

2018

# Egypt's Perilous Journey

David Nguyen

*Dominican University of California*

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# **Egypt's Perilous Journey**

An Analysis of Postmodern Egypt's Transition to Democracy

By  
David Nguyen

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science  
Department of Political Science & International Studies  
Dominican University of California  
5/1/2018

## Abstract

Citizens of the United States have been conditioned to believe that rule by democracy is the most free and fair method of governing. If we hold this to be true, I inquire: why do some postmodern Arab states appear resistant to the spread of democracy within government? In order to fully evaluate the merits of a democratic form of government, it is important to analyze the obstacles that hinder its success. Within this research, the gap that I have identified concerns how the overall quality of a nation's economy affects its ability to transition to democracy in the Middle East region. I hypothesize that Arab nations facing economic struggle are less likely to experience a smooth transition to democracy. My initial argument contended that an overall decrease in citizen satisfaction can sometimes result from a diminished economy, potentially leading to lowered motivation and lessened democratic participation. However, after studying Egypt's economy, I now argue that the Egyptian military's heavy-handed involvement in the government is the more prominent inhibitor of democratization in Egypt. The technique that I employ in my research is the case- study method, focusing on Egypt. Egypt possesses a weak economy and has experienced a rocky changeover to democracy, making it highly suitable for this study. The case study method is preferable because it provides for one the ability to take a holistic approach, and delve deeply into the country under investigation. This narrative analysis of Egypt draws from history, anthropology, economics, sociology, and political science. Additionally, I rely on other data sources, like Country Watch, in order to identify the patterns within the Egyptian economy and to determine how they affect the quality of its transitioning democracy.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In the process of writing this paper I have received support and encouragement from many different people, allowing me to retain my focus and motivation as I worked through this project. I would like to primarily thank my parents for their guidance and inspiration that they offered over the course of these past few months. Additionally, I would like to thank Dominican University's political science department faculty, all of whom have aided me greatly in the research and fine tuning of my senior thesis. Moreover, the friendly staff at the Archbishop Alemany Library have been a great help to me in their generous offering of resources and time. Lastly, I would like to extend my thanks to the other members of my Senior Seminar class, who have been with me throughout both the challenging and enjoyable moments of this final project.

## **Getting to Know Democracy and Egypt**

Western scholars have long contended that rule by democracy is the most free and fair method of governing. If this is truly the case, I inquire: why do some postmodern Arab states appear resistant to the spread of democracy? If the democratic ideals that we, as citizens, ascribe value to are as advantageous as we claim, it would appear contradictory that certain nations face such great opposition in their transition to this form of government. This topic is of significant importance to the area of political science, and to democratic societies in general, as it allows us to fully gauge the merits of a democratic republic. In order to observe how effective democracy is, it is necessary to identify its shortcomings. A significant portion of citizens in developed nations live under democratic rule, and without this analysis of when, and how democracy succeeds, it can be difficult to improve upon it.

Understanding the differences in mindset between successful and unsuccessful democratic transitions is a key step in creating lasting reform to remedy the issues that ail the unsuccessful states. The completion of this study attempts to identify the primary obstacles that stand in the way of democratization, and hopefully could influence the way that both humanitarian workers and citizens of the Arab world approach the push for democracy in these regions. The literature demands more attention as it pertains to the Middle East and the relationship between the quality of a nation's economy and the impact it has on the transition to democracy in the Middle East region. This area of study still contains important topics left to analyze within this region and I argue that this factor has the potential to be a significant influence on democratization. I agree with the majority of other authors that Arab nations facing economic struggle are less likely to experience a smooth transition to democracy. My initial

hypothesis was that an overall decrease in citizen satisfaction can often result from a diminished economy, potentially leading to an increased focus by the incumbent government to restructure the economic sector. I reasoned that, this can lead to government shifting its focus away from democratic reform toward economic structuring, in an attempt to appease the population and hold onto power. After completing my analysis, I later reached the conclusion that the Egyptian government's close relationship and historical ties to the Egyptian armed forces are the more relevant and prominent inhibitor of democratization. The technique that I employ in my research is the case- study method, focusing on Egypt. Since the ousting of Mubarak during the Arab Spring in 2011, Egypt has struggled with a weak economy and as a result, experienced a rocky transition from authoritarianism to democracy. The case study method is preferable because it provides for one the ability to take a holistic approach, and for another to delve deeply into the country under investigation. This narrative analysis of Egypt draws from the disciplines of history, anthropology, economics, sociology, and political science. Additionally, I rely on other data sources, like Country Watch, to identify the patterns within the Egyptian economy to determine how they affect the quality of its transitioning democracy.

This thesis begins with a literature review, detailing the opinions of scholars on this topic. The third section lays out the project's theoretical framework. This serves to elucidate the reasoning behind my argument in greater depth. A section on data collection and analysis is included next, in order to explain which techniques were implemented to gather data, before analyzing interdisciplinary information derived from various scholars. After completing the analysis, I examine the flaws in my research, and offer suggestions for future explorations on this topic.

This subject matter is particularly relevant, particularly when analyzed within the framework of the post- Cold War era. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the end of the Cold War, a tide of democracy swept over Eastern Europe. The clash of ideologies in this conflict ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, leaving one dominant mode of governing among the majority of developed countries. The collapse of Communism served as a symbolic victory for democracy, causing a cultural shift in regions such as Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East (JFK Library, 10). With the proliferation of democratic forms of government, it will be increasingly important to study the process of democratization, and help facilitate a smoother transition for nations looking to shift their governmental structure.

### **Historical Description of the Arab Spring**

This section provides background and establishes the context needed to understand my research on Egypt, and the political climate in the surrounding region. I focus on the Arab Spring in particular, as it has been a turning point for the region in a number of ways. In 2011, a tide of revolts swept across the Middle East, beginning with Tunisian Revolution. The democratic protests in Tunis sparked a trend that spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain, all of which experienced similar demonstrations and political revolution. Eventually, citizens in Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco, Jordan, joined the large- scale movement, with other Arab nations experiencing lesser democratic protests. The people of these states were primarily provoked to action by their ruling authoritarian governments (Ismael, 210). Many of these regimes were infamous for their innate political corruption, counts of human rights violations, and their gross misuse of power. The democratic movements in response to this varied from nation to nation, but often included public demonstrations, social media movements, civil disobedience, and occasionally riots and armed conflict. (Ismael, 214). Many of these Arab



citizens pursued rule by democracy, greater oversight in the area of human rights, free and fair elections, as well as economic freedom. The various Arab states experienced different results, but nearly all major participants saw significant change on some level (political, social, legal, etc.) In the case of Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak was ousted, arrested, and charged with the crimes that he had committed while in office for three decades (1991-2011). The government ended up being overthrown and replaced with a transitioning democracy (Malloch-Brown, 1).

### **Implications of the Arab Spring**

The Arab Spring brought about enormous waves of change, reverberating through the cultures, communities, societies, governments, and economies of most Arab states. After establishing the factual, historical narrative in relation to the events of the 2011 revolution, this segment analyzes how these events shaped the region into what it is today.

Some scholars describe the significance of the Arab Spring as a challenge to the status quo of oppression and subjugation, that defined many states in region for decades (Ismael, 375). In addition to the underlying motif of defiance and revolution that was apparent throughout the revolution, many other academics focus on the economic facet of the Arab Spring. The political movements unfolded differently in countries that were more prosperous than others, highlighting the disparity between rich and poor Middle Eastern countries. The political revolts across the Middle East served to further underline the distinction between these states, and shine a light on the wealth inequality that plagues some of these wealthier countries (i.e. Libya). With meaningful economic growth only being enjoyed by the upper-crust of Arab society, this perceived injustice created another social and economic change brought about by the Arab Spring (Malloch-Brown, 8).

In this post-revolution environment, Arab nations were also mired with questions of stability. In the case of Egypt, the democratic transition was initially met with adjoining liberalization efforts by members of the military. This was highly significant, as the military holds a significant portion of Egypt's political power. Despite these limited democratic changes supported by the Egyptian military, the success of this process will be decided by whether or not the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is willing to cede power to civilian and political leaders (Miller, 293). This conundrum raises another implication of the Arab Spring: the power-vacuum. Some states, such as Egypt, experienced these widespread power-vacuums after completing their political revolution. In these occurrences, the downfall of the status-quo government has created a potentially volatile situation where multiple groups are vying for power in certain states. Alongside the changes in political opinion, and the internal shifts in power brought about by the 2011 revolutions, some scholars point to legal changes brought about in specific Arab states. Sociologist Jasper Doomen is one of these individuals, holding that the existing set of laws in Middle Eastern nations will no longer suffice in the post-revolution era. In *Political Stability After the Arab Spring*, the writer argues that a new legal code will now be needed to govern the populace, and maintain their basic rights in this new democratic setting (Doomen, 399).

After progressing through a brief overview of Egypt's place in the middle east region, and introducing the core concepts necessary to grasp the subject matter of this study, we begin to analyze the existing literature on these topics. This upcoming section will build upon the general notions broached in the introduction, and will serve to better the observer's understanding of the theories within the current research on democratization.

## **Egypt's History**

A brief discussion on the general history of Egypt is also in order, as to give the observer an overlook at the social, cultural, and traditional norms of the country. This will be important as to aid the reader in understanding why certain facets of Egyptian life, politics, and governance exist in their current form. Although it would be impractical to give a thorough analysis of nation's vast and storied history, I look to present a glimpse of key time periods that have shaped Egypt into the country that it is today. The majority of these periods are drawn from Egypt's early archaic history, which serve to explain many of the hereditary and monarchical traits that can still be observed in the recent history of Egypt's national leadership. These early time periods also contain valuable information in regard to the nation's economic tendencies and practices. Additionally, this section helps to establish the historical basis for the influence of the powerful Egyptian military.

The state of Egypt is estimated to be established in what is referred to as the Early Dynastic period, from C.3100-2636 B.C. This period saw the creation of two separate kingdoms by nomadic stone age people, residing in the area that would eventually become present-day Egypt. In roughly C.3300, King Menes, leader of the southern kingdom, leads a campaign that usurps the northern kingdom and merges the state of Egypt, becoming the nation's first monarch (Assman, 27).

Egypt continued development and expansion throughout the next several centuries, experiencing a length period of economic success and diplomatic peace. This era is often referred to as the Old Kingdom, and lasted from C. 2686-2181 B.C. With a healthy economy and no foreign enemies to threaten Egypt's borders, the country accrued a significant stockpile of capital and resources (History, 3). However, mismanagement of Egypt's wealth by the Pharaohs

and elites of the fifth and sixth dynasties led to the monarchy's war chests being significantly lightened by the end of the period, thanks in no small part to the national efforts to build the pyramids of Giza (Assman, 50).

One of the next periods of significance in Egypt's history is the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, often referred to as the Middle Kingdom. This period saw the rise of an assertive Egyptian foreign policy bent on expansion. Aggressive military action directed toward the southern border resulted in the colonization of Nubia, establishing Egypt's position as a dominant power in the region. In this way, Egypt cemented its place as a military force to be reckoned with in the north African territories (History, 4). The country's economic, military, and political characteristics mentioned in these epochs will become increasingly salient in the analysis portion of this thesis, where I explore Egypt's inherent traits that are potentially inhibiting its democratization.

To conclude this section, we advance forward into the modern era and briefly progress through some of Egypt's recent history as to place the 2011 Arab Spring in its proper context. In 1914 Egypt becomes a British protectorate after a lengthy, rocky relationship with the European power. In 1922 Egypt regains its independence through King Fuad I, but is still partially subject to British influence over the next three decades. Fast forward to 1953, Muhammad Najib takes office as the nation's president and Egypt is proclaimed to be a democratic republic. 1981 marks the beginning of the Mubarak presidency, with the executive office-holder limiting political freedoms, demonstrations, and protests, despite Egypt's status as a supposedly democratic nation. After decades of alleged human rights violations and interfering in national elections, President Mubarak eventually resigns in 2011 and relinquishes control of the country over to the army (BBC, 15).

## **Literature Review**

### **An Overview of Democratization**

Understanding this study requires a general knowledge of the modern Middle East region, but additionally, also mandates that the observer can comprehend the conceptual aspect of democratization. Democratization refers to the transition that nations undergo, as their system of government converts from a non-democracy to a democracy. This process is vast, and contains several working parts that meld together, in order to hypothetically form a working democracy. The process is also affected in numerous ways by different variables that can occur from country to country, with democratization being influenced either internally, externally, or both (Call, 135). In the spirit of practicality, this introduction will paint in broad strokes, identifying the most core pieces of democratization, and elaborating on the most common influencers of the democratization process. This section will present an overview of democratization in order to adequately familiarize readers who have no experience with the general subject. Additionally, the section utilizes of examples from instances of democratic transition from around the world, allowing both researchers and observers to consider the experiences of other regions, before examining the Arab world.

### **Components of Working Democracies**

As described by James Dobbins in *A Beginner's Guide to Nation Building*, democratization must fulfill certain key steps before the process is considered complete, and a working democracy is in place. The components to a successful democratization are detailed to be: the structuring of representative institutions, the drafting of a national constitution, the development of civil society, the creation of a free press, and the organization of free and fair

elections (Dobbins, 191). In addressing the significance of each element, representative institutions are necessary in order to ensure that the general public's interests are accounted for, and to act as a check on the executive branch's power to influence legislation. The creation of a written constitution is integral to the democratization process, as it allows for detailed the expression of the nation's values and creates a baseline measurement for future lawmaking.

As illustrated by Dobbins, the development of civil society takes place in the “resuscitating, fostering, and protecting,” of any citizens or interest groups that fall victim to violence. This level of oversight is required in order to ensure government accountability (Dobbins, 190). The creation of a press that is “free, independent, and professionally competent,” is essential to creating the informed and engage public that democratic societies rely on. Lastly, establishing free and fair elections are a cornerstone of the democratization process, as they allow citizens to select politicians who will lobby for their interests (Doomen, 50). Not only is this final component an important piece of democratization, it is especially valuable in the democratization of authoritarian regimes. This step introduces the element of competition to states that traditionally utilize a hegemon who is often impervious to challenge by rival actors (Donno, 703).

Conversely, Doh Chull Shin characterizes the democratization process by splitting it into two distinct pieces. Shin argues that in the modern era, democratization occurs both in individual citizens and in the larger political regime of a country. The author contends that democratization is more of a “multilayered phenomenon” than other scholars often care to admit (Shin, 327). Within this school of thought, a successful transition to a working democracy must be accompanied by change at both levels. Shin holds that there must be a shift in cultural beliefs and values at the individual level, moving toward democratic ideals and principles, alongside a shift

in leadership and policy at the political level. This change in government would often include the installation of elected officials and the drafting of legislation to reflect these same democratic ideals and principles. An example of such a principle could be the rejection of an authoritarian decision-making process, in favor of one that encourages participation, debate, and dissent (Shin 328).

Lastly, a working democracy also requires an independent judiciary branch to maintain law and order within society. Additionally, judiciaries are used to conduct oversight on government officials, and are often responsible for assessing the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislative body. Güneş Murat Tezcür details these aspects of the judiciary body in democratic government, and specifies the importance of these institutions as they apply to Islamic societies. Tezcür discusses how judiciary systems foster democratic values, mentioning that “Islamic democracy does not offer any institutions to prevent the tyranny of the religious majority. Finally, judicial review that is sanctioned by democratically written constitutions, not subject to control by military elite, and provides open access to citizens, offers the best protection of individual and minority rights in Islamic societies (Tezcür, 480).

### **Influencers on Democratization**

The process of democratization is dynamic. No two nations experience completely identical transitions, and not all nations are successful in their adjustment. These influencers can primarily be broken up into internal and external elements, affecting the country in question from the inside or the outside. External influencers on democracy include relationships with other nations, international economies, or global organizations that the state in question belongs to (Mansfield, 137). For example, outside security threats to a nation have been theorized to affect the democratization process. However, other scholars pointed out that having settled borders and

strong relations with neighboring countries does not always guarantee a successful democratic transition (Oswiak, 717).

Foreign aid plays another external role in the fostering of democracy in some authoritarian regimes. According to Joseph Wright, this element possesses the capability to enhance democracy where it is prevalent (Wright 522). Internal elements can often include support for pro-democracy movements within a state's population. For this reason, survey data is sometimes utilized by researchers who are looking to measure the general public's sentiments toward democracy. This is done in order to gauge the viability of democratization in a region (Shin, 239). In addition to this, economic circumstance has often been considered in ascertaining when democratization succeeds. Take Prussia for instance, with political economists questioning whether or not landholding inequality had damaged the democratization process in the German state (Ziblatt, 610). Though this link between economics and democratization has been studied in the past, I maintain that there is a gap in the literature on how this link has specifically manifested in post revolution Egypt, as there has not been much time to study this relationship.

### **Consequences of Democratization**

Though the democratization process is described as a transition, it is not necessarily a fixed set of steps, leading to an idyllic result. For example, in South Korea, a successful democratization that ended with a functional republic, still continued to encounter serious problems in the areas of partisanship and politics, affecting the quality of Korea's democracy. This goes to show that even when the process is "completed," many nations still experience obstacles in governing (Shin, 71). Mexico offers a more extreme example of this phenomena, often being criticized for the internal violence and limited freedoms that ail the quality of its democracy, despite decades of transitional efforts. Even when accounting for Mexico's



reintroduction of a new constitution on their road to democracy, and the creation of new political parties to add greater diversity of ideas within governments, the nation continues to be hampered by issues of crime and violence. These internal problems serve to degrade the quality of Mexico's democracy (Ackerman, 10.) Conversely, it is worth mentioning that some democratic transitions *are* swift and smooth. Take Spain's usage of "protodemocratic elements within government" and allies within the Catholic church in order effectively transition to a relatively high-quality democracy. Specifically, Spain's efficient updating of laws and institutions necessary for democracy helped to usher in this new form of government with relative ease, (Hipsher, 287).

Not only does this process not necessarily have a designated start and end point, but scholars are quick to point out that the transition is not only linear. *Inequality, Democratization, and De-Democratization* observes that some governments have been observed to transition into a democratic form of government, before reverting back to their original form of ruling (Tilly, 37). In addition to the effects that follow successful democratization, there are also consequences of failure to democratize. Certain researchers have contended that some nations that falter in their transition process are highly likely to engage in civil war, as a result of their weaker state institutions (Narang, 357). Such consequences are important to keep in mind, as I examine the full scope (and potential aftermath) of Egypt's democratic transition.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Argument**

I argue that the mismanagement of the economy by the Egyptian Government and the subsequent raises in taxes to pair with nation-wide inflation have caused President Sisi to fall out

of favor with the Egyptian people. This falling out has led to a distaste for government in recent years and has thus detracted from the overall quality of Egypt's democracy, in terms of constitutional liberalism. Without the favor and support of the people, the government is forced to focus on economic reforms, which explains the state's resistance to political reforms and instituting of more democratic practices. Essentially, the poor state of the national economy has placed massive pressure on the Egyptian Government to reform the economy, forcing political and democratic improvements to be placed on the backburner.

For this reason, it would logically follow that Egypt's government would have a vested interest in repairing its malnourished economy, rather than enhancing its democratic institutions. I take this stance because in my study of similar historical cases, I have observed that economic discontent within a nation's populace can have the potential to incite a change in the status quo. These body paragraphs point to excerpts Ziblatt, and Zakaria, used for their research on instances of successful and unsuccessful democratization. I believe that this research on Egypt is significant in its subject matter, seeing as Egypt resides in a region that has been a hotbed for political change in recent years, as seen in the literature regarding the Arab Spring. I chose to study Egypt's democratization process specifically because I find that Egypt contains several cultural, historical, and social traits that are prevalent in several Middle Eastern societies. In this way, I argue that any conclusions made by this research are applicable to other countries that are attempting to make a political transition within this highly dynamic region. I discuss these broad Middle Eastern traits further in my section on the debate surrounding Egypt's democratic transition.

## **Method (Data Collection and Analysis)**

### **Case- Study Method**

This long- term study of the Egyptian Government and its people will most likely to be the most effective method because I am looking to explain the behavior of this group as a whole, and am less interested in the behavior of the individuals in the group. I use other democracies as references in my research, but I am primarily interested in a small number of these references, which I examine in detail. Although there are nations in Asia and Latin America that have failed to democratize and also require the attention of scholars, I believe that the sometimes unpredictable and volatile nature of postmodern revolution in the Middle East demands immediate inquiry.

### **Information Analyzed**

As mentioned before, the sample that I study is the entirety of the Egyptian Government and leadership over the course of the Arab Spring and onward. My primary method of collecting my data is to build off the work of others, as the practitioners of the case study method often do. I have read analyses of the state of Egypt and its budding democracy, as well as articles pertaining to its economy in order to determine the related nature of these two elements.

Additionally, I have done research on sites like Country Watch in order to gain an up to date overview of the state, and view economic trends with the hopes of understanding the patterns of the Egyptian economy and how it pertains to the quality of its democracy, in terms of constitutional liberalism. This narrative analysis of Egypt draws from scholarly works in the disciplines of history, anthropology, economics, sociology, and political science. As I draw on these works, I compare Egypt's economic trends/its growth and wane of constitutional

liberalism, to a handful of select democratic nations. In my research, I also look at the state of those economies and the qualities of their democracies in order to establish whether there is any correlation or causation between these two factors. Reliability and validity will be achieved by my use of peer-reviewed sources within my work.

## **The Debate Surrounding Egypt's Transition**

The various lenses that examine this concept include studying democracy's sustainability and ability to last in Egypt, as well as the generation of support for democracy and the general promotion of it in Egypt. For this concept, I also discuss the cultivation of it in Egyptian culture by American and other western influences. In conjunction with this, it is also important to study participation and engagement via voting to be able to gauge the amount of time and effort the people invest into their political system. Ensuring that races are competitive will also be important, as we observe who runs, and who wins.

Another topic that I discuss within my relevant body of literature is the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. In my research paper, the specific facets of this political revolt are of great significance, seeing as this event was the boiling point in the push for Egyptian democracy. The 2011 Egyptian Revolution essentially branches off a larger topic, which is the Arab Spring. The 2011 series of uprisings explains the motivations of the Egyptian people as they pushed for democracy so intensely. For this reason, discussion on the Arab Spring extends past my introduction, and is mentioned further in my literature review.

Other concepts that are of great significance include the military and their influence on Egypt's political system, along with the part that they played in the most recent uprising. They are a major institution in the both the revolts that have taken place, as well as the installment of

democracy afterward. Along with this, the hereditary- style of rule that has dominated Egyptian politics will also be crucial in understanding how their political system once operated, and why it needed to change.

### **Social Media and Egypt's Democratization**

The academic debate in this first group of literature covers a less discussed facet of the Egyptian Revolution. "Media, Cultural Consumption and Support for Democracy in Post-Revolutionary Egypt" by Mazen Hassan and "The Revolution Might Be Tweeted but the Founding Will Not Be: Arendt and Innis on Time, Authority, and Appearance" by Catherin Frost, both tackle the subject of social media and the role that it played in the revolution leading in Egypt's attempt at democracy. Understanding this is highly important, because if social media played a palpable role in the attempted installment of Egyptian democracy, some scholars theorize that it could aide democratization in other Arab states. My thesis demands that I understand what *inhibits* democratization, but conversely, it still benefits me to understand what *enhances* it in order to search for the absence of these phenomena in my study.

The debate here focuses on how influential social media was in the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Mazen's camp claims that social media was a key part of the Egyptian cultural composition, which allowed the revolution to happen. He states that while there may have been speedbumps in the use of this technology, it was still vastly superior to the mainstream media sources that many researchers had hypothesized would play a larger role. Mazen states that social media generated significant amounts of support for democracy, seen in voter participation, and easily outperformed its mainstream media counterpart (Mazen, 80). This is enough to warrant its use in the future and acclaim it as a key part in the regime change, according to Mazen.

On the other hand, Frost argues that social media produced a number of hiccups in the revolution, and while it was at least able to capture the public's attention, it is not prepared to be a working facet of democratization. Frost states that the death narratives that made their way to the internet negatively affected the image of the revolution, and the personalized nature of social media often garbled the overall message of the uprising (Frost, 175). While this does not quite outweigh the role that it played in acquiring salience for the movement, it is still valid criticism of an imperfect platform.

### **U.S. Influence on Egypt's Democratization**

The next two sources that share a similar topic are "Democratic Dreams Neglected in the Land of the Pharaohs: US Democracy Assistance in Egypt" by Barbara Rieffer-Flanagan and "Egypt and the Middle East: Democracy, Anti-Democracy, and Pragmatic Faith" by Matthew Crippen. Both of these sources examine the United States' relationship with Egypt since the revolution, and analyze the actions by the Obama Administration in order to determine whether or not the U.S. has been effective in its promotion of democracy to Egypt. These sources share more common ground than that of the last debate, but still differ in small ways.

Flanagan is hyper-critical of the Obama administration, citing statistics that display Egypt's abysmal 5.5/10 score by Freedom House, and states that the enormous amount of resources that the U.S. is putting into democracy related education and training in Egypt has relatively nothing to show for it, in terms of improvement in the fields of liberty and human rights. Flanagan states that the efforts of the Obama Administration were comparable, and possibly even inferior to those of the Bush Administration (Flanagan, 433).

Though Crippen admits that the Obama Administration's rhetoric and approach to Egyptian relations has fallen short, he takes a different approach in that he still puts his faith in U.S. and other leaders in democratic nations stating that that, "A respectful dialogue in which people from both regions strive to understand conditions giving rise to certain social practices would be more productive than morally superior attitudes, and help all to see areas where their respective cultures could be improved" (Crippen, 282). He also cites the shortcomings and human rights violations that the Egyptian Government has committed despite U.S. engagement, but believes that without his aforementioned dialogue, Egypt will never be able to overcome its cultural factors that are preventing it from being a sustainable democracy.

### **Inherent Obstacles to Democratization in the Middle East**

The following trio of articles engage a similar concept. "Sustainable Democracy and the Paradox of the Arab Spring: The Egypt Experience" by Etemike Laz and "Democracy and Islamist Violence: Lessons from Post- Mubarak Egypt" by Jerome Drevon examine the undeniable constants of Middle East society, and create an argument pertaining to how and if democracy will survive as it struggles against these elements, not limited to: religiosity, monarchies, military, and fundamentalism.

The first two scholars agree that many concepts within these pillars run counter to democratic beliefs, and that truly independent democracy may never form so long as there are such significant influencers, but they take slightly different approaches in their remedy to this issue. Laz calls for the developing of a framework that will restructure and organize religious, fundamentalist, and other facets of Arab society without doing away with them, in order to separate the democratic government from these matters and create a body of government that is truly independent and beyond the reach of outside forces.

On the other hand, violence by radical Islamist groups is the key factor that is preventing an independent democracy from developing, and Islamist groups that have opted to de-radicalize and begun to adopt less-extreme policies, often eventually opt to join the political process in order to be heard and voice their principles (Drevon, 2016). This participation is an important mean of measuring a quality democracy, and Drevon's de-radicalization approach appears to be more substantive and detailed than that of Laz. Samuel Huntington's "A New Era in Democracy" reinforces the concrete role that these pillars of society play in certain African countries. Huntington is of the belief that democratization will not be carried out as long as these institutions stand. Among these specific institutions, Hunington identifies personal dictatorships, militarism, regimes, and one- party systems to be particularly problematic, (Huntington, 110).

### **Military Influence on Egypt's Democratization**

Without its own grouping, "Commanding Democracy in Egypt: The Military's Attempt to Manage the Future" by Jeff Martini, argues why the military has elected to pull the political strings from backstage, rather than take office themselves.

According to the study, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) manipulates seats in the Egyptian Parliament to appoint many military officials, and reducing the number of civilian governors in favor of former military and security officers. It has also artificially imposed a security state in order to keep control of Egyptian society. This was more direct governing than the author had initially hypothesized, but this was still somewhat of a backseat role, seeing as the SCAF has shown no interest in hold executive office.



## **Resistance to Democratization on Account of Hereditary Rule**

Also without a counterpart, “A New Generation of Autocracy in Egypt” by Jeff Martini explores why hereditary success was such a staunch part of the executive branch in the Mubarak era, arguing that hereditary success was supported by Egyptian leaders due to the fact that continuing the family lineage supports the current office-holders, and because the current power of Egypt's lead party allowed them to change election policy to suit themselves. It also played to the collective benefit of other ranking officials in power, according to Martini.

## **Egypt's Slow Transition**

One last school of thought looks to explain the slow-moving nature of Egypt's democratization in another way. “Democracy's Long Haul” by David Brooks details the gradual progress that it takes to create lasting democratic institutions. Brooks states that when it seems that democracy has failed, it may just be taking a long time. As an example, Brooks mentions that Europe underwent a democratic revolution which collapsed and ended with violence, and many people of the time thought that this marked the final try for democracy in Europe, but in a few decades, had moved on to making lasting reform (Brooks, 2).

“The Future of Freedom” by Fareed Zakaria also adds to this discussion concerning the lethargic pace of democracy, attributing it to the fact that democracy's success can be directly tied to other factors, such as the economic wellbeing of a state. “The simplest explanation for a new democracy's political success is its economic success- or to be more specific, high per capita national income” (Zakaria, 69). Although this mention of economy draws closer to the core of my hypothesis, Zakaria does not specifically tie this link to the Middle East region.

### **Egypt's Support for Democratic Governance Among Poor Citizens:**

In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center titled “Democratic Values in Egypt”, researchers observed growing trend among the Egyptian populace. Pew reports that approximately sixty percent of Egyptian citizens believe that democracy is preferable to other kinds of government, but support for this change is diminishing (Pew, 10). The research project examines Egypt’s democratic institutions, surveying citizens to gain an understanding of the public’s interest in the different pieces of this emerging government. These institutions included the judiciary system, the election process, the media, the national economy, and more. The Pew Center’s results eventually concluded that the majority of citizens placed great significance on these democratic institutions, and believed them to be important to Egypt’s future (Pew, 12). Additionally, this is one of the only sources I have found that cites the economy as a factor in Egypt’s slow democratization effort.

The team of Pew researchers describe the economy to be a potential factor in Egypt’s democratization process, stating that, “Beyond these political measures, poorer Egyptians show a greater inclination towards a strong leader. A majority (55%) of low-income Egyptians think a leader with a strong hand is the best way to solve problems, while only 39% of high-income Egyptians agree” (Pew, 12). This idea that political, democratic change may be taking a backseat to the increasing need for economic reform provides support for my initial hypothesis, predicting that Arab nations facing economic struggle are less likely to democratize. However, this economic link was not identified to be the primary cause of Egypt’s failure to smoothly transition into a democratic form of government. Additionally, I found this point raised by the Pew researchers to be fairly underexplored, as they attributed this economic link to be simply another contributing factor in the Egyptian populace’s desire for strong leadership. Where I

initially viewed this connection between Egypt's national economy and Egypt's democratic transition to be the lead factor in its inability to fully democratize, the Pew Research Center describes the link to be simply another sign that many Egyptian citizens are in favor of strong leadership. Because the research team identifies this yearning for centralized power in government to be the main impediment to democratization, I maintain that the gap in the literature that I previously identified is still valid.

### **Restate Gap in Literature**

Within the literature that I have read and analyzed, only one of the sources specifically touch on the economic turmoil that Egypt has faced in recent years, and whether or not it has affected their sluggish democratic reforms, and limited improvement in terms of human rights. At the time of this study, it has only been 7 years since the Egyptian revolution. Due to the brevity of this time period, there hasn't been enough time to thoroughly examine this relationship between Egypt's weakened economy, and its slow-moving democratic transition. This is the main gap that I have discovered in my review of the literature. The studies I have examined take in to account social media, military influence, past regimes, cultural obstacles, and outside violence as detractors from Egypt's democratic efforts, but I have not yet found a scholarly source that cites Egypt's deteriorating economic status as a possible explanation for its unwillingness to reform. The Pew Research study is one of the only resources I have found that specifically accounts for the Egyptian economy, and although they acknowledge the economy to be a potential factor, the researchers do not identify this to be the main issue responsible for Egypt's sedated democratic transition. I believe that this is a possible oversight by researchers, because the economy can often play a very important role in the voting habits demonstrated by voters and the public policies passed by lawmakers.

After reviewing the literature, I plan to look at studies of other countries that weigh the economy as a factor when measuring the success of democratization in those states. With these results, I will then assess the current state and trends of the Egyptian economy, in comparison to that of other nations in the region. The figures on the Egyptian economy will be compared against experiments that rank and describe the success of Egypt's democratization. This will allow me to examine if there is a causal relationship between Egypt's high inflation rates/downtrodden economy and their inability to enact lasting reforms or improve the quality of their democracy (in terms of voter participation, voice, freedoms.)

### **Case Study Results**

Upon concluding my review of the literature pertaining to Egypt's democratization process, I have arrived at the conclusion that my initial hypothesis was flawed. Within the above sources that I have analyzed, I have found little evidence to support the idea that Egypt's slow transition to a democratic form of government can be primarily attributed to its ailing economy. As I progressed through the various studies and journal articles available, I examined literature on Egypt's democratization effort analyzed in the context of several different potential influencers. Among these potential influencers on the democratization process, I analyzed Egypt's existing military influence, adherence to hereditary rule, relationship with the United States, and more.

In my assessment of these numerous and varied influencers on Egypt's democratic transition, one particular factor stood out among the rest, proving to be far more dominant in the prevention of democracy in Egypt. The Egyptian military's powerful influence on the country's political system was a reoccurring theme that consistently appeared across several sources as I conducted my study. Even within the separate groupings of my selected content, I continued to

find references to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces' ability to dictate political action within government. This has proved to be the most convincing and thoroughly supported explanation as to why post-revolution Egypt has struggled to democratize. In my analysis, I have ventured upon a number of key sources that point to Egyptian citizen's desire for strong leadership in government. This literature by Laz, Martini, Taylor, the Pew Research Center, and the Country Watch databases discuss the ever-present role of the SCAF in Egypt's political realm, and combine to create a substantial amount of evidence in support of this alternate theory. Rather than the diminished economy being to blame for Egypt's democratization struggles, the majority of the evidence in my analysis points to the Egyptian Armed Forces' stranglehold on political power in the country as the primary influencer on this transition. This issue is exacerbated by a desire for stronger, centralized leadership, exhibited by certain members of Egyptian society.

In addition to the section of content devoted to exploring the military's influence on democracy, multiple other content groupings point to the Armed Forces' disproportionate amount of domestic power. For example, the content grouping in my analysis that examines the inherent obstacles to democracy in the Middle East contains several references to this imbalance of power. This group of sources assesses the feasibility of democracy in nations such as Egypt, based on certain constant elements that exist within these regions. For instance, Etemike Laz explores Egypt's democratization from a historical standpoint, taking into account certain integral pillars that have long-existed in the region, including religiosity, monarchies, and fundamentalism.

In Laz's analysis, he mentions military influence to be a significant inhibitor to democracy, specifically included among the other "pillars" that stand in the way of democratization. Laz specifically states that, "The Egyptian military is widely respected by the

general populace and deeply interwoven into the domestic economy. The military has been a part of the history of governance in Egypt. They had in 1951 ousted the post-imperial government. Thereafter the military has been involved in Egyptian politics. After the revolution, the transition was managed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces(SCAF) composed of senior military officers who sought to protect its economic and political interest. SCAF further continued to interfere in many aspect of the transition” (Laz, 49). Etemike Laz’s evaluation of the Egyptian military highlights the SCAF’s persistent role of power within Egypt’s political sphere. Additionally, Laz points to evidence suggesting that the Egyptian military’s reach is so extensive, that the SCAF’s domestic power has also managed to influence Egypt’s national economy. Most importantly, Laz emphasizes that the Egyptian military is in a position that allows them to further their own interests, without the threat of dissent or challenge. In addition to this, Laz identifies this behavior by the SCAF to be reoccurring, observing this trend in 1951-over sixty years before the Arab Spring.

Upon reading this excerpt, I was forced to reconsider my original hypothesis. Laz’s argument successfully identified and explained the intertwined nature of militarism and governance in Egyptian politics. The author highlights the Egyptian military as a main influencer on the nation’s democratization process, and then supports the claim by providing historical evidence. Moreover, Laz’s analysis of the SCAF’s ability to affect the Egyptian economy is also highly significant in determining the plausibility of my thesis statement. My initial hypothesis asserted that the weakened state of the Egyptian national economy was to blame for Egypt’s slow transition to democracy, but upon reading this source, I was presented with an alternative explanation. I have now been offered convincing evidence, lending credence to my growing suspicion that *even if* the national economy is a relevant factor in the obstruction of Egypt’s

democratization, something larger may be influencing the economy. If this is the case, then my initial hypothesis pertaining to the Egyptian economy is incomplete at best, having now learned that Egypt's economic struggle may merely be a mere symptom of its larger, overarching problem of military influence in government.

Another group of content that directly references the domestic influence of the Egyptian military is "Egypt's Support for Democratic Governance Among Poor Citizens," located at the end of my analysis. This section contains the one of the only sources in my analysis that specifically mentions the role of the Egyptian economy in the democratization process. Upon my early reading of this source, it seemed as though the study conducted by the Pew Research Center provided strong evidence in favor of my original hypothesis. In particular, the latter portion of my thesis statement emphasizes how the Egyptian government's efforts to reform the struggling national economy are detracting from their ability to focus on the political institutions needed to conduct a smooth democratic transition. The study conducted by Pew directly connects to this, stating that, "Poorer Egyptians are more willing to give up good democratic rule for a stronger economy. Only 31% of lower-income Egyptians say that they would chose a good democracy, with 66% wanting a stronger economy instead. High-income Egyptians are split on whether they prefer good democracy or a strong economy. Additionally, Egyptians who opposed the 2013 military takeover (56%) are more inclined toward a good democracy than those who supported it (44%)" (Pew, 12).

Although it would seem that these survey results by the Pew Research team serve to strengthen the plausibility of my original hypothesis, further analysis led me to believe that the results may better support my alternate, military hypothesis. Even though the Pew Research team partly attributes Egypt's inability to foster democratic values to this economic explanation, the

national economy is only treated as a symptom of a larger issue. The researchers observe this economic obstacle to be part of an overarching desire for a strong leader within the Egyptian populace. Pew reports that the number of Egyptian citizens who are in favor of democratic rule is actually comparable to the number of citizens who are in support of a more powerful, centralized government.

### Support for Democracy vs. Strong Leader

Total %	Democratic Government	Strong Leader	Don't Know
<i>Military removal of Morsi</i>			
Favor	42	55	3
Oppose	68	30	2
<i>View of Sisi</i>			
Favorable	48	47	4
Unfavorable	57	38	5
<i>Muslim Brotherhood</i>			
Favorable	60	35	5
Unfavorable	46	50	4

Source: Pew Research Center, 2014

In this way, the researchers posit the argument that a large percentage of Egypt's citizens are in favor of a stronger government because of their desire for political stability, national security, and a working economy. As a result of this desire for centralized government, (offered



by the SCAF military officials,) democratization has proved to be an arduous task at best. This runs counter to my initial hypothesis that the economic troubles of the Egyptian people are primarily to blame in the country's failure to transition. I was again forced to consider the possibility that Egypt's economic troubles are simply a part of a larger issue, involving the military's ever present role in government. When considering the interwoven nature of the Supreme Council on Armed Forces and the Egyptian government, combined with this outspoken push for strong, centralized government among Egyptian citizens, I began to shift my focus toward a stronger influencer on democratization. Lastly, the Pew study concludes this section by clarifying that this political opinion has a tendency to manifest itself in particular Egyptian demographics, stating that, "Preference for a democratic government versus a strong leader is related to views of the 2013 military removal of President Morsi, as well as attitudes towards the Muslim Brotherhood and Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Egyptians who favor the 2013 overthrow of the government and have a favorable view of Sisi also show greater support for strong leadership" (Pew, 14).

Unsurprisingly, the portion of my case study devoted to studying the Egyptian military's effect on the democratization process also added to the strength of this alternate, military hypothesis. In "Commanding Democracy in Egypt: The Military's Attempt to Manage the Future," Jeff Martini and Julie Taylor discuss the specific ways in which the SCAF has inhibited democratization in Egypt. In particular, Martini highlights the Egyptian military's efforts to encourage growth among their allies in government, while working to suppress the opinions of rival groups. The article states, "The SCAF has carefully directed the course of Egypt's transition by empowering political forces that do not oppose its dominance or are too vulnerable to try. It has courted two main partners: the established opposition parties, such as the WAFD Party,

which have criticized the military on certain policies but have demonstrated loyalty by not questioning its right to rule, and, more important, the Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, who share the SCAF's desire to limit the growth of liberal forces" (Martini, 130). The Egyptian military's political behavior as described by Martini, should not be taken lightly. The SCAF's efforts to stifle the elements of dissent, debate, and competition needed by democratic regimes, have dealt an enormous blow to Egypt's transition. Moreover, the Egyptian Armed Forces' use of powerful, fear-inspiring, organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to cement their position in government, has been incredibly detrimental to Egypt's budding democracy. Through this strategy, the SCAF has denied Egypt access to a political system that allows for the freedom of expression. After taking note of the SCAF's ever-present role in government, combined with their ability to maintain control of political power, aided by a significant push for strong leadership by some Egyptian citizens, the military-influence hypothesis has the makings of a thorough, persuasive argument.

As I began to recognize a trend in the content that I analyzed, evidence supporting this particular military hypothesis continued to mount. My original, economic hypothesis was tested further as I began to conduct research on the Country Watch databases. In order to examine the plausibility of my initial hypothesis, I referenced Egypt's economic report on the site's database in order to gain a better understanding of how that national economy's condition progressed or faltered since the 2011 revolution. I then compared these statistics to a Freedom House report featured on Country Watch, quantifying political freedom and civil liberty within Egypt. I referred to this freedom ranking in order to gauge Egypt's success (or failure) in its democratization efforts in the post Arab Spring years. I used these two specific reports an attempt to find a potential correlation between Egypt's economic turmoil and its inability to

successfully democratize, but after comparing the data, I found no such relationship. In fact, Country Watch reports that Egypt's economy has seen a moderate amount of reform and improvement in the years since the Arab Spring, enjoying multiple periods of steady macroeconomic growth (Country Watch, 5). This economic growth however, was not met with any sort of reciprocation in Egypt's liberal, democratic values. For example, Egypt's national economy improved significantly in 2015, with Country Watch reporting that growth in tourism, foreign investment, and GDP has taken place in the nation consistently throughout a three- year period, (Country Watch, 1). Despite these partially successful efforts to revitalize the economy, Egypt's freedom house rating remained unchanged in 2015 and 2016.

The Freedom House score ranges from 1-7, 1 being a nation with complete political freedom, and 7 being a nation with virtually none. Egypt's abysmal 5.5 rating brands it as a country labeled "not free" under this index, and is indicative of their failure to establish the specific institutions necessary for a working democracy. Regardless of whether or not the Egyptian national economy had improved or worsened during that period, Egypt's year-to-year Freedom House rating of 5.5 remained static. Despite experiencing palpable amounts of improvement in the economic sector during certain years, Egypt's score saw no change. Not only did Egypt's score remain unaffected after a few years of moderate economic recovery, but it actually worsened in 2018. At the time of this study, Egypt sits at a 6/7 freedom house rating. Although the absence of a correlation does not eliminate the possibility that economy may be a lead factor in the Egyptian democratization process, my time on the Country Watch database did little to bolster my confidence in my original hypothesis.

## Conclusion

After reviewing the available evidence, I have reached the conclusion that my initial, economic hypothesis is far less supported, and far less convincing than this secondary, military hypothesis. This original economic hypothesis was only partially supported by one of my analyzed sources, and even within this study, the researchers downplayed the effects of the Egyptian national economy on the country's democratization process. Additionally, the source places a greater emphasis on the larger, more prominent issue of an underlying desire for powerful leadership among a large portion of Egyptian citizens. This survey data by the Pew Research Center enhances the plausibility of my alternate hypothesis, predicting that Egypt's democratization efforts are chiefly stymied by the military's heavy-handed involvement in Egypt's political system.

This alternate hypothesis was further supplemented by my content grouping that studied the inherent obstacles to democratization, native to the Middle East region. This section identified a deep, historic relationship between the Egyptian Armed Forces and the national government. The interwoven nature of these two entities was observed to be clearly detrimental to the democratization process, as the SCAF's position of power in government consistently suppressed participation, discussion, and dissent, in favor of advancing its political and economic interests. Lastly, the content grouping on the Egyptian Armed Forces studies the military's effect on the democratization process, elucidating that the SCAF has empowered specific political entities, with the intent of maintaining total control of the Egyptian government. After consulting the Country Watch databases and finding little statistical correlation to support my initial prediction, it became even more evident that my original thesis statement required serious

reexamination, leading me to identify my alternate hypothesis as the more probable, and more thoroughly supported argument.

### **Weaknesses**

Potential weaknesses in the study include the fact that as I do my research on sites like Country Watch, these databases may not be able to account for the ever-changing, dynamic nature of the Middle East region. Although this is a reliable resource that is frequently updated, my subject matter focuses on events that are very recent. As a result of this, it is possible that there are long term influencers on the democratization process that have yet to appear, or to be accounted for on sites like Country Watch. For example, when I mention that the effects of Egypt's economic improvement in 2015 had no visible effect on Egypt's subsequent freedom score rating, it is entirely possible that there is a delay in these economic effects, and their impact on the democratization process may only be apparent in ten or twenty years. In this way, researchers may eventually discover the state of Egypt's national economy does indeed have a larger effect on the democratization process than I perceived. However, because I am interested in post- revolution Egypt, this is a weakness that I need to accept. Because of my selected topic, I am not able to observe economic reports from ten, or twenty years ago, as they would fall outside the scope of this post-revolutionary period. Despite this weakness, I contend that the evidence presented in my analysis still makes for a stronger argument that Egypt's military is to blame in their failure to democratize.

### **Benefits**

The social benefits for carrying out this type of study are immense, being that other young, budding democracies in the Middle East region will be able to look to a study of this kind

and see the roadblocks that await them in this post-revolution era, allowing them to prepare in advance. This could be very fruitful for countries undergoing mass- political change or large-scale democratic revolution, because it identifies the mistakes that have been made by Egypt, and allows them to avoid erring in the same way.

This could also change the viewpoints of the individuals within developed countries who look down upon, or do not understand people who have not yet achieved a working democracy that is strengthened by constitutional liberalism. This study would help to explain the obstacles holding these types of nations back, and remind members of fully democratic societies that we enjoy many benefits granted by our political system and economy that many others around the world do not. I believe that many citizens of democratic nations often overlook the rights, freedoms, and privileges that they enjoy. Moreover, I believe that exposing people to these studies can raise awareness about the somber reality that citizens of other nations face. This may create a sense of empathy and an alternate way to look at these struggling states, for those who do not view them in a favorable light.

### **Significance**

In addition to societal benefits, a study of this nature also contains the potential to change policies within multiple countries. The findings could alter the way that the Egyptian leadership manages its economy, possibly influencing it to impose fewer regulations in order to foster capitalist growth or inversely, to participate more directly with bailouts and stimulus packages.

This study also could modify foreign policy in the United States or abroad, causing ambassadors and other actors to change their objectives in their diplomatic discussions with Egypt in an attempt to improve the state of their democracy, based on the findings of a study of

this kind. For example, a U.N. ambassador working to establish a greater level of political freedom in Egypt could potentially read this study, and decide to shift their efforts from one issue area to another. Based on the findings of this analysis, the ambassador could hypothetically focus less on the developing Egypt's economic infrastructure, and more on the building of influential political coalitions that have the means to challenge the SCAF's place of power in government.

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