

**The Political Salience of Corruption:
The Politics of Corruption During the Arab Spring**

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Abstract

The central puzzle this thesis has sought to solve is: under what conditions does corruption become politically salient in an authoritarian regime? In order to solve this puzzle, this thesis first established criteria that could be used to evaluate and compare the political salience of corruption across cases. These criteria included the conception of corruption, the attribution of corruption, and the resonance of corruption. It is argued that when corruption is conceptualized as being unjust, when corruption is attributed to the regime or key individuals within the regime, and when grievances about corruption resonate with important actors, the political salience of corruption is high. This thesis subsequently argues that the overall level of corruption cannot account for the political salience of corruption. Indeed, as seen during the Arab Spring, countries such as Tunisia had been shown to have a comparative low level of corruption compared to countries like Morocco; nevertheless, corruption was much less salient in Morocco than it was in Tunisia. Ultimately, this thesis argues that variables that affect 1) how corruption is framed and; 2) how effectively corruption co-opts important actors plays a central role in explaining the political salience of corruption. The explanatory model presented in this thesis shows that the type of corruption and a series of variables that affect how corruption is framed, can account for the political salience of corruption.

Résumé

Le problème principal que cette thèse a cherché à résoudre est: en vertu de quelles conditions est-ce que la corruption déstabilise un régime autoritaire? Afin de résoudre ce problème, cette thèse a premièrement établi des critères qui pourraient être utilisés pour évaluer et comparer le potentiel déstabilisateur de la corruption d'un cas à l'autre. Ces critères incluent la conception de la corruption, l'attribution de la corruption, et la résonance de la corruption. C'est soutenu que lorsque la corruption est conceptualisée d'être injuste, lorsque la corruption est attribuée au régime ou à des personnes clés dans le régime, et lorsque des doléances au sujet de la corruption résonnent avec des acteurs importants, le potentiel déstabilisateur est haut. Ultérieurement, la thèse soutient que le niveau total de la corruption ne peut pas expliquer le potentiel déstabilisateur de la corruption, comme ce qui est démontré par le Printemps Arabe. En effet, les pays comme la Tunisie avaient été montrés d'avoir un niveau bas de corruption comparés aux pays comme le Maroc; néanmoins, comparé à la Tunisie, la corruption a été beaucoup moins déstabilisant en Maroc. En fin de compte, cette thèse soutient que les variables qui affectent 1) comment la corruption est conceptualisé et; 2) comment efficace la corruption coopte des acteurs importants jouent un rôle central dans l'explication du potentiel déstabilisateur de la corruption. Le modèle explicatif présenté dans cette thèse démontre que le type de corruption et un série de variables qui influent comment la corruption est conceptualisé, peut expliquer la potentiel déstabilisateur de la corruption.

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I would also like to thank all of my office-mates at ICAMES, who were always willing to help me procrastinate. Together, we survived floods, freezing temperatures, and everything else the ICAMES building could throw at us.

To my friends who have been scattered throughout Canada and the world, thank you for always making time to keep in touch. Despite time zone differences and oceans of separation, you've managed to remain a significant part of my life... Skype is an amazing thing! And finally, to my parents and brother, thank you for all of your support. Your encouragement and reassurance have helped me to persevere.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Puzzle of Corruption's Destabilizing Effect

The corruption of Arab autocrats and the prevalence of corruption within government institutions was a prominent grievance during the Arab Spring.¹ This is clearly evident in both attitudinal survey data as well as the prominence of corruption in the discourse of the demonstrators. In the Arab Barometer survey, respondents in Egypt and Tunisia were asked to indicate what they thought were the most important and second most important reasons for the protests.² As seen in Table 1, 63 percent of respondents from Tunisia and 73 percent of respondents from Egypt cited corruption as one of the top two most important reasons for the Arab Spring.³ Despite the centrality of corruption as a grievance during the Arab Spring, the role that corruption has played in generating opposition and creating instability is neither self-evident nor is it well understood. The central question that this thesis will seek to answer is: under what conditions does corruption become a politically salient issue in authoritarian regimes? In order to answer this overarching research question, there are two subsidiary questions that must be addressed.

First, how can the political salience of corruption be evaluated? Before the Arab Spring, the overwhelming majority of the literature on corruption in the Middle East – such as the literature on patronage, clientelism, and crony capitalism – had highlighted the

¹ The Arab Spring refers to a wave of massive antigovernment protests that occurred in the Arab world starting at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011. In the end, four longstanding authoritarian regimes were overthrown (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen), with others devolving into conflict. Syria, for example, devolved into an ongoing civil war, while demonstrations in Bahrain were violently crushed by the regime. Major, although less destabilizing protests, also broke out in Morocco, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Sudan.

² This included all respondents, not just the ones who participated in the protests. As such, the percentages in Table 1 represent the most important and second most important reasons for the protests according to all survey respondents.

³ In Egypt, opposition to Gamal Mubarak succeeding his father, President Hosni Mubarak, was also cited as a common grievance and reason for the protest.

stabilizing impact of these practices for authoritarian regimes. This literature did not examine the destabilizing effects of corruption, nor did it examine the degree to which corruption was a politically salient issue. In the wake of the Arab Spring, scholarly literature has begun to examine some of the more destabilizing effects that corruption can have in authoritarian regimes. However, while acknowledging the importance of corruption in destabilizing authoritarian regimes in the region, the role that corruption can play in undermining an authoritarian regime remains dramatically under conceptualized; vague references to grievances about corruption provide an insufficient explanation for the degree to which corruption is a politically salient and destabilizing issue. Therefore, this thesis will first more thoroughly conceptualize corruption as a grievance. By examining how corruption is framed and with whom corruption resonates, this thesis will establish some criteria that can be used to evaluate the degree to which corruption is a politically salient issue in an authoritarian regime across cases.

Table 1: Reasons for the Arab Spring Protests

	<u>Tunisia</u>		<u>Egypt</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Most Important Reason for Arab Spring				
Demand for improving the economic situation	751	63	649	54
Demands for civil and political freedoms	167	14	82	7
Demand authority not to be passed to Gamal Mubarak	—		94	8
Combat Corruption	202	17	352	29
Replace Incumbent Regime with an Islamic Regime	48	4	17	1
Oppose Pro-Western or Pro-Israel Policy	<u>1</u>	<u>≤1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>≤1</u>
Total	1169	100	1197	100
Second Most Important Reason for Arab Spring				
Demand for improving the economic situation	213	18	326	27
Demands for civil and political freedoms	348	30	119	10
Demand authority not to be passed to Gamal Mubarak	—		168	14
Combat Corruption	539	46	534	44
Replace Incumbent Regime with an Islamic Regime	56	5	38	3
Oppose Pro-Western Policy	<u>13</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	1169	100	1193	100

Source: Arab Barometer Survey, Wave II

Second, what factors explain the variation in the political salience of corruption? The degree to which corruption seems to have been a politically salient issue in the Arab world

does not appear to be a simple function of the level of corruption. Indeed, the countries where corruption has been a particularly prominent political issue do not have the highest level of corruption. An examination of corruption in Morocco and Tunisia clearly reveals the complexity of the relationship between the level of corruption and the degree to which corruption can undermine an authoritarian regime. As seen in Table 2, the two most widely used indicators of corruption both ranked Tunisia as being less corrupt than Morocco.⁴ In spite of being ranked as less corrupt than almost all of the other Arab states, corruption was a salient and clearly destabilizing issue in Tunisia. On the other hand, in spite of being ranked as one of the most corrupt Arab countries, corruption – while still a prominent political issue – has not generated the same level of anti-regime fervour in Morocco. Clearly, the degree to which corruption is a salient political issue is not a simple function of the level of corruption. This thesis will seek to elucidate the factors that affect the political salience of corruption.

Table 2: Corruption Indicators

	2010 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Score	2010 CPI Rank	2010 Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) – Control of Corruption Score	2010 WGI – Control of Corruption Rank (Percentile)
Tunisia	4.9	59 th / 178	-.15	54 th
Morocco	3.4	85 th / 178	-.18	53 rd
Egypt	3.1	98 th / 178	-.55	34 th

Note: Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index is a measure of corruption based on perceptions of corruption. It is an aggregate indicator that incorporates different sources of information on corruption, such as expert assessments and business opinion surveys. A country's score indicates the aggregate perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0-10, with 0 representing a country that is perceived as highly corrupt and 10 representing a country that is perceived as very clean. The World Bank Control of Corruption Score captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption. It is measured on a scale of -2.5 (very corrupt) to +2.5 (not corrupt).

Sources: Transparency International, 2010 Corruption Perception Index; World Bank, 2010 Worldwide Governance Indicators.

⁴ Tunisia was ranked as being significantly less corrupt according to Transparency International and only marginally less corrupt according to the World Bank.

Literature Review

Before outlining the central argument of this thesis, it is necessary to first review the literature relevant to this topic. There exist three bodies of literature pertaining to this topic. First, there is a large body of literature pertaining to corruption in the Middle East that predates the Arab Spring. The literature largely focuses on patronage and cronyism (some of which, but not all, may be corrupt). Second, there is a body of literature pertaining to framing effects and corruption. Finally, since the Arab Spring, there is an emerging – albeit small – body of literature on the destabilizing impact of corruption in authoritarian regimes. This section will briefly review these bodies of literature and will highlight the significant gaps within the literature that this research project will address.

Corruption and Authoritarian Stability in the MENA Literature

Between 1970 and the Arab Spring, authoritarian regimes in the Middle East were remarkably stable, seemingly resistant to the Third Wave of democratization. With scholars trying to look “beyond coercion”⁵ to explain the longevity of authoritarianism in the Arab world, corruption within Arab states – specifically the use of patronage and clientelism – became an important variable used to explain the longevity and durability of authoritarianism in the region. Much of this literature emphasized the patrimonial character of Arab states, with scholars of the region describing Arab politics as personalistic, informal, and corrupt. Much of this literature on patrimonialism attributed the importance of political patronage and personal ties to the political culture of the region. As such, much of it falls into the Orientalist tradition of scholarship on the Middle East, oversimplifying and essentializing

⁵ I. William Zartman. “Introduction.” In *Beyond Coercion Volume III: The Durability of the Arab State*. ed. Adeed Dawisha and I. William Zartman. (New York: Croom Helm, 1988).

Arab culture.⁶ Despite the essentializing nature of some of this scholarship, much of it provided valuable insight into the nature of authoritarian regimes in the region and how they have endured. In his seminal study on Morocco, for example, Waterbury showed how, by using political patronage to include previously excluded groups, the Moroccan monarchy successfully strengthened its political power.⁷ Many other scholars similarly highlighted the political utility of patrimonialism, clientelism, political patronage, patron-client relations, and corruption.⁸

By the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of neopatrimonialism was frequently being used to explain the dynamics of Arab politics. Neopatrimonialism refers to a situation wherein traditional and informal patrimonial rule becomes interwoven with the rational-bureaucratic structure of the modern state.⁹ The neopatrimonial character of Arab states became frequently cited as a factor that helps to explain the exceptional stability and longevity of authoritarian regimes in the region.¹⁰ Similarly, even the literature on rentier state theory, which emerged in the 1980s, continued to emphasize the importance of political patronage and neopatrimonialism; in addition to demonstrating how rentier wealth enhances the coercive apparatus of the state and changes the class structure of Arab societies, this

⁶ For example, while criticizing the references to political culture in works pertaining to patrimonialism in the Middle East, Lisa Anderson recognizes the “provocative” nature of the patrimonial literature that emphasizes the strategic use of political spoils. See Lisa Anderson, “The State in the Middle East and North Africa,” *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 1 (1987): 7-8.

⁷ John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful: the Moroccan Political Elite: a study in segmented politics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970),

⁸ See, for example, Clement Henry Moore, “Clientelist Ideology and Political Change: Fictitious Networks in Egypt and Tunisia,” in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London: Duckworth, 1977); Robert Springborg, “Patrimonialism and Policy Making in Egypt: Nasser and Sadat and the Tenure Policy for Reclaimed Lands,” *Middle East Studies* 15 (1979); Robert Springborg, “Sayed Bey Marei and Political Clientelism in Egypt,” *Comparative Political Studies* 12 (1979).

⁹ Rex Brynen, “The Neopatrimonial Dimension of Palestinian Politics,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 1 (1995): 25

¹⁰ See Jason Brownlee, “... And Yet They Persist: Explaining Survival and Transitions in Neopatrimonial Regimes,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, no. 3 (2002); Oliver Schlumberger, “Rents, Reforms, and Authoritarianism in the Middle East,” in *Dead Ends of Transition: Rentier Economies and Protectorates* eds. Michael Dauderstadt and Arne Schlidberg (Frankfurt: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, 2006).

literature showed how rentier wealth helped to bolster authoritarian regimes by sustaining patronage networks. The loyalty and political quiescence of both the masses and influential groups (such as Islamists, unions, or influential political actors) were purchased, through both the distribution of popular goods as well as the distribution of privileged economic rewards, respectively.¹¹

As many Arab states embraced political and economic liberalization in the 1990s and early 2000s, the literature that examined this liberalization process again highlighted the stabilizing function of corruption. Noting the proliferation of elections as many authoritarian regimes undertook controlled political liberalization, scholars noted how these elections – rather than merely providing a veneer of democratic legitimacy – actually aided in the distribution of patronage and therefore in the maintenance of authoritarianism. In her study of elections in Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt, Lust argues that elections facilitate a process she dubbed “competitive clientelism.” Elections reduce demand for change by providing “elites and their supporters an opportunity to compete over special access to a limited set of state resources that they can then distribute to their clients.”¹² Similarly, although mainly focusing on the role that political parties play mediating disputes between elites in authoritarian regimes such as Egypt, Brownlee also notes how ruling parties can provide a network where patronage is distributed.¹³ Blaydes also argues that elections have helped to provide elite unity and cohesion in Egypt. According to Blaydes, the rent-seeking elite in Egypt – which has emerged as key constituency in the

¹¹ See Michael Herb, “No Representation without Taxation? Rents, Development, and Democracy,” *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 3 (2005); Rex Brynen, “Economic Crisis and Post-Rentier Democratization in the Arab World: The Case of Jordan,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (1992).

¹² Ellen Lust, “Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East,” *Journal of Democracy* 20 no. 3 (2009): 122; See also: Ellen Lust-Okar, “Elections under authoritarianism: Preliminary lessons from Jordan,” *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (2006); Ellen Lust-Okar and Amaney Jamal “Rulers and Rules: reassessing the Influence of Regime Type on Electoral Law Formation,” *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 3 (2002).

¹³ Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 215

Mubarak regime – has been able to use elections as a mechanism of “resource allocation that minimizes the potential for destabilizing and distributional conflict.”¹⁴ Overall, in the wake of modest political liberalization, corruption was once again seen as a stabilizing factor; elections were used by regimes as a mechanism to distribute patronage to state elites, often organized in dominant political parties, by providing state elites with rent-seeking opportunities.

Like political liberalization, with many Arab states adopting neoliberal strategies of economic liberalization, the role that economic liberalization has played in providing opportunities for corruption has also been examined. Once again, corruption – often in the form of crony capitalism – was seen as a stabilizing byproduct of economic reform. King argues that “economic liberalization characterized by the distribution of patronage to economic elites and robust single-party institutional structures provided autocrats with resources to sustain authoritarianism in the MENA republics”¹⁵ Heydemann has similarly argued that, rather than serving as a destabilizing process, “selective processes of economic liberalization provides enhanced economic opportunities for regime supporters, reinforces the social base of authoritarian regimes, and mitigates pressures for comprehensive economic and social reforms.”¹⁶ Although economic liberalization is distinct from corruption and does not inherently lead to corruption, scholars such as King and Heydemann have noted the role that economic liberalization has played in providing opportunities for corruption by providing the resources necessary to sustain patronage and to co-opt important segment of the economic elite.

¹⁴ Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3

¹⁵ Stephen King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 5

¹⁶ Steven Heydemann, *Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), 14

Overall, there has been a wealth of literature that has examined the stabilizing role of corruption in authoritarian regimes in the MENA region. The literature on patrimonialism, patronage, rentier state theory, neopatrimonialism, and political and economic liberalization have all highlighted, to some degree, how corruption can help to sustain authoritarianism. The events of the Arab Spring, however, have necessitated a reexamination of the political economy of corruption. Although corruption has clearly had some stabilizing effects, the destabilizing potential of corruption has been almost completely overlooked; this thesis will seek to begin addressing this significant gap in the literature on corruption.

Framing Effects Literature

The second body of literature relevant to this topic is the literature pertaining to framing effects and, in particular, the framing of corruption. Emerging from the discipline of psychology and cognitive sciences, work on frames and framing effects has been widely employed in the social sciences and in various subfields of political science – including work on social movement theory, foreign policy decision-making, media effects, public opinion, and so forth.¹⁷ Essentially, framing effects “occur when (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion.”¹⁸

The literature on social movements, in particular, has examined the complex and influential role that framing processes can play in social mobilization through the creation of collective action frames. Collective action frames are interpretive schemata that help to simplify and condense the “world out there” in ways that are “intended to mobilize potential

¹⁷ James Druckman, “The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence,” *Political Behavior* 23, no. 3 (2001): 266

¹⁸ Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, “Framing Effects,” *Annual Review of Political Science*. 10 (2007): 104

adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists.”¹⁹ Of particular relevance to this study is the social movement literature on diagnostic framing. Diagnostic framing refers to both how a problem is framed and to whom (or to what) this problem can be attributed.²⁰ Regarding diagnostic framing, Gamson identifies the importance and ubiquity of “injustice frames” in social movements. As noted by Gamson, hardships and inequalities can be presented in various ways that evoke different emotion – from compassion to injustice. An injustice frame, therefore, is when an issue is framed so that it evokes a kind of “righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul.”²¹ Similarly, Gamson also notes the distinction between aggregate framing – in which the target of a movement is an abstraction and there is no clear antagonist – and adversarial framing – in which a social movement is able to identify a clear antagonist.²² Overall, the literature on social movements and framing can potentially help to illuminate how corruption was framed, as well as some of the factors that make certain framings resonate.

In addition to the social movement literature, there exists a series of related literature relevant to understanding the framing of corruption. First, there is a large body of literature on the measurement of corruption. Given the methodological challenges of finding a valid and reliable indicator of corruption, the literature on the measurement of corruption has highlighted the discrepancy between the objective-based measures (also referred to in the literature as experienced-based measures) and perception-based measures of corruption. Indeed, there exists a discrepancy between the objective measures of corruption – such as an individual’s experience paying a bribe – and the subjective measure’s of an individual’s

¹⁹ David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization” *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988): 198

²⁰ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 615

²¹ William A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 31

²² William A. Gamson, “Constructing Social Protest,” in *Social Movements and Culture* ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klardermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995): 101

perception of corruption.²³ Research on this gap between the objective and the subjective measures of corruption has shown that “cultural, economic, and political factors bias corruption perception away from corruption experience.”²⁴ In this literature, this gap between the objective and subjective measures of corruption has been discussed largely as a measurement problem. That is, it has been discussed as a problem in how indices measuring corruption can be improved, and the methodological pitfalls that researchers should avoid.²⁵ Implicit in this acknowledgement of a gap between corruption experience and perception, however, is that there exist factors that frame – that is, bias or shape – an individual’s perceptions of the level of corruption.

Finally, there is also an experimental economics literature on the framing of bribery. This literature examines the effects of how a bribe offer is framed, and “whether and to what extent the presentation of context affects behaviour in a corruption scenario.”²⁶ This experimental economics literature on corruption framing tends to examine the framing of corruption from an individual level. As such, there continues to be a lacuna on understanding the framing of corruption at a more societal or national level. Nevertheless, this literature confirms the importance of framing in understanding individual’s conceptualization of corruption, and their willingness to engage and justify corrupt actions.

Together, the literature on social movement framing, corruption measurement, and the experimental economics literature on bribery framing, forms the second body of

²³ See, for example, Francisco-Javier Urrea, "Assessing Corruption An analytical review of Corruption measurement and its problems: Perception, Error and Utility." Georgetown University Working Paper (2007); Dilyan Donchev and Gergely Ujhelyi, “What do Corruption Indices Measure,” *Economics and Politics* 26 no. 2 (2014)

²⁴ Donchev and Ujhelyi, “What do Corruption Indices Measure,” 310

²⁵ For a discussion on improving the measurement of corruption indices and the methodological advantages and disadvantages to objective and subjective measurements of corruption, see: Treisman, “What have we learned about the causes of corruption from ten years of cross-national empirical research”; Urrea, “Assessing Corruption”; Donchev and Ujhelyi, “What do Corruption Indices Measure”; and Seligson, “The Impact of Corruption on Regime Legitimacy.”

²⁶ Klaus Abbink and Heike Hennig-Schmidt, “Neutral versus loaded instructions in a bribery experiment,” *Experimental Economics* 9 no. 2 (2006): 105.

literature relevant to this thesis. This body of literature will help to provide the theoretical framework on how corruption can be framed, and how certain framings of corruption can affect the political salience of corruption.

Post-Arab Spring Corruption Literature

The final body of literature relevant to this topic is the recent literature on corruption in both the Middle East and the developing world more broadly that has emerged since the Arab Spring. This literature has begun to examine the destabilizing aspects of corruption. First, regarding the new literature on corruption more broadly, Chayes argues that corruption's pernicious effects have been consistently overlooked in the international development and foreign policy community. Linking endemic corruption to insurgency, terrorism, and political instability, Chayes argues "that acute, abusive government corruption prompts extreme responses and thus represents a mortal threat to security."²⁷ Other scholars and think tanks have also begun to devote more attention to corruption. A 2014 report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded that corruption "evokes indignation in populations, making it a factor in social unrest and insurgency."²⁸ Similarly, a 2015 report by the Institute for Economics and Peace used multivariate analysis and found a statistically significant relationship between the level of corruption – as measured by Transparency International's *Corruption Perception Index* – and peace – as measured by the Global Peace Index.²⁹ Overall, the recent literature on the effects of corruption in the developing world, which is still in its infancy, has begun to shed light on the relationship between corruption and political instability.

²⁷ Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 31.

²⁸ "Corruption: The Unrecognized Threat to International Security." Working Groups on Corruption and Security. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2014, 1

²⁹ "Peace and Corruption: Lowering Corruption – A Transformative Factor for Peace," Institute of Peace and Economics, 2015.

The literature of corruption in the Middle East that has emerged since the Arab Spring has acknowledged the apparent inconsistency between measures of corruption and the instability it seemingly generated. Much of this literature has sought to explain this inconsistency by demonstrating the methodological flaws with the various corruption indicators – in particular, Transparency International’s *Corruption Perception Index*. This literature has largely argued that the biases in several corruption indicators systematically underrepresented the views and perceptions of normal citizens.³⁰ Transparency International’s *Corruption Perception Index*, for example, focused on the perceptions of business leaders and corruption experts. Although there has been a renewed interest in corruption post-Arab Spring due to its centrality as a grievance, the political consequences of corruption remains dramatically understudied and therefore poorly understood. Commenting on the dearth of scholarly work on corruption that became apparent in light of the Arab Spring, Robinson states: the “political economy of corruption in MENA [Middle East and North Africa] is simply begging to be engaged seriously.”³¹

The Argument

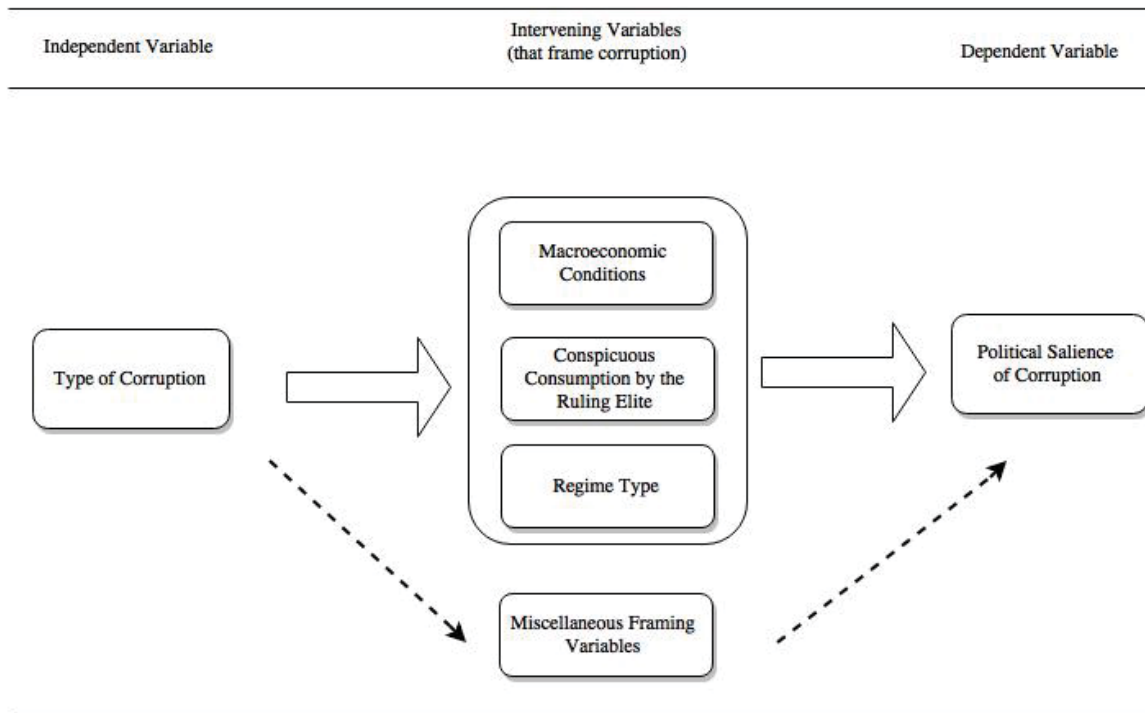
This thesis will argue that the political salience of corruption is the product of two factors: 1) how corruption is framed; and 2) how effectively corruption co-opts important actors. As such, variables that affect how corruption is framed and how effectively corruption co-opts important actors can explain the political salience of corruption within a country. Figure 1 depicts an explanatory model that explains the variation in the political

³⁰ See, for example, Hannes Baumann, “What Tunisia tells us about Western conceptions of “corruption.” Paper presented at BRISMES Annual Conference March 26-28, 2012.; and Emma C. Murphy, “Under the Emperor’s Neoliberal Clothes! Why the International Financial Institutions Got it Wrong in Tunisia” in *The Making of the Tunisia Revolution: Context, Architects, Prospects* ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

³¹ Glenn Robinson, “Oil States, Rentier States, and the Arab Spring,” *Arab Uprisings: New Opportunities for Political Science Research*. POMEPS, 2012, 54

salience of corruption. The independent variable is the type of corruption. As will be shown, it is the most important factor that influences the political salience of corruption, as it dramatically impacts both how corruption is framed as well as how effectively it co-opts opposition. However, the type of corruption alone provides an insufficient explanation for whether corruption is a salient political issue. Indeed, there also exists a series of other factors, unrelated or loosely related to the corruption itself, that also affect how corruption is framed. By affecting how corruption is framed, these intervening variables also affect the political salience of corruption.

Figure 1: Determinants of the Political Salience of Corruption



By demonstrating that the political salience of corruption is the result of a series of variables related to how corruption is framed and how effectively corruption co-opts important actors, this thesis will demonstrate the level of corruption within a country reveals relatively little about the political consequences of corruption. There are two primary reasons

why the indicators that measure the level of corruption fail to adequately account for corruption's political salience.

First, corruption is a vague and unspecific concept, of which there are numerous different types that can occur at widely different scales. Given the diverse range and scale of actions that can be considered corrupt, the overall level of corruption becomes a rather ambiguous concept. Is a country where petty bribery is rampant more or less corrupt than a country where cronyism is rampant? Different types of corruption are inherently weighed – either implicitly or explicitly – in corruption indicators. Indicators that measure the overall level of corruption, therefore, belie the nebulous nature of corruption as a concept. This becomes analytically problematic because it obfuscates the political effects of different types of corruption.

Second, the two main indicators of corruption, Transparency International's *Corruption Perception Index* and the World Bank's *Control of Corruption*, are perception-based measures. Although there are certainly many significant advantages to perception-based measures,³² there are also some serious drawbacks that limit their utility. Most importantly, perceptions-based measures of corruption do not actually measure the level of corruption directly, but measure perceptions of the level of corruption. As previously discussed, there is a large literature examining factors that can independently affect perceptions of corruption. The subjective nature of perceptions becomes analytically problematic in the study of corruption because any quantitative analysis using perception-based indicators of corruption does not necessarily reveal any insight on the political effects of the level of corruption; rather, if perceptions of corruption are biased by other factors which cannot be adequately controlled for, then the indicator of corruption is actually measuring other latent variables.

³² Experience-based measures are seemingly more noisy, for example. See Treisman, "What have we learned about the causes of corruption from ten years of cross-national empirical research," 241

In short, there is a validity issue. Despite the correlation found between the level of corruption and peace, for example, the ability to infer the any causal relationship between these two variables is limited by the potential for both spuriousness and reverse causality.

Given these methodological issues, indicators measuring the level of corruption cannot account for the variation in the political salience of corruption during the Arab Spring. Before elaborating in detail on the explanatory model, it is first necessary to explain how the grievances about corruption have been conceptualized. Therefore, this thesis will first elaborate on the criteria that have been used to evaluate and compare the political salience of corruption, which serves as the dependent variable in this study.

The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is the political salience of corruption. The political salience corruption refers to the overall prominence of corruption as a political issue and the degree to which it threatens to undermine an authoritarian regime. Corruption can be qualitatively categorized as having: high salience, moderate salience, or low salience. When the political salience of corruption is high, corruption is a prominent political issue and is a potentially destabilizing for the authoritarian regime. When the political salience of corruption is moderate, corruption may remain a relevant political issue, but it is less likely to undermine or destabilizing an authoritarian regime. When the political salience of corruption is low, corruption is not a particularly prominent issue nor does it threaten to destabilize an authoritarian regime.

There is no single indicator – either qualitative or quantitative – that can be used to measure the degree to which corruption grievances are potentially salient. However, as seen in Table 3, I argue that there are several criteria that can be qualitatively examined to

determine the overall political salience of corruption. These criteria include the conception of corruption, the attribution of corruption, and the resonance of corruption.

Table 3: The Political Salience of Corruption

The Political Salience of Corruption	Criteria	Cases (select countries)
High Salience	Conception: Corruption viewed as being very intolerable and very unjust Attribution: Corruption is associated with the regime Resonance: Grievances about corruption are widespread and resonate with important demographics	Tunisia Egypt
Moderate Salience	Conception: Corruption is viewed as being intolerable and unjust, but is less emotive of an issue. Attribution: Corruption is associated with other political actors, but not the regime Resonance: Grievances with corruption are less widespread, and do not resonate as much with important demographics	Morocco Algeria
Low Salience	Conception: Corruption is more tolerated and accepted, and is not seen as being particularly egregious or unjust. Attribution: There is greater ambivalence regarding to whom corruption can be attributed, making it less of an adversarial (we versus them) issue. Resonance: While grievances may or may not remain relatively widespread, it is not a grievance that particularly resonates with important demographics.	Jordan Saudi Arabia

The conception of corruption essentially refers to the degree to which corruption is viewed as being intolerable and unjust by the population. The conception of corruption helps to measure the severity of corruption grievances. If the population generally conceives corruption to be intolerable and unjust, then grievances about corruption will be more severe; if they conceive corruption to be more tolerable and less unjust, then corruption grievances will be less severe. The literature on social movements has frequently highlighted the importance of “injustice frames” in generating collective action. Indeed, as argued by Doug McAdam, “[b]efore a protest can get underway, people must collectively define their situation as unjust.”³³ When an issue is framed as being unjust, it is much more likely to generate collective action. As such, this thesis makes the assumption that, the more that the

³³ Doug McAdam *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982): 51

population conceives corruption as being unjust, the more salient and destabilizing corruption becomes as an issue.

Accurately measuring the degree to which corruption is tolerated and conceived as being unjust is challenging. In their study of corruption tolerance in several African countries, Chang and Kerr use attitudinal survey data to measure corruption tolerance; examining survey respondents' responses to questions about whether certain corrupt actions were "not wrong at all," "wrong but understandable," or "wrong and punishable," Chang and Kerr were able to create a composite variable of individual corruption tolerance. Although emulating this methodology to measure corruption tolerance would be ideal in this research project, unfortunately, the necessary data does not exist in all the countries under examination. Consequently, in this research project, the conception of corruption will be operationalized by examining the discourse on corruption, and qualitatively evaluating the degree to which corruption is conceived to be unjust; attitudinal survey data will be incorporated when available and appropriate.

The attribution of corruption refers to who is blamed for corruption – that is, what actor or group is associated with or deemed to be responsible for corruption. As noted by Gamson on his work on issue framing in social movements, there is an important distinction to be made between aggregate framing – in which the target of a movement is an abstraction and there is no clear antagonist – and adversarial framing – in which a social movement is able to identify a clear antagonist.³⁴ The attribution of corruption is an important determinant of the political salience of corruption. If corruption is directly attributed to the regime – that is, to the leader or to key figures within the regime – then corruption grievances are likely to be more politically salient; if the regime is blamed for the problem of

³⁴ Gamson, "Constructing Social Protest," 101

corruption, then regime change becomes the logical solution to solve the problem of corruption. However, if there is greater ambivalence regarding to whom corruption can be attributed, then it becomes a less politically salient issue; the regime is no longer the target of the population's ire, which helps to attenuate the degree to which corruption is a political issue than can undermine the regime. The attribution of corruption will be operationalized by again examining the discourse on corruption, and qualitatively evaluating which actors are blamed for corruption.

Finally, the resonance of corruption refers the degree to which grievances about corruption resonate with important demographics. As argued by Mekouar in his study of popular mobilization during the Arab Spring in North Africa, the participation of intermediate actors – that is, prestigious and respected actors who are seen to be either tolerant of or close to the regime – in protests proves critical in escalating small protests into mass mobilization. The participation of intermediate actors – such as union members, lawyers, Islamist groups, and other important members of civil society – helps to create a perception of exceptionality around the protests, thereby helping to create an informational cascade that signals an opportunity for mass mobilization.³⁵ Consequently, given the importance of intermediate actors, if grievances with corruption resonate more broadly and with important demographics, then corruption grievances will be more salient; if intermediate actors are aggrieved, it increases the probability that opposition against a regime could escalate. Conversely, if intermediate actors are not particularly aggrieved by corruption, perhaps because they have been successfully co-opted and are beneficiaries of the regime's patronage, then grievances about corruption will be less salient. Therefore, if grievances about corruption resonate broadly, including with intermediate actors, then corruption will

³⁵ Merouan Mekouar, "Why Small Things Matter? The Micro-Dynamics of Informational Cascades in North Africa" PhD Thesis. McGill University, 2013.

be more politically salient than if they only resonated narrowly. This will be operationalized by examining the actions and discourse of intermediate actors during initial protests; the actions and discourse of intermediate actors during the initial protests serves as a proxy for the degree to which corruption grievances resonated with important demographics.

Overall, through a largely qualitative examination of the conception, attribution, and resonance of corruption grievances, the political salience of corruption can be determined. It is important to note, however, that grievances do not need to fulfill all of the criteria for a particular category. These criteria thus represent a series of proxies that together can be used to measure overall political salience of corruption. As seen in Table 3, corruption grievances in Egypt and Tunisia have been coded having a high salience, corruption grievances in Morocco and Algeria have been coded as having a moderate salience, and corruption grievances in Jordan and Saudi Arabia have been coded as having a low salience. The main cases that will be examined in this thesis, however, are Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt.

Independent Variable

Defined by the World Bank and most scholarly literature as the “misuse of public office for private gain,” corruption is an inherently broad and vague concept.³⁶ Given the unspecific nature of this definition, there are a range of actions – both legal and illegal – that can be reasonably be construed as corruption. Indeed, as Brown and Cloke argue, “too much is expected of corruption in a single term... it cannot encompass so many different types of behaviour and motivations.”³⁷ When defining the concept of corruption for his study of corruption in Lebanon, Leenders notes the problematic tendency of much of the political science and economics literature to “treat corruption as a rather abstract notion

³⁶ Daniel Treisman, “What have we learned about the causes of corruption from ten years of cross-national empirical research,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (2007): 211

³⁷ Ed Brown and Jonathan Cloke, “Neoliberal Reform, Governance and Corruption in the South: Assessing the International Corruption Crusade,” *Antipode* 36 no. 2 (2004): 284

without stating explicitly that the term refers to an aggregate of extremely diverse transactions and forms of conduct.”³⁸ Although by no means an exhaustive list, different types of corruption can include: petty bribery, high-level bribery, the corrupt distribution of jobs, and crony capitalism. The consequences of treating corruption as an aggregate and abstract concept is that doing so obfuscates the varying causes and consequences of different types of corruption. With such a diversity of actions that can be considered corrupt, it is not surprising that different types of corruption will have varying political consequences, affecting both how corruption is framed and how effective the corruption is at co-opting opposition. Given that the type of corruption will have varying political consequences, it is important to distinguish between the types of corruption that predominate within a country.

Of particular relevance to this study is a distinction that can be made between more integrative forms corruption with more disintegrative forms of corruption. As noted by Johnston, there is a useful distinction to be made between integrative and disintegrative corruption. Johnston states:

Integrative corruption links people and groups into lasting networks of exchange and shared interest. Disintegrative corruption does not; indeed, it may well produce divisions and conflict, both among those involved in a corrupt enterprise and between those who are included and those left out.³⁹

The utility in distinguishing between integrative and disintegrative corruption can be seen when comparing more intermediate-level patronage with elite-level cronyism. Intermediate-level patronage involves few suppliers with relatively routine stakes, and tends to be relatively integrative. Conversely, the stakes involved in elite-level cronyism are

³⁸ Reinoud Leenders, *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2012), 9

³⁹Michael Johnston, “The Political Consequences of Corruption: A Reassessment,” *Comparative Politics* 18 no. 4 (1986): 464.

extraordinary, and might include more lucrative business contracts. While cronyism might be integrative for those included in the corruption, “for the wider political system they will likely be disintegrative.”⁴⁰ Although it is not possible to neatly classify every type of corruption as either integrative or disintegrative, as there can be overlap, it nonetheless remains a useful categorization that helps to reveal how the type of corruption can affect the destabilizing nature of corruption grievances. It is argued that more disintegrative corruption – such as cronyism – will be more politically salient than more integrative corruption – such as intermediate level patronage.

Disintegrative corruption will affect the conception, attribution, and resonance of corruption grievances. First, it is argued that the more disintegrative corruption is, the more likely that it will be conceived as being more egregious and unjust. When corruption is disintegrative, benefits accrue only to an elite minority. As such, it is argued that more disintegrative cronyism will be conceived as being more unjust than more intermediate-level and routine patronage. Second, it is argued that the degree to which corruption is either integrative or disintegrative will also affect the attribution of corruption. When corruption is integrative, corruption becomes more of an endemic and all-encompassing problem in which many actors are implicated. Comparatively, when corruption is particularly disintegrative, there will be fewer beneficiaries of corruption, thereby making it easier to attribute corruption to a few specific individuals. Corruption is, therefore, more likely to be framed in more of an adversarial manner. Finally, it is argued that, again, due to the disintegrative nature of cronyism, corruption grievance will resonate more broadly. Because fewer people benefit from the corruption, more people will be aggrieved. Evidence for this can be seen in a study of corruption in sub-Saharan Africa by Chang and Kerr, who find that patronage-

⁴⁰ Ibid., 471

insiders – that is, individuals who directly benefit from patronage – are more tolerant of corruption.⁴¹ The prevailing type(s) of corruption within a country will therefore affect how widely grievances about corruption are likely to resonate.

Intervening Variables

Although the type of corruption is the most important factor affecting the degree to which corruption becomes politically salient, factors – unrelated or loosely related to corruption itself – also matter. Indeed, there are several intervening variables, which are argued to affect how the population frames corruption, and which thereby affects the degree to which corruption is a destabilizing political issue. There are three intervening variables in this model. They include: the macroeconomic conditions, conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite, and regime type (republican system or monarchy).

First, it is argued that the macroeconomic conditions within a country affect on how corruption is framed. Macroeconomic conditions – operationalized using common economic indicators such as unemployment, inequality, inflation, and GDP growth – are theorized to impact how individuals perceive corruption. When the macroeconomic conditions are poor, it is theorized that individuals will be more likely to view corruption as prevalent as well as to view corruption as being more egregious. There is research to substantiate the impact of macroeconomic conditions on how corruption is framed. In a cross-country comparison of individual level perceptions of corruption, Melgar, Rossi, and Smith find that macroeconomic performance does impact individual level perceptions of corruption. High GDP per capita decreases perceptions of corruption, while high inflation

⁴¹ Eric C.C. Chang and Nicholas N. Kerr, “Do Voters have Difference Attitudes towards Corruption? The Sources and Implications of Popular Perceptions and Tolerance of Political Corruption,” Afrobarometer Working Paper, Workign Paper no. 116 (2009).

and inequality increase perceptions of corruption.⁴² As such, it is argued that poor macroeconomic conditions will negatively affect the way corruption is framed, which will subsequently make corruption a more salient and destabilizing issue.

Second, conspicuous consumption is another factor that this paper argues will affect the political salience of corruption. Conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite is theorized to make acts of corruption appear to be particularly egregious. Ostentatious consumption by the elite is theorized to lead to increased alienation from the regime and feelings of injustice by poorer segments of society. Moreover, conspicuous consumption can make individuals a clear target for who should be blamed for corruption, thereby affecting the attribution of corruption. Conspicuous consumption therefore increases an individual's biases about the regime and the elite, which subsequently impacts the individual's perception of the level of corruption, their indignation over corruption, and who they blame for corruption. Indeed, there is a correlation between conspicuous consumption – measured by luxury car sales – with Transparency International's *Corruption Perception Index*, demonstrating that there is some empirical support for this relationship.⁴³ As such, it is argued that an increase in conspicuous consumption will affect the framing of corruption.

Conspicuous consumption will be operationalized using qualitative descriptions of the ruling elite's lifestyle, and the degree to which they seemingly flaunt or hide their wealth. Ideally, a combination of qualitative sources and quantitative sources (such as data on the number of luxury car sales) could be used to determine the level of conspicuous consumption. Unfortunately, given the dearth of available indicators that can be used to quantitatively measure conspicuous consumption, only qualitative sources will be used.

⁴² Natalia Melgar, Maximo Rossi, and Tom W. Smith, "The Perception of Corruption," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22, no. 1 (2010): 128-129

⁴³ Omer Gokcekus and Yui Suzuki, "Is there a corruption-effect on conspicuous consumption?" *Working Paper*, (2013).

Finally, regime type is another variable argued to affect how corruption is framed. Herb, for example, notes that Arab monarchies “profited from comparisons between their rule and that of the presidents.... And this comparison in particular gave rise to a zeitgeist in the Arab world before the Arab Awakening in which monarchism enjoyed some measure of tolerance as a regime type that produced better results (or at least less-bad results) than the available alternatives.”⁴⁴ It is argued that Arab monarchies are better able to attenuate or neutralize grievances about corruption than their republican counterparts. They are able to rise above politics, blaming other political actors for the country’s woes. As well, they are able to more legitimately present themselves as patrimonial father figures of the nation, who can therefore more legitimately bequeath political patronage. This ultimately helps to frame corruption in more of an aggregate manner, and to attenuate the degree to which neopatrimonialism in a monarchy is perceived to be unjust.

It should be noted that, although the model presented in this paper includes only three intervening variables, there are numerous other variables that can affect how corruption is framed. In the interests of parsimony, however, these variables have been omitted from the model. The rationale for omitting other potential intervening variables from this model is that these omitted variables are either idiosyncratic – that is, specific to a particular case – or have a comparatively minor effect on the framing of corruption. Nevertheless, as seen in Figure 1, the model does include a miscellaneous framing variable, which can be incorporated when pertinent.

⁴⁴ Michael Herb, “Monarchism Matters,” *Foreign Policy*, November 26, 2012, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/26/monarchism_matters.

Methodology

This paper will employ a mixed methods methodology. It will use a combination of quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, and discourse analysis. First, using a combination of both individual- and country-level data from both Transparency International and the Arab Barometer Survey, quantitative analysis will be used to show the disconnect between the level of corruption and the political salience of corruption. Comparative quantitative analysis will be used to compare the effect of corruption in various Arab countries. This study will use standard qualitative methods to compare and analyze the effect of the independent and intervening variables on the dependent variable. Finally, this paper will employ discourse analysis. Examining the discourse surrounding corruption and grievances about corruption both before and during the Arab Spring, discourse analysis will be used to help reveal the particular factors – such as the type of corruption – that affect the political salience of corruption.⁴⁵

Regarding case selection, this study will use a small-N most similar case design. As noted by Collier, a small-N most similar case design can be a useful design to bridge case studies and large-N statistical studies; it can effectively help to both identify new variables and develop new theory while also being able to test hypotheses.⁴⁶ Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt will be the primary cases examined in this study. These countries have been chosen because Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt show variation in both the dependent and independent variables.⁴⁷ Additionally, all are situated in North Africa and share numerous

⁴⁵ My ability to incorporate discourse analysis into this study has been limited by language, however, as I have had to rely on only English and French sources. Due to the language barrier, only translated Arabic sources have been used.

⁴⁶ David Collier, “The Comparative Method.” in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada W. Finifter. (Washington: American Political Science Association, 1993), 106-108

⁴⁷ Refer to Table 1 and Table 3

political, religious, and social attributes, thereby helping to create a more “controlled comparison.”⁴⁸

Regarding the dependent variable, both Tunisia and Egypt had massive anti-regime protests wherein the corruption of the respective regimes was a salient and motivating grievances. While Morocco did experience some protests that were, in part, motivated by grievances over corruption, corruption was not a salient; despite the prevalence of corruption, grievances about corruption did not appear to be directed at the Moroccan monarchy and did not undermine its support as it had elsewhere in the Arab world. Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco also vary in the independent and intervening variables. By comparing and contrasting these countries, this research project will seek to reveal the importance of certain variables as they relate to the political salience of corruption.

Chapters to Follow

Chapter two examines the salience of corruption in Tunisia. It begins by analyzing the prominence of grievances about corruption during the Arab Spring, detailing why corruption was a particularly salient issue in Tunisia. Using the explanatory model presented in this chapter, it will show how the type of corruption as well as series of intervening framing effects help to explain why corruption was particularly salient. The third chapter will examine the political salience of corruption in Morocco and will explain why corruption was a less salient and destabilizing issue in Morocco. The fourth chapter will examine the salience of corruption in Egypt. It will analyze the corruption of both the Egyptian military as well as the Mubarak regime. This chapter will first show how grievances about corruption were particularly salient for the Mubarak regime, but were less of problem for the Egyptian military, despite the fact that the Egyptian military was as corrupt. The politics of corruption

⁴⁸ Collier, “The Comparative Method,” 111

in Egypt clearly highlights the importance of framing. The final chapter will summarize the argument presented in this thesis and will subsequently discuss insights and avenues for further research.

Chapter 2: Tunisia

Introduction

Despite having a relatively low level of corruption compared to other Arab states, corruption in Tunisia proved to be a remarkably salient issue. This chapter will argue that the political salience of corruption in Tunisia was particularly high, and that this was the result of the very exclusionary type of corruption that prevailed in Tunisia as well as other factors that affected how corruption was framed. These other factors that affected how Tunisians framed corruption include the macroeconomic conditions, the prominence of conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite, and the republican structure of the regime.

This chapter will be divided into several sections. The first section will briefly examine the politics of corruption in Tunisia, demonstrating that grievances over corruption were a central factor that motivated individuals to oppose the regime and to participate in the Arab Spring protests. The second section will examine the types of corruption that were prominent in Tunisia. It will show how the exclusionary cronyism and nepotism that prevailed made corruption a particularly salient issue, and how the more inclusive intermediate-level patronage had important shortcomings. The third section will examine how the poor macroeconomic situation, the conspicuous consumption of the ruling elite, and the republican structure of the authoritarian regime all negatively affected the framing of corruption. Although largely unrelated to corruption, these intervening variables also contributed to increasing the political salience of corruption. The final section will briefly overview the dependent variable – the political salience of corruption in Tunisia. It will reiterate how the previously examined independent and intervening variables affected the overall salience of corruption in Tunisia.

The Politics of Corruption in Tunisia

Corruption clearly played a central role in sparking the Arab Spring uprising and in mobilizing opposition in Tunisia. From the start of the uprising, grievances about corruption were prominent. First, the tumultuous wave of protests in Tunisia was initiated by the self-immolation of a young street-vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire in the town of Sidi bouzid after being harassed by police and state officials.⁴⁹ According to reports, Bouazizi's self-immolation was the result of a confrontation with corrupt police and a municipal inspector – who overturned his fruit-cart, confiscated his scale, and humiliated him by slapping him in the face.⁵⁰ In this sense, it was the corruption of state officials and the police, who would routinely extort bribes and harass local vendors, which led to the event that catalyzed the Arab Spring.

Second, the centrality of corruption can also be seen in the discourse of the protests. Slogans during the initial protests often focused on social demands for “work, freedom, and national dignity.” As the protests grew, however, the discourse of the demonstrations evolved. Slogans directly attacking the corruption and cronyism of Ben Ali and his wife, Leila Trabelsi, became commonplace. Slogans such as “Trabelsis spare some bread for the poor” and “Leila the hairdresser, the thief of the orphans’ money” highlight the centrality of corruption grievances during the uprising.⁵¹

Finally, as previously discussed and seen in Table 1, attitudinal survey data from the Arab Barometer survey shows that 63 percent of respondents in Tunisia cited corruption as one of the top two reasons for the uprising. Far from being some peripheral and minor

⁴⁹ Bouazizi died in hospital on 4 January 2011.

⁵⁰ Kareem Fahim, “Slap to a man’s pride set off Tumult in Tunisia” *New York Times* January 21, 2001 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/22/world/africa/22sidi.html>

⁵¹ Nouri Gana, “Tunisia,” in *Dispatches from the Arab Spring*, ed. Paul Amar and Vijay Prashad (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013): 8-9.

grievance, grievances about corruption were a driving force behind the Arab Spring protests in Tunisia.

Type of Corruption

This section will briefly overview three types corruption within Tunisia. This section will examine elite-level cronyism, intermediate-level patronage, as well as petty bribery and nepotism. As will be argued, the prevalence of elite-level cronyism during Ben Ali tenure dramatically affect how corruption was framed, making it a more salient issue. Furthermore, although the regime did attempt to co-opt important actors and organization by using more intermediate-level patronage, its penetration of important organizations was often superficial. In sum, corruption became a particularly salient issue because there was too much exclusionary cronyism, and not enough inclusionary intermediate-level patronage.

Elite-Level Cronyism, Intermediate-Level Patronage, and Low-Level Bribery

First, elite-level cronyism was rampant in Tunisia. Individuals that were close to the regime secured very lucrative business opportunities. The particular feature of the cronyism under the Ben Ali regime was its nepotistic nature. That is, the inner circle of the regime's elite that profited substantially from cronyism were, in some way, related to Ben Ali, his wife, his brothers, or his children. Clans – that is, families – connected to Ben Ali through blood and marriage constituted the inner elite of Tunisian politics and business. The extended family of Ben Ali essentially comprised of seven clans. This included: the Ben Alis, which comprised of Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his siblings; the Trabelsis, which comprised of Ben Ali's wife Leila Trabelsi and her ten siblings; the Kefis, which was the family of Ben Ali's first wife; the Shiboubs, the Mabrouks, and the Zarrouks, which were the families that Ben Ali's three daughters from his first wife married into; and the Materis,

whose son Sakhr El Materi married the eldest daughter of Zine El Abidine and Leila Trabelsi.⁵² However, as Erdle notes, this constitutes “only the tip of the iceberg... since all those who have managed to marry into these clans are also considered presidential relatives.”⁵³

The nepotism and cronyism during the Ben Ali regime was apparent, taking several forms. In the wake of neoliberal reforms, the extended family was able to take advantage of the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), the sale of public land, and the granting of (or sale of companies owning the rights to) licenses for providing various services or distributing various goods. This ultimately meant that the extended family was able to gain control over numerous different companies and industries, including car dealerships, cell phones and communication companies, airlines, TV and radio stations, and so forth. For example, Belhassen Trabelsi, the brother of Leila Trabelsi, was able to take control of the state-owned airline Tunis Air; he also bought the state-owned companies that held the distribution licenses for Ford, Rover, Jaguar, and Hyundai, as well as former state-owned hotels.⁵⁴ Other member of the extended family also profited substantially from the regime’s nepotism. When the private sector was allowed to enter the Tunisian airline industry, the two new private companies were ones owned by Ben Ali’s brother-in-law Behassen Trabelsi’s and his son-in-law Slim Chiboub,⁵⁵ As noted in a WikiLeaks cable, Ben Ali’s son-in-law, Marouane Mabrouk, purchased a 17 percent share of the Banque due Sud immediately before its privatization, which proved “critical to acquiring controlling interest in the bank

⁵² Steffen Erdle, *Ben Ali’s New Tunisia: A Case Study of Authoritarian Modernization in the Arab World*. (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 145.

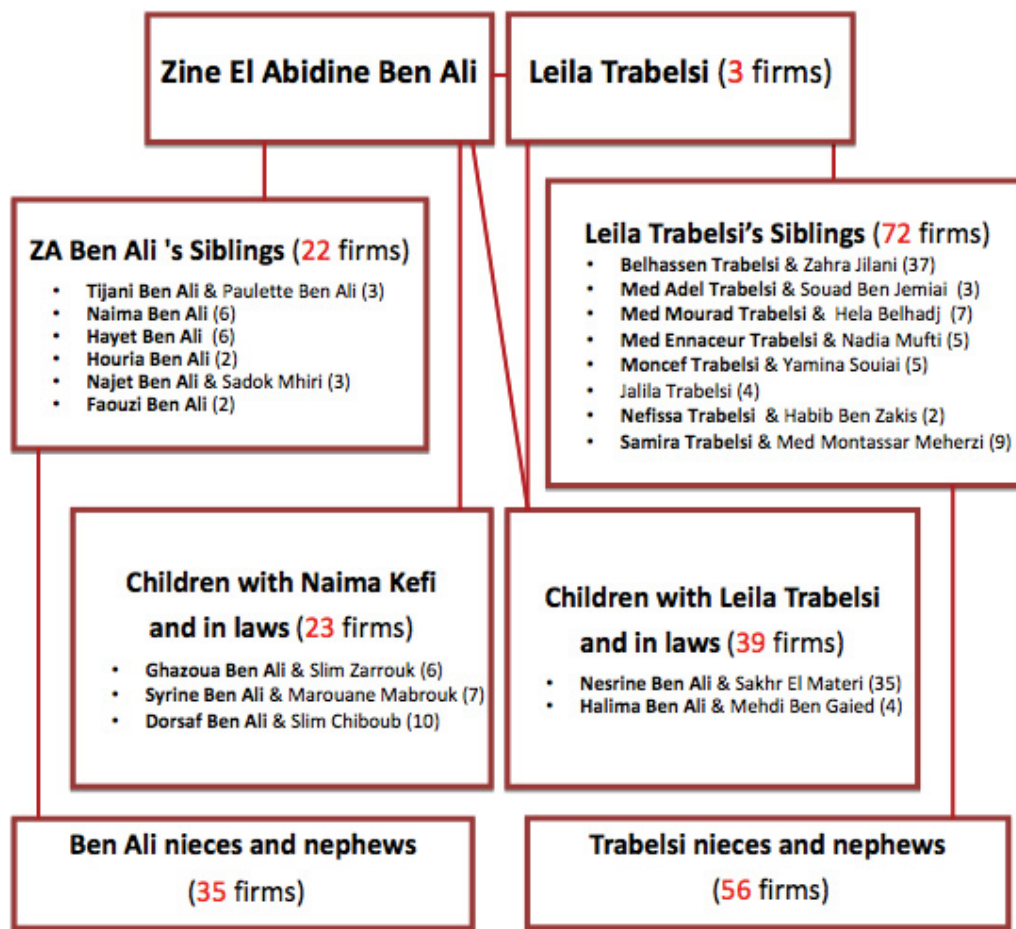
⁵³ Ibid, 145

⁵⁴ Murphy, “Under the Emperor’s Neoliberal Clothes!” 47

⁵⁵ Ibid, 48

since the privatization represented only a 35 percent share in the bank.”⁵⁶ Mabrouk was also able to secure control over the distribution of all Mercedes and Fiats in Tunisia.⁵⁷ Sakhr El Materi, another one of Ben Ali’s son-in-laws, was given public land to build his mansion in Sidi Bou Said, and was also rumoured to have been able to buy in as a partner of the mobile telephone company, Tunisiana, when the regime forced the current owner to accept Materi as a partner in order to obtain a 3G license.⁵⁸

Figure 2: Links between the Ben Ali Family and Tunisian Business (# of firms in parenthesis)



Source: Bob Rijkers, Caroline Freund, and Antonio Nucifora, “All in the Family: State Capture in Tunisia,” The World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 6810. March 2014.

⁵⁶ Robert F. Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia: What’s yours is mine” cable dated 23 June 2008, and published by WikiLeaks <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/06/08TUNIS679.html>

⁵⁷ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* 180

⁵⁸ For more accounts of the regime’s cronyism, see: Murphy, “Under the Emperor’s Neoliberal Clothes,” 47

The numerous accounts of cronyism and nepotism are too extensive to elaborate on in detail.⁵⁹ However, as can be seen in Figure 2, published by the World Bank using information from on the Tunisian Ministry of Finance website, the business interests of the Ben Ali family were extensive. Although the exact wealth of the extended family will likely never be known, it has been estimate to range from 7 billion to 15 billion.⁶⁰ While many of the now infamous details of Ben Ali's cronyism and nepotism have come to light after the uprising, it is very important to highlight that the cronyism and nepotism of the regime was widely known. This can likely be partially attributed to the rather conspicuous nature of the regime's nepotism. After all, it is difficult to conceal the ruling family's domination of private businesses and industries; moreover, this domination of industry by the extended family, even if legitimate, can create the perception of impropriety. As such, the corruption of the ruling family was well known. As noted by Erdle, "many presidential relatives (and particularly the Trabelsi clan) have acquired a bad reputation for abusing their privileged political relations for their own personal gains."⁶¹ Indeed, the details of the extended family's corruption were also published in two books (written in French), *Notre Ami Ben Ali* (1999) and *La regente de Carthage: Main basse sur la Tunisie*, which were subsequently banned in Tunisia.

The second type of corruption present in Tunisia was the intermediate-level patronage that the regime created to help bolster its support and to maintain stability. The main vehicle for the distribution of intermediate-level patronage during Ben Ali's tenure was the ruling party, the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD), which played a

⁵⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the nepotism in the regime, see: Murphy, "Under the Emperor's Neoliberal Clothes"; and Nicolas Beau and Catherine Graciet, *La Regente de Carthage*. (Paris: Editions La Decouverte).

⁶⁰ Murphy, "Under the Emperor's Neoliberal Clothes," 49

⁶¹ Erdle, *Ben Ali's New Tunisia*, 148

significant role in the distribution of patronage – in the form of both money and jobs. Under Ben Ali's predecessor, Habib Bourguiba, the NeoDestour party (as the RCD was previously called before being renamed by Ben Ali) was comprised of a more narrow and powerful elite. During Ben Ali's tenure, however, membership in the RCD was significantly expanded, creating both a more heterogeneous base of support as well as a more sophisticated clientelist structure. Whereas the NeoDestour was comprised of elites who actually aided in governing, under Ben Ali, the RCD was primarily used as a network to distribute patronage. As noted by Hibou:

The RCD thus appears as a network of interests and clients, providing jobs, administrative facilities, aid of every kind, lodging, banking facilities, and free health and transport passes... Furthermore, the RCD's active members have been able to enrich themselves directly and embark on a process of upward social mobility. Thus, in six or seven years, the president of a district cell could... build himself a prestigious house or open a profitable business.⁶²

In addition to helping to facilitate the distribution of patronage to important actors in the middle class, the RDC has been used to distribute social services among the poor. For example, the Solidarity Fund (the 2626 program), which was essentially a coerced charity collected from businesses and administered by the RCD, was established to offer free meals to the poor during Ramadan. However, it is important to note that this form of popular clientelism occurred in the wake of neoliberal reforms, and is therefore largely symbolic, as it could not compensate for the government's diminished provision of services.⁶³

In addition, the regime also tried to distribute patronage to unions and professional organizations to secure their loyalty. In particular, the regime tried to pacify and co-opt the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT). With over 300,000 members, the UGTT is the most powerful organization in Tunisia, having played a consequential role throughout

⁶² Beatrice Hibou, *The Force of Obedience: The Political Economy of Repression in Tunisia*. English Edition, translated by Andrew Brown, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), xviii-xix

⁶³ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, 179.

Tunisia's history. Although the UGTT was initially a strong ally of Tunisia's first president, Habib Bourguiba, as the union became more radical in its demands, the union began playing an increasingly oppositional role. During the 1970s and 1980s, it was a significant source of opposition to the Bourguiba regime, reaching a climax during the 1978 national strike.

Bourguiba took steps to pacify and weaken the union, employing a "divide and rule strategy by encouraging scissions within the leadership of the party while co-opting its most virulent figures."⁶⁴ After supplanting Bourguiba, Ben Ali maintained an escalated this strategy.

Indeed, to an even greater extent than Bourguiba, Ben Ali staffed the national executive board of the UGTT with pro-government officials, supplying the leadership of the union access to various forms of state rent.⁶⁵ Despite the regime's relatively successful co-optation of the union's leadership, it is essential to also recognize that the union has maintained significant autonomy, particularly within the regional and sectorial syndicates. Indeed, there was a growing rift between the co-opted national leadership and the dissatisfied membership the UGTT, as union members and the regional leadership were much more dissatisfied with and combative against many of the regime's economic policies.⁶⁶

Finally, the last type of corruption frequently encountered in Tunisia is the more petty corruption, which generally takes the form of petty bribery or petty nepotism. Petty bribery and petty nepotism are closely linked to and overlap with the previously discussed types of corruption. Indeed, connections with important clans and the distribution of patronage in the RCD are clearly related to petty corruption. Nevertheless, it is necessary to try and draw a distinction. As argued by Hibou, "Most forms of 'corruption' are distorted: by centering everything on the 'clans', they forget the day-to-day activities of 'ordinary

⁶⁴ Mekouar, "Why Small Things Matter?" 50

⁶⁵ Ibid, 52-53.

⁶⁶ Steffen Erdle, "Tunisia: Economic Transformation and Political Restoration," in *Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change*, ed. Volker Perthes (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 228

Tunisians’.⁶⁷ Although data on petty corruption during Ben Ali’s tenure as president is limited, and is largely based on anecdotal accounts, it is widely accepted that petty corruption – both bribery and nepotism – was common. Tunisians often experienced petty bribery and low-level corruption in dealing with police, customs agents, or other local officials. Moreover, petty nepotism also existed. The 2008 uprising by union members and students in the regional mining town of Gafsa centered around anger over the nepotism in hiring practices at the state-owned Gafsa Phosphate Company, the largest employer in the region. Demonstrators charged that the company had overlooked deserving candidates in favour of more well-connected, but unqualified, candidates.⁶⁸ Although the precise political effects of this more low-level corruption will not be examined in detail, it is nonetheless important to recognize and to emphasize its existence.

Cronyism and the Framing of Corruption

The cronyism during Ben Ali’s tenure dramatically affected the framing of corruption, affecting both the attribution and the conception of corruption. First, regarding the attribution of corruption, the exclusionary nature of the regime’s cronyism helped to frame corruption in a more adversarial manner by creating a clear adversary who could be blamed for corruption. As noted by the US ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Godec, in a cable leaked by Wikileaks, “President Ben Ali’s extended family is often cited as the nexus of Tunisian Corruption... Ben Ali’s wife, Leila Ben Ali, and her extended family – the Trabelsis – provoke the greatest ire from Tunisians.”⁶⁹ The highly visible and exclusionary nature of the regime’s cronyism and nepotism provided a clear target for who could be blamed for

⁶⁷ Hibou, *The Force of Obedience*, 278

⁶⁸ Kenneth Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 220

⁶⁹ Robert F. Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia: What’s yours is mine” cable dated 23 June 2008, and published by WikiLeaks <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/06/08TUNIS679.html>

corruption and its concomitant problems: Ben Ali and his extended family. This adversarial framing therefore helped increase the political salience of corruption.

Second, regarding the conception of corruption, the prevalence of cronyism clearly played a role in evoking a sense of injustice. Elite-level cronyism is particularly exclusionary, with only an elite minority reaping the benefits. As such, it is a type of corruption is particularly prone to being viewed as both illegitimate and unjust. Moreover, the very personalistic nature of the regime's cronyism also exacerbated the unjust conception of corruption within Tunisia. Indeed, under Ben Ali, Tunisia was increasingly becoming a kleptocracy, wherein corruption became an end in itself. In her study of state-led Tunisian development in the late 1980s, Bellin argued that "cronyism is not suffused with politicization, nor is it driven by corruption."⁷⁰ Indeed, Bellin noted that the industrialists that she interviewed often made a distinction between cronyism, which was endemic, with corruption and bribery, which they argued were not. One building contractor interviewed by Bellin in 1988 stated: "There is no question that good relations with a minister can speed your dossier through the administration, get you your license faster, or smooth the credit acquisition process. Sure, good relations with the state helps *but good relations is not the same thing as "rashwa" [bribery]*."⁷¹ Bellin's interviews were with industrialists, who likely benefited from cronyism. As such, it is logical that they would be less prone to view the cronyism that flourished under Bourguiba as an unacceptable and contemptible form of corruption.

Nevertheless, it appears that the cronyism that existed during the Bourguiba era was qualitatively different than the cronyism under Ben Ali. During the Bourguiba era,

⁷⁰ Eva Bellin, *Stalled Democracy: Capital, Labor, and the Paradox of State-sponsored development*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2001), 77.

⁷¹ Ibid, 77.

corruption and cronyism were certainly endemic; however, corruption was driven by a political logic, rather than serving merely as means to enrich oneself. Erdle states:

At the same time, it appears that another dominant pattern of contemporary Tunisia is about to be reversed, and this is the *raison d'être* of corruption in politics... Sure, Bourguiba also condoned (or even encouraged) the occurrence of 'corruption', but for him, this was a *technique of politics*, or *a means to an end*, which allowed him to make others liable to judicial persecution and *eo ipso* [by the same token] dependent on his 'benign neglect'. Since 1987, however, these practices (i.e. the self enrichment of persons close to the president) appear to have taken on a *dynamic of their own*, and have become *an end in itself*.⁷²

Ultimately, this qualitative change in the type of corruption, from a more accepted form politically motivated cronyism to a more resented form of cronyism that was driven by avarice, further helped to frame corruption as being unjust. The Ben Ali and Trabelsi were increasingly branded as thieves, who were actually plundering the state coffers.

The Limitations of Intermediate-Level Patronage in Tunisia

Although the elite-level cronyism that was driven by greed largely overshadowed all other types of corruption in Tunisia, it is important to still emphasize the more intermediate-level and strategically driven patronage that did exist. The distribution of patronage in the RCD and the co-optation of UGTT leadership exemplified this type of intermediate-level and strategically driven patronage. Ben Ali did successfully create an extensive and more sophisticated system for the distribution of patronage than his predecessor. However, there were shortcomings to this neopatrimonial system that limited its effectiveness in stymieing opposition. Specifically, the overall penetration of organizations such as the RCD and UGTT was relatively superficial, with patronage failing to sufficiently trickle through the ranks of these organizations. Therefore, many intermediate actors were not successfully co-opted, and were both more able and willing to oppose the regime.

⁷² Erdle, *Ben Ali's New Tunisia*, 227-228

First, the involvement of the UGTT in the demonstrations against Ben Ali proved pivotal. Members within local and regional unions were vital in organizing the Arab Spring demonstrations as well as in spreading information to other unions and to media outlets.⁷³ Yet, while regional union leadership and the rank and file within the unions were much more vocal and active in their condemnation of the regime, top executives within the union – who were the beneficiaries of the regime’s patronage – remained largely quiescent and maintained a more ambiguous position. However, as the more local demonstrations gained momentum, even the more co-opted leaders within the national UGTT were forced to eventually side with their regional syndicates and the rank and file, authorizing a series of revolving regional strikes by the end of December. As noted by Mekouar, the “executive bureau realized that its survival was dependent on the support it was willing to provide to the regional actors who were involved in frontal confrontation with the security services.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, dissatisfaction with the regime ran deep and the co-opted UGTT leadership proved to be more dependent on the aggrieved regional syndicates and the rank and file than it was on the regime’s patronage.

Similarly, many RCD members also participated early on in the protests. Indeed, during the initial protests in Sidi Bouazid (the hometown of Mohamed Bouazizi), “the majority of local lawyers [participating in the demonstrations] were members of the ruling RCD party.”⁷⁵ The Ben Ali regime had previously, but unsuccessfully, tried to co-opt or repress the Tunisian bar association, by creating parallel organizations or trying to have regime loyalists win the association’s internal elections. Nevertheless, the Tunisian bar association and lawyers remained largely independent of the regime, often both willing an

⁷³ Mekouar, “Why Small Things Matter?” 55-56

⁷⁴ Ibid, 57

⁷⁵ Ibid, 59

able to criticize the regime.⁷⁶ Despite the neopatrimonial purpose of the RCD, many influential members were clearly not co-opted.

Making Matter Worse: Intervening Variables that Frame Corruption

Although the type of corruption affects how corruption is framed (in addition to affecting the degree to which important actors are co-opted), other factors also affect how corruption is framed. As this section will demonstrate, the macroeconomic conditions in Tunisia, the conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite, and the more republican structure of the authoritarian regime all also affected the framing of corruption. Together, these intervening variables contributed to making corruption an even more destabilizing issue.

Macroeconomic Conditions

To begin with, the overall macroeconomic situation in Tunisia appeared relatively strong, as the economic reforms ushered in during the Ben Ali era had seemingly proved effective. Between 1996-2000, World Bank data indicates that Tunisia grew at a rate of 5.6 percent per year. Between 2001 and 2005 it averaged 5 percent growth per year. Even during the 2008 global financial crisis, Tunisia maintained solid economic growth, growing at 3.1 percent in 2009 and 3.7 percent in 2010.⁷⁷ Moreover, in addition to relatively strong economic growth, other indicators seemed to show a relatively strong macroeconomic situation. In 1984, the literacy rate in Tunisia was 48 percent; in 2008, it had risen to 78 percent. Poverty had also declined from 7.7 percent in 1984 to 3.8 percent in 2005.⁷⁸ Per

⁷⁶ Ibid, 47-48

⁷⁷ Ibid, 184

⁷⁸ Ibid, 184

capita income increased from \$2,715 in 2005 to \$3,720 in 2010.⁷⁹ In 2010, before the uprising, the official unemployment rate stood at 15 percent.⁸⁰

Although the macroeconomic situation in Tunisia was better than many of its Arab and North African counterparts, the overall macroeconomic situation remained very serious. Indeed, Tunisia's economic reality did not match the regime-propagated mythology of Tunisia as an economic miracle.⁸¹ First, although the official unemployment rate was 14, this figure was likely inaccurate, given the unreliable unemployment data. It also likely underestimated the unemployment among youth; according to Hibou, estimates indicated that the unemployment rate of people aged 18-29 had risen to 30 percent, and had risen to 45 percent for higher education graduates. With an estimated 140,000 people entering the labour market every year, the economy was only producing an estimated 65,000 jobs.⁸² Additionally, reassessment of the poverty rate after the uprising estimated that it was closer to 10 percent at the national level, with some regions experiencing a poverty level upwards of 30 percent.⁸³

The macroeconomic situation in Tunisia likely had an important impact on the framing of corruption. Given the economic hardship experienced by many within Tunisia, individuals struggling to find a job would be more likely to perceive corruption, at all levels, as being unjust. The regional disparities in the economic conditions as well as the demographic differences in employment (high youth unemployment, for example) provide

⁷⁹ Lahcen Achy, "Tunisia's Economic Challenges," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (December 2012): 5

⁸⁰ Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 218

⁸¹ Francesco Cavatorta and Rikke Hostrup Haugbølle, "The End of Authoritarian Rule and the Mythology of Tunisia under Ben Ali" *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 183. doi: 10.1080/13629395.2012.694043

⁸² Beatrice Hibou, Hamza Meddeb, and Mohamed Hamdi, *Tunisia after 14 January and its social and political economy: The issues at stake in a reconfiguration of European policy*, (Copenhagen: Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2011), 14

⁸³ Hibou, *The Force of Obedience*, 1

support for this conclusion. Given the high unemployment in Gafsa in 2008, individuals were particularly sensitive to the injustice of jobs being dispensed based on connections and bribery. Similarly, given his own precarious economic situation, the self-immolation of Bouazizi further provides evidence for how a poor macroeconomic situation can affect the framing of corruption.

Conspicuous Consumption

As part of the *nouveau riche* that emerged with increasing cronyism in the 1990s and 2000s, the extended family of Ben Ali – and the Trabelsis in particular – became synonymous with extravagant displays of wealth. Compared to Imelda Marcos for her extravagant and frivolous spending, Leila Trabelsi was known for her penchant for luxury cars, expensive jewelry, and extravagant homes. The 2009 French book, *La Regente de Carthage*, which focused on the corruption of Ben Ali, Leila, and the Trabelsi family, further highlighted the excessive lifestyle and conspicuous consumption of Leila and her family.⁸⁴ In 2006, two of Leila's nephews, Imed and Moaz Trabelsi, reportedly stole a luxury yacht of the chairman of a French investment bank off. After stealing the yacht, it was docked in the Tunisian port of Sidi Bou Said, creating a diplomatic kerfuffle between France and Tunisia.⁸⁵ Although the theft of a yacht might not technically count as an example of conspicuous consumption, it highlights the extravagant and highly visible displays of wealth by the Trabelsis.

More evidence of the conspicuous consumption of the ruling elite can be seen in another leaked cable from US ambassador, Robert Godec. After having dinner at the house

⁸⁴ Beau and Graciet. *La La Regente de Carthage*.

⁸⁵ "Yacht theft makes diplomatic waves: Tunisian–French relations suffer due to inquiry. *Herald Scotland*, 26 July 2008. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/yacht-theft-makes-diplomatic-waves-1.829762>

of Sakhr El Materi, who is married to Nasrine, the eldest daughter of Ben Ali and Leila

Trabelsi, ambassador Godec noted:

Most striking of all, however, was the opulence with which El Materi and Nesrine live. Their home in Hammemet was impressive, with the tiger adding to the impression of “over the top.” Even more extravagant is their home still under construction in Sidi Bou Said. That residence, from its outward appearance, will be closer to a palace. It dominates the Sidi Bou Said skyline from some vantage points and has been the occasion of many private, critical comments. The opulence with which El Materi and Nesrine live and their behavior make clear why they and other members of Ben Ali’s family are disliked and even hated by some Tunisians. The excesses of the Ben Ali family are growing.”⁸⁶

The reference to the tiger in the cable alludes to caged tiger that the couple had on the compound, which reminded ambassador Godec of Uday Hussein and his infamous lion cage. Needless to say, this is clearly a very unfavourable comparison.

Overall, the conspicuous consumption of the ruling elite in Tunisia made their corruption appear even more egregious. This is evident in several of the chants during the uprising, such as: “Trabelsis spare some bread for the poor” and “Leila the hairdresser, the thief of the orphans’ money”. Juxtaposed with the poverty of the many Tunisians, the extravagance of the Trabelsis, now became particularly despicable. Similarly, the conspicuous consumption of the Ben Ali family also helped to focus attention on Ben Ali and his extended family. It therefore helped to frame corruption in a more adversarial manner, with the Ben Ali’s being identified as the primary cause of corruption. This helps to explain targeted looting of many of the extended family’s palaces during and after the uprising.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Robert F. Godec, “Tunisia: Dinner with Sakher El Materi” cable dated 27 June 2009, and published by Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09TUNIS516_a.html

⁸⁷ Elanor Beardsley, Tunisians Loot Lavish Homes of Former Ruling Clan,” *National Public Radio* 18 January 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/18/133029178/Looted-Mansions-Become-Tunisian-Tourist-Spots>

Regime Type

Although still an authoritarian regime, Tunisia is a republican-style autocracy that incorporates republican features. The republican nature of the authoritarian regime had implications for the framing of corruption, affecting both the conception and attribution of corruption.

Regarding the conception of corruption, the republican structure made corruption more likely to be viewed as unjust. First, the legitimacy of the Ben Ali regime was based on “programs of modernization and development, supplemented by various forms of constitutional and electoral arrangements designed to give the appearance of a new republican legal order based on popular will.”⁸⁸ Similar to the legitimating ideology of authoritarian developmentalist states in such as Singapore and China, the Ben Ali regime based much of its legitimacy on its ability to improve living standards and to modernize the Tunisian economy. The failure to deliver on the regime’s developmentalist goals to provide economic goods undermined the developmentalist ideology. This was exacerbated, however, by the cronyism and nepotism by the elite. Not only had the regime failed to sufficiently deliver its economic goals, but it had done so due to the rapacity of the elite; the regime had stolen and embezzled the economic gains it had promised. Secondly, given the formalization of constitutional and electoral arrangements in the republican system, the use of neopatrimonialism to engender support can be more delegitimizing. Although the distribution of patronage through clientelist networks is an important mechanism of procuring regime support, it also tends to conflict with, and therefore undermine, the legal-rational principles of a republican system. Although the regime tried to create the impression of a republican legal order, corruption and neopatrimonialism undermined this illusion.

⁸⁸ Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 61

In addition to undermining the legitimating ideology of the republican system, the republican regime type made it harder for key figures in the regime – like the president – to disassociate from corruption at all levels of government. The structure of a presidential system is more vertically organized and has a clear hierarchy with the president at the top. As noted by Erdle: “Ben Ali’s regime is... characterized by a hub-and-spokes structure which makes him the undisputed axle of the political system. All command chains in the Tunisian state actually emanate from the president and likewise converge toward him.”⁸⁹ There was a clearer chain of command linking local officials – such as the police and lowly government bureaucrats – to the regime. As such, key figures within the regime were blamed for encouraging (or at least failing to prevent) petty corruption. The republican regime type therefore also helped to frame corruption in a more adversarial manner, with Ben Ali and the Trabelsis widely seen as the root cause of corruption within the country.

The Political Salience of Grievances about Corruption in Tunisia

As this chapter has argued, the type of corruption, the macroeconomic conditions, the prevalence of conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite, and the republican structure of the authoritarian regime helped to make the political salience of corruption high in Tunisia. These variables affected the conception, attribution, and resonance of corruption.

First, regarding the conception of corruption, corruption was clearly viewed as intolerable and unjust. Both petty corruption by local officials and the large-scale cronyism and nepotism by the elite were framed as being intolerable and unjust. This is most evident in the discourse during the uprising, which juxtaposed the corruption and repression of the regime with the themes of justice, dignity, and respect. Although it is difficult to precisely measure and assess how corruption was popularly conceptualized within Tunisia, the

⁸⁹ Erdle, *Ben Ali’s New Tunisia*, 176

preponderance of evidence – from Bouazizi’s self-immolation to the discourse on corruption both before and during the Arab Spring – demonstrates that corruption was conceptualized as being intolerable and unjust.

Second, regarding the attribution of corruption, corruption was clearly associated with the regime. The series of US diplomatic cables written by the American ambassador to Tunisia between 2008 and 2009 – released by WikiLeaks – highlight the widespread perception that the regime was responsible for corruption. For example, a cable written in 2008 states:

The numerous stories of familial corruption are certainly galling to many Tunisians, but beyond the rumors of money-grabbing is a frustration that the well-connected can live outside the law. One Tunisian lamented that Tunisia was no longer a police state, it had become a state run by the mafia. "Even the police report to the Family!" he exclaimed.⁹⁰

The terms the mafia and the family refer directly to Ben Ali and his extend family, and in particular the family of his wife, Leila Trabelsi. As the cable elaborates, “President Ben Ali’s extended family is often cited as the nexus of Tunisian corruption. Often referred to as a quasi-mafia, an oblique mention of "the Family" is enough to indicate which family you mean.”⁹¹ Corruption, at all levels, was attributed to the regime. This helps to explain how the self-immolation of a street-vendor over largely local grievances can transform into a national movement directed at, in part, the corruption of the regime.

Finally, grievances with corruption also resonated widely, and with important demographics. Evident by the heterogenous participation in the Tunisia uprising, corruption resonated with: individuals who were frequently harassed for bribes, small and medium sized businesses who had been disadvantaged by rampant cronyism and nepotism, as well as local

⁹⁰ Robert F. Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia: What’s yours is mine” cable dated 23 June 2008, and published by WikiLeaks <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/06/08TUNIS679.html>

⁹¹ Ibid.

and national unions and professional organizations. Mekouar has noted the striking importance of the participation of intermediate actors – such as UGTT, Tunisian lawyers, as well as business owners – in facilitating the uprising. For example, the largely unexpected participation of business owners in the demonstrations in the city of Sfax at the beginning of January “concretely signaled the universalities of discontent in the country’s second largest city.”⁹² Grievances with corruption did not just resonate with a small and more-or-less politically powerless section of the Tunisia population; rather, grievances resonated widely, including with politically powerful intermediate actors.

⁹² Merouan Mekouar, “Why Small Things Matter? The Micro-Dynamics of Informational Cascades in North Africa.” (PhD Dissertation, McGill University, 2013), 58.

Chapter 3: Morocco

Introduction

Corruption has been a constant feature of Moroccan politics, underpinning the entire political system. Indeed, corruption indicators have consistently shown Morocco to be one of the most corrupt Arab states. Given the high level of corruption within Morocco, it is unsurprising that over the last few decades, corruption has become a continuous political issue. Nevertheless, despite having a relatively high level of corruption compared to other Arab states and although corruption has been a constant political issue, corruption did not seem as politically salient in Morocco. As this chapter will demonstrate, the political salience of corruption in Morocco was only moderate. It will be argued that this can ultimately be attributed to factors that more positively framed corruption as well as the ability of the regime to co-opt important actors using intermediate-level patronage.

This chapter will be divided into four sections. The first section will briefly overview the politics of corruption in Morocco. The second section will examine the types of corruption that were prominent in Morocco, showing how, by both co-opting important actors and affecting how corruption is framed, the more inclusionary and complex patronage network that underpins the entire Moroccan political system made corruption a less salient issue. The third section will examine how the poor macroeconomic situation, the conspicuous consumption of the ruling elite, and the monarchical structure of the authoritarian regime all affected the framing of corruption. These intervening variables had a diverse and conflicting range of effects. The final section will overview the political salience of corruption in Morocco, highlighting how the previously examined independent and intervening variables ultimately affected the conception, attribution, and resonance of grievances about corruption.

The Politics of Corruption in Morocco

As seen in Table 4, both the World Bank and Transparency International indicators have consistently shown Morocco to be a very corrupt country.⁹³ Given the history and extent of corruption within Morocco, it is not surprising that corruption has been a constant political issue for decades. This is evident in the machinations of Moroccan politics. For example, in response to both the changing international system brought about by the end of the Cold War and domestic political discontent that was leading to greater support for Islamist parties within Morocco, King Hassan II embarked on a slow process of political liberalization. Although the cornerstone of this political liberalization was to improve human rights and, in a controlled manner, enhance opportunities for political participation by parties and civil society, part of Hassan's reforms were also targeted – at least rhetorically – at curbing corruption. After a 1995 World Bank report on Morocco that lambasted government corruption and its negative effect on foreign investment and development, King Hassan introduced several reforms. Indeed, “in the last year of his reign the king permitted the formation of a network of associations committed to the fight against corruption, presented a report to parliament on a major social security embezzlement scheme, and announced a “good management pact” for reform of the civil service.”⁹⁴ Although the actual impact of these reforms were negligible to non-existent, it did mark a turning point in which corruption was acknowledged by the regime and could be more freely discussed publicly. In 1998, the regime granted legal status to Transparency International's Morocco chapter, *Transparency Maroc*, which had been working illegally for the previous two years.⁹⁵

⁹³ It is important to note that changes in the level of corruption should not be compared across time, due to the methodological changes used to calculate the level of corruption from year to year. However, as Table 4 underscores, corruption has been a consistent feature in Morocco.

⁹⁴ Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, *Morocco: From Top-down Reform to democratic Transition?* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 7.

⁹⁵ James N. Slater, *Civil society and political change in Morocco*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 92

Table 4: Corruption in Morocco

	Transparency International's <i>Corruption Perception Index</i> (CPI) Score	CPI Rank	World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) – Control of Corruption Score	WGI – Control of Corruption Rank (Percentile)
1996	–	–	0.33	65.4
2002	3.7	52/102	- 0.18	53.2
2007	3.5	72/179	- 0.32	47.6
2010	3.4	85/178	- 0.18	53.3

Note: Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index is a measure of corruption based on perceptions of corruption. It is an aggregate indicator that incorporates different sources of information on corruption, such as expert assessments and business opinion surveys. A country's score indicates the aggregate perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0-10, with 0 representing a country that is perceived as highly corrupt and 10 representing a country that is perceived as very clean. The World Bank Control of Corruption Score captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption. It is measured on a scale of -2.5 (very corrupt) to +2.5 (not corrupt).

Sources: Transparency International Corruption Perception Index; World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators.

The importance of corruption as a political issue in Morocco can also be seen in the political platforms of various political parties, and in particular, Islamist political parties. A key strategy that Islamist political parties, such as the Justice and Development Party (PJD), have used to bolster their electoral support is to propagate the image that Islamist politicians are incorruptible. As noted by Wenger, “the central axis of the PJD’s message was what it called the “moralization of the public and public institutions” – in essence, fighting corruption and clientelism as well as increasing legislators’ work ethic.”⁹⁶

Although popular discontent with corruption has existed for decades, grievances about corruption have only really manifested in the comparatively subdued outburst of protests within Morocco during the Arab Spring. Although the uprising in Morocco, known as the February 20th movement, was smaller and was clearly less destabilizing than it was in both Tunisia and Egypt, it did nonetheless constitute a threat – albeit, not an exceedingly serious threat – to the monarchical regime. Like the other uprisings throughout the Arab world, the protests in Morocco centered a variety of grievances. And, like Tunisia and Egypt,

⁹⁶ Eva Wenger, *Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 102

corruption was undoubtedly a central grievance motivating the protesters. However, while the February 20 movement certainly constituted a threat to the monarchical regime, it was neither as large nor as destabilizing as its counterparts in other Arab countries. As noted by Mekouar, while “Moroccans shared many of the grievances that led their Tunisian and Egyptian neighbors to overthrow their respective leaders, the general population had seemed to far unwilling to push for meaning political reform or to question the absolute leadership of the monarchy.”⁹⁷

Type of Corruption:

Corruption has been and remains endemic in Morocco. Describing corruption in Morocco, Denoeux states:

Corruption is ubiquitous in all its dimensions and manifestations: petty as well as grand, in business transactions as well as in the country's political life, in the private sector as much as throughout the government bureaucracy, in daily human interactions as well as at critical junctures in the country's public life (e.g., during elections), and at the national and local levels alike.⁹⁸

This section will overview two prominent types corruption within Morocco, detailing how their specific features affected the overall destabilizing nature of corruption grievances. Elite-level cronyism within the monarchy will be examined first, followed by an examination of more intermediate-level patronage. Although there remains significant cronyism within Morocco, which appears to have been growing since the ascension of Mohamed VI to the throne, the monarchy and the *Makhzen* also sustain and incredibly dense, complex, and integrative patronage network. The distribution of intermediate-level and integrative patronage, which is distributed largely on strategic interests, must ultimately be contrasted

⁹⁷ Merouan Mekouar, “Morocco,” in *Dispatches from the Arab Spring*, ed. Paul Amar and Vijay Prashad (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013): 135-136.

⁹⁸ Guilain P. Denoeux, “Corruption in Morocco: Old Forces, New Dynamics and a Way Forward,” *Middle East Policy* 14 no. 4 (2007): 134.

with the exclusionary and elite-level cronyism that is driven more by greed and kleptomania. Overall, the existence of an extensive patronage network proved decisive in mitigating the political salience of corruption, particularly by its ability to help shield the monarchy from accusations of corruption and in its ability to co-opt important intermediate actors.

Elite-Level Cronyism

To begin with, the cronyism in Morocco can be seen in the blurring of the political sphere and the business sphere, in which the King, high-ranking members within government, and the *Makhzen* are able to take advantage of their political positions to personally enrich themselves. The *Makhzen* – which translates from Moroccan Arabic to “the storehouse,” where goods offered to or expropriated by the monarchy’s representatives were stored – is a term that has become synonymous with the ruling elite in Morocco. Cronyism, by the King and the *Makhzen*, has and remains a prominent feature of the Moroccan political economy.

Since independence, the monarchy has been the country’s largest landholder and has been intricately involved in the management of businesses in all sectors of the economy – including agriculture, telecommunications, banking, and real estate.⁹⁹ As such, has been a common feature within Morocco. For example, many of the benefits from the economic reforms and liberalization during the 1990s accrued to business and government elites.¹⁰⁰ Cronyism was certainly present during the state privatization and economic liberalization that occurred during the reign of Hassan II. However, while Hassan II and members of the *Makhzen* were able to profit significantly from their positions of power, the central logic of

⁹⁹ Denoeux, “Corruption in Morocco,” 136-137

¹⁰⁰ Azzedine Layachi, “Economic Reform and Elusive Political Change in Morocco,” in *North Africa in Transition: State, Society, and Economic Transformation in the 1990s* ed. Yahia H. Zoubir (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 50

corruption and the distribution of spoils centered on the preservation of the monarchy and the Moroccan political system; despite some predation, corruption was largely strategic – used co-opt opposition and secure loyalty.

Although it was initially thought that Mohamed VI was even more disinterested in business than his father and that the Palace might begin to withdraw from their dominant role in Moroccan business, politics and business have become even more intertwined under Mohamed VI. Deneoux noted how, since 2004, “the Moroccan press has reported extensively, and with concern, about what it often refers to as the ambiance of *affairisme* (a word that conveys an excessive preoccupation with business and profit-making, bordering on greed and unencumbered by ethical or legal considerations) that prevails within the royal entourage.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, although the activities of the Palace remain relatively secret, as the monarchy has been comparatively effective in obfuscating its corrupt activities, the increasing cronyism by the monarchy remains evident. Between 2001 and 2006, the Palace budget increased by 36 percent, significantly higher than the increase in the budget of other government agencies – such as the ministry of health, whose budget only increased 23 percent. As of 2006, the Palace budget equaled the money allocated to the Moroccan department of Justice.¹⁰²

As well, the monarchy owns a majority share of the largest private financial and industrial conglomerate, Omnium Nord Africain (ONA), which has since been merged with the private holding company controlled by the Palace, Société Nationale d'Investissement (SNI). A 2009 cable from the US consulate in Casablanca, released by Wikileaks, helps to reveal the extent and nature of cronyism in Morocco. The cable relays

¹⁰¹ Deneoux, “Corruption in Morocco,” 138

¹⁰² Anouar Boukhars, *Politics In Morocco: Executive Monarchy and Enlightened Authoritarianism*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 59

information from a prominent Moroccan entrepreneur, Baha Eddine Shanableh, discussing the challenges of business in Morocco. As described in the cable, conglomerates controlled by the palace, “such as the royal family’s holding company, Omnium Nord Africaine (ONA), which now clears most large development projects, regularly coerce developers into granting beneficial rights to ONA.”¹⁰³ The coercion and extortion described is indicative of the growing business interests of the King and those close to him. Indeed, the 2009 book, *Le Roi Predateur*, written by French journalists Catherine Graciet and Eric Laurent, provides a fervent condemnation of the Palace’s cronyism, detailing several examples of the palace’s corruption and the increasing overlap between business and politics in Morocco.¹⁰⁴

Intermediate-Level Patronage and the Dense Web of Patron-Client Relations in Morocco

Although cronyism certainly exists in Morocco and although it appears to have become more prominent under Mohamed VI, corruption in Morocco has and remains defined by the extensive, complex, and more intermediate-level patronage network. Again, while it can be difficult to clearly distinguish between the distribution intermediate-level and inclusionary patronage with elite and exclusionary cronyism, it nonetheless remains important to emphasize the expansiveness and inclusionary nature of the distribution of patronage in Morocco. While the King remains the ultimate patron, this network extends throughout Moroccan society, linking the Palace to various individuals and associations.

In order to fully appreciate the role that the distribution of patronage plays within the current Moroccan state, it is necessary to briefly examine the historical context from which it emerged. Extending back to the 17th century, the Moroccan Alaouite dynasty has historically governed with the support of the *Makhzen*. Both the recipient of and the network

¹⁰³ Elisabeth Millard, “Palace Coercion Plagues Morocco’s Real Estate Sector,” cable dated 11 December 2009, and published by Wikileaks, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09CASABLANCA226_a.html

¹⁰⁴ See Catherine Graciet and Eric Laurent, *The Predatory King*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2012).

through which the monarchy distributed patronage, the *Makhzen* has traditionally been the central pillar supporting the monarchy – providing the “administrative structure, legal framework and military manpower [necessary] to extend the Moroccan sultans’ authority over self-governing tribes.”¹⁰⁵ From its inception, much of the monarchy’s authority emanated from the *Makhzen*, and the patron-client network that it facilitates.

Although in many ways French colonialism dramatically changed the political and administrative structures within Morocco, it largely preserved many of the traditional hierarchical structures. In contrast to the assimilative colonialism that occurred in neighbouring Algeria, the French approach to their Moroccan protectorate (1912-1956) placed a strong emphasis on preserving and augmenting, but not abolishing, traditional patron-client networks.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the initial colonial administrator of the French protectorate, Resident-General Hubert Lyautey, actively sought to “win the allegiance of Moroccan notables.”¹⁰⁷ Specifically, the French began to cultivate greater ties between the monarchy and rural notables, who had traditionally fallen outside of the direct control of the Moroccan monarchy. The traditional constituency of the monarchy was the urban bourgeoisie. The rural notables – known as the *bilad as-siba* – had traditionally fallen outside of the control of the monarchy. As noted by Waterbury in his seminal study of the evolution of the Moroccan political elite, the French “altered this system fundamentally, first by bringing the *bilad as-siba* under the authority of the *makhzen*, and second by attributing

¹⁰⁵ Abdeslam Maghraoui, “Political Authority in Crisis: Mohamed VI’s Morocco,” *Middle East Research and Information Project* no. 218. http://www.merip.org/mer/mer218/political-authority-crisis#_1_

¹⁰⁶ See: James Liddell, “Notable, clientelism and the politics of change in Morocco,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 15, no. 3 (2010): 316. doi: 10.1080/13629380903175438; John P. Entelis, *Comparative Politics of North Africa*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980), 28; and Clement Henry Moore, *Politics in North Africa: Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia*, (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1970), 44

¹⁰⁷ Abdellah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 121.

permanent competence to the local notables (shayks, muqadims, quids).”¹⁰⁸ To expand the power of the Moroccan state, the French sought to “cultivate a new class of rural, predominately Berber notables by augmenting their property holdings – anchoring their influence through cultural symbols of prestige.”¹⁰⁹ In essence, enshrining the centrality of patronage within the Moroccan state, the French buttressed the traditional sources of support and cultivated new ones.

When the French protectorate ended in 1956, King Mohammed V, the father of Moroccan independence, further strengthened and preserved these inherited patron-client structures. The modern Moroccan state constitutes a sophisticated neopatrimonial system, wherein government jobs, state resources, and other forms of wealth and power are distributed to secure loyalty, co-opt opposition, and to lubricate patron-client networks.

Due to the secretive and often illicit nature of patronage, specific details on the distribution on patronage remains relatively sparse. Nevertheless, scholars have continually pointed to the centrality of the patronage to the Moroccan political system. Waterbury notes the dependency that defines the relationship between the Palace and important political actors: “...the monarchy underscores its supremacy within the system by constantly spawning new relationship of dependency between itself and various sectors of society. Dependency is maintained by manipulating access to various kinds of administrative prebends.” Similarly, Hammoudi notes the relationship between the limited political autonomy of important political actors – such as unions and political parties – with the existence of a dense patronage network headed by the King. Hammoudi states:

The gradual weakening of political parties and unions – through repression of those seeking change and the co-opting of elites devoted to the system – is also characteristic of this postcolonial order. A civilian network emerged, alongside the makhzen and the

¹⁰⁸ Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful*, 112

¹⁰⁹ Liddell, “Notable, clientelism and the politics of change in Morocco,” 316

military network. The king acted in such a way as to maintain rivalry between the networks and to appear as both indispensable mediator and unique source of favors and prebends, which were bestowed as rewards for political service.¹¹⁰

The favours and prebends that clients of the Palace can expect vary; they include advantages such as privileged access to state licenses, control over the provision of local services or goods, access to lavish government positions, assistance in bypassing regulations and expediting applications through the bloated government bureaucracy, and various other advantages that derive from having privileged access to the legislative and executive branches.¹¹¹ While a detailed examination of the distribution of patronage in Morocco is beyond the scope of this paper (although it is worthy of increased scholarly attention), it is worth briefly examining how patronage has been used to mediate the relationship between the palace and important political actors – such as political parties, business elites, Islamist groups, and NGOs.

Regarding political parties, the multiparty system in Morocco successfully preserves the prerogatives of the Palace, while also providing an arena where different interest groups can compete for influence. Following coup attempts in the early 1970s, King Hassan signed a new more liberalized constitution that, while maintaining the powers of the Palace, also called for elections at both the local and national level. As detailed extensively by Lust-Okar, by using a combination of repression and patronage, the monarchy under King Hassan successfully created a divided political environment where loyalist and radicals could be identified.¹¹² Nationalist opposition parties that fell into the loyalist camp – such as Istaqal – were incorporated into the political process and rewarded with the spoils of state patronage. The radicals – such as the socialist Union Nationale des Forces Populaire (UNFP) – were

¹¹⁰ Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, 32-33

¹¹¹ Mekouar, “Morocco,” 140

¹¹² Ellen Lust-Okar, “Divided they Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition,” *Comparative Politics* 36 no. 2 (2004): 160

persecuted and barred from formal political participation. Political power and influence was only bestowed upon parties that have been at least somewhat co-opted, and which therefore had limited incentive to try and dramatically reform the political system.

The inclusion of co-opted opposition continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, reaching an important point with the formation of a socialist opposition government in 1998. Called the *Alternance*, the socialist opposition leader Abderrahman Youssefi of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) served as prime minister from 1998-2002. The USFP formed as a breakaway from the more radical socialist opposition party the UNFP in 1975, whose members and leadership had a various times been repressed in an attempt to temper and neutralize their opposition to the monarchy. After receiving a plurality of seats in the 1997 national election, King Hassan appointed UNFP leader Abderrahmane Youssefi as prime minister. Although initially heralded as revolutionary turning point in the democratization of Morocco, the party had been sufficiently co-opted so that it posed not threat to the authoritarian regime. Indeed, the formation of a USFP government “did not signify true democratization nor did it provide the USFP with a plausibly autonomous role in governing. Instead, the move badly damaged the image of the party, dispelling illusions that Morocco’s long-time opposition remained outside of the same logic of the system.”¹¹³

The co-optation and inclusion of opposition parties has continued under Mohamed VI, with the moderate Islamist PJD playing an increasingly prominent role in government, even leading the government after the Arab Spring in 2011. As argued by Mekouar, the Islamist Justice and Development party (PJD) “appears to be a clearly co-opted party anxious not to anger the authorities and willing to do the impossible to accommodate the

¹¹³ Liddell, “Notable, clientelism and the politics of change in Morocco,” 319

monarchy.”¹¹⁴ Although the co-optation of opposition political parties has been achieved through a larger strategy of *divide et impera*, which includes the use of both repression and patronage, it is nonetheless essential to emphasize the pivotal importance of the distribution of political patronage within the Moroccan system.

Patronage has also been prudently used to co-opt other important actors. For example, the economic liberalization that occurred in the 1990s created a new generation of business entrepreneurs who were seemingly less connected to and less reliant upon the monarchy than the established business elite.¹¹⁵ However, although more autonomous than the existing business elite, Catusse argues that the new entrepreneurial elite remains deeply embedded in existing patronage networks and a system dependent on connections and reciprocity; consequently, they have little interest in challenging the status quo and reforming the political system.¹¹⁶ The overwhelming majority of entrepreneurs that have entered Moroccan politics have done so on parties independent of, yet allied with, the palace. Attempts by business leaders to create new more oppositional parties have had limited electoral success.¹¹⁷ Additionally, Cavatorta has noted how the Moroccan monarchy has successfully divided and co-opted influential Islamist associations. Similar to strategy employed with political parties, the monarchy has employed a *divide et impera* strategy, employing a combination of repression and patronage that isolates and excludes the more radical groups

¹¹⁴ Merouan Mekouar, “Moroccan Islamists: All the Taste, Half the Calories,” (Chicago: Midwest Political Science Association meeting, April 2010), 7.

¹¹⁵ Michael Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 248.
Politics and Power in the Maghreb, 248

¹¹⁶ Myriam Catusse, “Acteurs Prives, Action Publique. Patronat et Politique au Maroc” in *La Societe Civile au Maroc: L’emergence de Nouveaux Acteurs de Developpement*. ed. Maria-Angels Roque. (Paris: Publisud, 2004), 167, 177.

¹¹⁷ Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb*, 248

while simultaneously including and empowering the more deferential and loyal groups.¹¹⁸ For example, while the monarchy excludes the more radical Jamiat al-adl Islamist association, it includes and rewards its more moderate rival, the Tariqa Boutchichiya Islamist association.

Indeed, Cavatorta notes:

The monarchy accordingly entertains privileged relations with the Tariqa and its leaders. This alliance is possible because the Tariqa does not challenge the *imarat al mouminine* [that is, the Kings religious legitimacy as Commander of the faithful and the descendent of the prophet Mohammed] and does not believe that the association should be directly engaged in politics, but should instead only be concerned with the betterment of its individual members. The king therefore supports the Tariqa in order to strengthen his religious legitimacy and to have privileged access to the religious bourgeoisie that the association represents. In exchange, the Tariqa enjoys freedom from scrutiny and occasionally obtains political favours like the royal appointment of the leader's son to the post of governor of the Berkane province.¹¹⁹

The distribution of patronage clearly extends beyond just politicians, as the monarchy is able to influence and co-opt other important members of civil society.

Finally, as seen in Table 5, according to the 2006 Arab Barometer Survey, 39 percent of Moroccan respondents had used *Wasta* to achieve something personal in the past five years. *Wasta* refers to the use of personal, familial, or tribal connections. It can be thought of as a type of nepotism whereby an individual receives special treatment based on their connections. The high level of *wasta* use within Morocco, compared to other Arab countries, emphasizes the extent to which clientelism and the trading of favours permeates all level of Moroccan society; patronage and corruption trickle down throughout Moroccan society.

Table 5: Used Wasta within the Last Five Years (2006)

	Morocco	Jordan	Algeria	Lebanon	Yemen	Palestine
Yes	39 %	22 %	29 %	19 %	33 %	16 %
No	58 %	77 %	62 %	79 %	56 %	84 %
Don't know / Decline to answer	3 %	1 %	8 %	1 %	10 %	0 %

Source: Arab Barometer Survey, Wave 1 (2006)

¹¹⁸ Francesco Cavatorta, "More than Repression: The Significance of Divide et Impera in the Middle East and North Africa – The Case of Morocco," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25, no. 2 (2007): 198

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 198-199.

The Efficacy of Intermediate-Level Patronage in Morocco

The type of corruption in Morocco helps to explain why the political salience of corruption was only moderate, and why corruption was ultimately less salient than in Tunisia. Despite the increasing level of cronyism under Mohamed VI, the use of intermediate-level patronage affected how corruption was framed and how effectively corruption co-opted important actors. Specifically, corruption within the country was generally not blamed on the monarchy and corruption grievances did not particularly resonate with important intermediate actors.

To begin with, the extent to which almost everyone in the political sphere was entangled within this expansive patronage network affected the attribution of corruption. Despite being the fountainhead of corruption within Morocco, blame for corruption was diffused throughout the entire political system. While the cronyism of Mohamed VI's entourage did make them targets during the February 20th uprising, for the most part, blame for corruption was spread between different political actors – including the more nebulous *Makhzen*, highly visible politicians, members of parliament, and government bureaucrats. The pervasive and diffuse nature of patronage within Morocco helps to account for why blame for corruption was more diffused throughout the political system, rather than accumulating at the top of the regime.

Second, although greed seems to driving the increase in cronyism under Mohamed VI, the central logic driving corruption has been, and remains (although to a lesser extent), strategic. Patronage has been used to co-opt opposition and to secure loyalty. For the most part, intermediate actors – including the business elite, prominent political parties, and religious and rural notables – stood firmly in support of the status quo, supporting the monarchy and King's modest reforms. The most compelling explanation for the quiescence

and continued support of many of the country's intermediate actors is that they had been successfully co-opted by the regime; they were beneficiaries of the clientelist structure of the political system.

Moreover, in comparison to Tunisia, it is noteworthy the degree to which the regime tried to win the support of the rank and file in various organizations, rather than just co-opting the elite. In the wake of uprisings elsewhere in the Arab World, Desrues has noted the monarchy's strategy of "preventative management," in which it took numerous measures to shore up the support of various influential actors in order to prevent a domino effect. For example, the regime increased subsidies on basic food products, it promised hires in the public service to the movement of unemployed graduates, it resumed a dialogue with the country's main unions, and it tried to placate members in the PJD (which was then the leading opposition party) by releasing one of its imprisoned leaders who was serving a terrorism charge.¹²⁰ The measures adopted by the regime demonstrate its adept ability to co-opt and pacify potentially destabilizing opposition. Despite the fact that ultimate authority remains concentrated in the monarchy, by including various groups in the political process and by making concessions – albeit, oftentimes superficial concessions – the regime has been able to contain grievances about corruption; it has been able to limit the degree to which anger about corruption resonates with influential groups in Morocco.

Although the inclusive and strategic use of the regime's patronage helps to explain why corruption was framed as more of a general social malaise and why grievances about corruption did not resonate with influential intermediate actors, it is important not to overstate or generalize these claims. During the February 20th movement, while there were relatively few direct accusations that Mohamed VI was corrupt, many of his entourage and

¹²⁰ Thierry Desrues, "Le Mouvement du 20 février et le régime marocain : contestation, révision constitutionnelle et élections," *L'Année du Maghreb* VII 2012. <http://anneemaghreb.revues.org/1537>

members of the *Makhzen* were targeted. Several chants during the movement focused on the blurring of the political and business spheres by the *Makhzen*, with chants targeting specific members of the King's entourage - such Fouad Ali El Himma and Mounir Majidi, two of the King's childhood friends.¹²¹ Similarly, although intermediate actors remained relatively quiescent during the February 20th movement, “a notable presence in the demonstration were several major businessmen, specifically ones who had long complained of being excluded from and disadvantage by the cosy relationship between the traditional business elites and the palace.”¹²² Keeping these caveats in mind, corruption was, on the whole, not attributed to the monarchy and most intermediate actors remained firmly in support of the status quo.

Intervening Variables: A mixed bag of effects

This section will show how other factors also affected how corruption was framed in Morocco. It will demonstrate that the macroeconomic conditions in Morocco, the conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite, and the monarchical structure of the regime all also affected the framing of corruption. These intervening variables had a diverse and conflicting range of effects, with some amplifying and others attenuating the political salience of corruption.

Macroeconomic Conditions

Despite a series of economic reforms implemented at the behest of the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the economic situation in Morocco remained poor. In 2010, with a population over 31 million, Morocco had a GDP per capita of \$2,700

¹²¹ Mekouar, *Dispatches from the Arab Spring*, 144-145.

¹²² Willis, *Politics and power in the Maghreb*, 249-250.

(US), thereby making it one of the poorest Arab states.¹²³ Moreover, although economic growth in the 2000s was more robust and more stable than it was in the 1980s and 1990s, it still lagged significantly compared to both other Arab states and other developing countries. Between 1998 and 2006, economic growth in Morocco was only a paltry 2.4 percent. While average GDP growth increased to 4.9 percent between 2006-2010, economic growth in 2010 remained only 3.6 percent. In addition to only modest economic growth, unemployment remained high. While unemployment declined from 13.4 percent in 2000 to 9.1 percent in 2009, many Moroccans continued to be underemployed or employed in the informal sectors, often lacking in any kind of social or economic security.¹²⁴ Moreover, unemployment figures varied significantly depending on region and demographics; indeed, the unemployment rate for college graduate is over 45 percent, and the unemployment rate for people under 29 in urban areas is estimated to exceed 70 percent.¹²⁵

Overall, with such poor economic conditions, it is not surprising that corruption has been, and remains, a serious political issue within Morocco. The dire economic situation – including extensive poverty and unemployment – affected the framing of corruption. The abysmal economic situation of millions of Moroccans (and in particular, of unemployed young people) likely has made corruption appear to be more unjust. The poor economic situation makes acts of corruption seem particularly egregious, thereby helping to make corruption a more destabilizing and serious political issue.

¹²³ The World Bank, World Development Indicators (2015).
<http://databank.worldbank.org/data//reports.aspx?source=2&country=MAR&series=&period=>

¹²⁴ Mekouar, “Morocco,” 149

¹²⁵ Boukhars, *Politics In Morocco: Executive Monarchy and Enlightened Authoritarianism*, 30-31

Conspicuous Consumption:

Conspicuous consumption is certainly prominent in Morocco. King Mohamed VI, for example, possesses 12 palaces, and the employees working at these palaces – including gardeners, servants, and cooks – cost about \$70 million (US) per year. The King also owns 30 additional private residences.¹²⁶ The King is also known to have partiality for luxury and sports cars. He is a premier client of Ferrari, and reportedly chartered a Moroccan military plane to transport his Austin Martin DB7 to England, to expedite its repair.¹²⁷

In addition to the conspicuous consumption of the King, there are also exclusive neighbourhoods in Morocco's large cities – such as the Gueliz and Nakheel neighbourhoods in Marrakech, the Riyadh and Zaer Street neighbourhoods in Rabat, and the Anfa and Ain al-Dhizb neighbourhoods in Casablanca. Located in tourist areas and largely away from the eyes of everyday Moroccans, this is where the rich and privileged reside. As described by Benaziz in *Al Monitor*: “Here the streets are as wide as football fields. There are long rows of villas, lines of luxury cars, greenery as far as the eye can see... There are walls embellished with stone, each higher than the other, reflecting the influence of the residents and concealing what they own.”¹²⁸

While conspicuous consumption is certainly present, it should still be noted the extent to which the wealthy still attempt to legitimize their wealth and excesses. As described by Benaziz:

[T]he majority of them make great efforts to "legitimize" their wealth so that it doesn't look undeserved. They boast about their abilities, inter-marry with old families, and establish sports associations, because the masses love sports. They join political parties that are loyal to the authorities. And when someone from a rich neighborhood wants to win in the elections, he doesn't run for office in his own area. Those who are like

¹²⁶ Catherine Graciet and Eric Laurent, *The Predatory King*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2012), 11

¹²⁷ Graciet and Laurent, *The Predatory King*, 11-12.

¹²⁸ Mohammad Benziz, “The Secret World of Morocco’s Super Rich,” *al Monitor*, 10 November 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/culture/2013/11/morocco-wealthy-class-rich.html>

him will not vote for him; they don't need him. Thus, he runs in the poorest neighborhood, preferably in the countryside, where it is easy for him to show off his generosity.¹²⁹

Similarly, while acknowledging the wealth and privilege of the *Makhzen* and the increasing resentment of the *Makhzen* by the general population, Jamal also notes the savvy strategy employed by beneficiaries of royal patronage in order to limit the alienation of the population at large. As noted by Jamal:

The beneficiaries of the *makhzen* are called *khadims* – the king's personal servants. In return for their service, *khadims* become the primary purveyors of centralized authoritarian power. The ideal *khadim* is both loyal and discreet. Discretion implies the *khadim* neither outperforms the heroic deeds of the king nor flaunts his material wealth publicly in ways that embarrass the regime. And although the *khadim* does engage in corrupt dealing, he should be careful not to leave a trace.¹³⁰

Additionally, as will be discussed later in greater detail, King Mohamed VI has also successfully cultivated an image as the “King of the Poor” – presenting himself as a pious, humble, and modest King. In sum, ostentatious displays of wealth are certainly prevalent in Morocco and they clearly have an adverse affect – leading to greater polarization and resentment between the wealthy beneficiaries of corruption and the rest of society. That being said, it should be noted the efforts that have been taken to avoid – or at least mitigate – widespread public resentment.

Regime Type

Although the actual power and role of the Moroccan King in many ways mirrors that of their republican counterparts, both King Hassan II and Mohamed VI have been very successful in obfuscating their role in the distribution of patronage and corruption. This can be partially explained by the image of the King as the supreme arbitrator among different

¹²⁹ Benziz, “The Secret World of Morocco’s Super Rich,”

¹³⁰ Amaney A. Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 103.

political factions and interest groups. By allowing warring factions to compete in parliament, the King is able to rise above politics and to more convincingly deflect criticism and popular anger onto politicians and political parties. After ascending to the throne in 1999, King Mohamed VI shrewdly defined Morocco as an “executive constitutional monarchy,” simultaneously trying to bolster the democratic nature of Morocco while also obscuring his own political role within the system. Even Gregory Gause, a prominent critic of the argument that there is something unique and inherent in monarchies that makes them more stable, concedes that the Moroccan King has succeeded in rising above petty politics. Gause states:

[The monarchy] also shrewdly allowed parliamentary politics to continue to operate throughout most of Morocco’s modern history, with the king rising above the day-to-day political struggle and playing the various factions off against each other. In that sense, Morocco is the monarchy that best approaches the ideal type of the “monarchy above society”.¹³¹

By rising above politics and using politicians and the warring factions within the Moroccan parliament as scapegoats, the monarchical structure of the regime has helped to mitigate the degree to which the monarchy is viewed as being publicly culpable for corruption.

Related to the way in which the King has been able to rise above politics and disassociate himself from corruption, corruption – or at least, various forms of patronage – does not seem to undermine legitimizing ideology of a monarchy in the same way that it does a republic. Specifically, the respective Kings of Morocco have cultivated an image as a neopatrimonial father figure of the nation. This image is significant because it enables the King to more legitimately intervene in politics and provide political patronage. For example, Mekouar notes the way in which Mohamed VI has successfully diverted accountability to the

¹³¹ F. Gregory Gause III, “Kings for All Seasons: How the Middle East’s Monarchies Survived the Arab Spring,” *Brookings Doha Center*, Analysis Paper Number 8 (2013), 25.

Moroccan parliament, while also publicly intervening when there is an opportunity to present the monarch in a favourable light:

[T]he king could act as a *deus ex machina* by unexpectedly fixing problems that the government in place had not been able to solve. Forgotten towns were swiftly connected to the electrical grid during royal visits, political prisoners were freed at the king's whim, and flashy cultural festivals with major international music stars, free of charge to the country's youth, were organized under the king's patronage.¹³²

Not bound by the rational-legal structures of a republic, the various Moroccan monarchs have able to intervene in politics based on their professed desire to ensure fairness and justice. The monarchical structure in Morocco and the image of the King as a neopatrimonial father figure, therefore, has helped to frame the corruption of the monarchs as being more legitimate and less unjust.

Miscellaneous Framing Factor: The King's Image

A final variable affecting the framing of corruption, idiosyncratic to Morocco, is the pious, humble, and progressive image that Mohamed VI has cultivated. Endearingly nicknamed the “King of the Poor,” there has also been a renewed focus under the reign of Mohamed VI on the poor and on human development.¹³³ As well, since his ascension to power in 1999, Mohamed VI has accelerated and publicized his liberalizing record – focusing on human rights, women's rights, and *Amazigh* (Berber) rights. Although the substantive nature of many of the reforms ushered in under Mohamed VI can be questioned, he has nonetheless successfully cultivated a man-of-the-people image. For example, breaking with royal protocol, he will often take his hand away if someone tries to perform the *baise-main* – that is, the formal kissing of the hand. As well, “Mohammed VI also made regular visits – well covered by the press – to popular neighborhoods, delivered

¹³² Mekouar, “Morocco,” 151

¹³³ Slater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 80

meals personally during the fasting month of Ramadan, and spearheaded a large program of social housing distribution that led to the near-total removal of shantytowns in the country.”¹³⁴ The genuine popularity of King Mohamed VI and his modest image has likely helped to further shield the monarchy from direct accusations of corruption.

The Political Salience of Corruption in Morocco

Although corruption was endemic in Morocco and although grievances about corruption were common, the political salience of corruption in Morocco was only moderate, not high. First, regarding the conception of corruption in Morocco, the available evidence indicates that corruption was conceived as being both unjust and unacceptable. Looking at the discourse around corruption during the February 20th movement, corruption was – as it was in Tunisia – discussed as being unjust and unacceptable. The movement’s slogan: “liberty, dignity, and social justice” reflected the unjust conception of the endemic corruption within Morocco. As well, there is also attitudinal survey data to indicate that Moroccans viewed a variety of different types of bribing actions to be unacceptable. In a 2008 survey conducted by Transparency International for their Global Corruption Barometer, 500 Moroccan respondents were asked to evaluate whether certain bribery-related actions constitute acceptable behaviour. As seen in Table 6, survey respondents in Morocco were much more prone to identify potentially corrupt behaviour as being unacceptable than individuals in other Arab countries surveyed in the study (as well as individuals in Western Europe). This indicates that corruption, and in particular bribery, was not tolerated in Morocco.

While Moroccans were clearly the most likely to view any kind of bribery as unacceptable, it is still interesting to note that, according to the 2006 Arab Barometer Survey,

¹³⁴ Mekouar, “Morocco,” 142-143.

Moroccans were the most likely to use *Wasta*. Although there currently does not exist sufficient data on how *Wasta* is conceptualized in Morocco, and whether it is popularly viewed as an acceptable form of behaviour or an unacceptable form of corruption, data from other countries such as Qatar have indicated “that privileged allocation on the basis of social connections is not seen as corruption... [as] corruption is generally viewed as being about bribes.”¹³⁵ Overall, while the prevalent use of *Wasta* within Morocco and the bypassing of formal institutional channels undoubtedly indicates the existence of a severe lack of trust in public institutions,¹³⁶ it may also help to legitimize and normalize clientelism.¹³⁷ In this sense, although there is significant data to substantiate that bribery was widely conceived as being both corrupt and intolerable, the widespread use of *Wasta* within Morocco could indicate that the use of nepotism and personal connections is more accepted in Morocco; however, more attitudinal data would be necessary to confirm this hypothesis that *wasta* use is seen as being more socially acceptable.

Although corruption was clearly viewed as being unjust and intolerable, the attribution of corruption helps to significantly mitigate the political salience of corruption. Corruption was not attributed to the Moroccan monarchy; importantly, the King was rarely, if ever, accused of corruption or blamed for the corruption within Morocco. Indeed, protesters during the February 20th Movement carefully avoided directly accusing the King of wrongdoing or attributing the country’s woes to the King. While there were calls for greater checks on some of the King’s entourage, the *Makhzen*, the economic elite, politicians,

¹³⁵ Lina Khatib, “Corruption in Qatar? The Link between the Governance Regime and Anti-Corruption Indicators,” Working Paper No. 40, European Research Centre for Anti- Corruption and State-Building (2013). <http://www.againstcorruption.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/WP-40-Qatar-paper.pdf>.

¹³⁶ Hana Brixi, Ellen Lust, and Michael Woolcock, “Trust, Voice, and Incentives: Learning from Local Success Stories in Service Delivery in the Middle East and North Africa,” World Bank Group (2013): 233-250

¹³⁷ Ibid, 241

and government bureaucrats, the monarchy remained relatively unscathed and insulated from direct accusations of corruption

Table 6: Tolerance of Corruption in Morocco

	Morocco		Iraq		Kuwait		Lebanon		Western Europe Average	
Is it acceptable to:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Offer a payment to a public official before issuing a license?	8%	92%	21%	67%	11%	82%	21%	8%	15%	74%
To put notes in a tipping box, after the public official has granted a license:	7%	93%	22%	65%	17%	73%	44%	55%	25%	62%
To ask someone else to help get the license and months later deliver a gift to the office annual party:	4%	94%	33%	52%	29%	58%	42%	56%	24%	60%

Note: The answers for each question in each country do not necessarily sum to 100 percent. The reason for this is that the percentage of respondents who answered either “Don’t Know” or “Refused to Answer” have not been shown in this chart, due to space constraints.

Source: Global Corruption Barometer 2008, Transparency International.

Finally, regarding the resonance of corruption grievances, although grievances with corruption were widespread, they did not appear to resonate with important intermediate actors in Morocco. Indeed, the vast majority of intermediate actors within Morocco – including important unions, influential Islamist groups, the business elite, the francophone bourgeoisie, the urban middle-class, as well as the rural religious and tribal notables – did not mobilize during the February 20th movement, remaining steadfast in their support of the monarchy and the status quo.¹³⁸ Regarding unions, although some local chapters of larger national mobilized during the February 20th movement, the main unions within Morocco – such as the Moroccan Labour Union (UMT) and the Democratic Labour Confederation

¹³⁸ Mekouar, “Why small things matter,” 188

(CDT) – remained largely quiescent.¹³⁹ Similarly, while the youth wings of the powerful non-monarchist political parties – such as the Islamist PJD and the socialist USFP – mobilized in the pro-democracy and anti-corruption movement, the leadership of these political parties maintained their support for the monarchy, showing tremendous reluctance to support the movement and even pressuring their members to boycott participating in the protests.¹⁴⁰ As noted by Okar-Lust in 2004, there “is strong evidence that Morocco’s opposition parties are capable of mobilizing the masses but unwilling to do so.”¹⁴¹

In summation, corruption was only moderately salient in Morocco. While corruption was certainly conceptualized as being intolerable and very unjust, the endemic corruption within Morocco was not attributed to the monarchical regime; furthermore, while grievances about corruption remained widespread, they did not seem to resonate with important demographics.

¹³⁹ Desrues, “Le Mouvement du 20 fevrier et le regime marocain : contestation, revision constitutionnelle et elections.”

¹⁴⁰ Mekouar, “Why small things matter,” 189.

¹⁴¹ Lust-Okar, “Divided they Rule,” 160

Chapter 4: Egypt

Introduction

As in all other Arab Spring countries, the demonstrations in Egypt were not the result of one singular issue. Grievances over numerous different issues – such as the economic situation, corruption, violent repression, and a lack of democracy – all contributed to the outbreak of protests. However, corruption was certainly a central grievance motivating opposition against the Mubarak regime. In particular, the crony capitalism that flourished under Mubarak, in which tycoon capitalist linked to the regime reaped the benefits from privatization, drove much of the popular anger. Hosni Mubarak's son and heir apparent, Gamal Mubarak, led the charge for embracing neoliberal reforms like privatization and epitomized the corrupt tycoon capitalist that elicited the ire of Egyptians. Importantly, while the crony capitalism of Gamal Mubarak and others within government demonstrably made corruption an increasingly salient grievance, the corruption of the Egyptian military did not evoke the same level of outrage, despite the fact that the Egyptian military was also very corrupt. Ultimately, the case of corruption in Egypt, and the contrast between the politics of corruption for the Mubarak regime and the politics of corruption of the Egyptian military, vividly underscores how framing affects the political salience of corruption.

This chapter will be divided into several sections. The first section will briefly examine the politics of corruption in Egypt, comparing the popular antipathy towards Mubarak's crony capitalism with the relative indifference towards the corrupt activities of the Egyptian military. The second section will examine the type of corruption in Egypt. It will compare and contrast the crony capitalism of the Mubarak regime with the more institutional cronyism of the Egyptian military. The third section will examine the

intervening variables that affect the framing corruption. The final section will overview the political salience of corruption in Egypt, detailing how corruption was conceptualized, to whom it was attributed, and with which groups is resonated.

Politics of Corruption in Egypt

As Egypt undertook serious neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, corruption became a growing political issue. The increasing prominence of corruption as a political issue became evident in 2000, with grievances about corruption manifesting in various opposition groups. In mid 2000s, there was a proliferation of groups that began calling on President Mubarak not to seek a fifth term and also rejecting the notion that Gamal Mubarak would succeed his father. These groups included the well document Kifaya (Enough) movement, which emerged in 2004, as well as other groups and movements such as the Popular Campaign for Change, Youth for Change, and Workers for Change. Among other issues, these groups began clearly voicing their anger over the growing corruption of Mubarak, with a focus on Gamal and his business associates. Although the burgeoning of these oppositional groups can be partially attributed to changing political opportunity structures,¹⁴² they also represented a manifestation of growing resentment over political corruption and the brand of crony capitalism associated with Gamal Mubarak. Similarly, by the mid 2000s, worker protests and strikes became common in Egypt. In 2004, Egypt experienced its longest wave of worker strikes since WWII.¹⁴³ These strike represented outrage over a combination of neoliberal reforms, the poor economic situation, and corruption.

The politics of corruption in Egypt, and the growing political unrest that it was generating was clearly evident during the Arab Spring protests. As previously discussed, 73

¹⁴² Rabab El-Mahdi, "Enough! Egypt's Quest for Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 8 (2009): 12.

¹⁴³ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, 97

percent of respondents from Egypt in the second wave of the Arab Barometer survey cited corruption as one of the top two most important reasons for the Arab Spring. The corruption of the regime and the crony capitalism of Gamal Mubarak and his associates, in particular, were central in the grievances of the demonstrators. Ironically, despite the fact that the Egyptian military was celebrated by demonstrators during the uprising, “the Egyptian military is hardly innocent of just the type of arrogation of public resources the protesters were denouncing.”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, despite all evidence indicating that the Egyptian military is at least as corrupt – in terms scale – as Mubarak and his cronies, the corruption of the Egyptian military did not evoke much acrimony or indignation.

Type of Corruption

This section will compare and contrast the corruption of the Mubarak regime with the corruption of the Egyptian military. As will be shown, both the corruption within the Mubarak regime and the corruption of the Egyptian military can be considered to be a type of cronyism. However, although both represent a form of cronyism, there were important differences between these two types of corruption. As will be shown, the crony capitalism epitomized by Gamal Mubarak and his associates was ultimately more exclusionary, less discreet, and normatively more objectionable.

Gamal Mubarak and Crony Capitalism

Under pressure from both the World Bank and IMF, Mubarak undertook substantial economic liberalization the early 1990s. In 1991, Egypt signed an Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank,

¹⁴⁴ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 79

which resulted in the privatization of hundreds of state-owned enterprises (SOEs).¹⁴⁵ During this period, many public services were privatized – including services such as electricity generation and distribution, waste treatment, and transportation systems (like subways and roads).¹⁴⁶ The transformation of the Egyptian economy under Mubarak was immense. In 1991, it was estimated that the government contributed to 70 percent of the Egyptian GDP; by 2006, its contributed to less than 20 percent of GDP.¹⁴⁷

The privatization that occurred in Egypt under Mubarak, however, was rife with corruption and rent-seeking. According to neoclassical economic theory, the privatization of state-owned industries should lead to a reduction in rent-seeking and corruption, as market pressures lead to increased competition between firms and greater efficiency. However, the privatization that occurred in Egypt was driven corruption. As noted by King, “Egypt’s privatization process has lacked the regulatory framework necessary to prevent the sale of the majority of its SOEs at below market value to a small group of investors. The result has been the creation of a series of privately owned monopolies or near monopolies.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, when privatizing SOEs, government ministers and bureaucrats colluded with businessmen, resulting in the sale of SOEs below market value and enabling well-connected businessmen to gain monopolies in various industry and services.

For example, several companies – such as the Egyptian state-run Pepsi Cola Company, Asyut Cement, and the Meridien hotel – were identified as being sold below market value.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the state sold profitable companies, while retaining the

¹⁴⁵ Ann M. Lesch, “Egypt’s Spring: Causes of the Revolution,” *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 3 (2011): 37

¹⁴⁶ Ann M. Lesch, “Concetrated Power Breeds Corruption, Repression, and Resistance,” in *Arab Spring in Egypt: revolution and Beyond* ed. Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 26

¹⁴⁷ Philip Marfleet, “Mubarak’s Egypt – Nexus of Criminality,” *State Crime* 2, no. 2 (2013): 123

¹⁴⁸ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, 114

¹⁴⁹ Ibid 115

unprofitable ones.¹⁵⁰ Privatization was based on political connections, and political cronies were subsequently able to gain monopolies in industries that should have been competitive. For example, Ahmad Ezz, a close friend of Gamal Mubarak, operated a small steel factory in Sadat City in 1995. In the mid 1990s, he bought many of the public sector steel companies that were sold; by 2006, Ezz had become a billionaire, controlling 70 percent of steel and iron production in Egypt.¹⁵¹ Other friends and business associates of Gamal Mubarak were also known to accumulate massive fortunes.¹⁵² The Mubaraks – including Hosni, his brothers, and Gamal – also personally benefited from the corrupt liberalization of the Egyptian economy. The president’s family gained stakes in numerous companies and products,¹⁵³ they bought land at discounted prices,¹⁵⁴ they secured commissions on state-business deals,¹⁵⁵ and they leveraged state-associated banks to secure loans without collateral.¹⁵⁶ Through their corrupt business dealings, the Mubarak family accumulated a fortune of between \$40 and \$70.¹⁵⁷

It is important to emphasize the role that the ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), played in facilitating corruption. Led by Gamal Mubarak, in the early 2000s, a new wave of businessmen turned politicians began a hostile takeover of the ruling party, supplanting and sidelining the old guard within the party. The increasing amalgamation of business and politics was epitomized in the evolution of the NDP, as businessmen and allies of Gamal assumed leadership positions within the NDP.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid 115

¹⁵¹ Lesch, “Concetrated Power Breeds Corruption, Repression, and Resistance,” 30

¹⁵² Ibid, 21.

¹⁵³ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* 116

¹⁵⁴ Lesch, “Egypt’s Spring: Causes of the Revolution,” 41

¹⁵⁵ Lesch, “Concetrated Power Breeds Corruption, Repression, and Resistance,” 29

¹⁵⁶ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* 116

¹⁵⁷ Jack A. Goldstone, “Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011).

Military Incorporated

Since Nasser, the Egyptian military has developed a substantial presence within the Egyptian economy. Under Nasser's statist modernization, the focus of the Egyptian military expanded beyond just defense-related manufacturing, as the military was designated to play a role in the development of public infrastructure, the provision of basic commodities, and the manufacturing of domestic goods.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, the involvement of the Egyptian military in the economy grew steadily, as it gained control over sectors of the economy completely unrelated to national defense.

Although much of the military's economic empire remains shrouded in secrecy, three major military organizations that engage in commercial and non-defense related production have been identified.¹⁵⁹ First, the National Service Projects Organization was established in 1979 in order to help the Egyptian military avoid reliance on the free market for obtaining goods. The organization owns eight manufacturing plants, with 40 percent of its production targeted for the commercial market.¹⁶⁰ Second, the Arab Organization for Industrialization was established by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE in 1975 in order to create a collective Arab defense industry. After Egypt's 1979 peace treaty with Israel, however, all of the other states withdrew. This organization "focuses on supplying the defense equipment needs of the Egyptian Armed forces and uses excess capacities for supporting community development projects in the fields of infrastructure, environmental protection, and transportation."¹⁶¹ It runs eleven factories across Egypt, with over 70 percent of its

¹⁵⁸ Shana Marshall, *The Egyptian Armed Forces and the Remaking of an Economic Empire* (Washington DC: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2015): 4

¹⁵⁹ Ahmed Morsy "The Military Crowds Out Civilian Business in Egypt," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 24 June 2014. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/06/24/military-crowds-out-civilian-business-in-egypt>

¹⁶⁰ Zeinab Abul-Magd, "The General's Secret: Egypt's Ambivalent Market," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 9 February 2012. <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=47137>

¹⁶¹ Morsy "The Military Crowds Out Civilian Business in Egypt,"

production geared toward commercial markets. Finally, the National Organization for Military Production “is engaged in civil manufacturing and service industries, producing a wide variety of goods: luxury jeeps, infant incubators, butane gas cylinders, and even food stuffs (pasta and poultry products). They also provide services such as domestic cleaning and gas station management.”¹⁶² The military is also Egypt’s largest landowner and manager, thanks to a 1997 presidential decree that gave the military the right to manage all undeveloped non-agricultural land, estimated to be around 87 percent of the country. This includes massive plots of lucrative land in cities like Cairo.¹⁶³ Finally, the military also benefits from tax forgiveness and exemptions from labour laws.¹⁶⁴

The economic empire controlled by the Egyptian military is ultimately a type of cronyism. In this case, however, the cronies are neither private entrepreneurs nor are they corrupt politicians; rather, it is more of an institutional cronyism. By preserving an economic empire worth billions of dollars, the military, as an institution, has been able to secure wealth and privileges for its members, specifically high-ranking officials. Indeed, high-ranking officials are able to enjoy access to luxury assets – including private villas and lavish resorts – and retired generals are able to transition into managing these military owned enterprises upon retirement.¹⁶⁵

Overall, the Egyptian military controls an extensive commercial empire, which it successfully protected from Gamal Mubarak during the wave of privatization. By the time of the Arab Spring, the extent of the military’s incursion into the economy was unclear; no one had precise knowledge of all of the military’s commercial ventures nor was it known what

¹⁶² Abul-Magd, “The General’s Secret”

¹⁶³ Mohamed Elshahed, “From Tahrir Square to Emaar Square: Cairo’s Private Road to a Private City,” *The Guardian*, 7 April 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/apr/07/tahrir-square-emaar-square-cairo-private-road-city>

¹⁶⁴ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 81

¹⁶⁵ Abul-Magd, “The General’s Secret”

percent of the Egyptian economy that the military occupied. Nevertheless, estimates of the military's domination of the economy range from 5 percent to 40 percent, with most experts indicating it to be closer to 40 percent and all estimates approximating the empire to be worth tens of billions of dollars.¹⁶⁶

The Exclusionary, Objectionable, Conspicuous, and Nature of Crony Capitalism

While corruption was rife in both Mubarak's crony capitalism and the military's commercial empire, only crony capitalism proved to be an emotive issue and a common grievance. This can partially be explained by several distinctions between these two types of corruption. Indeed, the crony capitalism epitomized by the Mubaraks was ultimately more exclusionary, less discreet, and normatively more objectionable than the military's corruption.

First, crony capitalism was particularly exclusionary. Rather than trickling down throughout society, crony capitalism enriched an exclusive group of capital-owning bureaucrats and politicians. Although vote buying and the distribution of patronage during elections were common, for the most part, the spoils of corruption overwhelmingly accrued to the elite. Moreover, privatization and the crony capitalism that ensued alienated important intermediate actors. First, Nasser's Arab socialism was founded upon and relied on the support of workers, peasants, and unions. In Nasser's Egypt, "state patronage established a rent-seeking context favourable to the lower classes."¹⁶⁷ As argued by King, the Mubarak government has abandoned the traditional and more populist ruling coalition, using neoliberal policies like privatization to shape a new ruling coalition among a rent-seeking urban and capital-owning elite. While the regime successfully secured the support of this

¹⁶⁶ Shana Marshall and Joshua Stacher, "Egypt's Generals and Transnational Capital," *Middle East Research and Information Project* 262 (2012).

¹⁶⁷ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, 52

new capitalist class, it excluded the working public, which had been the government's traditional base of support; in this sense, crony capitalism was particularly exclusive, as it alienated former key constituencies of support. Ironically, crony capitalism also alienated the Egyptian military. Although Hosni Mubarak remained close with the military leadership, providing various forms of patronage to them,¹⁶⁸ there was a clear animosity between the military and Gamal Mubarak and the business wing of the NDP, due to the latter's focus on privatization and the threat that this posed to the military's economic empire. This undoubtedly contributed to the military's willingness to side with Arab Spring protesters and remove Mubarak and the NDP from power. By contrast, while the corruption of the military was not particularly inclusive, in the sense that it disproportionately benefited high-ranking officials, it was neither as alienating nor as exclusionary as crony capitalism.

Second, due to the fact that privatization and crony capitalism excluded and alienated the Egyptian working class, it was widely viewed as being particularly egregious. As noted by Chayes, "Egyptians connected the runaway capitalism espoused by this clique – and the staggering fortunes its members amassed – with a wave of privatizations that reached its peak between 1995 and 2005, throwing hundreds of thousands of Egyptians out of work."¹⁶⁹ By contrast, the corruption of the military did not represent a deviation from the traditional social contract established under Nasser nor was it associated with economic turmoil. As such, it was a more palatable form of corruption and was not viewed as being particularly unjust.

Finally, crony capitalism, compared to the corruption of the military, was particularly conspicuous. While this can be partially explained by differences in conspicuous

¹⁶⁸ Hazem Kandil, "Back on Horse? The Military between Two Revolutions," in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 191

¹⁶⁹ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 84

consumption (which will be discussed below), the privatization of SOEs was also highly visible as was the growing domination of capitalists within the Egyptian parliament and the NDP. While details on crony deals were largely unknown, the prevalence of crony capitalism was highly publicized. In contrast, the corruption of the military has been much more discreet. The military's domination of the economy represents a continuation, rather than an abrupt change, in the status quo. The discretion of the military is also aided by the fact that all military activities – including their commercial ones – are classified as state secrets.¹⁷⁰

Intervening Variables

This section will show how other factors also affected how corruption was framed in Egypt. It will demonstrate that the macroeconomic conditions in Egypt, the conspicuous consumption by the ruling elite, and the monarchical structure of the regime all negatively affected the framing of corruption. When examining conspicuous consumption, this section will compare and contrast the conspicuous consumption of tycoon capitalists close to the regime with the more hidden wealth of the Egyptian high command.

Macroeconomic Conditions

Due to the massive expansion of government expenditures that occurred during both Nasser and Sadat eras,¹⁷¹ Egypt has long had significant debt and deficit problems. Indeed, since the 1970s and the 1990s, Egypt hovered on the verge of bankruptcy.¹⁷² Despite some financial assistance after Egypt's participation in the 1990 Gulf War, Egypt's unstable fiscal situation and the resulting pressure from international financial institutions compelled the Mubarak regime to implement structural adjustment programs that reduced government

¹⁷⁰ Marshall and Stacher, "Egypt's Generals and Transnational Capital"

¹⁷¹ Samer Soliman, "The Political Economy of Mubarak's Fall," in *Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 44.

¹⁷² Ibid, 44.

expenditure. Consequently, for many Egyptians, particularly among the working class, the 1990s and 2000s were a particularly tumultuous time. Unemployment, poverty, and income inequality reportedly all increased in the 1990s.¹⁷³ The deteriorating social conditions for millions of working Egypt's that occurred with neoliberal reforms manifested in growing opposition, which included an increase in worker strikes as well as the emergence of opposition groups like Kifaya. By the mid to late 2000s, however, economic growth had substantially improved in Egypt's, averaging 6.7 percent per year from 2006-2010. This was a substantial increase in average growth rate of 3.5 over the previous decade.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, while economic growth had improved in Egypt, unemployment and poverty, while no longer increasing, also remained high. In particular, there was a high unemployment among young people and university graduates.

The harsh economic climate in Egypt undoubtedly affected the framing of corruption. In particular, the crony capitalism that flourished under Mubarak became increasingly viewed as unjust. The perceived injustice of crony capitalism was exasperated as crony capitalism became increasingly blamed as a primary cause of Egypt's economic turmoil in Egypt. Chayes effectively summarizes how the poor macroeconomic situation became increasingly associated with crony capitalism.

[T]he high unemployment that many Western analysts blamed for the 2011 overthrow of the Mubarak regime was not seen by Egyptians as a structural, macroeconomic phenomenon resulting inexorably from rising population or incompetent economic policies. It was seen as the direct product of corrupt practices perpetrated by an upstart cliques of crony capitalists who had captured key levers of the Egyptian state and were using them to advance their private agenda.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, 119

¹⁷⁴ Rex Brynen, Pete W. Moore, Bassel F. Salloukh, and Marie-Joelle Zahar. *Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democratization in the Arab World*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 23

¹⁷⁵ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 85

Unlike other developing countries – such as the tigers of Southeast Asia – where cronyism was accompanied by substantial improvement in economic and social conditions, cronyism in Egypt was accompanied by continued economic turmoil for millions; this is unsurprising, given that the cronyism that occurred in Egypt was a particularly unproductive type of cronyism.¹⁷⁶ Overall, the poor economic conditions helped to frame corruption, making it a particularly egregious offense.

Conspicuous Consumption

Numerous observers had noted the increase in conspicuous consumption in Egypt since the 1990s. Indeed, throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, scholars, reporters, and individual Egyptians noted the increase in lavish displays of wealth. For example, an article in the Washington Post in 1996 noted the increase in conspicuous consumption.

But five years of free-market economics have contributed to a surge of luxury spending in Egypt, at least by a privileged few. Like Moscow or Shanghai, Cairo is awash in the badges of new wealth, from \$14 million penthouse apartments to gourmet bakeries selling cheesecakes for \$50 each. In perhaps the ultimate testimonial to Egypt's new-found purchasing power, the German luxury-car maker BMW recently announced plans to open an assembly plant here. Mercedes-Benz is expected to follow.¹⁷⁷

Many other anecdotal accounts have noted how liberalization, privatization, and crony capitalism in Egypt have been accompanied by a noticeable surge in opulent displays of wealth. Dahi, for example, notes that the high number of strikes in Egypt that occurred in the early and mid 2000s was indicative of “fury not only to their higher cost of living, but also to the mounting extravagance and conspicuous consumption of the elite.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*, 201-206

¹⁷⁷ John Lancaster, “Desert Turns to Green as Egypt's Affluent Revive Colonial Links,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 22 February 1997. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/02/22/desert-turns-to-greens-as-egypts-affluent-revive-colonial-links/88295d64-f21d-4a19-8cf0-3d9a9754e1e4/>

¹⁷⁸ Omar Dahi, “The Political Economy of the Arab Revolts,” *Middle East Report* 259 (2011).

The conspicuous displays of wealth, prevalent in highly populated areas like Cairo, have affected the framing of corruption. First, conspicuous consumption has likely increased perceptions of inequality, making the corruption of the regime appear particularly contemptible. Second, conspicuous consumption in Egypt has also likely affected the attribution of corruption, with the extravagance of the capitalist class making them a clear target. The importance of conspicuous consumption regarding the attribution of corruption is highlighted by the Egyptian military's ability avoid being associated with corruption. Unlike crony capitalists, whose wealth was not hidden from view, the Egyptian military has been much more discreet, not publicly flaunting its wealth. Chayes notes:

Camera-shy officers have tended to stay out of the limelight; transactions are shielded by budget secrecy; much of the wealth has been inconspicuous – the chief luxury assests are located along isolated stretches of the north coast, on the Suez Canal, or in distant Upper Egypt. Many of these assets, moreover, are held by the institution, with officers enjoying only usufruct, not personal ownership, of the villas and lavish hotels.”¹⁷⁹

Overall, differences between the conspicuous consumption of crony capitalists and the Egyptian military helps to account for the differences in how corruption was framed for both groups.

Regime Type

The republican structure of the Mubarak regime also affected the framing of corruption. Unlike monarchical regimes, where the King rules by dividing and co-opting a variety of opposition parties, in a republican structured regime like Egypt, President Mubarak governed through a dominant ruling party, the NDP. The republican structure of the regime and the domination of the NDP proved significant because, as the NDP became increasingly associated with corruption and crony capitalism, there was no way for the Mubarak regime to disassociate itself from corruption. Indeed, throughout the 1980s, 1990s,

¹⁷⁹ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 82

and 2000s, there was a proliferation of businessmen within the Egyptian parliament, who overwhelmingly entered parliament as members of the ruling NDP. The 1995 parliamentary election saw 66 businessmen elected to parliament, constituting 16 percent of the overall parliament. By 2000, 120 businessmen had been elected as members of the NDP. Moreover, prominent businessmen, led by Gamal Mubarak, dominated leadership of the NDP; businessmen such as Ahmad Ezz, Husam Badrawi, Ibrahim Kamil, and Jamal al-Nizar assumed roles in the powerful policies committee.¹⁸⁰ The proliferation of businessmen and crony capitalists within the leadership of the NDP inherently made the NDP associated with corruption. Given that the NDP was the dominant ruling party, and that Mubarak's son, Gamal, occupied a leadership position within it, corruption was attributed to the Mubaraks and to the regime. The regime type thus helped to frame corruption in a more adversarial manner, as corruption could not be disassociated from the regime.

Miscellaneous Framing Variable: A Symbol of National Identity

A final miscellaneous variable that affected the framing of the military's corruption, which must be acknowledged, is the military's role as a symbol of Egyptian nationalism. The military is a symbol of Nasser, the 1952 Free Officer Coup, and Arab nationalism. As noted by Abul-Magd, "No doubt there is corruption in the Egyptian military. But ordinary Egyptians won't react against it because of the long nationalistic myth. Even if they suffer, they look up to the military."¹⁸¹ As an iconic symbol of Egyptian nationalism, the military has been well positioned to shield itself from accusations of corruption and misdoing.

¹⁸⁰ King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* 94

¹⁸¹ Zeinab Abul-Magd quoted in: Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 82

The Political Salience of Corruption in Egypt

Overall, the political salience of corruption was high in Egypt. This is because: 1) corruption, and particularly crony capitalism, was conceptualized as being unjust and intolerable; 2) corruption was attributed to the regime; and 3) grievances about corruption resonated widely, and with important intermediate actors.

First, regarding the conception of corruption in Egypt, corruption was undoubtedly conceptualized as being very unjust and intolerable. Indeed, as argued by Marfleet, a “striking feature of public protests was the range of banners, placards, leaflets, chants, poems, songs, graffiti, street paintings and installations, among which the twin themes of criminality and of justice featured prominently in words and images.”¹⁸² The crony capitalism that was associated with privatization and other neoliberal reforms was conceptualized as being particularly heinous; Egyptians, particularly among the working class, associated the economic hardships that accompanied the neoliberal reforms with crony capitalism.

Second, corruption was attributed to the regime. Hosni Mubarak, Gamal Mubarak, government ministers, and the capital-owning leadership within the NDP were the primary targets of the protesters. Placards and banners with mug shots of Mubarak and his ministers and that called for their imprisonment were common. Chants targeting Gamal Mubarak, who was particularly reviled, were also common. The NDP headquarters were torched by protesters, as was an office building owned by Ahmed Ezz, the corrupt steel magnate and friend of Gamal Mubarak.¹⁸³ Corruption was framed in an adversarial manner, with the Mubaraks and their cronies within the NDP seen as the primary culprits.

¹⁸² Marfleet, “Mubarak’s Egypt – Nexus of Criminality,” 114

¹⁸³ Kareem Fahim, Michael Slackman and David Rohde, “Egypt’s Ire Turns to Confidant of Mubarak’s Son,” *New York Times*, 6 February 2011.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/middleeast/07corruption.html>

Finally, corruption resonated widely, and with important intermediate actors. Although students and young Egyptians initiated the 2011 Arab Spring in Egypt, using new media to share information, the overall composition of the demonstrators was broad-based, including different actors, groups, and classes. Ashraf Kahlil, a Cairo-based journalist covering the 2011 uprisings, commented: “The makeup of the crowd—a true mishmash of young and old, male and female, Christian and Muslim—was also different from protests past.”¹⁸⁴ Numerous trade unions and professional syndicates supported the Egyptian uprising and were instrumental in mobilizing individuals, such as the newly created Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions.¹⁸⁵ The broad participation of Egyptians in the demonstrations highlighted the widespread anger at the Mubarak regime, indicating the failure of the regime to sufficiently co-opt and pacify opposition. Finally, as previously discussed, the animosity between the military and Gamal Mubarak’s neoliberal-espousing wing of the NDP certainly contributed to the military’s willingness to side with Arab Spring protesters.

¹⁸⁴ Ashraf Kahlil, “January 25: Tear Gas on the Day of Rage,” in *Revolution in the Arab World: Tunisia, Egypt, and the Unmaking of an Era*, ed. Marc Lynch, Susan B. Glasser, and Blake Hounshell (Washington DC: Foreign Policy Magazine, 2011), 74

¹⁸⁵ Joel Beinin, *The Rise of Egypt’s Workers*. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 7.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The central puzzle this thesis has sought to solve is: under what conditions does corruption become a politically salient issue in authoritarian regimes? In order to solve this puzzle, this thesis first established criteria that could be used to evaluate and compare the political salience of corruption across cases. These criteria included the conception of corruption, the attribution of corruption, and the resonance of corruption. As has been argued, when corruption is conceptualized as being unjust, when corruption is attributed to the regime or key individuals within the regime, and when grievances about corruption resonate with important actors, the political salience of corruption is high.

This thesis subsequently argued that the overall level of corruption could not account for corruption's political salience. This was clearly evident during the Arab Spring, as the level of corruption did not correlate with corruption's political salience. Countries such as Tunisia had been shown to have a comparative low level of corruption compared to countries like Morocco; nevertheless, corruption was much less destabilizing in Morocco than it was in Tunisia. Consequently, this thesis argued that variables that affect 1) how corruption is framed and; 2) how effectively corruption co-opts important actors plays a central role in explaining the political salience corruption. The explanatory model presented in this thesis shows that the type of corruption and a series variables that affect how corruption is framed, can ultimately account for the political salience of corruption. This final chapter will examine insights and avenues for further research.

The Importance of Disaggregating and Unpacking the Concept of Corruption

Although indicators that measure corruption remain important tools for policy makers and social scientists alike, one of the central conclusions of this thesis is that the

overall level of corruption within a country reveals relatively little about the political consequences of corruption. One of the main reasons for this is that corruption is an inherently broad concept. Because there is an incredibly diverse range and scale of actions that can be considered corrupt, the overall level of corruption becomes an ambiguous concept. Inherently, indicators that measure corruption – like Transparency International’s *Corruption Perception Index* or the World Bank’s *Control of Corruption Indicator* – weigh different types of corruption when they produce an estimate for the overall level of corruption. Indicators that measure the overall level of corruption, therefore, belie the nebulous nature of corruption as a concept. This subsequently obfuscates the political effects of different types of corruption. Consequently, in order to understand the politics of corruption within a country, it is essential that the concept of corruption be disaggregated and that different types of corruption are examined independently.

The Importance of Framing

Regarding the politics of corruption, another central conclusion of this thesis is that framing is very important. Indeed, there exist numerous factors that frame – that is, bias or shape – an individual’s perception of the level of corruption, whether an individual views corruption as tolerable or egregious, or which actors are blamed for corruption. As such, when examining the politics of corruption, it is essential that factors that affect how corruption is framed be taken into account. These factors can help to explain why corruption becomes a particularly salient issue in some cases, but not in other. For example, although cronyism has been rife in many of the developmentalist states in Asia – such as South Korea and China – the fact that cronyism has been accompanied by significant economic growth and improvements in living standards has likely had a dramatic impact on how cronyism has been framed; consequently, this has likely had a significant impact on the

political salience of corruption in these countries. More research should therefore be devoted to better understanding the framing of corruption.

Monarchies versus Republics

Absolute monarchies – in which monarchs actually rule rather than just reign – have become an anachronism throughout most of the world. Following the logic of Huntington’s “King’s Dilemma” – wherein absolute monarchies would face revolution unless they devolved their authority – throughout most of the world, absolute monarchy as a regime type has dwindled.¹⁸⁶ However, in the Middle East, eight quasi-absolute monarchical regimes endure. Moreover, not only do Arab monarchies endure, but these regimes appear to have been more stable and resilient than their republican counterparts. During the Arab Spring, no monarchy was overthrown, with only Bahrain experiencing significant regime-threatening turmoil. Oil wealth and rentier theory help to explain the lack of protests and overall stability of the Gulf monarchies (excluding Bahrain). The survival and relative stability of non-rentier Jordan and Morocco, however, has legitimately led to a interest in the potential stabilizing features of these seemingly anachronistic regime types. While scholars such as Gause have convincingly argued that claims “about Arab monarchies’ special cultural legitimacy tend to be ahistorical and circular,”¹⁸⁷ this thesis has shown that, regarding corruption, monarchies are seemingly more adept at shielding themselves from accusations of corruption.

This can be somewhat attributed to the differences in electoral politics. Indeed, whereas republics throughout the Arab have created electoral systems that favour dominant outcomes, monarchies have created electoral systems that favour fragmentation within their parliaments. Consequently, whereas republics have largely ruled through dominant single

¹⁸⁶ For a description of Huntington’s “King’s Dilemma,” see Brynen et al., *Beyond the Arab Spring*, 181-182.

¹⁸⁷ Gause, “Kings for All Seasons,” 1

parties, such as the RCD in Tunisia or the NDP in Egypt, monarchies have ruled by fragmenting and co-opting smaller opposition parties, using a *divide et impera* strategy. Although much of the literature pre-Arab Spring had emphasized the efficacy of dominant ruling parties,¹⁸⁸ this thesis has indicated that, regarding the politics of corruption, there may be substantial drawbacks to dominant single-party systems and substantial advantages to more fragmented multiparty systems. Indeed, it certainly appears to be much harder for an authoritarian regime to disassociate itself from the corruption of a dominant single party; a monarch seemingly has much more flexibility in its ability to obfuscate its role in the distribution of patronage.

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*."

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