge even before the 1978 strike but had yet to hit bottom, only briefly stabilizing just as popular grievances were on the brink of boiling over in 1984, a problem which, in order to solve, the government had begun to artificially overvalue its currency exchange rate in an attempt to offset its debt (Kaboub 2013).

No longer were the economic hardships only limited to the underdeveloped towns and villages in the interior, but it was beginning to spread to the more developed parts of Tunisia. Discontent began to cross socio-economic class, which did not bode well for the Bourguiba regime. The socialist policies that had propped the regime up in the early days of independence were a drain on the economy and were increasingly making it difficult for the regime to continue with the importation of goods and to service its debts. By 1983, the subsidy of goods accounted for 3.1% of GDP and 10% of the state's budget ("Déclenchement des émeutes du pain en Tunisie"). In response, the regime followed the oft-prescribed neo-liberal economic strategy of restricting imports while rolling back subsidies that had become too costly to maintain ("The Riots of 1984 and Their Aftermath"). From the standpoint of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the virtue of such a plan from an economic perspective unsurprisingly gelled with the prevailing prescriptive recipe that was sweeping neo-liberal economic circles during this period. Austerity was the solution so often applied to struggling developing countries, particularly at the behest of international pressure. Movement towards austerity was particularly dangerous in Tunisia during the early 1980s. The country had only begun to

emerge from the previous decade still feeling the wounds both socially and politically of the strike in 1978, but the base of that strike, workers in the interior, had little patience for further suffering. Thus, when the rollback of subsidies hit, it affected the goods that rural Tunisians relied upon, with bread prices doubling and other goods such as semolina and pasta nearly reaching similar price hikes (“The Riots of 1984 and Their Aftermath”).

As previously mentioned, the slow economic growth and the introduction of policies that were bewilderingly antagonistic towards a disaffected segment of society that had shown previous motivations to protest led to not only protests in the poor southern regions, but also in the more economically developed north. Protests began with poor seasonal and rural workers in towns such as Douz, Kébili, El Hamma, Gabes, and Kasserine (Boukhayatia 2017). However, protests quickly spread to more affluent groups, including students who protested in solidarity with workers (“Déclenchement des émeutes du pain en Tunisie”).

The response from the security forces was swift. Several branches were sent out to confront the protesters, including the military, the gendarmerie, and the local police. In the days following the price increases on January 1st, protesters continued to confront the security forces and violence ensued from both sides. According to David Seddon, security forces opened fire on crowds several times killing somewhere between 60 and 120 people, with many more injured (1986, p.1). The violent confrontations between protesters and the security forces led Bourguiba to declare a state of emergency and institute night curfews in order to halt demonstrations and give the security forces license

to crackdown should they persist (“Curfew Imposed Across Tunisia as Riots Spread” 1984). Indeed, the protests continued in the face of the violence from the security forces, leading to further confrontations. Reports of stone throwing and arson came from coastal towns like Sfax, as well as other disturbances in more southern, interior towns like Gafsa and Le Kef (“Curfew Imposed Across Tunisia as Riots Spread” 1984). The security forces attacked well-barricaded avenues in the medina of the capital of Tunis with indiscriminate fire after police failed to curb the protests following Bourguiba’s state of emergency and curfew (“The Riots of 1984 and Their Aftermath”). Protesters had also taken up sniping positions throughout the old city in Tunis, leading the military and the police on January 5th to move through the city to eliminate pockets of resistance (Seddon 1986).

Protests finally ended on January 6th when a visibly frail Bourguiba took to the airwaves to announce the repeal of the subsidy elimination program with the restoration of the original program to follow suit, leading to the acquiescence of the protesters and the end of the state of emergency and major protests as early as February (Seddon 1986). In the aftermath the government cited reports listing the casualties at 70 dead, more than 400 injured, and 800 arrested; however, the newspaper *Jeune Afrique* reported that upwards of 143 were killed with thousands more arrested (Houpert 2016). Yet again, the response of the security forces and Bourguiba was decidedly mixed: a swift crackdown followed by a major concession. By the 1980s, the regime had clearly shown that it was not afraid to use violence to quash protests, but that it would also cave and give the people what they wanted should it face stiff enough resistance.

The Gafsa Mining Basin Revolt of 2008

The Bread Riots of 1984 were not the last time Bourguiba or Tunisia would face protests or civil resistance, but it was certainly the last major confrontation with the state until the years leading up to the 2011 Arab uprisings. In the interim years following the Bread Riots, an ailing and increasingly politically distant Bourguiba was adjudged to be incapable of fulfilling the duties of the presidency and was overthrown in a bloodless coup by his then interior minister, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. It is important to note the continuity between the regime of Ben Ali and Bourguiba, particularly when considering the repressive apparatus, the role of the security forces, and state responses to protesters. As interior minister and in his previous roles as director of national security and minister of defense, Ben Ali was central and instrumental in the response by the state to protests taking place in the streets. In an interview that I conducted with Riadh Ferjani, a Tunisian journalist who took part in the 2011 protests, he said of this continuity “No, there is no change. It’s a continuity, it’s the same regime. When [Ben Ali] was minister under Bourguiba, he was called ‘the repression technician.’ This is not a minister.”

This is not to say that the nature of the state and its positions did not change. There were certainly changes in the relationship between the president and the military. Though this will be discussed in more detail in the section that follows, it is worth pointing out here that the military and Ben Ali rarely saw eye-to-eye, particularly in the early 1990s when Ben Ali came to power. Ben Ali moved against the military early on in his rule, which led to schisms that would be critical to his exile in 2011. Despite the

changes to the relationship between the military and Ben Ali, it should still be said that a continuity exists between the two regimes given how central Ben Ali was to the prior major episodes of unrest and repression.

In the lead up to Ben Ali's first major challenge in the Gafsa mining basin, the story is not all that dissimilar to the one previously told when Bourguiba was in power. The 2000s heralded a period of fantastic economic growth in Tunisia. According to the World Bank, from 2000 to 2008, the GDP of Tunisia more than doubled from 21.5 billion dollars to 45 billion dollars. Outside of a sharp dip in growth in 2002 due to a downturn in the agricultural sector, the World Bank reports that Tunisia clocked growth rates above 3.5% year-to-year, rising as high as 6.2% in 2004 and 6.7% in 2007. The manufacturing and energy sectors continued buoy the Tunisian economy during the first decade of the new millennium. Despite a downturn in tourism following the September 11th attacks, the sector continued to stay afloat through aggressive marketing campaigns and an upturn in domestic tourism. For the most part, this delivered results for many Tunisians and allowed Ben Ali to enjoy a relatively stable and prosperous rule. The contract arranged between the Ben Ali regime and the people of Tunisia during this period is well-characterized by the African Development Bank (ADB) in a 2012 report:

“...the Tunisian regime was based on the authoritarian bargain: obligatory loyalty to the regime in exchange for political stability and the distribution of jobs and other benefits. This system worked as long as the regime was able to provide

enough jobs and money to meet people's expectations" (Obayashi 2012, pp. 16-17).

The ADB's report in the year following the Arab uprisings and ultimately the ouster of Ben Ali was fantastically prescient. Indeed, the echoes of this brewing discontent were sitting just below the surface of the economic success that seemed to have taken root in Tunisia. While on its face the economy of Tunisia was booming, it was becoming clear to the unemployed – increasingly university graduates – that the economy was being captured by the Ben Ali regime and his cronies. Rent-seeking behavior by the political and economic elite had taken much of the windfall from that economic growth and little had trickled down the most vulnerable and poor segments of society. The primary way in which Ben Ali had shifted the economic winds in his favor was through the manipulation of the legal system to hurt competitors and to benefit family companies. In a report on the corruption uncovered after Ben Ali was forced out of office, Dreisbach and Joyce (2014) argue that the president shifted the economy in his favor "by tailoring regulations to meet only their companies' needs...the Ben Ali family structured Tunisia's economy to benefit themselves and their closes allies." According to Dreisbach and Joyce, the primary effect of this was that competition was essentially eliminated from large swathes of the Tunisian economy; what was left were companies controlled primarily by Ben Ali's relatives. Thus, while the wealth of the Ben Ali family was enriched as the economy grew, Tunisians found very little room for entrepreneurship and opportunity. Starting a business and taking advantage of the soaring economy was

nearly impossible, leaving far too many Tunisians unemployed and struggling to make ends meet.

This economic discontent came to a head in 2008 in the Gafsa Mining Basin. One of the primary commodities mined in Gafsa is phosphate and, at the time, workers within the industry were well aware of the corruption rife in the Ben Ali regime. As Wilder (2015) argues, the protests that were taking root in Gafsa were not all that dissimilar to the beginning of protests in Ksar Hellal back in 1977 and 1978: protests began with basic economic grievances related to the corruption of the Ben Ali regime, but later escalated to include more politicized demands that were directed at the regime itself. Gafsa was also a politically sensitive region dating back to the 1980s. Much of the economic restructuring that took place during that decade fell on factory workers in Gafsa, leading to a loss of nearly 10,000 jobs by 2008 (Zemni 2013).

In January of 2008, the Gafsa Phosphate Company (*Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa*, CPG) announced the results of its recruitment competition, which had long been viewed as using a kleptocratic, clientelist way of rewarding regime cronies and loyalists with local mining jobs (Zemni 2013, p. 129). The results of the recruitment competition confirmed these suspicions and triggered a massive revolt in Gafsa, spreading to the towns of Moulares and Redeyef. Ben Ali and the security forces responded. Stretching on for just over six months, the Gafsa protests were a protracted, drawn out conflict that took a significant amount of effort to get under control. The protests varied: sometimes flare-ups would occur only to pause for short periods, riots

would break out from local students attacking police stations, and roads were blocked with fire and fortifications at various points (Gobe 2010). Often many of the attacks on state-owned buildings and the security forces were unsurprisingly used as reason for further crack downs. As Gobe notes, “police action, which is strongly coercive, takes on the shape of a collective punishment aimed at generating terror, at choking the feeling of resistance and at breaking the ties of solidarity within the population” (2010, pp. 12-13). Teargas and gunfire were a frequent feature of police attempts to suppress the collective action organized by youths in the Gafsa region (Daraghi 2011).

By June, Ben Ali launched a raft of reforms that he hoped would bring an end to months of protests and conflict that had wracked the region. Some token measures were taken: sacking the governor of Gafsa, as well as the director of the CPG were foremost among them. These were taken like so many authoritarian concessions to be superficial at best, which led Ben Ali to promise reinvestment into the region using funds from the phosphate industry, particularly to develop infrastructure projects and build a new cemented factory with the goal of creating more jobs (Gobe 2010, p. 16-17).

While many were arrested, the casualty list was not nearly as extensive as the protests seen in 1984 and 1978. According to Gobe (2010), three people were killed by members of the police and National Guard over the course of the protests in Gafsa. There are a few reasons for this. First, the revolt remained local to Gafsa and surrounding villages. Ben Ali’s repression was largely successful and prevented the protesters from gaining a foothold in other major cities, which in turn led to fewer participants and less

need for violence. Second, the military did not play the same role as it had in 1978 and 1984. As Wilder points out, “the army remained strictly in reserve and the rebellion was crushed not in a matter of days but of several months” (2015, p. 358). Much of the repression was carried out by the police rather than the military, which was indicative of the way Ben Ali had reoriented the security forces after coming to power (which will be discussed in-depth in the following section). Third, the UGTT did not support the protesters and remained on the sidelines during the revolt. The UGTT’s failure to back the revolt hampered its ability to mobilize outside of Gafsa and served as yet another factor that pinned the movement back (Wilder 2015).

In an interview with the New York Times in 2014, Mohamed Néjib Mrabet – today head of the CPG – remarked that “2008 was revelatory as to the social discontent of the whole population (Gall 2014). Indeed, the revolt in Gafsa served as a warning shot over the bow of the Ben Ali regime. It foreshadowed many of the factors that would eventually lead to the 2010 protests and Ben Ali’s response: economic conditions and corruption mobilizing a struggling, poor citizenry, while the regime responds in kind with force and promises of reform. Similarly, the military’s restrained role in Gafsa would ultimately reappear in the most critical way in 2011 when it refused to crackdown on protesters.

IV. The Clear Break: A Military Reborn and Subordinated Under Ben Ali

The military in post-independence Tunisia differed markedly from its Francophone neighbors in Algeria and even in Morocco. Because the military had not

played a central role in the independence movement and because France had largely withdrawn from Tunisia voluntarily to tend to more pressing matters in neighboring Algeria, the military did not take on a political characteristic. Michael Willis (2014) argues that the primary reason the Tunisian military remained on the fringes of politics is because Bourguiba structured it as such following French withdrawal. According to Willis, Bourguiba ensured that the military was largely composed of members of the French colonial army rather than from local radical militias hungry for power. Most importantly perhaps, Bourguiba assigned a civilian to head up the Ministry of Defense and

“officially banned all political activity or association within all ranks of the military – even withdrawing the right to vote in elections. Unlike Algeria and Morocco, where military figures played central roles...senior military figures were conspicuously absent from the elite that ruled Tunisia...” (Willis 2014, p. 86).

Despite this, the role of the military would change as Bourguiba would eventually find the military a useful tool in repelling periods of unrest during the latter years of his presidency. The military would ultimately find its roots once again, prompted by a thorough undermining of the institution by the newly-minted Ben Ali regime, eventually leading to its refusal to put down protests during the Jasmine Revolution. The military's break with Ben Ali in 2011 was decisive in preventing Ben Ali from carrying out a violence-centric key control strategy. In order to establish why the military broke with

the Ben Ali regime, ultimately leading to less violence and a last-ditch attempt at offering concessions, we must look at how the military was inextricably changed under Ben Ali.

A Military Scorned: Civil-Military Relations Under Ben Ali

In Habib Bourguiba's final years, he was increasingly ill and unequipped to handle the burdens of ruling a country that had its fair share of problems. Even in his televised address to the nation after the 1984 riots, Bourguiba seemed slow and labored, struggling to sound like the charismatic leader he had been just 30 years prior. Ben Ali was close to Bourguiba and held several high-level posts in the latter's regime over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, serving as both interior and prime minister. But during the late 1980s, the country was falling apart. Conflict between Islamists and a dysfunctional Bourguiba government put regime insiders in a precarious position. This tension served as the perfect divide in which Ben Ali could insert himself. The country was nervous, and tensions were high. Bourguiba was seen as ineffective, the economy had struggled for nearly a decade, and now civil war seemed a possibility. Ben Ali readily stepped into the role of savior. Arguing that Bourguiba was mentally unfit to carry out the duties of president, Ben Ali came to power via bloodless coup on November 7th, 1987. Christopher Alexander (2011) characterizes the popular reaction to Ben Ali's power grab thusly: "[he was seen as] the country's savior — the prescient leader who pulled the country back from the abyss. By thwarting chaos, Ben Ali had saved a struggling economy as well as the country's secular political order." A seemingly reform-minded Tunisian leader had

rescued the country, reasserted a strong hand to right the ship, and would potentially lead the country into a new liberal age.

While the liberal aspirations of Tunisians would not take effect for another 24 years, Ben Ali moved to consolidate his power during the twilight of the 1980s. By the early 1990s, Ben Ali had been elected and re-elected president in 1989 and 1994 respectively. A new liberal order this was not. Part of that consolidation would ultimately contribute to his own undoing. The reasons why Ben Ali had moved to consolidate power are unsurprising. After all, he was the one who oversaw the internal security apparatus under Bourguiba. Ben Ali knew that it was only some years prior that he had orchestrated his own bloodless coup. As any dictator of sound mind would, he made critical moves to make sure he would not befall the same fate as his predecessor. This goal dovetailed well with a solution to another problem that had not gone away. At the turn of the decade the Islamist insurgency was still causing problems for the regime. Ennahda, the largest Islamic party in Tunisia, had attempted to work through the system. They had criticized Ben Ali heavily during his 1989 election, laying criticisms of fraud at the regime's feet (Louden 2015). An alleged plot by Ennahda to overthrow the regime constituted the final straw and led Ben Ali to crack down, outlawing the party and arresting roughly 8,000 party members between 1991 and 1992 (Louden 2015).

This purge was also the perfect pretext for Ben Ali to cleanse the military officer corps and populate it with loyalists who would be easier to manipulate – a decision that would ultimately seal his fate by sewing a deep resentment in the military that would

come to the fore in 2011 in the form of its refusal to follow orders and ultimately block his attempt to unleash violence on protesters, leading to the mixed strategy ultimately utilized (Klaas 2013). By the mid-1980s, the officer corps of the Bourguiba-era military was primarily composed of an elite that looked much like the Bourguiba regime itself: European and American educated coastal dwellers, with a strong underrepresentation of the more impoverished interior and southern reaches of the country (Ware 1985). Ben Ali was keen on reshaping the military to ensure the vestiges of the Bourguiba regime did not pose a problem in the ensuing years. This task culminated in what is now infamously known as the Barraket Essahel Affair. Ben Ali alleged that military officers had met and organized a plot against the regime in the town of Barraket Essahel. Ben Ali's internal security apparatus rounded up 200 officers and brought them to the Ministry of Interior, accusing them of plotting with Ennahda to overthrow the regime (Klaas 2013). By the time the purge had ended, it was reported that 244 soldiers had been arrested and accused of treason, 93 of which had been given prison sentences ranging from three to sixteen years ("L'affaire Barraket Essahel, une tache noire dans l'histoire de la Tunisie"). Career officers who had served the Tunisian military for decades were tortured and stripped of their pensions and rank, with one Tunisian officer recounting how he was tortured by the regime, including being "suspended on a metal rod in the so-called 'roasted chicken' position for hours" and "beaten, hung by his feet with his hands tied behind his back, and brought to the brink of drowning in a basin of urine and feces" (Klaas 2013).

The Barreket Essahel Affair eliminated two birds with one stone: Ennahda and the Islamists had been effectively neutralized, and the officer corps of the Tunisian Armed

Forces had been humiliated and brought to heel. Where the military had been Bourguiba's preference for asserting order during periods of unrest, the police became Ben Ali's weapon of choice. As Christopher Alexander (2011) puts it, the Tunisian police became the regime's "praetorian guard" and would be the vanguard for future challenges, while the military would remain relatively weak and sidelined. Over the course of the 1990s, in many ways the military became largely subordinate to the police force. However, the memory of past wrongs does not fade quickly, and Ben Ali's heavy-handed tactics with the institution sewed seeds of distrust. The actions Ben Ali had taken created an environment in the military where it constantly felt hamstrung by the newfound centrality of the police in security-related matters, with paranoia amongst officers rampant. Ben Ali had singlehandedly created "a climate of suspicion and even fear within the institution" (Willis 2014, p. 104).

The Break with Ben Ali: January 2011

Though the military played an ancillary role in containing the Gafsa strike in 2008, it had spent much of the new millennium in the background while the Tunisian police force and other elements of the interior ministry served as the first line of defense for the Ben Ali regime. This is no more apparent than during the 2011 Jasmine Revolution. Violence played a central role in the regime's strategy but it was largely the police and gendarmerie that were carrying out most of acts against Tunisian civilians. Police were constantly at odds with protesters, firing live rounds into crowds, as well as beating and arresting protesters ("Sidi Bouzid: 'Cet article a été censuré en Tunisie.

Partagez-le’’). However, during the confrontations that began on December 17th, 2010 and ended with Ben Ali’s exile on January 14th, 2010, the military remained on the sidelines. It was not until Ben Ali retreated to Saudi Arabia that the military stepped in to prevent looting and further rioting. What exactly happened? Why did the military not intervene in protests that were seeking to completely change the trajectory of the country?

As protests reached fever pitched and the crowds called for Ben Ali to go at all costs, Ben Ali attempted to pull his trump card: the military. The demands of the protesters were clear: Ben Ali had to go and no amount of last-minute promises were going to save him. The military knew that Ben Ali had lost the people. It was finally leaked to the protesters that the head of the Tunisian Army, General Rachid Ammar, had refused Ben Ali’s request to fire upon protesters and crush the uprising, leading protesters to become even further emboldened (Willis 2014). Michael Willis articulates the public reaction to this news well:

“The leaking of that information to the demonstrators not only encouraged and galvanised the crowds in Tunis and elsewhere but also made popular heroes of the army and its leadership. The appearance of soldiers and armoured cars on the streets was applauded and cheered by the ordinary Tunisians, who saw the army as their allies and defenders in clashes with the fast disintegrating units of police and internal security services. Pictures and film footage of soldiers saluting the

demonstrators and being kissed and thanked by them were some of the most striking of that remarkable week.”

Here it is important to understand why time must be spent understanding the military’s evolution from independence to the revolution in 2011. The military had historically been apolitical, a protector of the state. When riots and violence broke out in response to the economic malaise of the late-1970s and early-1980s, the military stepped in to bring order to the state. And that apolitical ethos continued to permeate the institution even as Ben Ali, a military man himself, overthrew the lawyer-cum-revolutionary in Bourguiba. It is in this context that the Barreket Essahel Affair becomes so crucial. The military already saw itself as apolitical, outside of the larger choices made in the regime. When Ben Ali used dubious subtexts to crush career officers who had served decades in the military, that same apolitical military that Bourguiba had cultivated, he had gone beyond the pale. Ben Ali’s purging of the officer corps reeked of short-termism. Sidelining the most powerful security institution in Tunisian politics and de facto subordinating it to the police force and internal security agencies bought him some stability and protected against a counter-coup as he consolidated his power. Ben Ali also enjoyed support during the 1990s and early-2000s, as he retained some of his reformists image and guided the economy to some success. Under these circumstances, it seems reasonable that a beleaguered military would not step in and attempt to right the wrongs of 1991. However, once Ben Ali lost the people in 2011, the military clearly had no incentive to come to his aid. Popular support for the regime had failed and the military had no mind to prop it up. As Michael Willis argues “Ben Ali’s distancing of the military

from the regime also arguably allowed it to return to the role it had been designed to play under the early years of the Habib Bourguiba: that of the apolitical guardian of the state and the constitution” (2014, p. 116).

V. Alternative Explanations

The argument that I have laid out thus far articulates that the Ben Ali regime’s mix of violence and moderate concessions was a product of the regime’s history of repression, a divide between the civilian government and the military, and the changing face of the scope and size of protests and the demands espoused by their participants. It is worth looking at alternative explanations that may provide some context for how the regime responded. I will address several relevant theories in turn. First, I will look at the suggestion that the Ben Ali regime was violent because protesters were violent. Second, I will assess the argument that the regime’s response was a product of the composition of the protesters. Finally, I will address the argument that international factors may have played a role.

Violence-Begets-Violence

As I have explained at length, one of the most common explanations for violence by the regime in state-run media outlets was that protesters were violent and causing levels of disorder that required state intervention. As Ben Ali noted after two weeks of protests, “The law will be applied in all firmness” (Borger 2010). Early reports suggest that not all protesters were entirely peaceful. Both Al Jazeera and The Guardian reported

that riots had broken out with vandalism, destruction of property, and violence featuring in these cases (“Riots reported in Tunisian city” 2010; Borger 2010).

There are several pieces of evidence that problematize this theory. First, sit-in protests and peaceful demonstrations, especially in the first few days of the uprising, were regularly responded to with police brutality (Allal 2013). Second, there is significant evidence that much of the violence on the protester side was in fact orchestrated and perpetrated by plain clothes police officers posing as protesters, with the intent to stoke further clashes to provide pretext for more violence. As has been discussed, witnesses in Kasserine reported that many of the actions by the police seemed singularly intended to provoke a response that could be followed by violence. Additionally, in my interview with Riadh Ferjani, he argued multiple times that police officers would pose as protesters in order to provoke more clashes. Further, the massacres at Thala and Kasserine were clearly disproportionate to the actions of the protesters. The sniper fire used to execute protesters signaled a shift in tactics by the regime that suggested that violence would increase exponentially from that point forward. While the nature of protests remained largely similar, the level of violence on the regime’s side did not seem to be in response to any escalation from the protester side.

Composition of the Protesters

It could potentially be argued that the composition of the protesters colored the response of the regime. In some ways this is true. The initial protests were largely centered around the disaffected interior where inhabitants had long had a contentious

relationship with the Ben Ali regime and its economic policies. Indeed, the regime's response in the early days of the uprising was to censor and ignore, much like it had in Gafsa before the eventual crackdown. For the regime, this was limited to the interior and, if it could be contained, did not warrant a complete response. Once protests had spread to the capital and the larger coastal population centers, the regime jumped into action to get ahead of the narrative and respond with some concessions and eventually more violence.

The primary issue with this argument is that while it may explain the early response, it does not explain shift from the second to third phase, where the Ben Ali regime escalated and eventually collapsed. When placed in the context of the variables I have highlighted, particularly the shirking of the military, it becomes clear that it fails to explain a significant amount of variation in the regime's response during the uprising.

Additionally, as was argued by the likes of Nugent (2017) and Beissenger et al. (2015), protests were unified in Tunisia by their shared experience of repression and that this ultimately affected the level of repression carried out by the regime. There is some support for this claim, as it was well known that the Tunisian military shirked Ben Ali's orders in the waning days of the protests because he had effectively lost the people rather than individual aggrieved constituencies. This would certainly explain why the protests did not escalate to levels seen in Syria. However, it is important to note that the level of violence that did exist occurred without the military. There is no evidence that the police or Ben Ali's special forces had any qualms about utilizing live fire against protesters, regardless of how socioeconomically cross-cutting the participation was. As a result, this

only partly explains levels of violence seen in Tunisia and ignores the historical use of police forces by Ben Ali to put down dissent.

International Factors

Then Tunisian economy had become increasingly interconnected with the global economy at the turn of the century. Ben Ali's regime had grown closer to Western governments and was increasingly in the good graces of the global community. As Hannes Baumann (2011) points out, the international community was "gushing" over the way Ben Ali had changed the country after Bourguiba:

"The IMF and World Bank praised Ben Ali's liberalising policies since 1987. The economy, manufacturing, and living standards all grew faster than in other non-oil Arab states. Tunisia's 'competent leadership' and its low level of corruption were seen as major causes of success. Transparency International's 'corruption perception index' listed Tunisia as the least corrupt Arab country until 2003, when it was 'overtaken' by the Gulf States. The 'Ibrahim index of African governance' ranked Tunisia 8th in Africa in 2010, ahead of all other North African Arab states. One political scientist found that a 'developmentalist ethos' prevented corruption among the country's leadership. She considered Tunisia akin to 'developmental states' such as South Korea and Taiwan, in which a small and competent bureaucracy, 'insulated' from societal forces, could forge ahead developmentalism."

All of this is to say that the Ben Ali's government could have potentially relaxed its levels of violence or increased its concessions in response to anticipated pressures from the international community.

The evidence laid out thus far does not bear the international theory out. Ben Ali was more than willing to use high levels of lethal violence if it came to that. The military's refusal to crack down put a stop to what could have potentially been a crackdown on par with Bashar Al-Assad's in Syria, but thankfully that did not come to pass. Similarly, the concessions all seemed relatively pragmatic and divorced from any international reactions. The transformative promises laid out in Ben Ali's final speech are more likely attributed to his desperation and weak bargaining position than any international furor over the violence that had preceded it. Indeed, there was little-to-no mention of these events by the Western governments and international organizations that had praised Ben Ali so.

VI. Conclusion

The response by the Ben Ali regime was largely in line with what was expected given its history of repression and concessions. Ben Ali was not hesitant to use violence during the Gafsa protests in 2008 and had overseen much of the violence during the major protests under Bourguiba. Indeed, had the military and Ben Ali seen eye-to-eye, it is unquestionably likely that Tunisia would have descended into violence much in the same way Syria did. The mere fact that Ben Ali had attempted to direct the military to crack down on protesters suggests the violence in the past was likely to lead to violence in the

future. Civil would not come to pass as it had in Syria, precisely because Ben Ali had sown the seeds of his own demise decades earlier when he humiliated the military by subordinating it to his prized police force, purging it of career officers who had served their country during its most difficult days post-independence. When it came time to utilize violence, Ben Ali was stone-walled by the military he had spurned. Not only was Ben Ali prevented from using excessive levels of violence, he was also forced to offer an enormous raft of concessions as a result of the divisions he had sewed between the military and the civilian regime. The military's refusal to crackdown prevented violence from escalating to the levels seen in Syria and forced Ben Ali's hand in terms of concessions. The interaction between these two forces – Ben Ali's turn to the past of violence which was thwarted by the military's break with the regime in 2011 – led to the mixed strategy that characterized the Jasmine Revolution.

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Chapter 4: Violence and the Syrian Uprising

I. Introduction

The Syrian uprising began in earnest in March of 2011, several months after the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen had successfully overthrown their leaders, just after Libya had descended into a civil war, and while thousands took to the streets on a weekly basis, thousands of miles away in Rabat, Morocco. Indeed, Bashar al-Assad was overseeing a flood of protests and an attempt to control them while the Middle East was changing around him. But the appearance of revolt or resistance in Syrian streets was not something that was wholly different for the Assad regime. Whether it was protesters in Qamishli in 2004, prisoners in Palmyra, or the infamous massacre of Muslim activists in Hama, the Assad family and its institutions were fully equipped and prepared to deal with resistance from those challenging their rule. And make no mistake: the threat to the regime from the protesters was real, particularly given the context that surrounded Syria in the early months of 2011. The first modestly sized protests emerged in Damascus where several hundred youth took to the streets demanding political reforms and the removal of Assad (Flock 2011). Within a week the security forces had flooded the streets in order to get ahead of the protests, and violence came with them. Just over a week after the protests began, police were actively firing into crowds. On March 23rd alone, 15 people were killed in an attack by security forces on anti-regime protesters in the southern city of Daraa, with one activist noting that "By using such disproportionate violence against its own citizens, neither the government nor the people can be expected

to negotiate. I am scared because I don't know how this will end. I fear escalating anger will lead to an evermore brutal crackdown." (Marsh 2011). The activist, a man named Mohammed al-Abdullah, was unfortunately correct in every case.

Explaining what transpired in Syria intuitively provides the most obvious case for exemplifying a violence-centric approach to repressing a civilian uprising, if not only because even at the time of this writing the civil war that the uprising spawned continues to rage on, claiming thousands of lives on a weekly and monthly basis. It is important to note that while the Syrian Civil War is exceptionally violent, the violence did not only begin after the Free Syrian Army was formed. Violence was the central tool of the Assad regime as early as the first week of the protests ("Four protesters killed as demos spread across Syria" 2011). Hinnebusch, Imady, and Zintl (2016) reinforce this viewpoint of the Assad regime's strategy, arguing that instead of Assad using his legitimacy in the early weeks of the protests to organize a reform program that could have potentially led to early elections that might re-legitimize his rule, "...protest was met with violence from the security forces, and the claim of international conspiracy against Syria became pervasive in government discourse" (p. 228). This is not to say that the violence was not paired with a raft of both real and imagined reforms offered up by Assad, at least in the first month. The regime followed a veritable hit parade of dictator concessions in late-March/early-April, including accepting the resignation of his cabinet (Fadel 2011) and ending the long-standing state of emergency enacted by his father (Oweis 2011a). However, the ending of the state of emergency marked a turning point for the regime and its strategy for the remainder of the protest phase. After relaxing the law, Assad remarked

“after [the end of the state of emergency], we will not tolerate any attempt at sabotage” (“Syrians protest despite Assad concessions,” 2011). By May, concessions had all but stopped and well over 1,100 Syrians had been killed by regime security forces (“Conflict Timeline: 2011” 2015). This number represents a 10,000%+ higher mortality rate than experienced in Morocco and a 175% higher rate than in Tunisia.

This chapter will analyze why the Assad regime made violence a central cornerstone of its protest response, largely at the expense of meaningful reforms that would have demobilized protesters, brought stability to a fraught situation, and avoided what became one of the most intractable, bloody civil wars of the past half-century. I argue that a combination of institutions conditioned to use violence (as evidenced by past abuses), pliant political institutions, and a military coup-proofed with religious and familial loyalists all led to a key control strategy that emphasized lethally high levels of violence over a mixed or concession-heavy approach. First, I will assess how the protest phase of the Syrian uprising played out prior to the civil war, looking at how violence was used against protesters and how Assad’s concession strategy shifted over time and eventually disappeared altogether. Second, I will provide an assessment of how the Assad family regime approached civil resistance in the decades prior to the Arab uprisings in 2011 by looking at three key events: (1) what I term “the 1980s massacres,” which consists of violence at Tadmor Prison in Palmyra, the Eid al-Adha Massacre in Aleppo, and the massacre at Jisr Ash-Shugur; (2) the infamous Hama massacre of 1982; and (3) the repression of protests in the northern Kurdish city of Qamishli in 2004. Third, I will

discuss how the Assad family embedded religious and familial loyalists into every arm of the government, particularly the security forces, creating a regime where the survival of the ruling religious minority and the family had to come at all cost. Fourth, I will unify these three variables into a causal process that explains why the Syrian regime was so particularly violent during the protest phase of the revolution, as well as assess alternative explanations. Finally, I will end with a conclusion that offers some caveats and a way forward for assessing political violence in Syria after the protests had turned into full blown civil war.

II. Repression and Concession During the Syrian Uprising: January to July 2011

While the regime was certainly predisposed to see political resistance and respond with violence, the scope of the protester demands certainly played a role in how far the regime was willing to go to stop the unrest. While there were hints that protests were stewing in Syria amidst the uncertainty in Tunisia and Egypt, the regime did not bear the full brunt of the protesters' wrath until mid-March. Even as Assad doled out concessions (alongside heavy-handed violence), it was clear to the regime that there would be no backing down on either side. The inability of the regime to adequately meet the demands of the protesters or offer concessions resembling what they called for led to a spiral that eventually forced Assad to establish a red line that would trigger a cessation to concessions and a central focus on violence as the solution to the conflict. This section will lay out how the protest phase of the uprising played out with an eye towards the use of violence by the Assad regime, a strategy which defined the regime's response.

Similarly, I will look at how the concessions offered by the Assad regime were both limited and completely inadequate in addressing the grievances of the people.

Pre-Uprising: January and February of 2011

By late January, scenes of tens of thousands of people flooding into Tahrir Square in Cairo calling for the end of Hosni Mubarak's thirty-year reign were plastered across media outlets and the internet. Weeks earlier, Ben Ali had fled Tunisia for the relative safety of Saudi Arabia. Despite these major twists, it would still be weeks until other major Arab states would face internal resistance from protesters. Libya would not descend into chaos until mid-to-late February, and Syria would not be regularly wracked by protests until mid-March. Despite that, there were still stirs of anger directed towards the regime beginning as early as January and carrying on into February

On January 31st, a protest was arranged in Damascus by six youth on Facebook. One of the protesters, a woman named Maya Milani, later said that the meeting was meant to be a candlelit vigil held not against the Syrian regime but in solidarity with those in Tahrir Square in Egypt (Roberts 2012). According to Milani, those who gathered at the meeting were swept up in the revolutionary fervor that had taken hold in Egypt and began yelling about change, which immediately caused police to begin threatening the dozens gathered, confiscating cameras, and arresting others (Roberts 2012). A major theme of the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions was change. It was inevitable that this sort of revolutionary thought would begin to creep into the subconscious of those in Syria. Several days later, social media users took to Twitter and Facebook to call for what

would be a common fixture across nearly all of the states facing popular mobilization in 2011: a day of rage. Days of rage were symbolic days selected by protesters organizers to bring people into the streets and protest the regime, often on Fridays after prayer. In early February, activists created the Facebook group “Together for a Day of Rage in Syria” that had two clear demands from the government: (1) an end to the state of emergency and (2) an end to corruption (“Day of Rage Protest urged in Syria” 2011). Still, protests were not gaining traction. February was pocked with several other calls to resistance and protest, but they remained limited and sporadic, quickly dispersed by police. Most notably, protests echoing the early February calls for reform took place on February 5th in al-Hasakah and al-Hamidiya on February 17th. Confrontation during this period remained controlled and relatively limited to low levels of violence, involving mostly crowd control measures. Most protests were prevent from escalating, particularly those organized in al-Hasakah, by strict security measures and the ubiquitous presence of the Syrian secret police –the *Mukhabarat* (“How Syria dodged an Egypt-style 'day of rage'” 2011). In al-Hamidiya’s market, police quickly “dispersed” 1500 protesters that did manage to organize; though details of their tactics are unclear, it was common for those organizing or participating in protests during the first stage of the uprising to be arrested by police before or during the actual protests (Khatib and Lust 2014). There is little-to-no mention of lethal levels of violence or live ammunition being used during the month of February and these early protests.

March and April 2011: Massive Protest and Confrontation

March became a turning point for the protests as they began to spread to multiple cities. Tensions finally reached a head the following day on March 16th when protesters launched a peaceful march on the Interior Ministry in Damascus (“Middle East unrest: Syria arrests Damascus protesters” 2011). Protesters later told Human Rights Watch that the primary demand of the people was the release of political prisoners, mostly family members of those in attendance. Violence escalated from simply arresting and dispersing protesters and began to incorporate more physicality and hand-to-hand methods of control. According to one protester who was there, “We had barely taken my father's picture out when men ran toward us and started beating us. They beat my mother on her head and arm with a baton. We started running away, but they followed us” (“Syria: Peaceful Demonstration Violently Dispersed” 2011). Indeed, the reaction of the security forces was not crowd control or dispersion, but rather to violently beat those gathered in front of the ministry.

Violence escalated quickly thereafter as successive days of protests began to break out across Syria and in multiple cities and villages. Daraa, a center of the uprising, became a flashpoint on March 18th when protesters again organized. Violence again escalated as the Syrian police began to use lethal levels of violence, freely firing into crowds. One protester told the New York Times that “[the police] used live ammunition immediately, no tear gas or anything else” (“In Syria, Crackdown After Protests” 2011). According to a report by Human Rights Watch, protesters on March 23rd also were met

with swift and lethal violence on the part of the police, leaving 36 participants dead (“Syria: Security Forces Kill Dozens of Protesters” 2011). Human Rights watched reported that security forces were reported to have used “tear gas and live bullets” against those gathered at the al-Omari mosque in Daraa (“Syria: Security Forces Kill Dozens of Protesters” 2011). Protests continued into the following weeks, with confrontations between the state and the protesters becoming more fraught and violent. Security forces continued to flagrantly fire into crowds, killing dozens as protests swelled across the country (Stack and Zoepf 2011).

By early April, it became clear that protesters were not backing down in the face of frequently indiscriminate violence by the Assad regime. A Syrian human rights lawyer and activist told the Saudi English language daily Asharq al-Awsat that “after all of this bloodshed, I can only say that it would be better for him [Assad] and for Syria if he steps down from power. I would tell him, honor the blood of your people and step down from power with your head held high” (“Al-Assad should step down and return to dentistry – Syrian human rights lawyer” 2011). Daraa continued to be a flashpoint for protests against the regime. On April 22nd, protesters took to the streets after prayer and began chanting the slogan “The Syrian people will not be subjugated. Go away doctor [Assad]. We will trample on you and your slaughterous regime” (Tisdall 2011). The 22nd of April became what until up until that point was the “deadliest day” of the uprising, as security forces again used a combination of teargas and live ammunition to repress protests, leaving 75 dead across the country (“Deadliest day’ in Syria uprising” 2011). An Al Jazeera report of the violence during that day cited a witness in Homs as saying

“Suddenly the security opened fire on us randomly” (“‘Deadliest day’ in Syria uprising” 2011).

By May, it became clear to those in the streets that the removal of Assad would have to become the goal of the movement. In early May, chants similar to the ones used in Daraa on May 6th such as “The people want to topple the regime” became regular fixtures of the anti-government protests. The lethal levels of violence that the security forces had levied against protesters up until this point continued in turn. According the BBC, the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS) reported the use of military equipment to suppress protests in Daraa “Syria protests: Rights group warns of 'Daraa massacre’ 2011). The same DCHRS report said that the military were using tanks, snipers, and anti-aircraft weapons freely against civilians. Additionally, the same DCHRS report noted that bodies were frequently disappearing from the streets in the days following the violence and that 244 bodies had been transferred to Tishreen military hospital in Damascus. The military had likely attempted to cover up the massacre corpses from the streets. Additionally, the BBC reported that 330 people were arrested on May 4th in various suburbs across Damascus to stave off demonstrations in the capital (“Syria protests: Rights group warns of 'Daraa massacre’” 2011). By May 24th, the death toll had risen to over 1,000 civilians killed across the nine weeks of protests, with more than 10,000 arrested during that same period (“Syria death toll 'surpasses 1,000’” 2011).

Protester Violence:

Riots and systematic violence on the part of the protesters were not a common occurrence during the protest phase of the Syrian uprising, especially during the early stages in March and most of April. Most violence that occurred in the first month was sparked by the aggressive repression being applied by state security forces. Protesters and security forces clashed on March 24th in Daraa, with protest organizers claiming that security forces flagrantly opened fire into crowds of unarmed protesters. As is common during such scenarios, the regime made frequent claims that armed protesters assaulted members of the security forces, in this case “killing a doctor, a medical assistant, and an ambulance driver” (“15 killed in clashes between protesters, security forces in Syria” 2011). However, an echo of the *Ahdath* years under Hafez rose to the surface in April when it was reported that that unknown assailants assaulted a convoy of Syrian security forces travelling between the suburbs of Daraa (Narwani 2014). According to a resident of Daraa, the assailants slicked the road with oil and then opened fire on the trucks as they slid into each other, killing nineteen soldiers (Narwani 2014). In an earlier incident on April 10th, Syrian officers were ambushed by armed men near the port city of Baniyas, killing several members of the security forces (“Syria unrest: Shooting erupts in seaport of Baniyas” 2011). As the protests wore on towards the eventual formation of the Free Syrian Army (along with the subsequent transition from the protest phase of the conflict to the civil war phase, thus outside the scope of this study) and a formal armed resistance in July of 2011, these sorts of operations became more frequent. Jisr Ash-Shughour became a contentious village yet again decades after the *Ahdath*, when a heavy Syrian

military presence in the town led to what Syrian State TV reported as a massive assault against the security forces, alleging that 40 officers were killed by “armed groups using weapons and grenades” (“Syrian TV: Security officers killed in ambush” 2011).

What is difficult to pin down is how much these episodes affected the strategy of violence applied by the regime. It without a doubt gave the Syrian military impetus to crack down further. For instance, after the latter episode in Jisr Ash-Shughour in June of 2011, a representative from the Interior Ministry portended harsh retribution from the state: “The state will act firmly, with force and in line with the law. It will not stay arms folded in the face of armed attacks on the security of the homeland” (“Syrian TV: Security officers killed in ambush” 2011). These sorts of threats were supplemented by State claims that such retribution was being called for by bystanders in the city: “the people in Jisr al-Shughour are urging the army to intervene speedily” (“Syrian TV: Security officers killed in ambush” 2011). This sort of language suggests that regime used episodes of violence to justify aggressive crackdowns to the public. The issue remains that violence was extremely heavy *throughout* the protest phase. While protester and/or rebel violence may have given the security forces an excuse to launch a public relations campaign, it is not clear that these ambushes led to significant fluctuations in the violence being applied by the security forces. What is perhaps clearer is how the application of violence changed the regime’s key controls strategy as a whole. While violence may have been consistently high from the early days of the protest, the nature of the concession packages changed in April. In the following section I will discuss how the handling of concessions by the regime changed starkly.

Concessions: A Capped Repertoire

One of the central themes of this chapter is that violence was heavy and lethal nearly from the outset in Syria. Once protests became widespread in March of 2011, the Assad regime and its security forces regularly resorted to both moderate and high levels of violence. Tactics escalated quickly from physical assault (moderate) to the regular use of live ammunition and indiscriminate killings (high) within days of the March 15th and 16th conflagrations. One way in which Bashar differed slightly from his father was that he did offer a raft of concessions – at least in the early days of the protests. Amidst the brutality of the police, the criminal *Shabiha* gangs, and the military, Bashar would take to state run media and offer suggestions that reform was on the table. Concessions, however, remained heavily oriented around the first three to four weeks of the uprising and it became clear by mid-April that the Assad regime had little appetite to give more than it intended, as will be discussed shortly.

Assad claimed that the state would begin to look into reforms around a week after the protests became regular occurrences in late-March. On March 23rd, as violence began to escalate in Daraa, Bashar made a public pledge to “look into granting Syrians greater freedom,” including considering drafting laws to provide media freedoms, allowing great political plurality, and ending the state of emergency (Al-Khalidi 2011b). Still, the concessions offered at this point were only speculative and suggested very little seriousness on the party of the regime. Three days later, the regime made a bid to satisfy one of the earliest demands of the protest movements and released roughly 260 political

prisoners – mostly Islamists – from prison through presidential pardon (Fadel 2011). The pardoning of the prisoners was in many ways one of Assad’s most attractive concessions, particularly amongst Sunni Islamists. The concession drew a few nods of approval, but it did little to stem the reaction to the violence being carried out by the security forces elsewhere. The regime followed the pardon of the prisoners with several token resignations from Assad’s cabinet and the powerless prime minister, as well as a promise to organize a committee that could look into deeper political and institutional reforms sometime in the future (Fisher 2015). This batch of reforms smacked of typical token appeasement by an authoritarian ruler. Eliminating powerless bureaucrats and officials did little to address the violence in the streets or the major institutional corruption that plagued the Syrian political system. Further, it did nothing to open politics or make any constitutional reforms that might decentralize power away from the hands of the Assad family. While the release of the prisoners was certainly a key concession from the regime, Assad had essentially missed out on the opportunity to capitalize on it as a major reform that could ameliorate protester grievances. Calls for the release of political prisoners began in the early days of March and it had been weeks since that was a major demand. Since those demands had been made, violence had continued to be the primary weapon of repression against the protesters and their demands had already broadened by the time Assad caved on the issue of the prisoners.

The final major concession, the “cap” of the Syrian regime’s concession repertoire, was at last the annulment of state of emergency that had been in place for roughly 48 years. On April 16th, Assad made the announcement via state-run TV that he

had encouraged the legislature to lift the state of the emergency, which was finally carried out five days later on April 21st (Oweis 2011a). The reception of the announcement was mixed, with many pointing out that laws still existed that gave the security forces significant latitude when it came to its repressive tactics, while others acknowledged that it was a good start (Oweis 2011a). However, Assad signaled that this was likely to be the last serious concession, saying in his address that there will no longer be “an excuse” for organizing protests (“Syria's Assad Says Government to Lift Emergency Law” 2011). This red line made it clear to the opposition that any additional reforms would only begin to be considered *after* protests came to an end.

It is tempting to say that the concession strategy of the regime was fairly moderate. However, this would belie the hollowness of many of Assad’s concessions. Many completely symbolic, including the reshuffling of Assad’s cabinet and the sacking of several local officials, as these actors had little-to-no power or influence over Syrian politics and the apparatus of the state. These concessions did not align with protester demands for far-reaching changes to the political structure. Bureaucrats chosen by Assad were subsequently replaced by additional Assad cronies. Given the centrality of Assad’s power at the national level, the cabinet reshuffle did not indicate liberalization or accountability on the part of the regime. The main substantive concessions – the pardoning of 260 prisoners and the end of the state of emergency – were somewhat well received but, again, did little to address the underlying issues that protesters had with the State. It is unlikely that Assad or his inner circle truly believed that the end of the state of emergency would leave them in a weaker position given other leverage the security

forces had. Additionally, as Khaled Oweis (2011a) points out, “Assad's conciliatory move followed a familiar pattern since the unrest began a month ago: pledges of reform are made a day before Friday when demonstrations have been the strongest, and are usually followed by an intense crackdown.” After the red line was crossed and protests failed to abate, concessions all but dried up. Between April 21st and July 29th when the Free Syrian Army was formed, very little was conceded by the Syrian regime. “Hama Rules” were in full effect, though of course they had been since the beginning.

Violence as a Dominant Strategy

As previously mentioned, the level of violence applied during the protest phase of the uprising was consistently high. From the very early days of the protests, the Assad regime its security forces used lethal levels of violence to quash protests. Police were regularly firing live ammunition indiscriminately into crowds of protesters, leaving over 1,000 dead by the end of May. Not only were the police active in using lethal means of crowd dispersal, but the military was taking part in the repression using snipers, anti-aircraft weaponry, and tanks. For the regime lethal violence was always the main weapon of choice. As I have noted, the regime used dissident violence to prop up its public relations campaign that attempted to justify this high level of violence. The regime modified its

strategy in April to devote all of their resources to the continued application of violence and *away* from concession packages. The lifting of the state of emergency marked the

final olive branch the regime was willing to offer to the protesters. Brutal violence would come to define the regime's key control strategy.

III. Historical Baseline: A Modern History of Violence in Syria

The basis for the use of violence against adversaries of the regime in Syria traces its roots to Bashar's father, Hafez al-Assad. Hafez was a self-styled military overseer of the revolution that brought stability and predictability to Syrian politics after decades of uncertainty following independence in 1946 including multiple coup d'états, the last of which brought the elder Assad into power in 1970. In addition to coup proofing his regime by stacking it with religious and familial loyalists (discussed more thoroughly in the following section), Hafez made certain to establish his dominance and ruthlessness during the first major test of his authority: the uprising led by the Muslim Brotherhood from 1979 to 1982. Speaking of the massacre at Tadmur Prison in 1980, Fouad Ajami (2012) writes, "The regime wanted this barbarism known... This ruler was there to stay, and he let the violence... deliver the message. The demonstrations of old... were a thing of the past" (p. 41). This section will explore how political violence was normalized and institutionalized by the Assad regime under Hafez and then carrying over to his son Bashar after the former's death in 2000. First, I will look at three major episodes of violence during the early years of the Muslim Brotherhood's uprising, including massacres at Tadmur Prison, Jisr Ash-Shugur, and Aleppo. Next, I will discuss perhaps the most notorious incident of violence during Hafez al-Assad's rule, the massacre of the

village of Hama in 1982. Finally, I will discuss regime reactions to protests that broke out in the northern Kurdish region in 2004.

The Massacres of 1980

The late-1970s and the early-1980s proved to be trying times for the Assad regime as a result of an organized uprising against the regime by disaffected Sunni Muslims in the major commercial capital of Aleppo and the western city of Hama. The uprising took shape around the Muslim Brotherhood, the well-known and well-organized Egyptian Islamic organization that had significant inroads amongst Sunni communities in the region. The Brotherhood capitalized on an increasingly nervous Sunni middle class that felt left behind by the socialist, agrarian rhetoric of Hafez and his allies (Ajami 2012). As a leader of the socialist Baath party, Hafez sought to build the foundation of his regime around the minority Alawite religious sect, of which his family were practitioners. These factors, combined with the influence of Saudi Arabia on Sunni Islamists in Syria during this period, led to an incredibly tense situation that resulted in a series of violent acts that eventually culminated in the massacre at Hama in 1982.

A few things must be noted about the massacres that occurred between 1979 and 1982. The first is that the context is quite different than the largely peaceful protests that occurred in the spring of 2011. Wieland (2012) notes that “Alawite officers had become the targets of sectarian killings” and that “President Hafez al-Asad had narrowly escaped an assassination attempt himself.” It is clear that the Assad regime was responding to what it perceived to be an organized insurgency against its rule, and with the instability of

the '60s and '50s in its mind, it moved decisively to stomp out any foothold for the Brotherhood or surrogates of the Saudis. However, the second thing to note is that simply writing off the reaction of the Assad regime against Sunni Islamists as a tit-for-tat response to violence neglects to acknowledge the legitimate concerns and fears that urban Muslims were feeling as a result of Assad's socialist rhetoric. Indeed, it was not only radical members of the Brotherhood that were fighting the regime. As Thomas Pierret (2010) puts it, "By early 1980, northern cities like Aleppo and Hama had witness broad protest movements involving students, professional associations, and merchant bourgeoisie" (p. 2). While it is easy to see that Hafez was responding to directly violent acts against his power base and rule, the violence also acted as a deterrent to the segments of the population that were unhappy with being neglected by Assad's economic reforms.

Violent deterrence by the Assad regime first took shape in 1980 during three major events where the regime lashed out at opponents with exceptionally high levels of violence that far exceeded any reasonable definition of military reprisal, claiming the lives of thousands upon thousands of unarmed civilians in the process. The first major incident was at Tadmur Prison. The events leading to the massacre at Tadmur were driven by a flagrant assassination attempt on the life of Hafez by elements of the Brotherhood in June of 1980. According to Sami Moubayed (2015), as Assad was welcoming a Malian diplomatic guest at the presidential palace, extremists lobbed hand grenades at the feet of the President and opened fire on his security detail. As the story goes, Hafez kicked away one grenade while the other was smothered by a selfless body guard of the president (Moubayed 2015). The reaction from Hafez was swift. The

President immediately passed what is known as *Law No.49* in July of 1980. *Law No. 49* served two purposes. First, it outlawed membership in the Muslim Brotherhood and made such activities punishable by death (Pierret 2010). Second, it also served to draw members of the Brotherhood out of the shadows by offering up a token amnesty to those who turned themselves in, allowing the regime to arrest roughly 1,052 activists in the process (Pierret 2010, p.3). Hafez's retribution did not stop with *Law No. 49*, as he took out his revenge on Brotherhood members at Tadmur Prison on June 27, 1980.

Tadmur Prison is a major military prison complex in the ancient city of Palmyra and was a centerpiece of the Assad regime's detention scheme for political opponents. According to Amnesty International (2000), Tadmur was a prison where the Assad regime carried out some of its most brutal torture and crimes against the population, especially during the 1980s and 1990s. Detained at Tadmur was a large population of Brotherhood members who been detained over the course of the past decade-and-a-half. The day after the attempt on President Assad's life, Hafez ordered his brother Rifaat al-Assad (then in control the Brigade for the Defense of the Revolution, otherwise known as the Defense Brigade) to take members of the 138th Security Brigade and extrajudicially execute Brotherhood prisoners held at Tadmur ("Syria: torture, despair and dehumanization in Tadmur Military Prison" 2010, p. 24). What followed was a systematic massacre of unarmed Brotherhood members where they slept in their cells, leaving more than a thousand prisoners dead ("Human Rights in Syria" 1990). The killings were systematically carried out at 6:30 a.m. by six groups of soldiers that went hall to hall and dormitory to dormitory executing prisoners ("Tadmur Prison: A Special

Report” 2015). Two Syrian soldiers who were detained in Jordan the following year confessed to being a part of the Tadmur massacre, explaining that after the executions were carried out the bodies of the dead were tossed into mass graves outside the prison in an attempt to conceal what had occurred (“Syria: torture, despair and dehumanization in Tadmur Military Prison” 2010).

The Assad regime continued to repress any signs of dissent in the country during the early 1980s. Two other cases of indiscriminate violence by the Assad regime were carried out during this tumultuous period in 1980. As previously discussed, the hubs of this social and political discontent were based around the two cities of Hama and Aleppo. One such event occurred several months before the attempt on Assad’s life in March of 1980 in the small mountain village of Jisr ash-Shughour. Protests had been launched around the country in response to the decades-old state of emergency and the crack down on democratic freedoms, prompting professionals and unions to organize against the state in several cities (“Human Rights in Syria” 1990). On March 9th, 1980, residents of Jisr ash-Shughour marched on government buildings, while some dissidents broke into a local military barracks to steal ammunition. The reaction was decisive by the military. Special forces were flown in to the village via helicopter where, in concert with indiscriminate mortar and rocket shelling, Syrian soldiers went house-to-house executing and wounding dozens of civilians, as well as arresting at least 200 others (“Human Rights in Syria” 1990). This case illuminates the blanket tactic of repression that Hafez used during this period. While it was unions and the middle-class who were organizing protests in many cases,

the regime responded by indiscriminately killing civilians in cities where the protests were organized.

Yet another notorious act took place later that summer on Eid al-Fitr, the Muslim religious holiday celebrating the breaking of fast and the end of Ramadan, on August 11th, 1980. The massacre, which later became known as the Al-Masharqah Massacre, named after the neighborhood where the violence was centered, was largely part of a broader siege of Aleppo by the regime that lasted from April 1980 to February 1981 (“Thirty-Five years on the Mashariqa Massacre: Blood which hasn’t yet dried” 2015). On the morning of Eid, Syrian troops entered the Mashariqah district of Aleppo and began pulling 83 young males from homes where families had begun to gather to celebrate the holiday and ordered them with no explanation to go to a nearby graveyard, where they were subsequently lined against a wall and systematically shot and executed by security forces (“Thirty-Five years on the Mashariqa Massacre: Blood which hasn’t yet dried” 2015).

These individual massacres that occurred over the spring and summer of 1980 were far from the only instances of heavy-handed violence carried out by the Assad regime during the uprising. The regime carried out violence in several other villages, including Sarmada, Idlib, and Ma’arra (“Human Rights in Syria” 1990). While the circumstances of the early 1980s may have been different in terms of the level of violence carried out against the regime, it was still a period of widespread popular discontent that was not always violent. Further, it is clear that in response to the

grievances of the people during this period, Hafez al-Assad was keen to make violence the cornerstone of his campaign against what he perceived to be the enemies of the state. The culmination of this campaign of violence was realized in January of 1982 in the large, western city of Hama.

The Hama Massacre of 1982

Alongside Aleppo, Hama has been a hotbed of unrest since the Islamist uprising began in 1979. Being the fourth-largest city and an economic hub, the city felt the weakening of the economy in the late 1970s rather acutely. The simultaneous cross-current of economic malaise, Islamist activism, and leftist nationalism made major population centers such as Aleppo and Hama flash points for resistance to the regime (Lund 2011). Following the tumult of 1980 and the ensuing retribution by the Assad regime, 1981 became markedly more violent and Syria looked to be on the brink of civil war. A bombing campaign launched by the Muslim Brotherhood hit several major Syrian cities in response to government retaliations carried out the year before. According to Aron Lund (2011), the Syrian parliament was bombed in August of 1981, followed by the bombing of a security building in Damascus on November 29th, 1981. Syria was quickly slipping into disarray and becoming increasingly sectarian, with members of the Assad family's loyal Alawite sect on one side and Sunni Muslims, left out of the post-coup economic rebuilding and mobilized by a long-marginalized Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, on the other. In addition to religious grievances stoked by the Brotherhood, Hama was also an agricultural and economic center that had experienced significant economic

dislocation throughout the 1970s. According to Lawson (2016), heavy industrialization programs enacted by Assad during the 1970s and tax hikes meant to subsidize state purchase of cotton severely upset the economic balance of the area around Hama and burdened the working poor who felt the brunt of the new burden created by tax hikes. With the religious and economic tension reaching a turning point by the end of 1981, the Assad regime moved to stomp out the Islamist movement and any lingering resistance to the regime once and for all. What resulted was the brutal decimation of the city of Hama early the following year.

Syrian military forces sieged the town of Hama beginning on Thursday, February 2nd, 1982. The Assad regime ordered around 12,000 troops to encircle the village, with the operation being led once again by the close confidant and brother of Hafez, Rifaat al-Assad (“Syrie : l'ombre du massacre de février 1982 plane toujours sur Hama” 2012). Robert Fisk (2010) later referred to Rifaat, someone he purportedly saw in Hama during the fighting, as “the Butcher of Hama” for his role in the massacre. It was reported by Time magazine that the operation began as a door-to-door search executed by the regime to weed out Brotherhood members and collaborators who had taken up hold in the city since the beginning of the protests (Tharoor 2011). Shortly thereafter, the Brotherhood reacted with a call to arms from the loud speakers of minarets across the city, exhorting the citizens of Hama to rise up and defend the city. The regime escalated the violence to end the Brotherhood’s stand and laid siege to the city for nearly four straight weeks.

Outside access to the village was strictly forbidden and the regime made pains to avoid information about the massacre reaching outside media. As a result, very little was initially known about what was happening inside the city. British journalist Robert Fisk was one of the few members of the press to gain access to the city. Fisk says that he was able to take a taxi carrying members of the security forces into city, where he witnessed the ensuing battle and casualties on both sides (“Robert Fisk remembers ‘Hama Massacre’” 2012). Rebels had taken up refuge in the Old City in order to gain a foothold and push back the security forces, causing some casualties on the side of the Syrian forces. But outside of these small snap shots, the scale of the massacre was extremely unclear at the time and to a large extent still is today. In 2001, Thomas Friedman recalled his visit to Hama after the violence, saying that “the regime actually wanted Syrians to go see it, to contemplate Hama’s silence and to reflect on its meaning.” Friedman (2001) describes a scene that “looked as though a tornado had swept back and forth over it for a week.”

In Friedman’s 1989 book *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, he dedicates an entire chapter to what he dubbed “Hama Rules” – a term he coined to describe the total warfare laid upon Hama by the Assad regime. Friedman’s book also offers one of the best collection of accounts of what happened in Hama, using sources from books published by the Brotherhood and Israeli intelligence. According to Friedman (1989), when the Syrian forces entered the city they faced stiff resistance in the narrow alleyways, often coming under heavy fire from rooftop snipers and roving bands of secular youth that had aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood. The massacre went into full effect as it became clear to

Rifaat al-Assad that “ferreting” out the Muslim Brotherhood from various districts around the city was not effective enough because rebels had been able to launch successful attacks against the military using rocket propelled grenades and other arms (Friedman 1989). Rifaat’s strategy shifted to indiscriminate violence, focusing on leveling entire neighborhoods and districts. The Brotherhood claimed that it caught a radio transmission from Rifaat to one of his lieutenants where he is alleged to have said “I don’t want to see a single house not burning’ (Friendman 1989). The result, according to Friedman, was that few if any buildings escaped utter decimation as result of the shelling from both air and land. Hama had been destroyed. Reports about the number killed have varied and been disputed by several different sources. Bill Rugh (2015), a former diplomat frequently in Damascus around this time, plays down higher estimates, arguing that journalists were exaggerating numbers. However, an Amnesty International report released the year following the massacre in 1983 cites between 10,000 and 25,00 people were killed over the 27 days that Hama was besieged. Friedman in *From Beirut to Jerusalem* chooses a variant of the Amnesty International numbers, citing 20,000 as the number killed. What can be said with certainty is that thousands, many of them unarmed civilians, lost their lives during one of the most brutal sieges of a city in modern times.

An important aspect of the Hama massacre to take note of is that the reaction from Assad against the protesters during the period from 1979 to 1982 as the *Ahdath*

(“the events”)³ was almost entirely focused on the use of violence as a tool of coercion. As discussed earlier, a misconception of this period is that it largely amounts to a civil war against a rebel insurgency. While this is true in the sense that elements of the Brotherhood and other forces organized in various areas to strike at the regime, the claim neglects the other widespread political and economic grievances that had taken root in major population centers such as Hama and Aleppo. As Conduit (2017) points out, “Hafez al-Asad’s social contract, while modernizing the nation and making Syria more economically equitable overall, created a distinct group whose stake in the country and economy declined significantly over the 1970s and 1980s” (p. 79). Despite these legitimate grievances, Hafez and his allies remained tone deaf to a population struggling to cope with economic dislocation brought about by the President’s reforms. This is evidenced in blunt terms by Lund (2011):

“During the *Ahdath*, Hafez el-Assad conceded nothing...there were no changes in the political structure. Quite the contrary: in practice, the level of repression was increased considerably, and the regime narrowed its base, more or less eschewing public support to regroup in its core constituency.” (p. 15).

The lack of serious consideration to the plight of his citizens and the scorched earth policy that Hafez used during the *Ahdath* set the tone for the use of political violence by not only Hafez himself in later years, but also his son decades later.

³ The vague terminology is rooted in the government treatment of those who discussed the atrocities committed by the regime. As a result of this fear, people spoke in hushed terms about the violence and often times only referred to these episodes as “the events.”

The al-Qamishli Uprising of 2004

The unprecedented violence display by Hafez and his cronies during the 1980s provided one clear lesson for Bashar to take onboard after his father died of a heart attack in 2000: overwhelming violence brought quiescence. The Islamist insurgency that had proven to be such a thorn in the Assad regime's side during the late-1970s and early-1980s was utterly demolished and forced into the shadows. Not only had the insurgency been quashed, but it also had solidified the Assad reputation of completely intolerant of challenge from the public, lest it incur the wrath of the security. As will be discussed in the next section, the apparatus of the state that was passed down to Bashar after Hafez died remained largely intact. Gambill (2004) remarks that although Bashar was meant to "put a somewhat kinder and gentler face to the regime he inherited, the government's legacy of brutality in the face of internal challenges to its authority is largely unshaken – its February massacre of up to 20,000 people in Hama...remained deeply imbedded in Syrian popular consciousness." This serves as both a useful way of understanding the continuity of the Assad regime, as well as the support for one of the central claims of this dissertation: that historical acts violence plays a critical role in how states use it contemporarily. Indeed, it was only a few years after Bashar came to power that he faced his first challenge, in the shape of an uprising in the northern Kurdish areas of Syria bordering Turkey.

The uprisings in 2004 was notable for a variety of reasons. It marked one of the only times in post-independence Syria that the Kurdish region became significantly

wrought by unrest (“The Al-Qamishli Uprising: The beginning of a new era for Syrian kurds?” 2009). The events that triggered a broader set of protests and riots against the regime in the Kurdish north of Syria began in the Kurdish city of Qamishli. A soccer match between the local Kurdish team and an Arab team from the Syrian city of Deir ez-Zor ended in clashes that left nine soccer fans dead (“Qamishli Kurds Commemorate 2004 Uprising” 2016). During the funerals held in honor of the dead at Qamishli, members of the procession began chanting anti-regime slogans and defacing a statue of the deceased Hafez al-Assad, leading to a confrontation with the security forces that left 23 people dead and dozens more injured and/or arrested (“Qamishli Kurds Commemorate 2004 Uprising” 2016). This confrontation led to several days of unrest in various Kurdish towns in the north, including al-Qahtaniya, al -Malkiya, and `Amuda (“Group Denial: Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights in Syria” 2009). The crackdown by Bashar and the security forces was swift and lethal. Over the ensuing days, the military surrounded and entered Kurdish population centers across Syria. The result was 36 people dead, 160 injured, and thousands arrested (“Group Denial: Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights in Syria” 2009). A report published by the non-profit organization Kurd Watch in 2009 writes that the “brutality” of the security forces was on full display, “as reflected in the high number of dead, injured and arrest – some of them children” (p. 10).

The violence in Qamishli and elsewhere in the Kurdish north of Syria in 2004 is remarkable because they in many ways mirror the events of the 1980s under Hafez al-Assad. When confronted with criticism and anti-regime sentiment, Bashar did not act any

different than his father did decades before. Despite the fact that the events spiraled out of control due to unfortunate circumstances stemming from the hooliganism after the soccer match in Qamishli, the Assad regime were quick to crack down on organized dissent first – and only – with violence that killed dozens of people participating in a funeral procession. The events in 2004 further highlight the pattern of response that the Assad family regime has used throughout its rule. Not only is violence the main tool of the regime, but it is almost always excessive and designed to stomp out dissent before it can take root and spread. Security forces have time and time again displayed a shocking lack of restraint and have made the firing of live ammunition into crowds of protesters a normal reaction to popular mobilization. This fact has varied little from the events at Tadmur Prison, the massacre at Hama, and the violence in the streets of Qamishli. The Assads have clearly not been known for their bargaining; rather, high levels of violence have been the defining trait of the regime's response to protesters throughout their rule.

III. Civil-Military Unity: Coup-Proofing and Loyalty

One of the reasons that an analysis of the Syrian regime across multiple decades works is because there has been notable continuity between the regime installed by Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar. As previously discussed, the years leading up to the coup that brought the elder Assad to power were notably tumultuous. As Gelvin (2015) points out, Syria faced numerous coups before Hafez al-Assad came to power. The role of the military since independence has always been a central feature of the Syrian state, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s the military and various factions within it jockeyed for

power at the expense of state stability. Major coups occurred in 1949, 1954, 1961, 1963, 1966, and finally in 1970 with what is known as the “Corrective Movement” which brought Hafez to power and re-oriented the state towards the President’s Alawi loyalists and strengthened his grip on a security apparatus that had been struggled with unrest and power plays for decades (Rabil 2005). This section will discuss how the instability of the first few decades after independence led to the creation by Hafez al-Assad of a state characterized by religious and familial loyalty, especially the security apparatus. First, I will look at how Assad coup-proofed the state and laid the foundation for hardened and loyal security force through nepotistic promotions and religious favoritism. After, I will look at other methods of coup-proofing used by Assad, including economic incentive structures and the creation parallel military forces.

Coup-Proofing and Religious-Familial Continuity

The 1960s proved to be a difficult period for political life in Syria but it was the beginning of the long-term consolidation of power by the secular and socialist Baath party founded by Syrian nationalist and activist, Michel Aflaq. A coup in 1963 officially brought the Baath Party to power but schisms within the party began to take shape over the ensuing years. Aflaq became keenly aware of the influence that the Syrian military had within the party and divisions began to harden between the founders and their loyalists on one side and young military officers, led in large party by Hafez al-Assad, on the other (Hansen 1986).

Hafez, himself a minister of defense and commander of the air force, grew up in the era of Arab nationalism and idealism promoted and popularized by Gamal abd al-Nasser, a strain of political secularism that captured the minds of Arabs across the Middle East in the decades after World War II and the creation of the state of Israel. However, a key difference in thought between Hafez and Nasser was the former's belief that Nasser held a monopoly on secular pan-Arab thought, largely at the expense of the Baath Party (Cleveland and Bunton 2013). Upon returning to Syria from Cairo in the early 1960s, Hafez found himself at the center of a small, clandestine group of Alawite officers who wanted to bring the Baath Party to power, later joining Aflaq and his allies to achieve that end with the coup of 1963. According to Cleveland and Bunton (2013), after the coup it was the Alawite officers led by Assad that held "the levers of power" (p. 416). Sensing an imminent move by Aflaq to marginalize the officers who had taken hold of the center of power in the Syrian Baath Party, Hafez and other military officers overthrew the 1963 government and exiled the founders from Syria, with Aflaq fleeing to Iraq and the newly established Iraqi branch of the party and its influential member, Saddam Hussein. (Jansen 1986). The utter defeat of the Syrian military at the hands of the Israelis during the 1967 War and the subsequent internal divisions and enmities between the head of the Syrian branch of the Baath, Salah Jadid, and Hafez and his allies over Syrian policy and its role in the Palestinian struggle led to a showdown in 1970 where Hafez al-Assad took power in a bloodless coup, arresting Jadid and other members of the government (Galvani 1974).

The above context is necessary because it outlines and underscores how necessary it was for Assad to maintain his grip on power after 1970. Because of the extent of the factionalism and infighting in the Syrian regime, even after the Baathists took power in 1963, Assad made it a priority to bring stability and predictability to the state in the 1970s. Because of Syria's history of coups, the first step towards this goal was coup-proofing the regime. As James Quinlivan (2000) describes, coup proofing is a process whereby

“regimes have created a structure that minimize the possibility that a small group can seize power. These include effectively exploiting family, ethnic, and religious loyalties, creation of an armed force parallel to the regular military; development of multiple internal security agencies with overlapping jurisdiction that constantly monitor one another; fostering of expertness in the regular military; and adequately financing such measures.”

Indeed, at a basic level the purpose of coup-proofing is to create parallel security institutions that can be used to offset the threat of each other, thereby reducing the likelihood of one branch overthrowing the regime. Hertog (2011, p. 400) refers to this phenomenon as a system where “ruling elites have historically built up rival security forces and an ‘army to watch the army’ to reduce the risks of a military takeover.” The model of coup-proofing adopted here expands the definition to apply it to how the reins of power in a repressive system are manipulated. This argument is underpinned by the observation that not all coup-proofing systems and militaries are created equal in regards

to their relationship to the regime. As recent work on the subject has suggested, coup-proofing is far from a guarantee of safety. Albrecht (2015) and Böhmelt & Pilster (2014) have found evidence that over the long term, coup-proofing can in some cases increase the chance of a break from the regime. As Gaub (2013) correctly points out, however,

“An armed forces which is seen, and see itself, as an agent of the state...will have very little difficulty dissociating itself from any government if necessary, for example in the case of Egypt. A military institution representing a particular regime, however, will connect its own survival to the regime and question and hence act as such...” (p. 223).

This latter point is almost certainly the case in Syria. The officer corps and leadership positions in the security apparatus were stacked with family and religious loyalists. If the military ties the survival of the regime to its own institutional survival, it stands to reason that the option of dissent against a regime under threat of ouster will not likely be on the table. As such, I adopt the coup-proofing model to highlight how a personalistic security apparatus can become a facilitator for the strategy of the regime during periods of popular unrest. In the case of Syria, then, the military became a facilitator of the high level of violence applied against citizens during the uprising.

The first characteristic that Quinlivan outlines is relevant to the case of Syria, particularly in how Assad balanced his Alawite identity as head of a secular party and a majority Sunni population. While publically managing conservative Sunni abhorrence for Alawism by procuring religious decrees from a Shia cleric in Lebanon and reining in

some of the facets of the religion found particularly distasteful to Sunnis, he set to work stacking the military officer corps by promoting Alawite officers up the ranks so that the most prominent positions were held by religious loyalists (Cleveland and Bunton 2013, pp. 417-418). Indeed, despite being only roughly 12% of the population, by the end of the century the vast majority of officerships were in the hands of Alawite officers (Quinlivan 1999).

Hafez al-Assad also coup-proofed the military in a variety of other ways. One notable method was granting control of a key branch of the armed forces, the Defense Brigades, to his younger brother, Rifaat al-Assad. As discussed in the previous section, Rifaat became infamous for his oversight of the massacre at Hama. He helped oversee much of the key repressive acts committed by the Syrian government throughout the 1970s, though it was not until 1983 that he attempted to overthrow his brother in a failed coup attempt while Hafez was in the hospital, leading to his exile (“The Baath Party: A History of Internal Divisions” 2006). While Rifaat was perhaps the most infamous of Hafez’s military family members, he was not the only. Hafez’s cousin, Shafiq Fayyad, was a general and head of infantry and armored divisions of the Syrian military throughout the 1970s (Batatu 1999). The powerful and influential Makhoul family, related to Hafez through marriage, also produced several influential members of the security forces, including Hafez Makhoul who went on to become head of the General Security Directorate (“Bashar al-Assad’s inner circle” 2012). This nepotism in the security forces continued under Bashar al-Assad after 2000. One of Bashar’s key security officers throughout the uprising in 2011 has been his youngest brother, Maher al-Assad.

Maher has presided over the Republican Guard brigade and the Central Committee of the Baath Party, and is also credited with being particularly violent and highly critical of political openness and dissent (“Bashar al-Assad’s inner circle” 2012). Maher’s reputation as the family enforcer also led him to oversee the one of the most elite military units in the Syrian military under Bashar, the Fourth Armored Division, the successor to Rifaat’s Defense Brigade (Rokus and Todd 2013). Bashar’s first cousin by marriage, General Dhu al-Himma Shalish, also heads Presidential Security for his cousin (“Bashar al-Assad’s inner circle” 2012).

Hafez also laid the foundation for a coup-proofed regime by successfully navigating his relationship with particular segments of the Sunni community in Syria. The Baath Party came to power on the back of a socialist, agrarian agenda that while antithetical to the petty bourgeoisie in the cities of Syria, it appealed greatly to Sunnis in the rural hinterlands. Knowing that maintain religious and familial cadre of military officers would not be sufficient to maintain control given the percent of the population that Alawites held, Hafez also recruited and promoted Sunni officers who hailed from modest social backgrounds rather than the urban old guard (Cleveland and Bunton 2013, p. 418). Along similar lines, Hafez preferred officers who came from general rural backgrounds because it tended to breed more pragmatic, professional officers rather than ideologues that may have been exposed to philosophy or Western education (Cleveland and Bunton 2013, p. 418).

Other Coup-Proofing Factors

Several other factors are of key importance to the loyalty of the security apparatus. Hafez al-Assad created parallel agencies that oversaw each other and ensured adherence to the objectives of the president. Rifaat's Defense Brigade was one of the first parallel organizations created, making the choice of Hafez's brother an obvious pick to head up a parallel military organization. According to Quinlivan (1999), the Defense Brigade oversaw critical government buildings that might be vulnerable to coup plots, as well as sensitive and critical military installations, including air fields around the country. The army also had segments dedicated to coup proofing, including the famed Third Armored Division, which was strategically stationed close to the capital and headed up by some of Hafez's most trusted loyalists (Quinlivan 1999, p. 147). Coup-proofing is a central component of the system designed to instill loyalty and fidelity between the Assad and the security forces. It had the dual effect of ensuring that no one branch could become too powerful or threaten the regime and also ensuring that key branches of the security forces were stacked with loyalists and those who would not challenge the Assad regime. In contrast to the case of Tunisia where Ben Ali had hamstrung the military and, in the process, sewn disloyalty and resentment, Hafez had built a military apparatus that ensured that the institution would be largely pliant when it came to any request to repress. This is a key factor in explaining why a majority of the military remained loyal to Assad when violence escalated in 2011, rather than shirking as the militaries of Tunisia and Egypt had.

Additionally, much of the officer corps holds loyalty to the regime through a system of benefits that heavily disincentivizes defection, explaining why not one military

unit has broken off *en masse* throughout the Syrian civil war (Khaddour 2015). The most influential incentive is known as *Dahiet al-Assad*, or “The Suburb of Assad,” a suburb north of Damascus that contains military housing that for decades was strictly offered only to officers of the Syrian military (Khaddour 2015). This incentive dovetails well with Hafez’s strategy of promoting and recruiting officers from more modest and rural backgrounds. Once an officer from such a background is plugged into the housing system offered by the Syrian government, they gain access to socioeconomic strata that their families would never have been able to reach without the assistance of the state. As Kheder Khaddour (2015) puts it, “With the move into military housing, officers effectively complete their buy-in, linking their personal and familial fortunes to the survival of the regime.” In the context of a civilian uprising calling for the end of the rule of the Assad family, it is not difficult to imagine the choice that is before officers embedded in the *Dahia* program: defend the regime at all cost or lose everything your family has. The program was initially established by Hafez al-Assad in the early 1980s as a means to simply supply officers with housing but over time the program transformed into a system that could provide upward socio-economic mobility, especially after the suburbs opened up to civilians in the early 2000s. After opening the neighborhood to the civilian market, officers began viewing ownership of real estate in the suburb as a means of income and wealth (Khaddour 2015). Further, according to Khaddour, there was a sizeable waiting list for access to a home – somewhere between seven and fifteen years – which meant that it was mostly middle-ranking and high-ranking officers that had access to the homes in the first several decades of the program. This assured two things: (1)

officers with the most military influence were steadfastly loyal to the state patronage system, and (2) that loyalty was produced through years of state salary deductions and waiting – few officers would want to forego what they perceived to have been years, sometimes decades, of saving and hard work.

As a result of the system established by Hafez after the 1970 coup, the Syrian state was carefully crafted to ensure that regime unity was maintained and perpetuated. Hafez accomplished this by thoroughly coup proofing his regime by creating a complex system of nepotistic loyalty, parallel security forces designed to keep the regime protected from internal threats, and a successful manipulation of socioeconomic divisions within the Sunni Arab community. This system continued after the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000 and then was reinforced by Bashar. Bashar continued to place family and Alawite loyalists in key positions of power in the security apparatus. Similarly, the economic patronage system of subsidized officer housing created a generation of officers whose economic livelihood relied on the perpetuation of the Assad family regime. As evidenced by the Arab uprisings and the Syrian civil war today, this system paid dividends for the family. The Syrian military and security apparatus have faced no major defections. Though there have been members of the infantry and individual officers defecting, the structure of the Syrian military remains resilient and continues to fight as of the time of this writing.

V. Causes of Violence During the Syrian Uprising and Alternative Explanations

The Syrian uprising and the political violence used throughout it mirrors history in countless ways. Throughout this chapter I have laid out two key interacting factors that caused Syria's notably violent reaction to protests: the historical use of violence to quell dissent and a coup-proofed regime built to ensure the continuity and the loyalty of the security forces. These two variables are not isolated and feed into each other to create the conditions that led to the crack down on largely unarmed civilians.

Violence had been institutionalized by the elder Assad, particularly during the *Ahdath* years of the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was during this time that Hafez al-Assad normalized a repression strategy that put overwhelming violence first and left concessions or political appeasement out of the formula. The violence that Hafez carried out against dissenters in the early 1980s has often been viewed through the lens of "regime survival." James Gelvin (2015) argues that the major difference between the elder and younger Assad and his father was that the latter was fighting for his regime's political life while the younger Assad was instigating a violent crackdown against his own citizens. This view, as we have shown, is misguided precisely because it ignores how Hafez al-Assad faced broad-based dissent, not just from Islamists but from Syrians of all walks of life who were not seeing the benefits of the reforms of the 1970s. The merciless brutality of the Hama massacre mirrors in haunting ways the decimation of Aleppo today. This continuity in violence between the two Assads is not accidental.

This is in large part because, as discussed, the security forces were designed by Hafez al-Assad to give the state significant leverage over repression strategies. As a result of the coup-proofing of the 1970s and 1980s, the state apparatus in Syria was one that was unlikely to face the internal opposition that Mubarak saw in Egypt or Ben Ali saw in Tunisia. Hafez's policy of promoting Alawite officers and members of his family, as well as recruiting from segments of the rural Sunni population that benefited from his agrarian and socialist reforms, created a generation of officers that owed their lives to the regime. Similarly, economic incentives such as the *Dahiya* housing plan ensured that officer's socioeconomic status were directly tied to the survival of the regime. All of these factors together created very little internal checks on the use of violence within the regime.

Alternative Explanations

The history of violence in Syria under the Assad regime and its tightly united security and state apparatuses were likely the most influential factors that led to the strategy applied by the state. Alternative explanations for the level of violence seen in Syria during the uprising are unappealing for several reasons, but most of all because they are either unsupported by the events that transpired or they represent a small piece of the larger puzzle that I have attempted to sketch throughout this chapter. I will address them in turn here.

Violence-Begets-Violence: This explanation has to some extent already been thoroughly debunked by the previous section that analyzed regime responses to protester demands. If the protest phase of the Syrian uprising is taken in its entirety, from March to

July of 2011, it is clear that high levels of lethal violence were a constant fixture throughout. If it were the case that the Syrian uprising experienced high levels of violence because of the acts of violence perpetrated by protesters and dissidents, then two things would have to be true: (1) peaceful protests should have experienced low levels of violence (crowd control, arrests), and (2) high levels of violence should have only become a norm after the assaults on security forces at the end of March and end of April. In the first case, Syrian police were using live fire against unarmed protesters engaging in peaceful protests on countless occasions, several times well before the attack on the officers on March 31st. For instance, on March 23rd security forces executed six people using live ammunition. A witness at the protest described the violence that day by saying, “Bodies fell in the streets... You didn’t know where the bullets were coming from. No one could carry away any of the fallen” (Al-Khalidi 2011a). Additionally, amidst the assault by the security forces that day, protesters were repeatedly announcing through the mosque loud speakers that their protest was peaceful (Al-Khalidi 2011a). This is only one example of security forces using indiscriminate violence on peaceful protesters, of which there were many throughout the protest phase (several described in the previous section). On the second point, as just noted, violence was indiscriminate and lethal before dissidents began organizing ambushes against the security forces. The lethal use of high levels of force was not a one-off before these events, either. Lethal force was used against protesters on March 18th, March 21st, March 23rd, and March 25th (“In Syria, Crackdown After Protests” 2011; Oweis 2011b; Al-Khalidi 2011a; Slackman 2011). It is clear that the regime took seriously the attacks on its military in April 2011, especially given the

potential for radical elements taking root in the country as an armed resistance.

Concessions ceased shortly after, while violence continued. Despite this, lethal violence against protesters remained a fixture of the protests regardless of who was protesting throughout March, April, May, June, and July. An explanation that argues that Assad's security forces were violent in large part because protesters were violent ignores the evidence of March 2011 prior to major attacks against the regime.

International Factors: The presence of international pressure on the Assad regime during the uprisings was largely muted in the first several months of protest. At first glance this seems to give some credence to the idea that a silent international community, particularly a United States weary from years of endless involvement in the quagmire that is/was Iraq, coupled with a supportive Iranian regime intent on keeping the balance of power from tilting too far towards the Sunni/Saudi axis in the region, essentially gave Assad license to carry out the killing of his own citizens with little-to-no repercussions. To some extent, this may be true. However, when the West finally began to speak out against the crimes being committed by the Syrian regime in the summer of that year, little changed in regard to the Assad's strategy. Beginning in August, President Obama began firmly calling for Assad to step down and coupled these calls with a slew of sanctions levelled against various aspects of the Syrian state and economy (Phillips 2011). It is unclear that more stern language or sanctions in March of 2011 would have done anything to deter Assad from using the level of violence that he did. Syria has traditionally been a state existing outside the good graces of the West, largely to relatively little detrimental effect thanks to firm support from Iran and Russia. Indeed,

sanctions had already been leveled on Syria by the United States prior to the uprising in both 1979 and 2004 (“Q&A: Syria sanctions” 2012). Syria was accustomed to not being the West’s favorite state, and it is reasonable to assume that any harsh talk from the United States or any other Western leaders during the early months of the uprising would have done little to put Assad off.

On the other hand, Syria is a closely-knit ally of both Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran, both of which have a stake in what happens to the Assad regime. While Western pressure (or lack thereof) figured very little into the calculations of the regime, it is clear that Iran backed Assad from the outset. The reason is clear. In an article published in *The Atlantic*, Stephen Cook describes this relationship aptly: “Damascus is, after all, Tehran’s most important gateway to Arab politics, the focal point through which it has been able to insert itself directly into the Arab-Israeli conflict, among other regional issues” (2011). Iran itself was torn between framing the Arab uprisings as a timely eruption of Islamic mobilization in the vein of the country’s own Revolution and protecting its key ally in the Arab world from an uprising that threatened its position. This support was vocalized by Iranian proxies. Hassan Nasrallah, head of Hezbollah in Lebanon, backed Assad to follow through with reforms, while a Hezbollah unit commander told *Christian Science Monitor* “The Syrian regime will not fall, and even if it did, we have plans to deal with the situation (Peterson 2011). It could be argued that Iran’s influence allowed the Syrian regime to carry out the violence it did through its military support of the country. Indeed, Karim Sadjadpour (2013) argues that “Without Iranian military aide and financial largesse, al-Assad’s regime may have fallen long ago.” Thus, it is hard to argue that the

violence carried out against protesters in 2011 is at least in part indirectly a product of Iranian military support for the Assad regime. It would, however, be difficult to argue that this was the main driver of the strategy employed by Assad in 2011. While it could be argued it was facilitated by the military hardware provided in part by Iran, the strategy was certainly of Assad's devising given the family's history outlined in this chapter.

Composition of the Protesters: Like many of the uprisings that took place in 2011, Syria's was characterized by protesters who represented a cross-section of society and not simply old regime enemies. However, a plausible theory for explaining the high level of violence in Syria might be that the ghosts of the uprising during the *Ahdath*, which was largely composed of Sunni Islamists, may make up a significant portion of the dissidents participating in the protests. Little evidence of an Islamist-driven or a sectarian uprising exists in Syria. As has been discussed extensively throughout this chapter, the demands of the protesters were undoubtedly liberal in nature. The release of political prisoners, greater economic freedom, changes to the constitution, calls for a more representative democracy, and the resignation of Assad all point to a protest movement, that while largely Sunni as a result of the demographics in Syria, was focused on liberal democratic and economic reforms rather than anything resembling the more radical fringes of Sunni dissidents during the *Ahdath*. The Assad regime was concerned about the perpetuation of its existence, not settling old scores.

It is worth mentioning that the several groups remained for the most part absent from the protests and allied themselves with the Assad regime. Syria's minority Alawite,

secular regime has always provided cover to non-Muslim religious minorities, particularly Christians and Druze. Christian and Druze Syrians in large part supported the regime, as it was easy to find evidence of what happened when a secular ruler gave way to sectarianism by looking at neighboring Iraq. According to Fareed Zakaria, the Christian population in Iraq reduced by nearly two-thirds from 1.4 million pre-US invasion to 500,000 in 2013 (2013, p. 209). As a result, many Christians and Druze sided with the regime for fear of losing the protection of a secular state that itself was a minority. Religious minorities were torn between the calls for liberalization and the fear of losing the religious status quo. As a result, some Christians participated in the protests while the Syrian church institutions refused to support the protests (Karouny 2011). Still, even if religious minorities participated in protests, it did not stop the regime from discriminating between targets during the repression. As has been discussed at length, violence was perpetrated by the regime indiscriminately throughout the protests. It is very possible that supporters of the religious status quo fell in just the same way as Muslim's taking to the streets against Assad.

VI. Conclusion

The Syrian regime, particularly its security forces, were set up in such a way that it could carry out the level of violence that it did during the protest phase of the Syrian uprising. Hafez al-Assad built a regime in the 1970s that was extremely durable and not troubled by the use of extreme levels of force. Hafez left in his wake tens of thousands of his own citizens dead and buried in mass graves from Hama to Palmyra. By stacking his

security apparatus with family, religious loyalists, economic dependents, and vulnerable segments of Syrian society, he ensured that high levels of violence would remain the centerpiece of Syria's key repression strategy. When Bashar was faced with protesters in his streets calling for his ouster and reforms that would fundamentally change the state, unwilling to accept his token concessions, he levelled the full force of his father's security state against them. The lesson of the 1980s had been that an onslaught of brutal violence had brought about submission and stability, eliminating the Islamist challenge to Hafez's rule. Further, the military was tailor-made to abide by the same logic and lessons that Bashar held and remained unified with the Assad regime towards achieving that goal. This confluence of conditions resulted in the excessively high levels of violence in Syria. While mostly token concessions – outside of perhaps the lifting of the state of emergency - were certainly part of the regime's strategy in the early weeks of the protests, this strategy shifted starkly after April 10th when Assad took to the airwaves to warn protesters that the regime would only meet protests with violence should they remain on the streets after the state of emergency had been lifted. Thus, the regime's response to resistance from the protesters was to drop concessions and resolve the problem through force alone.

Data that would have been useful for this study is largely relegated behind a wall of secrecy thanks to the ongoing Syrian civil war. It is likely that a decade or more from now there will be confessions and memoirs that outline in greater detail in the internal thinking of the Assad regime during the months of March, April, May, June, and July of 2011. For now, the Syrian government continues to assault rebels with ruthless violence.

Even as the uprising has descended into an intractable civil war with alliances murkier than the inner workings of the regime, the shadow of Hafez can be seen throughout. The Assad family's state was built on the ashes of those who dared to challenge its monopoly on power, and Bashar has continued to ensure that remains true in the new millennium.

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Chapter 5: Discussion, Generalizability and Future Research

I. Introduction

The three cases explored in this dissertation all began under very similar condition. Protests began in response the perceived failure of the regime in power to provide for the people and would eventually swell to the point where thousands of people would take to the streets and demand changes to the status quo that would on their face be unsustainable to the autocratic governments ruling each country. All three cases began with peaceful protests, with a gathering of like-minded individuals who were dissatisfied with how their country with governed, and no inclination towards violence or war. The central question that this dissertation has asked is this: how do we get from peaceful protests in all three cases to brutal violence in one (Syria), a mix of violence and concessions in another (Tunisia), and minimal violent confrontation with significant concessions from the regime in another (Morocco)? Explaining these divergent outcomes has been the core pursuit of this research. In this section, I will place these cases side-by-side and look at how each of the two key variables discussed – historical baseline and civil-military unity– and looking for similarities and differences that separate the cases in meaningful ways. Additionally, the application of this model will be tentatively applied to cases outside of the MENA region in order to test its potential generalizability. I will proceed by taking each of the variables in turn, looking comparing and contrasting each case in the process. Next, I will discuss the implications for generalizability. Finally, I will discuss avenues of future research and provide some concluding thoughts.

II. Historical Baseline

Country	Morocco	Tunisia	Syria
Historical Baseline	Concession ⁴	Violence	Violence
Executive Lesson and Interpretation in 2011	Violence counterproductively brought isolation and only short-term stability, while concession and liberalization allowed the regime to flourish.	Violence had effectively brought protests under control during the riots of the '70s and '80s and Gafsa in 2008, serving as an appealing trump card late into the protests in 2011.	Violence was critical in eliminating the Islamist threat to the Assad regime in the 1980s. The violence was so brutal that no one dared challenge the state again until after Hafez had passed. Violence was thus an effective tactic and would be similarly appealing in 2011.

Table 3: Results of Historical Baseline Variable

⁴ The baseline for Mohammad VI was concession given its success during the Islamist protests early into his rule. It is important to note that without the recalibration of the 1990s, the baseline could easily have been violence given Hassan II's previous repressive strategies. This is why the "Executive Lesson" row is important: the interpretation of the contemporary executive is important for understanding how past strategies are used as queues for current strategies. The interpretation is what ultimately determines the baseline, rather than a simple wholesale adoption of whatever strategy had been previously used.

Results for the historical baseline variable can be found in Table 3. The variable for a country's historical baseline as coded is binary, leaving us with a country either historically favoring concession or violence. In Morocco and Syria, the coding is clear. Morocco under Muhammed VI has comparatively favored the use of concessions in lieu of incapacitative violence, while the Assad family in Syria has unquestionably used incapacitative violence as its dominant strategy. Tunisia represents a sort of hybrid case in a number of ways, which we will discuss here. Before delving into the deeper comparisons, it is important to note that all of these regimes have used carrot-and-stick strategies in the past. No regime focuses on one instrument while ignoring the other. Muhammed VI in Morocco was remarkably restrained in allowing protesters to take to the streets in 2000; however, prior to the liberalization program carried out by Hassan II in the early 1990s, the Hassan regime was actually quite brutal in its repression. In Syria, the Hafez al-Assad made overtures to coopt and appease Islamists during the *Ahdath*, thin and lacking substance though they were. In this respect, it is important to look at the broader picture and how these variables are framed. Beginning the baseline for Morocco after the reforms of the 1990s is important because it better characterizes the institutional environment that the regime of Muhammed VI operated under and was informed by. Similarly, it is difficult to look back at the Syrian case and the Assad's previous control strategies and come to any conclusion other than the regime has always been prone to indiscriminate, lethal violence against its citizens. Binary as these codings may be, history will always have shades of gray. Despite that, I am confident that these codings characterize the historical record of these regimes accurately.

It is important to note how the historical baselines of these cases diverge in important ways and thus set the stage for different outcomes. Again, the historical baseline itself represents a heuristic reference point for autocrats to look back upon; it helps them assess what the best way to proceed in the present will be given past successes or failures of previous strategies. Thus, the strategy of the past is not always wholesale adopted. It must be reinterpreted through the lens of what outcomes it produced, negative and positive. In all three cases, the regime adopted its dominant strategy or at least attempted to. Tunisia represents the intermediate case and even though the final coding of the case's key control strategy is "Mixed," you can see the beginning of what would have been Syrian-levels of violence had the military not stepped in. It is clear that in Tunisia the Ben Ali regime resorted to violence in a way similar to its experience in the Gafsa Mining Basin in 2008. The regime had effectively quashed the rebellion in 2008 utilizing incapacitative violence and had the military not refused to intervene, it unquestionably would have accelerated its use after July 14th, in line with the regime's previous strategy.

Syria was a case where the historical baseline was never in question. Both Bashar al-Assad and his father, Hafez, were/are brutal autocrats who never shied away from using excessive levels of incapacitative violence. Even in comparison to Ben Ali and Ben Ali's predecessor, Habib Bourguiba, Syria's historical baseline typifies how lethal an authoritarian regime can be when it is protecting its power. The violence carried out against innocents during the Ahdath, especially in Hama, remains a black scar on the country's history. Bashar's ascension to the presidency only solidified the historical baseline. Similarly, it highlights why the start-point for the historical baseline matters. As

discussed, Hassan II was quite brutal during his reign, with a period of particularly brutality during the 1970s being dubbed “The Years of Lead.” But institutional change matters. The Assads showed no signs of liberalizing their regimes and made little-to-no effort to reform their repressive tactics. Again, the control strategies of Hafez and Bashar are marked by continuity. In contrast, Hassan II’s liberalization in the 1990s set a new standard for the regime. Not only did this setup an institutional environment that made the violence of the violence of the ‘70s impractical for Muhammed VI, but it was also something that Hassan II did not backtrack on in the final years of his reign. The regime of Hassan II in his final years is markedly different than decades prior. If we are to understand how regimes behave today, we have to understand how the changes to political institutions over time create different outcomes. The framework for a concession-focused strategy was laid out for Muhammed VI in the 1990s during a period that made a break the country’s violent past. No such moment occurred in Syria; thus, Hafez’s control strategy is an appropriate place to begin the historical baseline.

Ben Ali, who held the highest-level security positions under Bourguiba, in many ways actually marks a continuity with the Bourguiba regime. Many of Bourguiba’s worst repressive tendencies can be seen in Ben Ali’s handling of the Gafsa Mining Basin and the Jasmine Revolution, particularly the former’s use of violence as a crutch when concession failed. Despite these continuities, Ben Ali broke with the institutional precedent set by Bourguiba when he gutted the military and reorganized the security forces with an emphasis on the police and other ancillary security forces like the

Presidential Guard. The institutional environment, particularly when it came to the security forces, was significantly different under Ben Ali than that under Bourguiba.

III. Civil-Military Unity

Country	Morocco	Tunisia	Syria
Civil-Military Unity	Unified	Divided	Unified

Table 4: Results of Civil-Military Unity Variable

Results for the civil-military variable can be found in Table 4. Perhaps the most critical variable in this dissertation is the level of civil-military unity displayed by a regime. This fact has been reiterated throughout the literature by authors like Eva Bellin (2012), Josua and Edel (2015) and Dragu and Lupu (2017). The important feature to note in this project is precisely *how* the military’s choices interacts with the oft-ignored variable found here: a country’s historical baseline. The choices that the military made proved decisive in each of these cases. In Syria and Morocco, the militaries’ complicity and unity allowed the regime to carry out its previously preferred control strategies, while the Tunisian military’s break with Ben Ali prevented a return to the violence seen in Gafsa. Even in the two cases where the military was complicit, there are some notable differences. Again, as perhaps the case that displays the its theoretical fit most starkly, the Syrian military’s complicity in the brutal violence against protesters and other civilians has been an iconic reminder of the legacy of the Arab uprisings. The Syrian military’s

crackdown on protesters with indiscriminate fire just days after protests began would have echoes that reverberated beyond the protests phase. The Syrian uprising's characterization as one of violence is overwhelmingly a product of the Syrian military's lock-step adherence to the Assad regime's penchant for overwhelming the opposition with bloodshed.

Morocco's military was similarly unified with the monarchy but not visibly in a way that mimicked its Syrian counterpart. The choice of the Moroccan military to abstain from intervening in the protests (undoubtedly in no small part due to the strategy chosen by Muhammed VI), was a unity of omission rather than the unity displayed in the streets of Damascus by the Syrian army. The Moroccan military's abstention also highlights an interesting line of inquiry. Had the Moroccan military broke with the regime, what would that have looked like? The theory that I have laid out here argues that the level of violence in Morocco would have been higher but concessions may have been more muted, resulting in a mixed strategy. Theoretically, the counterfactual is a case where the military finds protest levels unsustainable or a security concern and steps in, leading to a rise in violence. The historical baseline in the Moroccan case (concession) would have been modified with the military's break, leading to higher levels of violence than those seen during the actual protest phase in 2011. The implications for that kind of break from a regime that prefers concessions would create an interesting dynamic that should be explored further in future research. Does the executive side with the military in that case or does that create a division that actually creates division later in the protest phase?

What are the incentives for the military to break with an executive's preferred strategy without staging a de facto coup, as seen in Tunisia and Egypt?

Tunisia's case is also one where the division between the regime and the military was readily on display and known to the public. As discussed in the chapter on Tunisia, the news of the military's break with Ben Ali circulated quickly and resulted in many soldiers receiving heroes' welcomes across the country. Much like in their counterparts Egypt in the days before Mubarak was ousted, Tunisian soldiers came to be seen as the vanguard of the revolution and were greeted with open arms by protesters in the streets. The refusal of the Tunisian military to crackdown on protesters in what had become an unsustainable tide of anti-regime sentiment and backlash, proved crucial in preventing further violence. Had the military not refused to follow Ben Ali's orders, the revolution would almost assuredly have seen bloodshed on the scale of the early months of the Syrian uprising.

Ultimately, the choice of each military during the Arab uprisings was a critical juncture in the protest phase of each of these cases. Morocco and Syria were both cases where the military abided by the regime's choice, albeit for different reasons. The Syrian military is a critical part of the regime's repressive apparatus. In an interview I conducted in Tunis with Sami Badreddine from the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, he noted that "In Syria, you are the opponent: we take you, we kill you." The military was a critical part of that system and remained so during the uprising. In Morocco, the military had been effectively reoriented towards external matters and were largely apolitical

during the uprising, remaining unified with Muhammed VI and his regime. Though Tunisia was not the only case during the Arab uprisings where the military's refusal resulted in regime change – Egypt being the other primary case – it is clear that they were an instrumental part in preventing violence from escalating, leading to Tunisia's coding as a "Mixed" case.

IV. Generalizability: Transporting the Theory to Ethiopia and Ukraine

In order to test the plausibility of this model outside of the current universe of cases, I will look at two relatively recent instances of protest and revolution: Ethiopian protests in 2016 and the Ukrainian Revolution of 2014. Both cases represent the most comparable level of mobilization to that seen during the 2011 Arab uprisings; thus, they make useful exploratory cases where the key variables under consideration here can be assessed in light of different regional and cultural circumstances. Ethiopian protests in 2016 were widespread and massive, with significant violence from the security forces; however, protests did not result in widespread change to the political system and regime. The Ukrainian case resulted in a full-scale revolution that led to the ouster of the Russian-backed regime. Both cases meet the scope conditions for this project, however: protests were of sufficient size, protests called for significant changes to the status quo that threatened the regime.

These case studies are not meant to be exhaustive or in-depth as the major cases covered in this dissertation. Rather, this is an attempt to gather a brief sketch of these scenarios to get a sense of my model's portability. I will proceed by first looking at the

Ethiopian case, followed by the Ukrainian case and a brief analysis of the conclusions that can be drawn.

Ethiopia 2015-2016: The Oromo Protests

Protest in Ethiopia has occurred with relative frequency for many years now. Even in 2018, protests are still common place and violence from the security forces usually follows. One of the most contentious issues that has sparked protests is the political and social rights of the Oromo people, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group. The Oromos dominate one of Ethiopia's nine politically autonomous states, Oromia. Despite being the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, Oromos have faced well documented discrimination, both politically and socially. According to Amnesty International's 2017/2018 country report on Ethiopia, Oromos have experienced numerous human rights violations, including torture, arbitrary arrest, unfair trial, and extrajudicial executions.

Protests broke out in 2015 after the government of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn announced a plan to expand the capital of Addis Ababa to surrounding areas. This expansion, known as the "master plan," was set to encroach into autonomous Oromia, deeply angering an already oppressed and discriminated against ethnic group. On November 12th, 2015 protesters took to the streets to voice their opposition to the plan. The November 12 protests were the beginning of a long protest that is generally marked by two phases: the initial phase following the announcement of the master plan (November 2015 to February 2016) and the reignition of protests following the arrests of opposition leaders (May 2016 to October 2016). The protest phase ended after a state of

emergency restored calm in October 2016; however, this was after a year of bloodshed that saw over 1,000 protesters killed (Carboni 2016). Both the military and the police were key actors in carrying out violent repression against the protesters (“Ethiopia: Lethal Force Against Protesters” 2015).

Historical Baseline

The historical baseline for this case dates back several decades. Ethiopia has been ruled since a revolution in 1991 saw the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) capture Addis Ababa during the Ethiopian Civil War, bringing down the military junta led by Mengistu Haile Mariam and its formerly Soviet-backed security forces. While Mengistu was a brutal dictator that oversaw decades of human rights abuses, including the mass murder of thousands of Ethiopians during the what is known as the Ethiopian Red Terror in the late-1970s, the EPRDF did not improve that record during its tenure in power. Despite the EPRDF's nominal organization as an alliance consisting of four different factions, it has functionally *de facto* dominated and ruled by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF and its allies has been the overriding force in the repression and violence perpetrated by the state since 1991.

Protests have frequently been met with excessive violence since the EPRDF (effectively the TPLF) came to power in 1991. At the turn of the century, The EPRDF used high levels of violence, including live ammunition, against election protesters in 2000 and then again in 2001 against student protesters in Addis Ababa protesting against academic freedom restrictions (McCracken 2004). In 2005, protesters were massacred by

police forces after opposition groups failed to unseat the EPRDF and its domination of Ethiopia's parliament in heavily contested elections, with 46 killed and 4000, according to a 2006 Human Rights Watch report. Once again in 2014, in a sort of foreshadowing of the 2015/2016 violence, the EPRDF government cracked down on student protesters after rumors of the "master plan" to expand Addis Ababa began to circulate. Death toll for the 2014 violence is hard to obtain, but estimates from a 2014 Human Rights Watch report place it potentially in the dozens. The evidence is clear that EPRDF and the historical baseline of this case qualifies as one of violence.

Civil-Military Unity

The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) was born from the ashes of a previously unprofessional and brutal military that composed the ruling junta. When the EPRDF came to power, the military was in dire straits with rampant command and control issues, in addition to poor training, low professionalization, and a lack of a clear military doctrine (Berhe 2017). The EPRDF dissolved the military, building a new military from its own rebel structure in addition to a broad-based recruitment strategy intended to make the military represent Ethiopia's diverse population (Berhe 2017). What resulted was a more organized, though very much politicized, military force whose focus during the 1990s became war with the break-away state of Eritrea and internally on insurgent rebel groups, particularly in the state of Ogaden.

Indeed, the Ethiopian military became an arm of the nationalist government and often went beyond cracking down on insurgents. It is evident from the events in Ogaden,

stretching from the late-1990s to the late-2000s, that the military was comfortable with internal repression against civilians who challenged the EPRDF. Insurgent groups formed in Ogaden in the late 1990s in opposition to the EPRDF and killed roughly 70 civilians, as well as foreign Chinese workers (Bloomfield 2008). The latter was particularly problematic for the government, as it was seeking to further expand its standing in global economic markets (Berhe 2017). The death of foreign workers would not stand. Repression from the EPRDF and the military was swift and merciless, lasting over a decade. The presence of insurgents in Ogaden also gave the EPRDF pretext to snuff out anti-government sentiment in the region, which had taken begun to gain popularity. Widespread human rights abuses, including torture, rape, and extrajudicial killings were reported against civilians in the Ogaden region (Bloomfield 2008). Similar evidence is found that the ENDF was in lock-step with the regime once again 2015 and 2016. Multiple reports exist of the military being involved in lethal violence against peaceful civilian protesters. In one case known as “The Irreechaa Incident,” the military as deployed to Thanksgiving festival in Oromia where a large number of activists were gathered. During the deployment to Irreechaa, the military fired live ammunition into crowds, with activists reporting that 700 were killed – a number that the government disputed (“Ethiopia army's deadly clashes with civilians: 2016 – 2018”). The state of emergency was declared soon thereafter, and at no point during the protest period in 2015 and 2016 did the military show any signs that it would break with the EPRDF regime. Civil-military unity was strong in this case.

It should be noted here that while the military did not primarily carry out the violence in 2005, they remained a reliable arm of the regime's repressive apparatus should the need arise – as it did in 2015. The regime showed in the past that its preferred key control strategy was violence. While in past cases of protest the military was not needed and the police took the lead in carrying out repression, it was more than willing to answer the regime's request in 2015 and involve itself.

The Euromaidan Revolution: Ukraine in 2014

In stark contrast to the Ethiopian case, the Ukrainian revolution was extremely well covered and publicized in the Western press. Ukraine occupies an important strategic fulcrum in the ongoing tensions between Western powers and Russia. As such, it has long been a battleground for influence and control, with the European Union and the US pulling in one direction while Vladimir Putin and Russia pull in the other. In equally stark contrast to the nearly year-long Ethiopian protests, the Ukrainian revolution in 2014 lasted only five days – from February 18th to February 23rd – before President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted from office and replaced with a transitional government. Despite being short-lived, the protests were large, far-reaching, and a direct threat to the regime. Ultimately, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health later determined that 106 people died during the clashes (“Information about the victims of mass actions in Kyiv and in the regions of Ukraine as of 06.00. April 16, 2014,” 2014).

Historical Baseline

The Ukrainian case is unique in the context of this project. All the cases discussed thus far – Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Ethiopia – were authoritarian regimes when protests broke out, albeit to varying degrees. Ethiopia held a Polity IV score of -3 at the time of protests, signifying the prominence of more authoritarian characteristics than democratic ones to a notable degree (Marshall, Gurr and Jagers 2016). Ukraine on the other hand held a score of +6 at the time of the revolution in 2014. As such it is difficult to pin down a historical baseline in the same way one would when looking at an entrenched autocratic regime that has experienced and repressed multiple protests. The question that is begged is this: how do authoritarians establish a historical baseline? While his tactics were clear leading up to February 2014, it must be asked *why* violence was the norm here and not concession, particularly in the absence of previous repressive experience.

One argument put forth is that Yanukovich's close ties to brutal autocrat Vladimir Putin informed his inclination towards violence. Putin has successfully avoided large scale protests in Russia during much of his tenure in power, but his violent tactics are well documented (Filipov 2017). It is thus no secret that Putin would stop at nothing to crush dissent. Yanukovich was overthrown in large part because of his cozy relationship with Russia and Putin in particular. With Yanukovich was effectively acting as an arm of the Kremlin in Ukraine, it would not be surprising to learn that Putin urged quick and decisive violence to put down the February 2014 protests. This claim is

buttressed by evidence that Russian agents played a role in the violence, with rumors swirling that snipers responsible for much of the casualties in Kiev could have been Russian. Interim Health Minister Oleh Musiy remarked that “I think it wasn't just a part of the old regime that [plotted the provocation] but it was also the work of Russian special forces who served and maintained the ideology of the [old] regime” (Strange 2014). As a result, violence that killed over a hundred people in Kiev was likely driven by Russian influence, remnants of the pre-Orange Revolution regime, or some combination thereof. If true, the baseline for either group of actors would be violence.

Similarly, as will be discussed in the following section, Yanukovych faced protests after his victory that spurred the Orange Revolution in 2004. Evidence exists that the military refused orders to crack down, which would suggest that Yanukovych's pro-Russian regime had planned to carry out a violent response should the military comply. With the military's refusal to intervene, any potential bloodshed was stopped, and the Orange Revolution went on to be successful. Had the military agreed to step in on behalf of Yanukovych, however, then we would expect violence to be the key controls strategy in 2004.

Civil-Military Unity

The main arm of repression during the protest phase was the Ukrainian police and the aforementioned unknown snipers. The military's role was much more muddled. The played no part in the repression, either during the protest proper in February or in the lead-up to the protests in November and December 2013. As one protest participant

clarified, "...Russian propaganda keeps bad-mouthing Kiev, saying there was a junta here... the military didn't take power here, the people rose up" (Shore 2018, p. 241). This suggests that there was likely civil-military disunity, evidence by its insistence on remaining in the barracks. Looking back at Yanukovich's experience during the Orange Revolution in 2004, evidence was revealed that members of the officer corps had no love for Yanukovich and ultimately refused to participate in violence (Chivers 2005). Additionally, the Ukrainian military was heavily professionalized, taking much of its military doctrine from former-Soviet military. All of this is to suggest that 2014 remained yet another case of military disunity and shirking. It is unlikely the military warmed to Yanukovich in the interim between the Orange Revolution and the advent of Euromaidan. Whether or not the call was made to crush protests and later shirked by the military is limited to conjecture, but the available evidence sketches a picture of a regime that did not have the backing of the military.

Discussion

	Historical Baseline	Civil-Military Unity	Outcome
Ethiopia	Violence	Unified	<u>Violence</u>
Ukraine	Violence	Divided	<u>Mixed</u>

Table 5: Results of Generalizability Test

The cases fit quite nicely within the model despite the Ukrainian case's aforementioned unique properties. Civil-military unity proved critical in both cases, though visible

evidence of military shirking in the Ukrainian case is largely unavailable. In Ethiopia, the military actively participated in the crushing of protests during the year, leading to the EPRDF's ability to play out its history of violence. The first phase of the Ethiopian protests culminated in the event's bloodiest month (February 2016) and one of the protest's bloodiest massacres (The Irreechaa Incident of October 2016). In Ukraine, the military remaining on the sideline and the strong tradition of civilian control, in addition to a historical distaste for Yanukovich amongst the officer corps, led the military in Ukraine to stay in the barracks. Yanukovich would undoubtedly have escalated had he not been checked by the military back in 2004. Whether he knew he did not have the backing of the military and decided to run without giving the order is unclear, but it certainly did not participate in Yanukovich's crackdown. As protesters remained on the streets in the face of an EU-brokered treaty, the police doubled-down and continued enact massive levels of violence in concert with alleged foreign (possible Russian) and domestic (old-regime) operatives. Despite this acute level of violence, concessions ultimately came in spades. Revolution was successful as Yanukovich's allies abandoned him, giving into the key protester demand, and pro-EU leader Yulia Tymoshenko was ordered released.

VI. Conclusion

This project has laid out the case for a dynamic and evolving analysis of how protest unfold over time. The central question asked is this: why do some states use violence while other give into the demands of protesters? Here I have argued, with

support from three key cases, that the key control strategy that a regime uses is determined firstly by a regime's historical baseline. As a regime faces contemporary threats, it looks the past to analyze what has been most effective. Once it identifies past successful strategies, that baseline is then filtered through the key executor of violence: the military. The military ultimately proves crucial. A unified-civil military disposition allows a regime to carry out its previous tactics. However, a divided civil-military disposition will force a regime to compromise or collapse all together, resulting in a mixed strategy of concession and violence.

The three key cases here, drawn from the 2011 Arab uprisings, help to shed light on the dynamics that played out during this remarkable wave of protests that swept the Arab world in 2011. In order to broaden the plausibility of this model, I have brought in two more recent cases of protest to investigate to what extent this model has portability. Initial signs suggest the model holds water in external cases outside of the Middle East and North Africa. However, it will be important that future research investigate the dynamics of a larger number of cases in a more systematic way. The next logical step for this project would be to increase the number of cases in order to more comprehensively cover protests events in the authoritarian world. The Ukrainian case also suggest that it may be worth looking at democratic cases, as well. As protests continue to break out in places like Venezuela, future research will have no shortage of cases to incorporate. The results should be of great interest.

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