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Sharing Saddles: Oligarchs and Officers on Horseback in Egypt and Tunisia

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Research on the military's removal from politics overemphasizes the attitudes and interests of officers. Civilians are portrayed as incapable of confronting refractory men with guns. This essay compares regime transitions in Egypt (2011–2013) and Tunisia (2011–2014) to show that unified civilian elites strengthen and polarized elites undermine civilian control of the armed forces. Research for the cases is based on interviews with Egyptian and Tunisian businesspersons, party members, and civil society activists; the International Consortium of Investigation Journalists's tax-offshoring database; loan disbursements from the IMF and World Bank; and secondary sources in Arabic, French, and English. The cases reveal novel insights about the military's removal from politics in fledgling democracies. Pleasing Egypt's officers did not shield President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood from a coup in July 2013 because Morsi and the Brotherhood threatened the wealth and power of civilian politicians and oligarchs. In Tunisia, Islamist and non-Islamist political and economic elites pushed democratization for fear of another Ben "Ali-style kleptocracy. Even during crisis in 2013, united civilian elites contained opposition calls for army intervention. The study's findings suggest that democratizers are not at the mercy of soldiers, but rather civilian leaders have the power to sideline their armies.

La investigación sobre la separación de las Fuerzas Armadas de la política pone un énfasis excesivo en las actitudes y los intereses de los oficiales. Se describe a los civiles como incapaces de confrontar hombres rebeldes con armas. En el presente ensayo, se compara las transiciones de régimen en Egipto (2011–2013) y en Túnez (2011–2014) para demostrar que las élites de civiles unidos fortalecen el control civil de las fuerzas armadas y las élites divididas lo socavan. La investigación de los casos se basa en entrevistas a empresarios egipcios y tunecinos, miembros del partido, como así también activistas de sociedades civiles; la base de datos de impuestos en el extranjero del Consorcio Internacional de Periodistas de Investigación, los desembolsos de préstamos del FMI y del Banco Mundial; y recursos secundarios en árabe, francés e inglés. Los casos revelan enfoques novedosos sobre la separación de las fuerzas armadas de la política en democracias noveles. Los oficiales complacientes egipcios no defendieron al Presidente Mohamed Morsi de la Hermandad Musulmana en el golpe de julio de 2013 debido a que Morsi y la Hermandad amenazaban la riqueza y el poder de los políticos civiles y oligarcas. En Túnez, las élites políticas y económicas islamistas y no islamistas impulsaron la democratización por miedo a otra cleptocracia al estilo de Ben Ali. Incluso durante la crisis de 2013, las élites de civiles unidos incluían llamadas de la oposición para una intervención militar. Los hallazgos del estudio sugieren que los democratizadores no están a merced de los soldados, sino que los líderes civiles tienen el poder de marginar sus ejércitos.

Les recherches sur le retrait des militaires de la politique donnent trop d'importance aux attitudes et intérêts des officiers. Les civils y sont représentés comme étant incapables de prendre les armes pour affronter les réfractaires. Cet essai compare les transitions de régime d'Égypte (2011–2013) et de Tunisie (2011–2014) pour montrer que les élites civiles unifiées se renforcent et que les élites polarisées sapent le contrôle civil des forces armées. Les recherches sur ces cas se basent sur des entretiens avec des hommes et femmes d'affaires, membres de partis et activistes de la société civile d'Égypte et de Tunisie, la base de données sur la délocalisation fiscale du Consortium international des journalistes d'investigation, les versements de prêts du FMI et de la Banque mondiale, et des sources secondaires en arabe, en français et en anglais. Ces cas révèlent de nouveaux renseignements sur le retrait des militaires de la politique dans les démocraties naissantes. Satisfaire les officiers égyptiens n'a pas protégé le Président Mohamed Morsi de la Fraternité Musulmane contre un coup d'état en juillet 2013 car Morsi et la Fraternité avaient menacé la prospérité et le pouvoir des oligarques et politiciens civils. En Tunisie, des élites politiques et économiques islamistes et non-islamistes ont repoussé la démocratisation par crainte d'une autre kleptocratie dans le style de celle de Ben Ali. Même pendant la crise de 2013, les élites civiles unies ont contenu les appels de l'opposition à l'intervention de l'armée. Les résultats de l'étude suggèrent que les « démocratiseurs » ne sont pas à la merci des soldats, mais que ce sont plutôt les dirigeants civils qui ont le pouvoir de mettre leurs armées sur la touche.

When men on horseback claimed to rescue Egypt from the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013, they were sharing saddles with oligarchs whose interest was not the preservation of the nation but rather their wealth and status.[1] Research on the military's removal from politics overemphasizes the attitudes and interests of officers. Civilians are said to be at the mercy of soldiers to decide the timing and conditions of their proverbial return to the barracks. Save for exceptionally cunning politicians, civilian elites are portrayed as incapable of confronting refractory men with guns. This essay

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[1] Army officers as "men on horseback," or national saviors, was first articulated by Samuel Finer 1962.

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finds that, on the contrary, unified civilian elites strengthen civilian control while polarized elites undermine efforts to control their armed forces. The study builds on recent research that highlights conditions in which civilians do not aspire toward supremacy over soldiers but instead advocate for coups (Kinney 2019). The analysis suggests that democratizers are not at the mercy of officers, whose weapons do not assure their power. As long as they do not alienate civilian allies, political leaders are able to sideline their armies.

My argument contributes to debates in several areas of research, including democratization, authoritarian persistence, civil–military relations, and political economy of oligarchy. Using mechanisms from each of these literatures, I argue that when mass upheaval disrupts a regime, political and economic elites (*oligarchs*, i.e., those engaged in wealth protection) align with soldiers for coups when the new regime's rules do not adequately shield their money and privilege from civilian opponents. Civilian elites cooperate to reduce army influence if the new regime safeguards their interests better than the last. I execute this argument with a most-similar systems comparison of regime transitions in Egypt (2011–2013) and Tunisia (2011–2014). The cases are approached heuristically to build theory by identifying new causal mechanisms and pathways toward civilian control. Case research comes from ten open-ended interviews with Tunisian and Egyptian party members, businesspersons, and civil society activists; tax-offshoring data from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists's (ICIJ); loan disbursements from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF); and secondary accounts in English, Arabic, and French.

The cases reveal novel insights about the military's removal from politics in fledgling democracies. President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood secured the Egyptian army's political exit by satisfying its interests. Despite this, oligarchs and party leaders, who felt vulnerable to the Brotherhood's policies and electoral prowess, aligned with soldiers to end his presidency in July 2013. Pleasing the officers did not save Morsi because he antagonized *civilian* elites. The contrast with Tunisia was plain. Elites learned under Zine el-Abidine Ben "Ali that predatory dictatorship benefits only the dictator. Islamist and non-Islamist parties opened dialogue in the 1990s with the expressed aim of establishing democracy through de-polarization and consensus. Oligarchs likewise pushed democratization, fearing the alternative could be another Ben Ali-style kleptocracy. Data from the IMF and World Bank show that few-strings-attached loans, designed to protect the transition, supported Tunisian consensus because political elites could literally afford to avoid provoking oligarchs and labor with polarizing fiscal policy. Even during the crisis of July–August 2013, civilian elites de-escalated through compromise, thus containing opposition calls for army intervention. The study's findings inform research concerning the establishment of democratic armies, which is the topic of the next section.

Quartering Armies in the Middle East and Beyond

The 2011 uprisings in the Arab world have led to a considerable amount of research on military responses to mass rebellion (Droz-Vincent 2011; Barany 2011; Bellin 2004, 2012; Brooks 2013; Gaub 2013; Louër 2013; Knights 2013; Lutterbeck 2013; Frisch 2013; Makara 2013; Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham 2014; Bou Nassif 2015; Koehler 2017; Burns 2018). In the subsequent regime transitions, some scholarship has given the region's armies a partial role (Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015; Bellin 2012; Burns 2018; Linz and Stepan 2013) while others place major emphasis on the behavior and interests of Arab armies (Albrecht and Bishara 2011; Abul-Magd 2016; Bou Nassif 2017; Jumet 2017). Few accounts use the 2011 transitions to examine how civilians and officers negotiate the latter's exit from politics (Frisch 2013).

According to legend, in 1964 Juan Linz penned an essay that labeled Brazil's military dictatorship an autocratic–democratic "situation." Having read the article before publication, General Golbery do Couto e Silva convinced fellow officers to "extricate themselves from government while they were still able to control the pace and circumstances of their withdrawal" (Linz and Stepan 2013, 21). The story suggests civilians influence military behavior while implying they are at the mercy of officers to decide the timing and conditions of their exit. The use of the reflexive verb *extricate* presupposes an overemphasis on the military's desire to remove *itself* from power. Nearly five decades later, Henry and Springborg (2011, 5) similarly asked of the Tunisian army, "Should it seek to exercise power in its own right … awaiting a new civilian order to emerge and elections to be held? Or … hand over power forthwith to civilians, however divided and inexperienced they might be?"

Militaries are thought to "hand back the government to civilian authority" (Cotler 1986, 152) and "allow … civilian authorities to govern" (Walter and Williams 1993, 40). They decide "to back the regime, support its foes, or stay neutral," until the situation stabilizes "in a manner acceptable to the high command" (Barany 2011, 24). Officers, we are told, have sufficient motive and capacity to fight for their "prerogatives" (Stepan 1988, 9). The military's calculation depends on will (e.g., legitimacy concerns, repression costs) and capacity (e.g., fiscal health, foreign support) (Bellin 2004, 2012). Cohesiveness determines if the army will compromise with the opposition (Agüero 1998, 388; Frisch 2013, 181). Hierarchical, politically engaged, and internally focused armies are less likely to submit to civilians (Burns 2018, 57; Huntington 1991, 232; Linz and Stepan 1996, 55–65). Civilian supremacy, in short, is said to reach "its fullest expression in *the military's voluntary acceptance* of subordination" (Welch and Smith 1974, 4, my emphasis).

Some researchers suggest exceptionally cunning politicians outmaneuver recalcitrant officers or convince the brass to let civilians govern (Walter and Williams 1993, 41). For instance, civilian elites may "pact" with officers, exchanging incentives (e.g., new weapons, wage hikes, preservation of military businesses, autonomy, favorable duties) for civilian supremacy. Civilian leaders can purge disloyal soldiers and prosecute criminal officers when they feel secure enough to do so; they are urged to tread lightly, however, lest they provoke the army leadership (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Chapter 4; Stepan 1988, 68–124; Huntington 1991, 231–53). Others note only in passing the importance of unified civilian authorities or well-rooted parties (Gillespie 1986; Serra 2010, 40).

Politicians are otherwise portrayed as incapable or unwilling to confront men with guns, either due to incompetence or lack of gall. Zeinab Abul-Magd (2012, 2) wondered if Egypt's 2012 presidential candidates did not discuss the army "out of lack of awareness, fright, or in order to please the armed ruling elite." Noureddine Jebnoun (2014, 10) notes that Tunisia's Interim President Moncef Marzouki's fear of the army prevented the institutionalization of the joint chiefs. Backed by coalition partners, however, Marzouki sidelined several powerful officers (Grewal 2016, 33–56). Kira Jumet (2017, 198) shows convincingly that political, economic, and security elites overthrew an elected

president, but agrees with Samuel Huntington (1968, 228) that, "Civilian leaders … know they do not have power and are not allowed to create power because their actions are subject to military veto." In sum, an overemphasis on the wants and needs of officers reduces the wellsprings of power to those who possess weapons, thus diverting our attention from civilians who perpetuate army interference and authoritarianism.

Democratization, the Military, and Authoritarianism

A large body of scholarship claims elites engage in forms of wealth protection that subvert or maintain democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Boix 2011; Freeman and Quinn 2012; Ansell and Samuels 2014; Albertus 2017). They vote-buy, manipulate media, bribe, facilitate moneyed access to legislators, and unequally distribute campaign finances (Rueschemeyer 2004; Levitsky and Way 2010; Mares 2015). The link between inequality, redistribution, and regime transformation, while disputed (Houle 2009; Haggard and Kaufman 2016), supports research on Middle East regimes, like the anti-democratic effects of neoliberal reforms, crony capitalism, and World Bank and IMF influence (Beinin 2001, Chapter 6). Middle East rulers exploit Western-backed "stabilization" and "structural adjustment" packages to transfer public assets to cronies, i.e., "systematic plundering" (Droz-Vincent 2011, 10). Post-populist leaders reassure nervous investors with subsidies, low taxes, loose regulations, little accountability, and few protections for workers. In turn, dependence on the state for such incentives makes the bourgeoisie a poor champion for democratization (Hinnebusch 2015, 341).

Another reason Middle East authoritarianism persists is that autocrats exploit fear of political Islam (Lust-Okar 2004; Lust 2011; Angrist 2013). The region's postwar elites subverted class-based movements in favor of nationalist appeals and scapegoated foreigners, imperialists, and Communists (Mitchell 2011, 145–49). Western-backed structural adjustment in the 1980s shifted the debt-burden onto the "have-nots" and undermined rulers's anti-Western rhetoric. Islamists filled legitimacy and welfare gaps with anti-Americanism and support for the casualties of neo-liberal policy and by building electoral and coercive capacity via non-state patronage (Gumuscu 2010, 855). As a result, regimes named Islamists the new security threat and a danger to US aid (Jamal 2012, 1–5; Masoud 2014, 216). The United States' re-articulation of its security interests after September 11, 2001, lent dictators cover to repress opponents, especially Islamists (Albrecht and Wegner 2006, 134–35).

Undoing Democratic Control of the Armed Forces

This paper uses many of the above-mentioned mechanisms from democratization theory to argue that polarized elites undermine civilian control over the armed forces. *Elite polarization* is when one segment of the elite threatens another's elite status (Waldner 1999, 29; Angrist 2006, 16), thus restricting access to policy and patronage. Although elite polarization is a single study condition, its assessment is divided into separate discussions of two elite subtypes with different aims and sources of power: (1) *political elites* are threatened by rival identity blocs (e.g., Islamism–liberalism) and derive power from things like possession of state office and mobilizational capacity and (2) *economic elites/oligarchs* or those engaged in asset protection who derive power from material/financial resources (Winters 2011, 12–20; Hadiz and Robison 2013). Most oligarchs today are "civil oligarchs," as in Egypt and Tunisia, who rely on anonymous or impersonal coercion of states (democratic or autocratic) to protect their property, rather than "doing the job themselves" (Winters 2011, 28). With their property secure, oligarchs engage in wealth maximization strategies, like tax-offshoring. Mass unrest disrupts states's rules. *Dissatisfied* oligarchs are threatened by the subsequent regime and will more directly engage in asset protection, including through civil–military alliances. *Satisfied* oligarchs are not threatened by the new regime or are better protected.

Several additional points are warranted. First, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, 224–25) assume only officers execute coups and that they do so in order to prevent wealth redistribution on behalf of civilian elites. Civilians, however, actively and influentially participate in coups (Kinney 2019). Moreover, civilian interests are neither paramount nor identical to army interests. As Abdul Dardery of Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party described the 2013 coup: "They [economic elites] wanted to keep their privileges. I don't know if the military used them or if they used the military. I think it was *a marriage of convenience*."[2] Second, in consolidated regimes, marginalized civilians and soldiers conspire to *gain* privileges (Kinney 2019). During regime transitions, civil–military allies seek to *preserve* privileges under new rules. Finally, economic and political polarization overlap considerably. Oligarchs hold political office and are often polarized along identity cleavages. They own media outlets and lots of cash, thus influencing political divisions with "structural power," or their ability to reward/punish elites for policies that harm their interests (Roll 2010, 366). Mogul Salah Diab's arrest, for instance, sunk the Egyptian stock market because other tycoons feared "they may meet the same fate" (Lambert 2015, 21).

The study uses a most-similar system design. This design is well suited to regional case comparisons, which hold many plausibly relevant factors constant, thus reducing their likely intervention between the independent variable and outcome of interest. Process tracing compliments this case design by strengthening the assessment of whether the explanatory variable (*elite polarization*) accounts for the divergent outcomes under investigation, i.e., coup in Egypt and civilian control in Tunisia (George and Bennett 2005, 81–82; Bennett and Elman 2007, 175; Anckar 2008, 389–93; Seawright and Gerring 2008, 298–304). My aim is theory building. I approach the case studies *heuristically*, inductively identifying new causal mechanisms and paths (see George and Bennett 2005, 75). Research for the cases is based on ten open-ended, hour-long discussions (conducted virtually from June to October 2020) with Tunisian and Egyptian party members, civil society actors, and businesspersons; tax-offshoring data from the ICIJ; loan disbursement data from the IMF and World Bank; and secondary sources in English, Arabic, and French.

Although most-similar case designs never flawlessly pair two cases on every condition, Tunisia's and Egypt's similarities during the transition period offer an alluring comparison for students of democratization: (1) geographic proximity; (2) strong states; (3) ethnic homogeneity; (4) comparable socioeconomic conditions, such as levels of income, wealth inequality, unemployment, and inflation; (5) levels of development (e.g., urbanization, literacy, life expectancy); (6) rates of public support for democracy; and (7) regime-type (e.g., "liberalized" authoritarianism, strongmen,

[2] Interview with Abdul Dardery, June 30, 2020.

Table 1. Tunisian military interventions, 1950–2011

Year	*Event*	*Description*
1962	Attempt	Salah Ben Youssef, coup attempt
1987	Plot	*Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique*, plot
1987	Intervention	Zine el-Abedine Ben Ali, coup
2011	Intervention	Rached Ammar, intervention during uprising

Sources: Grewal (2016, 28–32) and Albrecht (2020, 595).
Note: Military intervention = army weighs-in on question of "who rules and who decides who rules" (Taylor 2003, 7).

Table 2. Egyptian military interventions, 1950–2011

Year	*Event*	*Description*
1952	Intervention	Free Officers, coup
1954	Intervention	Gamal Abd al-Nasser, coup
2011	Intervention	SCAF, intervention during uprising

Sources: Powell & Thyne (2011).
Notes: Military intervention = army weighs-in on question of "who rules and who decides who rules" (Taylor 2003, 7).

autocratic parties and elections). Although both countries had generally weak civil societies, Tunisia's *Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) contributed to elite depolarization (Bellin 2018, 439–57).

While there are differences between the Tunisian and Egyptian militaries, a number of scholars have challenged the conventional view that Tunisia's army is politically disengaged (Bou Nassif 2015; Grewal 2016, 2020; Albrecht 2020, 593–94). Tunisian "officers have developed ambitions to enter politics, including through coup attempts," writes Holger Albrecht (2020, 594–95). "While the military's involvement in politics fell short of … establishing junta regimes similar to those in Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, and Algeria, this was not for lack of trying." Tables 1 and 2 show a comparable number of postwar Tunisian and Egyptian army interventions. There are other similarities. For example, both Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak marginalized their armies in favor of their internal security apparatuses. Ben Ali's Interior Ministry totaled some 80,000–200,000 members, dwarfing the army's 15,000–37,000 (Brooks 2013, 210–13; Koehler 2017, 373; Burns 2018, 75). Additionally, officers in both countries took control during their transitions in 2011.[3] Rather than retroactively assume Egypt's army was politically ambitious and Tunisia's was not, I use process tracing to show how a civil–military coup coalition emerged in Egypt (2011–2013) and a cross-party coalition established civilian control in Tunisia (2011–2014).[4] Table 3 summarizes key findings.

Egypt, 2011–2013

President Mohamed Morsi tried to establish control over the military by pacting with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which was Egypt's executive authority since Hosni Mubarak's resignation. While initially successful, the strategy failed because the Muslim Brotherhood mistakenly diagnosed the military as Egypt's chief obstacle to civilian control. Businesspersons, media moguls, politicians, and police convinced officers to join their effort to mobilize *Tamarod* (Rebel) for an anti-Brotherhood coup, even though SCAF had secured its interests and stepped into the shadows. Political *polarization was high* because the Brotherhood's electoral prowess threatened its competitors. Oligarchs were *dissatisfied* because the Brotherhood threatened their wealth.

Table 3. Summary of findings, Egypt (2011–2013) and Tunisia (2011–2014)

Case	*TWP*	*AFC*	***EP***	***PP***	*Control*
Tunisia	No	High	**Low**	**Med**	Yes
Egypt	Yes	Low	**High**	**High**	No

Notes: The main study factors are bolded. TWP = threat to wealth protection; AFC = access to foreign credit; EP = economic polarization; PP = political polarization; Control = civilian control.

When Morsi assumed office on June 3, 2012, he struck a deal with SCAF. The agreement was a textbook example of civilians guaranteeing military prerogatives in exchange for civilian control—as described in the literature on military extrication (e.g., Huntington 1991; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Stepan 1988). Morsi gave the military budgetary autonomy; control over specified appointments, like the Defense Minister (an officer in perpetuity); the right to try civilians for "harming" the army; impunity for past crimes; and commitment to the 1979 Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty, which allocates $1.5 billion annually in American military aid (Abul-Magd 2016, 33; Linz and Stepan 2013, 21; Sennott 2013, 119). The pact produced what resembled the Turkish "tutelary" model (Esen and Gumuscu 2016, 1582). It secured army interests but, noted liberal politician Amr Hamzawy, the military "would not interfere in politics" (El Mahdy 2013, 1).

Morsi's first test of the arrangement was *not* the opening salvo of a civil–military struggle.[5] On August 12, 2012, Morsi retired DM Mohammed Tantawi, Chief-of-Staff Sami Anan, and several branch chiefs—and nullified SCAF's legislative and executive authority. Neither Tantawi nor Anan led the July coup; the main beneficiary of their retirement, General Abdel Fatah el-Sisi, executed it. Morsi awarded Tantawi and Anan a prestigious award (the Order of the Nile) and appointed them presidential advisors, offering the officers a "safe exit" from the pressures of governance (Droz-Vincent 2013, 707). The army "caved in without a whimper" (Frisch 2013, 180). Morsi won plaudits from supporters and liberals alike (Fahim 2012, 1–17; Shull and Hassieb 2012, 1–4). General Sisi was satisfied with the pact and the December 2012 constitution,[6] yet observers have explained the army's about-face in 2013 with reference to army considerations (Abul-Magd 2016, 33–34; Jumet 2017, 188–89).

While the pact reduced the army's *interest* in re-intervention, it made Morsi vulnerable to a coup because it isolated him from *civilian allies*. Early in the transition, the Brotherhood nurtured Tahrir Square's secular–Islamist coalition. In the Tahrir of 2011, "bearded" Muslim Brothers prayed en masse, "their skin scarred by the torture of Mubarak's security state," and "embraced secular Egyptian liberals" (Cohen 2016, 2). In November 2011, the Brotherhood joined protests against the "Selmi Document" ("Ali el-Selmi, liberal Wafd Party), which supported army

[3] Grewal (2016) has shown that General Rachid Ammar intervened decisively in 2011 and did not relinquish power to civilians. The Troika forced him into retirement in 2013.

[4] I do not explain democratization. While coups are an obstacle to democratization (Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015, 190), military neutrality is a requisite; it is insufficient for democratic consolidation (Hagopian 1990, 147).

[5] Powerful SCAF figure Mohammed el-Assar confirmed Morsi's purge was agreed upon in advance (Roll 2015, 30).

[6] Sisi was also satisfied with the Brotherhood's "systemic" orientation (Stacher 2020).

prerogatives (Roll 2015, 29). The demonstrations led Field Marshall Tantawi to declare, "The army is ready to go back to the barracks immediately if the people wish" (as cited in Awad and Perry 2011, 3). "From 2011 to the end of 2012, the military was not as powerful," claimed Abdul Dardery (FJP), "because the popular mode was against them."[7] A liberal echoed this sentiment, saying, "The military didn't feel strong enough to do anything against Morsi at the beginning."[8] The optics of the 2012 pact, however, confirmed fears of betrayal among Morsi's *civilian* opponents. Morsi "honored … Tantawi and … Anan," one liberal argued,

> These two people were working under the Mubarak regime … and we knew they did some … abuses. *This was a big split between Morsi and the rest of the revolution.* We told some Brotherhood members, "You don't know what you're doing, you're honoring these people that will put you in jail in a year." And they laughed at us.[9]

Khaled Fahmy likewise argued that Morsi, "could have turned to us, the revolution … to Tahrir. We would have come to his rescue. And instead, he tried to flirt with the police and the military against us" (as cited in Sennott 2013, 119).

Failing to secure Tahrir's full support, Morsi exposed himself to attacks from unsympathetic political and economic elites, whom the Brotherhood consistently bested in elections. In September 2012, Morsi dismissed Maj. Gen. Farid el-Tuhami—"guardian" of old regime corruption—and the officers did nothing. Business and media elites, however, decided around then to declare war on his presidency (Roll 2015, 31; Hubbard and Kirkpatrick 2013, 2). Morsi's unilateral November 22 decree, which broadened executive authority to "protect" the Islamist-led Constituent Assembly, also did not provoke a coup. Morsi revoked the decree in December following public referendums on the 15th and 22nd that approved the new constitution (63.8 percent to 36.2 percent). The document limited executive power, did not create a theocracy, and expanded army authority (Abul-Magd 2016, 33; Brown and Dunne 2013, 12–20; Rashwan 2013).

Viewing the referendums as a defeat, a coalition of non-Islamist parties formed the National Salvation Front (NSF) and retreated "to obstructionist and pro-military attitudes" (Dunne and Hamzawy 2017, 64), seizing upon the decree to widen polarization. In January 2013, the NSF and officers held discussions in which some civilians pushed for a coup to end "Islamist rule" (Dunne and Hamzawy 2017, 65). Ancien régime *feloul* (remnants) fueled deadly street clashes in February 2013. The Interior Ministry spearheaded a rapprochement with the military, its Mubarak-era rival, steadily convincing the officers to treat Muslim Brothers as terrorists. The General Intelligence Service, meanwhile, encouraged youth *Kefaya* (Enough) activists to hit the streets. In April, six weeks later, activists Mahmoud Badr, Moheb Doss, Walid el-Masry, Mohammed Abdel Aziz, and Hassan Shahin organized *Tamarod* (Rebel), which circulated a petition demanding Morsi's resignation. Talkshow hosts asked viewers to sign the petition, and businesspersons reportedly forced "laborers to sign the petition."[10] Oligarchs secretly funded *Tamarod* while generating an echo chamber of anti-Brotherhood dehumanization.[11]

The coup coalition grew to win support from members of the Supreme Constitutional Court; various political stripes (e.g., liberals, Salafis, Arab nationalists, Trotskyists, and Wafdists); labor organizations; Coptic Pope Tawadros II; and Grand Imam of *al-Azhar,* Ahmed el-Tayyeb (Alsharif and Saleh 2013; Kouddous 2013; Jumet 2017, 189–91). Three *Tamarod* cofounders were enlisted in the conspiracy. Moheb Doss admitted in July 2013 that Badr, Abdel Aziz, and Shahin were "under the direct guidance of Egyptian army and intelligence" (Frenkel and Atef 2014, 9). At a press conference prior to General Sisi's June 25 ultimatum, Badr surprised *Tamarod's* leadership by repeatedly asking the public to support Sisi and the army—contradicting the group's internal discussions. On July 3, as tanks occupied Cairo and helicopters hovered over Tahrir Square, Badr veered from *Tamarod's* scripted remarks, imploring the army to arrest Morsi and save Egypt from "terrorists" (Frenkel and Atef 2014, 3). Civilian elites "didn't name it [a coup]," but supported the regime. "They would say, 'It's the protector', 'It's our best institution', and, 'We have stability. It's better than being Syria and Iraq'."[12]

Economic Polarization: Egypt's Dissatisfied Oligarchs

Egyptian oligarchs were *dissatisfied* under the Brotherhood's leadership. The mostly non-Islamist economic establishment largely remained after Mubarak's ouster (Stacher 2012, 38–39), although some fled or were imprisoned by SCAF, like Gamal Mubarak and his National Democratic Party allies, whose privatization schemes threatened "Military, Inc." (Abul-Magd 2012, 12). Many business and media elites watched the Brotherhood's rise, "with great nervousness" (Roll 2013, 18).[13] The MB–army alliance, which *expanded* the military's business empire (Abul-Magd 2016, 24–31), frightened Mubarak-era oligarchs. Abdul Dardery (FJP) states,

> A revolution means a revolution. There are those who are privileged and they do not want people to take away their privileges. And they were worried about losing their economic interests by losing their connection with the military…. So they decided to take back the country with the coup.[14]

"The media [and economic elites] had their own interests," claimed one liberal party member, "and felt threatened by the Muslim Brotherhood. And they wanted the military back."[15] "The more authoritarian the regime," noted another, "the less regulation and the less people watching what they are doing. They didn't only want secularism; they wanted authoritarianism."[16]

In what specific ways did the Brotherhood threaten the oligarchs? First, the group's economic outlook was not revolutionary, but also did not represent the status quo. The Brotherhood served an underemployed lower-to-middle-class base, long neglected by the state's neoliberal retreat.

[7] Interview with Abdul Dardery, June 30, 2020.

[8] Interview with activist who wished to remain anonymous, September 10, 2020.

[9] Interview with liberal party member who wished to remain anonymous, August 2, 2020.

[10] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.

[11] The UAE and Saudi Arabia also financed Morsi's ouster according to voice-verified #Sisileaks audiotapes (Hertsgaard 2015, 22).

[12] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.

[13] Many oligarchs simply disliked Islamism (Roll 2013, 18). Although "very, very rare," some supported revolutionaries, like Mamdouh Hamza. Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.

[14] Interview with Abdul Dardery, June 30, 2020.

[15] Interview with liberal party member who wished to remain anonymous, July 27, 2020.

[16] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.

The group's financier, Khairat el-Shater, emphasized social welfare and a desire to break up old patronage networks, a move which would benefit small-to-medium-sized "devout businessmen," whose opportunities were limited by state-aligned firms (Gumuscu 2010, 847–55). One liberal stated, "Morsi wanted to replace the economic elites with Muslim Brotherhood economic elites. Their main priority was to take everything away, to bring the MB business members to take over."[17] Egypt's "devout bourgeoisie" had avoided association with the Brotherhood to escape state repression, but they were no longer under such constraints post-Mubarak. MB businessmen Khairat el-Shater and Hassan Malek were not "as strong as Naguib Sawiris," explained a liberal party member, "but people thought, 'Well, if he was powerful under Mubarak, then what could he do in power'."[18]

Following their release from prison, Brotherhood entrepreneurs recovered confiscated assets and sought to expand their firms. In 2011–2012, the MB created the Egyptian Business Development Association (EBDA) and *Tawassul* (Intercession), which aimed to establish pro-Brotherhood economic institutions and develop relationships with private sector elites. Although some members of Egypt's established upper class joined EBDA, many more distrusted the Islamists. "The elites remained largely the same for the last 20 years," a liberal activist argued. "The Brotherhood was getting the chance to build their business and become successful. This was a threat."[19] The Brotherhood, for its part, handicapped its outreach efforts with harsh rhetoric. For instance, Morsi announced investigations against unidentified "leading private companies" (Roll 2013, 18). The Brothers also threatened specific sectors, namely import–export and tourism. Morsi advocated steering import–export contracts in "new directions," away from the UAE and Saudi Arabia toward Qatar and Turkey. This threatened "existing economic investments."[20] Most Egyptian businesspersons directly or indirectly benefit from tourism. "There are around 50 industries that rely on tourism. Even if you do construction, tourism is good for you. They were scared of an Islamist group controlling the country," said one liberal, "If Egypt is under Islamic rule, that threatens the whole tourism idea if you have a regime that is saying alcohol is illegal, and in Sharm el-Sheikh people are half naked."[21]

Second, oligarchs consistently lost elections to better-organized Brothers, despite establishing new media outlets and political parties, and dumping money into political campaigns. "A lot of businesspeople were donating … to our party because they were anti-Muslim Brotherhood," one liberal recalled.[22] In challenging Morsi's presidential bid, Ahmed Shafik had an "army of fearful businessmen behind him" (Roll 2013, 20), such as Ahmed Ezz (from prison), Mahmoud Baraka, Tarek Nour, Yassir Hagag el-Falah, and Hafez Orabi (Fadel 2012, 9–19; Adly 2017, 16). Billionaire Naguib Sawiris's well-funded Free Egyptian Party (founded post-revolution), which housed many secular business elites, ran 150 candidates in the 2012 parliamentary contest. The Free Egyptians won only fifteen seats despite "a huge campaign with TV."[23]

Third, Morsi's administration imposed new tax-burdens. One liberal claimed Morsi, "was attacking them [economic elites] with anything he had—Sisi's imposing taxes to get money from them, Morsi was trying to *replace them* by taking money from them."[24] In November 2012, Morsi-appointee PM Hisham Qandil implemented a capital gains tax on initial public offerings on the Egyptian exchange (Al Bawaba 2013, 10). Morsi also approved the "Income, Sales, Stamp, Real Estate and Taxation Act (December 2012)" and "Stamp Duty Law (April 2013)" as part of an austerity package to secure a $4.8 billion IMF loan, which could have secured an economic dividend for the revolution. The IMF postponed the loan (until after the coup), citing "lack of consensus" and instability (Haidar, Al-Saadni, Salah al-Din, and Al-Saadni 2012, 1; Jalal 2013; Khalaf 2013, 11–14). Austerity measures Morsi took to secure the loan, however, partly fueled this unrest.[25] In contrast, international financial institutions eased tensions in Tunisia by offering few-strings-attached loans.

In the Mubarak era, oligarchs stashed money in offshore tax shelters "to secure assets from state interference" (Roll 2010, 366). After the uprising, the Egyptian Tax Authority eliminated loopholes to make "profit shifting" more difficult (Mekawy, Diab, and Hussein 2018, 46–59). Table 4 displays Egyptian tax offshorers listed in the ICIJ database and their support for the July 2013 coup. Morsi publicly attacked oligarchs for tax evasion, like Nassef and Naguib Sawiris and Mohamed el-Amin (Ahram Online 2013a, 4; 2013b, 2). Amin responded with attacks on Morsi on his CBC-TV channels.[26] Singling out the Sawiris family in October 2012, Morsi claimed they owed over $1 billion in back taxes and targeted their company, ORASCOM, "with a tax-evasion case" (Adly 2017, 15). While the family eventually paid, Naguib openly derided the case as "politically motivated" (Kenner 2013, 4–5) and became a leading sponsor of the coup, "out of personal interest, protecting himself and his business interests."[27] Naguib gave *Tamarod* $28 million; office space, belonging to the Free Egyptians Party; and free publicity in his newspapers and TV channels (Kenner 2013, 4–6). Naguib's "political channel," ONTV, which he operated at a loss, led the assault on the Brotherhood. After the coup Naguib became "bored" with ONTV and sold it to pro-Sisi magnate Ahmed Abu Hashimi, who praised Sawiris and ONTV for confronting Egypt's pre-Sisi "dangers" (Shams el-Din 2016, 8–9). Likewise, petroleum tycoon Ekmel Kartam's newspaper *Al-Tahrir* viciously "attacked the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists on a daily basis," and prominent talk show hosts Amr Adib (see table 4) and Ahmed Moussa parroted nationalistic, pro-military rhetoric.[28]

The post-coup regime's "khaki-clad officers" argued "social justice must wait, accusing those who demand it of scaring away tourists and foreign investors" (Marshall and Stacher 2012, 7). Oligarchs made the same argument. "For them the security services were their best friend," a liberal party member reflected. "It was a win-win. They were not forced to cooperate with the security services. They would always use the word "stability," *al-istiqrar*. The media messaged, "*istiqrar, istiqrar, istiqrar*." They would say stability is good for business, tourism, and income."[29] Naguib Sawiris pledged to invest billions in Egypt and claimed

[17] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, July 27, 2020.
[18] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.
[19] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.
[20] Interview with two anonymous activists, September 10 and 15 and liberal party member, August 2, 2020.
[21] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.
[22] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, July 27, 2020.
[23] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.
[24] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, July 27, 2020.
[25] Aside from subsidy cuts, Morsi's austerity plan included anti-corruption measures and tourism-busting duties on alcohol and cigarettes.
[26] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.
[27] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.
[28] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, July 27, 2020.
[29] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.

Table 4. Egyptian tax-offshorers's support for General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's July 2013 coup

Individual	*Biographical details*	*Support Sisi coup?*
Mamdouh Abbas	Businessman; ex-chairman, Zamalek	
Amr Adib	News anchor, *al-Qahera al-Youm*	Yes
Ahmed Bahgat	Owner, *Dream TV*	Yes
Hazem Barakat	Businessman	
Salah Diab	Owner, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*	Yes
Mohamed Aboul Enein	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	Sisi, coup likely
Ahmed Ezz	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	Prison
Ayman Ahmed Fathy Hussein	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	Prison
Karim Ghabbour	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	
Raouf Ghabbour	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	
Hassan Heikal	Financier; tied to Mubaraks	Sisi, coup unclear
Ibrahim Kamel	Businessman; ex-NDP (dismissed)	
Mohamed Mansour	Businessman; ex-minister	Sisi, coup unclear
Yassine Mansour	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	
Ahmed Maghraby	Businessman; ex-minister	Prison
Mohamed Maghraby	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks	
Maher Maksoud	Businessman; linked to Hassan Heikal	
Yasser Mallawany	Financier; ex-NDP	Prison
Moussa Mostafa Moussa	Ghad Party; early Sisi backer	Yes
Alaa Mubarak	Businessman; son of H. Mubarak	Prison
Khaled Nosseir	Businessman; son of M. Nosseir	
Mohamed Nosseir	Businessman; ex-member, Free Egyptians	
Ahmed Osman	Businessman; son of Osman Ahmed Osman	
Rachid Mohamed Rachid	Businessman; tied to Mubaraks; ex-minister	Exile
Mounir Sabet	Businessman; H. Mubarak's brother-in-law	
Gamal Anwar Sadat	Businessman; son of Anwar Sadat	
Hussein Salem	Businessman; tied to Mubarak regime	Exile
Naguib Sawiris	Businessman; leader, Free Egyptians	Yes
Nassef Sawiris	Businessman; brother of Naguib	
Badr Sednaoui	Businessman	

Sources: All names come from the ICIJ Offshore Leaks Database. Biographical information and support for Sisi and/or coup traced from: Galal (2013), El Tarouty (2015), Lambert (2015), Trenwith (2015), Bahgat (2016a, b), Atef and Elshamy (2016), and El-Mahdawy and Mamdouh (2018).
Notes: Blank space = no data; list may be incomplete due to opaque nature of tax-offshoring.

others would, too, "under a new government aware of the importance of the presence of investors" (Al Arabiya 2013a, 5). The benefits of the new order were also on clear display in 2014 when an army commander jettisoned union heads (for requesting wage hikes) at a factory owned by Mohamed Aboul Enein (see table 4) (Cunningham 2014, 21–24).[30] "Egyptian soldiers," wrote Marshall and Stacher (2012), "*secure corporate assets*—a type of insurance no other state actor can provide" (22, my emphasis).

Political Polarization: Egypt's Broken Coalition

Political polarization, deepened by dissatisfied oligarchs, tore apart Tahrir Square's short-lived coalition between Islamists and non-Islamists. Political elites supported the coup because they struggled to defeat the Brotherhood in elections. Of course, some party leaders, like Hamdeen al-Sabahi, simply wanted "to get rid of the Muslim Brotherhood."[31] Many elites, for instance, held intensely anti-Islamist views in which elements of class identity were present. "The elite would make fun of the … *nouveaux riches*, and look down on them," as one activist described the environment. "Most of the old elites … would call the Brothers "savages," even if the Brothers in question were rich."[32] After the constitutional referendum, Morsi called rural supporters to Cairo where they blocked off roads. This "antagonized the Cairenes," explained one liberal. "The Cairenes are elites; they see these people as farmers. Their perception was the Muslim Brotherhood was occupying the capital."[33]

Whereas Tunisian Islamists and non-Islamists opened a dialogue decades before Ben Ali's ouster, Egypt waited for months to talk after Mubarak's resignation (Linz and Stepan 2013, 23). As Abdul Dardery (FJP) described,

> Egyptians needed some time after the revolution to develop a dialogue. I tried to start this dialogue in Luxor. We did talk a little bit…. [T]he leader of the Coptic church came to me and said, "We all suffered under Mubarak"—let's not [let] anyone divide us again. There was a culture of hate made by the Mubarak regime…. We were coming out of decades of distrust, rumors.[34]

The secular–Islamist coalition had no reservoir of trust to withstand the ancien régime's media onslaught, which vilified Morsi's every move as evidence of "Brotherhood-ization," convincing many only a coup could stop him (Momani 2013). Kira Jumet (2018) likened the shift in Cairo's atmosphere in 2011–2013 to standing at a cocktail

[30] I have seen no direct evidence that Aboul Enein supported the coup. It seems likely based on his rhetoric (e.g., derisively referring to union heads as Muslim Brothers and criminals).

[31] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.

[32] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.

[33] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, July 27, 2020.

[34] Interview with Abdul Dardery, June 30, 2020.

party as the guests turn into vampires. "In less than a year people didn't like [the] Muslim Brotherhood," a liberal recalled. "Many said, 'Maybe military rule is better than a rule that will hang us in the streets for drinking … or force us to cover our faces'."[35] "It was ugly," noted an activist, who explained that a family member "was hated because he announced he was a Muslim Brotherhood member. People would say, 'What do you expect from him? He's a Muslim Brother'. He stopped coming to family gatherings."[36]

During clashes over Morsi's November decree, crowds chanted, "Shave your beard, show your disgrace, you will find that you have Mubarak's face!" (Kirkpatrick 2012, 7). To guard the presidential palace, Muslim Brothers raised militias, which then abused anti-Morsi protestors in "outdoor torture chambers" (Jumet 2017, 180). On July 3, 2013, General Mohamed Kamal, Egypt's senior police officer, called Islamists a "bunch of dogs" on TV (Saleh 2013, 2). The NSF declined to negotiate with Morsi, instead intensifying "calls on the army to interfere" (Dunne and Hamzawy 2017, 56). After meetings with ElBaradei and non-Islamist parties (the MB refused to participate), Sisi laid out a "transitional road map," which included new presidential, not parliamentary elections. This reflected non-Islamist parties's worry that they could not win district-level contests against the Brotherhood (Masoud 2014).

Political elites supported the coup because their interests were more closely aligned with the army than the Brotherhood, even though their strategy now seems to have backfired. "[P]acting with the military is a matter of political survival," said Tamer El-Ghobashy. "They [liberals] can have the military extinguish their political rivals … because … they can't compete with them on the electoral playing field" (as cited in Kouddous 2013, 27). Abdul Dardery (FJP), however, claims that, "They were fooled by the military leaders. They should have known better."[37] Liberals, Amr Hamzawy (2013, 2) bemoaned in *Al-Sharouk*, had rushed into an "alliance with the military establishment … without deep reflection on the essence of democracy." The coup also dashed the revolutionary aspirations of many Egyptian protesters. "A lot of people woke up to the fact that they participated in the coup," lamented an activist, "but didn't understand it that way … when they were demonstrating."[38]

Tunisia, 2011–2014

Most accounts of Tunisian civil–military relations during the transition point to a politically disengaged army, citing its "professionalism," republican ethos, and political marginalization (Brooks 2013, 2016; Koehler 2017; Bellin 2018; Burns 2018). This case demonstrates, however, that elite consensus produced civilian control in Tunisia. The "Troika" coalition partners—the Islamist party *al-Nahdha* (Renaissance) and two secular-left parties, Congress for the Republic *el-Mottamar* (Congress) and *el-Takatol* (Forum)—cooperated to sideline General Rached Ammar. At the height of tension in July–August 2013, *al-Nahdha* pacted with *Nidaa Tounes* (Call of Tunisia) to de-escalate a crisis and contain opposition demands for army intervention. Pressure from *satisfied* oligarchs helped preserve the secular–Islamist coalition. Although armed agents at times gave the transition trouble, unified political and economic elites pushed back appropriately and did not extend support to anti-democratic movements aligned to the army or internal security apparatus.[39]

The image of a politically disengaged Tunisian army does not match available evidence (Bou Nassif 2015; Grewal 2016, 2020; Albrecht 2020, 593–94). There was a coup attempt in 1962, two in 1987, and an alleged plot in 2002 (Kallander 2011, 25). Republican values may circumscribe the army's appetite to *govern*, but not for enhanced political sway. "We are a republican military and *we never wanted to become politically hegemonic;* this goes against our values," recalled a retired officer on Ben Ali's early rule. "But after decades of marginalization under Bourguiba we did hope to gain some political influence in Tunisia" (as cited in Bou Nassif 2015, 68, my emphasis).[40] In reference to the 2013 crisis, a businessperson privy to Quartet-Troika negotiations said,

> The army should play a role in crises but *not in taking power*. I worked with a lot of the opposition and I spoke with many of them, and they wanted a change of the regime, but *not a change from a civil one to a military one.… Yes, the military would have helped to change the government to a new civil government. But Tunisia has never ever had a military regime. We are a civil country.*[41]

If the army had intervened against *Nahdha*, even to hand power to its *civilian* opponents, as suggested, then Tunisia's democratic transition would have ended.

The Troika coalition finally reduced General Rached Ammar's political influence in 2013, well after elections for the National Constituent Assembly (ANC). After Ben Ali's departure, Ammar capitalized on hype surrounding his revolutionary heroism to exercise, in essence, personal control over military and governing institutions, e.g., securing resources, controlling appointments, and blunting criticism (Grewal 2016, 27–33). General Mohamed Ali el-Bekri claimed, "Everybody knew that the real minister of defense was Rachid Ammar," not civilian DM Abdelkarim Zbidi (as cited in Grewal 2016, 32). Ammar refused Interim President Moncef Marzouki's (CPR) orders on several occasions, notably after the September 2012 attack on the US embassy. With coalition backing, President Marzouki lobbied *Nahdha* parliamentarians to replace DM Zbidi, who Marzouki suspected of coup-plotting with Ammar. After the death of several Tunisian soldiers fighting Islamist militants of Ansar al-Sharia in Mount Chaambi led to pressure from parliamentarian Mohamed Abbou (Democratic Current/al-Tayyar), Ammar retired before Marzouki could dismiss him. Marzouki then altered recruitment patterns to weaken Ammar's network, appointed loyal officers, and pushed the ANC to speedily draft a constitution to dash the street's hope of dissolving the body in July–August 2013 (Grewal 2016, 44–56; Al Jazeera 2017, 2).

The Troika coalition weathered persistent demonstrations from February to October 2013, during which a string of assassinations brought Tunisians into the streets, some calling for a coup against the *Nahdha*-led Troika (Amara 2013, 13). Mohammed Brahmi's (*Mouvement du peuple*) assassination in July 2013—no less stirring than Chokri Belaid's (*Mouvement des patriotes démocrates*) in

[35] Interview with anonymous liberal party member, August 2, 2020.
[36] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.
[37] Interview with Abdul Dardery, June 30, 2020.
[38] Interview with anonymous activist, September 10, 2020.
[39] In February 2011, an internal security unit reportedly attempted a coup in an alleged 2,000-member assault on the Interior Ministry (The Daily Star 2011, 1–3). While beyond the study's temporal scope, credible allegations have emerged that in 2018 Lotfi Brahem plotted a coup against Youssef Chahed, whose 2017 "war on corruption" stirred elites (Beau 2018a).
[40] After his 1987 coup, Ben Ali filled several civilian roles with army loyalists (Albrecht 2020, 596).
[41] Interview with businessperson who wished to remain anonymous, June 30, 2020.

February—trailed Egypt's coup and anti-Brotherhood repression. Sixty parliamentarians resigned and warned *Nahdha* to "look at Egypt," which security officials interpreted as a coup invitation (Grewal 2016, 47). Some media referenced the "Egyptian scenario," urging Tunisians, "*lil-tamarod* [to rebel]" (Al Arab 2016, 4). A grassroots *Tamarod* formed in June 2013 and gathered some 1.7 million signatures by September 2 in support of the ANC's dissolution (Al Arabiya 2013b). According to a *Nahdha* official, General Ammar claimed the opposition requested his assistance. "We were worried there would be a military coup [*inqilab askari*]."[42] Unlike the Brotherhood, however, *Nahdha* was never fully isolated from the civilian elite; it never "governed alone" (Ghanem 2013, 5). All parties maintained communication with the Troika, which offered concessions but refused to step down (Agence-France Presse 2013, 7). Tunisian elites neither offered top-down assistance to *Tamarod*, like their Egyptian counterparts, nor made a serious effort to align with officers.

While Egyptian oligarchs herded around Ahmed Shafik for fear of the Brotherhood, Tunisia's business community (represented in the Quartet by the Union of Industry, Trade, and Handicrafts [UTICA]) exploited the *Nahdha*-led Troika's weakness to reinforce the political consensus. Businesspersons wanted *Nahdha* out for an "experienced" party, claimed a *Nahdha* member. "When we say 'experience', what is meant is Destouris [Destour Party],"[43] referring to Bourguibists of *Nidaa Tounes* (formed 2012), an alliance of non-Islamists including leftists and ex-officials of Ben Ali's ruling Democratic Constitutional Rally. A businessperson privy to Troika–Quartet discussions confirmed the opposition called "for a coup," and that the Troika "was in a bad situation." They continued,

> We [the Quartet] came and said we have to … find a solution. They were afraid … of what happened in Egypt…. The Troika was certainly aware … of the presence of the army in the street; they felt it. [PM] Ali Laarayedh [*Nahdha*] said, "Do you want us to return to jail?" We said, "No, but you have to leave for a technocratic government and new elections."… The Troika and *Nahdha* was surprised the business community joined with the UGTT. There was a unified country against them. The role of the Quartet was to bring various interests together to pressure the Troika. So the Troika was scared of us…. We made the Troika aware that this was their only possible solution—that negotiating was better than civil war *or ending up like Morsi*.[44]

Nahdhawis confirm the Troika, specifically *Nahdha*, had no choice but to compromise.[45] Beji Caid Essebsi (*Nidaa*) and Rached Ghannouchi (*Nahdha*) began private talks in Paris and later with the UGTT. These discussions produced the NSF and an enhanced presidency with Essebsi at the helm. The leaders exchanged symbolic gestures on mogul Nabil Karoui's *Nessma TV* and co-attended National Dialogue meetings. When necessary, the UGTT's Secretary-General, Houcine Abassi, who declared his refusal to be a "Tunisian Sisi" (cited in Bahloul 2013, 14), called strikes to pressure *Nidaa-Nahdha* into signing the pro-democracy Road Map (Chayes 2014, 8–11; Netterstrøm 2016, 396).

Economic Polarization: Tunisia's Satisfied Oligarchs

Unlike their Egyptian counterparts, Tunisian businesspersons took a direct role in democracy promotion, delivering competitive elections in a "conservative transition" (McCarthy 2018, 18) in which oligarchs retained significant policy influence (Freedom House 2018, 18). Under Ben Ali, few oligarchs benefitted, specifically only the narrow clique of families referred to as 'the clan', which concentrated wealth through intimidation, extortion, and corruption. The clan burdened even pro-regime oligarchs (Beinin 2001, 147–63; Hibou 2006/2011, xix–xx). "We were afraid of a new Ben Ali regime, particularly the end … when his family controlled the economy and strategic sectors," noted a prominent businessperson. "This is the most important thing we got from the revolution."[46] "The former regime was pressuring them [businesspeople] and wanted to get involved in their affairs," echoed a Nahdha member. "I think [Ouided] Bouchamoui [President, UTICA; National Dialogue moderator] pushed for revolution because with democracy they could be more prosperous and get richer."[47] Newly liberated oligarchs (literally) capitalized on the clan's departure by buying their confiscated assets. Slim Riahi (Free Patriotic Union [UPL]; *Nidaa*) bought $20 million in Carthage Cement shares and, along with fellow mogul Chafik Jarraya, a stake in news publisher *Dar Assabah* (Ryan 2011, 47–52).

Like most countries, Tunisia's politico-business relationships are pervasive. Although oligarchs were not well represented under Ben Ali, UTICA has since pushed to expand their influence. According to one businessperson, "I said we need to be inside of parliament and have representatives in parliament to defend us."[48] Businesspeople founded, financed, and joined parties. Mohammad Frikha (Sfax) was elected on *Nahdha*'s ticket.[49] Billionaire Hechmi El-Hamdi created Popular Petition (*Aridha Chaabia*) and placed third in the 2011 contest. Slim Riahi launched and financed UPL and later became secretary-general in *Nidaa*, which billionaire Nabil Karoui co-founded and funded. Members of the prominent Driss family joined *Nidaa* to save their "positions," lest they face marginalization for proximity to Ben Ali (Oubenal and Ben Hamouda 2018, 7–14).

Post-Ben Ali politico-business relations have been characterized as a "democratization of corruption" (Yerkes and Muasher 2017, 21) in which socioeconomic cleavages have "low visibility" (Van Hammel, Gana, and Ben Rebbah 2014, 766). Amal Souid (*Nahdha*-Gabes) lamented, "Many members of parliament are businessmen. And there's conflicts of interest, not only in the Troika; now there are more. This is an illness that democracy suffers from."[50] Oligarchs support both Islamists and non-Islamists. "Businesspersons change their party every time," said one *Nahdha* member. "If the party is in the government, then we have relationships with businessmen. If a party is not in the government then the businessperson looks for other parties."[51] "They're [*Nahdha*] open to working with us," said one businessperson, "They're more liberal than others like Hama Hammami [communist, Workers's Party]."[52] Jarraya, a titan of the interior's black market who openly brags of buying influence,

[42] Interview with *Nahdha* member who wished to remain anonymous, July 1, 2020.

[43] Interview with anonymous *Nahdha* member, July 1, 2020.

[44] Interview with anonymous businessperson, June 30, 2020.

[45] Interview with Amal Souid (*Nahdha*) and anonymous *Nahdha* member, July 7 and July 1, 2020.

[46] Interview with anonymous businessperson, June 30, 2020.

[47] Interview with anonymous *Nahdha* member, August 2, 2020.

[48] Interview with anonymous businessperson, June 30, 2020.

[49] Interview with anonymous *Nahdha* member and anonymous activist, August 2 and October 6, 2020.

[50] Interview with Amal Souid (*Nahdha*) and anonymous activist, July 7 and October 6, 2020.

[51] Interview with anonymous *Nahdha* member, July 1, 2020.

[52] Interview with anonymous businessperson, June 30, 2020.

Table 5. Tunisian tax-offshoring

Economic and political elites	*Biographical information*
Samir Abdelli	Business lawyer; politician
Jamel Dallali	Shareholder, Tunisia News Network; *al-Nahdha* ties
Lyès Ben Chedli	Businessman; tied to Chafik Jarraya
Noomane Fehri	Co-founder, *Afek Tounes*
Kaïs Guiga	Businessman; alleged Ben Ali ties
Jameleddine Bida	Lawyer, Court of Cassation
Mohsen Marzouk*	Politician, *Nidaa Tounes*; *Machrou Tounes*
Habib Aouili	Politician, *al-Nahdha*
Nizar Bouguila	Businessman; linked to Noomane Fehri (*Afek Tounes*)
Fethi Mokhtar	Businessman; father of Kais and Sadri Mokhtar
Kais Mokhtar	Businessman/politician, Democratic Progressive Party
Sadri Mokhtar	Businessman; son of steel tycoon Fethi Mokhtar
M. Khayam Turki	Politician, *Ettakatol*
Rafik Kilani	Businessman, Kilani Group
Lassaad Kilani	Businessman
Fraj Dghim	Ties to *al-Nahdha* and National Destourian Initiative
Taoufik Mkacher	Businessman; ties to judiciary
Fathi Jaouadi	Ties to *al-Nahdha*
Lotfi Zitoun	Politician, *al-Nahdha*
Salah Oueslati	Shareholder, *al-Nahdha*-linked Jasmin Prod/TNN
Rafik Abdessalem	Politician, *al-Nahdha*
Rached Lahmar	Shareholder, *al-Nahdha*-linked Jasmin Prod/TNN
Rachid Hammami	Shareholder, *al-Nahdha*-linked Jasmin Prod/TNN
Hatem Brik	Shareholder, *al-Nahdha*-linked Jasmin Prod/TNN
Moumen Bannani	Shareholder, *al-Nahdha*-linked Jasmin Prod/TNN
Mohamed Trabelsi	Politician, ex-Minister of Social Affairs
Mohamed Ben Salem	Politician, *al-Nahdha*;ex-Minister of Agriculture
Fadhel Abdelkafi	Financier/politician, ex-Minister of Finance

Sources: All names come from the ICIJ Offshore Leaks Database. Biographical information comes from: Dahmani (2010); Reuters (2012); I-Watch (2016); Ben Hamadi, Khadhraoui, and Sbouai (2016a, b); Sbouai and Khadhraoui (2016a, b); Ben Hamadi and Khadhraoui (2016, 2017); Mersch (2016); and Beau (2018b).
Notes: List may be incomplete due to opaque nature of tax-offshoring.
*Marzouk was named as inquiring into how to open an offshore account.

maintained ties to *Nahdha* as well as *Nidaa* (which he financed) and claims to have mediated between them in 2013 (Ghorbal 2017, 5–6; Jeune Afrique 2017, 1). Despite using *Nessma TV* for anti-Islamist propaganda, Karoui boasted of ties to Essebsi and Ghannouchi and also claims he brought them together in 2013 (Aliriza 2014, 13).

Since the 1980s, oligarchs avoided Ben Ali's extortion by tax-offshoring under his permissive tax framework, "financial port of Tunis" (Servant 2010, 10). Table 5 uses data from the ICIJ that shows tax-offshoring crosses partisan lines; it persisted through the transition. In 2017, Karoui ordered *Nessma TV* staffers to "slander" anti-corruption group *IWatch* for detailing the Karoui brothers's tax-avoidance via "shell companies and offshore tax havens" (Aliriza 2017, 7). Ghannouchi (*Nahdha*) applauded *Inkyfada*'s reporting on presidential candidate Samir Abdelli's tax-offshoring, but, like Mohsen Marzouk (*Nidaa; Machrou' Tounes*), took legal action against the group for reporting on Tunis News Network, which was linked to prominent *Nahdhawis* (Mersch 2016, 5). Similarly, when PM Youssef Chahed arrested Jarraya in his 2017 "War on Corruption," *Nidaa* and *Nahdha* only cautiously approved (Cherif 2017, 5).

Finally, Tunisian authorities collected a "democratic rent" in the form of few-strings-attached loans from the IMF and World Bank. Figure 1 displays World Bank disbursements from 2009 to 2015, highlighting much larger Governance and Opportunity Loans earmarked to support the transition (World Bank 2015, 1). Figure 2 shows IMF funds disbursed when World Bank loans stopped. The IMF suspended disbursements only twice between 2011 and 2018—and once to push elites to compromise. As the poster child for Arab democratization, Tunisian democracy was "too important to fail" (Fabiani 2018, 8–19). Foreign credit allowed elites to accommodate revolutionary demands (e.g., employment, development for the interior, subsidies, UGTT-backed wage hikes) without raising taxes. Tunisian officials routinely asked western counterparts for greater aid to "cushion the costs" of reform, lest they provoke oligarchs or the street (Muasher, Pierini, and Djerassi 2016, 37–40; Honwana 2013, 153–54). Some Tunisians felt the upper class, which would not feel the debt burden, protected the status quo by committing "generations to repaying an unrealistic debt" (Marzouki and Aliriza 2015, 5). Indeed, the IMF (2019, 9) claimed Tunisia's "large and growing … debts … represent a strong burden for future generations." For this reason, in 2012, Houcine Dimassi resigned his post as the finance minister over the Troika's debt spending (Dimassi 2012, 4–5).

Political Polarization: Between Polarization and "De-polarization"

Tunisia's "de-polarization" project began in the 1990s under Ben Ali, who weaponized fear of Islamism to divide and eventually conquer even secular critics (Angrist 2013, 549–58). Ben Ali's rights abuses, election-rigging, mass surveillance, and censorship united Islamists and secular parties alike, who established dialogue-promoting organizations (e.g., the Nationalist-Islamic Conference, Congress for the Republic, October 18 Movement) to assuage "fear of democracy's consequences" (Linz and Stepan 2013, 23). Their meetings produced several pro-democracy agreements, which *Nahdha's* Rafik Abdessalem called a "partnership" born of repression (Abdessalem 2014, 6). Hamadi Jebali (*Nahdha*) said, "We do not want to again be in a polarized situation. For that, we are ready to make concessions" (quoted in Angrist 2013, 556). Souad Abderrahim (*Nahdha*) told a rally, "We who were oppressed will oppress no one. We want to end this phobia" (cited in El Amrani and Lindsey 2011, 8). Nejib Chebbi (*Parti démocrate progressiste*) reassured followers that *Nahdha's* statements were trustworthy, since he had relaxed his own Marxism (Angrist 2013, 557).

Coalition maintenance, moderation, and inclusivity reigned during the transition. *Nahdha* did not wish to return to prison any more than its opponents wanted to be monitored and abused by another Ben Ali. To be sure, elites were "not holding hands" (Alexander 2011, 1). Tensions were high during the 2011 election cycle and after the 2013 assassinations (Agence-France Presse 2011, 20; Lynch 2011, 1). In August 2013, protesters gathered in the Bardo district to demand the dissolution of the ANC. As in Egypt, *Nahdha* organized counterdemonstrators and cited its electoral mandate. The contrast with Egypt, however, is unmistakable. One *Nahdha* member suggested the party join "the Destour

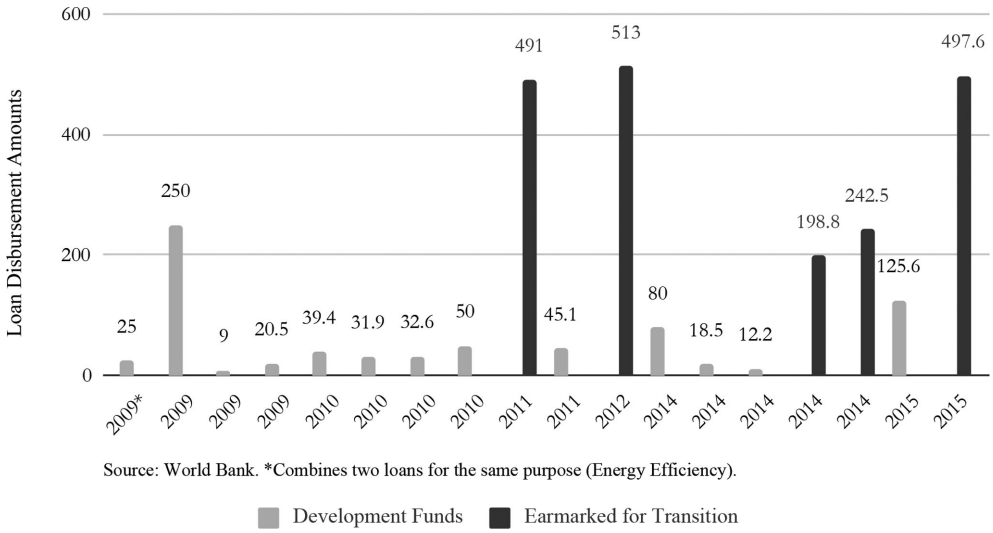

Figure 1. World Bank disbursements to Tunisia, 2009–2015 (in USD millions).
Source: World Bank. *Combines two loans for the same purpose (energy efficiency).

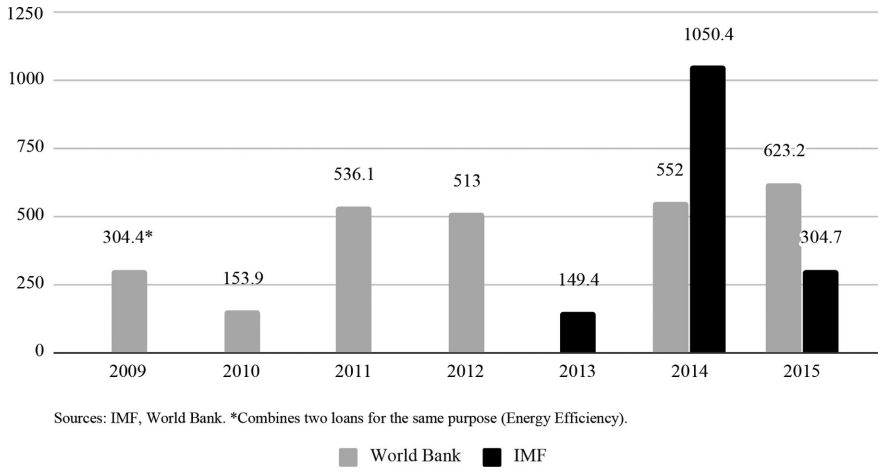

Figure 2. World Bank and IMF disbursements to Tunisia, 2009–2015 (in USD millions).
Source: IMF, World Bank. *Combines two loans for the same purpose (energy efficiency).

Party, because I don't see many differences between the two … . [T]hey have almost the same economic program."[53] Before the 2011 election, Islamists and non-Islamists spoke of avoiding Algeria's experience (1991–2002). *Nahdha* instructed supporters not to greet Ghannouchi's return from exile to avoid comparisons to Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Iran (Lynch 2011, 9). *Nahdha* and *Nidaa* also moderated at important moments. Asked why it took *Nahdha* so long to break ranks with Salafists and declare *Ansar al-Sharia* a terrorist organization, Abdelfattah Mourou owned the mistake and said, "I'm not sure Ennahdha will be in the majority in the next election" (quoted in Ryan 2013, 14).[54] Likewise, *Nidaa's* secular-right shifted toward *Nahdha* against *Nidaa's* secular-left (Romdhani 2014, 7–8). As one *Nahdha* member summarized the transition: "Unlike in Egypt, there is no violence, killing, or dictatorship. After just one year we established a democratic state [*dawla dimoqratiyya*]."[55]

[53] Interview with anonymous *Nahdha* member, August 2, 2020.
[54] Yerkes (2016, 5) argues *Nahdha* moderated too much for a healthy democracy.
[55] Interview with anonymous *Nahdha* member, July 1, 2020.

Conclusion

Egyptian oligarchs and politicians aligned with officers for a coup in July 2013 to safeguard their wealth and privileges from the Muslim Brotherhood. President Morsi tried to secure civilian control by accommodating the officers, but his pact did little more than repel non-Islamists and make him vulnerable to the machinations of civilian rivals. Economic and political elites in Tunisia, by comparison, suffered under Ben Ali's kleptocracy. Having opened dialogue in the 1990s with the expressed aim of establishing democracy through depolarization and consensus, Islamist and non-Islamist party leaders cooperated to first reduce General Rached Ammar's influence and later defuse opposition calls for a coup during the crisis of July–August 2013. Oligarchs backed their efforts because they feared that the alternative to democracy could spell the return of predatory dictatorship. Few-strings-attached loans from the IMF and World Bank also eased tensions by allowing elites to evade polarizing fiscal choices.

These findings suggest that civilians have greater agency to quarter their armies than existing literature gives them credit. Soldiers do not decide when to return to base simply

because they carry guns. As long as civilians do not alienate *civilian* allies, they do not have to agree to army wish lists in exchange for the right to govern. Civilians can instead demand oversight over military budgets, prosecute officers for human rights abuses, and privilege societal needs over army prerogatives when allocating guns and butter. Scholars can assess these findings by revisiting cases of army disengagement in Latin America, Southern Europe, and West Africa. Future iterations of this research will investigate why some democracy activists inadvertently join coup movements while others knowingly "knock on the doors of the barracks" (Stepan 1988, 128). A related inquiry will examine how coup perpetrators mobilize civil society in order to justify and disguise the transgressive nature of their behavior.

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