

# *Education as a Security Threat*

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*“One of the most impressive facts about modern life is that in it, unlike preceding centuries, intellectual activity is not carried on exclusively by a socially rigidly defined class...but rather by a social stratum which is to a large degree unattached to any social class and which is recruited from an increasingly inclusive area of social life”<sup>1</sup>.*

Education has been traditionally treated as selection criteria of revolutionary leaders, and as a propaganda tool for the revolution’s ideology. Educated elites, leading uneducated masses, utilize education as a method of provoking political consciousness of the masses. From dependency theorists to neo-Marxists, education has been a key component in determining who leads and who follows. But what happens when education, deeply penetrates the public and educated citizenry, is the norm rather than the exception? No longer is education solely a quality held by the vanguard of the revolution’s leadership, but a springboard leading to spontaneous populist uprisings.

These democratization movements in the Arab World were a shocking occurrence to many scholars of civil conflict. While democratization movements swept away former dictatorial regimes in Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe during the 1990s and early 2000s, the seemingly intractability of the Middle Eastern and North African authoritarian regimes resulted denoting their “exceptionalism”, of being heavily resistant to democratization (Bellin 2004: 139-157). However, the mass protests of the seemingly leaderless publics, marking the beginning of the Arab Spring, was reminiscent of the “people putch” against Milosevic in October 2000, the Bull Dozer Revolution of Serbia in 2000, The Rose Revolution of Georgia in 2003, and the Orange Revolution of the Ukraine in 2004, and the Tulip Revolution of Kyrgyzstan in 2005<sup>2</sup>. From Ireland to Italy, Tunisia to Libya, the more educated the populace, the more successful

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Mannhein 1966: 139

<sup>2</sup> See Mingst and Toft 2011: 176 for further details on these peaceful revolutions.

calls for governmental reform/change appears to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In countries where educated masses are less prevalent (Bahrain, Jordan, and Hungary), the uprisings and protests appear to be less efficacious in initiating regime or policy changes. Does a more educated public mean a greater possibility of internal instability and violence as these publics exercise their free will and demand greater democratic rights? This paper examines the role of a state's education advances upon the likelihood of an authoritarian state experiencing destabilizing protests. The interaction between net changes in unemployment composition based on education attainments and net changes in the college enrollments will be examined for their role in initiating these protests.

### ***Literature Review***

Analysis of state stability and peace has largely revolved around an analysis of a state's power capabilities: its population, the level of its economic strength, and strength of their political institutions. Education has traditionally been considered an important subset of a state's population and economic strength but is mostly ignored as an important independent variable of a state's population that has critical and sustained impact upon a state's stability and peace. Previous to the public policy fallout of the European and American debt crises, governments worldwide were spending unprecedented and historically high levels of national treasure in educating their publics. Governments took the path that public education would increase the attractiveness of their labor pools, encouraging corporate investment to their doorsteps. "The World Bank has long recommended extending access to public goods like health, education, and jobs to the poorest as a method of spurring economic growth<sup>3</sup>". The call for increased access to

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<sup>3</sup> World Bank. *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development*. World Bank 2006.

public education has recently been linked to issues of national security<sup>4</sup>, concerned that lack of educational access is potentially linked to future instability. Much of the literature agrees with the US Education Reform and National Security Report, following Montesquieu's assertion that correction of societal defects and peace may both be achieved via education. Scholars in the discipline have typically assigned a 'pacifying' effect to education, that the more education a person has, the more invested the individual is in the success of the economy/state, and thus the higher the opportunity cost for the individual to engage in protest or revolutionary actions (Almond et al 2004, Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Thus, the field assumes that at the micro level, education has a repressing effect on extra-legal political participation. So, in question is the *overall* effect of education upon society at large, nor does it address the direct relationship between societal educational attainment and economic changes have upon the initiation of protest movements might be indicative of future revolutionary movements.

Higher education has an important role in fostering revolutionary attitudes, and while it has long been noted that in Latin America "student radicalism increases the longer the student stays at university"<sup>5</sup>, scholars traditionally assume these students are comprised of the upper echelons of society-thus muting the dispersion effect of radicalization upon the general public (Birdsall, London, and O'Connell 1998, Brown and Hunter 2004). But what happens when college education becomes more universal in a society? The same socialization factor of education that encourages increased student political participation would be spread out over a larger proportion of society, especially in developing societies where the population is

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<sup>4</sup> *US Education Reform and National Security*. March 2012. Council on Foreign Relations Task Force Report no. 68

<sup>5</sup> Wickham Crowley 1992:36

predominately under the age of 35. Society, at large, would become more susceptible and willing to engage in protests of all types, a grievance factor where:

“The expanded educational system discharged a growing number of school learners and holders of certificates who no longer consider manual work and farming appropriate, but cannot be absorbed into the non-manual clerical and civil service sectors of the economy. This leads to the growth of an educated unemployed or underemployed stratum whose aspirations have been unfulfilled” (Oberschall 1993: 126).

Treating education as an important factor in democratization and human capital has been trending in recent years and intense debate rages over the actual causal impact of education in the democratization transition and consolidation process. Advocates of education’s importance in the democracy process note the potential predictive qualities of education levels upon democratic transitions (Glaeser et al 2007, Freidman et al 2011). Emler and Frazier (1999) first noted Parry et al’s (1992) study on UK that “those with substantial educational attainment and low income were disproportionately engaged in forms of direct action (suggesting that some formal education is needed to trigger involvement in direct action amongst poor people” (252). Glaeser et al note that “countries with higher levels of education are more likely to experience a transition from dictatorship to democracy...moreover, the size of the most successful challenger regime to an existing dictatorship rises with the level of education” (2007:79). Friedman et al’s watershed study of school girls in Kenya’s attitudes towards political violence modernized the role of education in radicalizing youths towards political violence. Here they found that:

“In the political realm we see evidence of greater knowledge and raised expectations, but not of actual political involvement, and perhaps as a result, we document greater frustration and acceptance of political violence...they may be more willing to accept political violence as necessary in some circumstances”(2011:6).

On the opposing side, scholars such as Acemoglu et al dispute the predictive role of education upon regime transitions. They dispute the results of Glaeser et al (which finds that schooling does predict changes in democracy) as Glaeser et al fail to incorporate time effects in

their regressions, and Acemoglu et al state that the impact of education disappears not only from democracy but also from all other measures of political institutions. Acemoglu et al argue that “entire long-run differences across countries are used to estimate the effect of education upon democracy.... omitted factors that influences both democracy and education in the long run, will lead to spurious positive estimates of  $\gamma$ ” (2005:46).

The literature of political grievances and economic frustrations is particularly strong in the civil resistance/conflict genre. Theorists in the field have addressed the salience of the expansion of higher education in conjunction with unemployment as a destabilizing factor in a society (Urdal 2006: 612, Winckler 2002: 635, Goldstone 2001:95). In examining the Middle East, Lia notes the radicalizing effect of unemployment upon educated youths (2005: 145-146). The central issues many scholars address, however, are unemployment and economic grievances, and only secondarily the intervening role of education in stoking the grievance levels that unemployment produces. Many scholars however, are beginning to look past the stand-alone argument of economic grievances, such as unemployment, to more dynamic models of grievance (Thyne 2006:734, Sambanis 2004:234). Following in the steps of Davies’ 1962<sup>6</sup> theory that feelings of relative rather than absolute deprivation drives social unrest, the relative feeling of grievances of educated young people in the face of stubborn unemployment and lack of political “space” for these technologically and socially facile youths of a state, may drive protest far more than unemployment alone. Of interest is whether the regime turnover occurred not because of entrenched unemployment, but *who* was unemployed. In Egypt, unemployment amongst the youth has risen steadily over the past 2 decades, hitting a high of 34.1% in 2005 before lowering

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<sup>6</sup> James Davies, 1962. “Towards a Theory of Revolution”. American Sociological Review 27 (1): 5-19

to 24.8% in 2007<sup>7</sup>, even while Egypt graduated record number of college graduates. The presence of highly *educated*, unemployed youths needs to be examined as a potential driver of recent expressions of frustration across the globe, from the US Occupy Wall Street to recent demonstrations in the streets of Kiev.

### ***Methodology***

The literature traditionally portrays a complex balance of social, economic, and political preconditions are typically examined along with political leadership styles, foreign intervention, and a history of state freedom. Often missing is a dynamic modeling of a dynamic process. In this paper, I examine the role of educational and economic fluxuations: namely changes college enrollments as well as what percentage of a state's unemployed have a tertiary degree, as an important precondition for inciting both peaceful and violent protest movements within an authoritarian regime. The direction and frequency of political expressions of discontent against the backdrop of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century mass access to public secondary and tertiary education should say something about the relationship of educated public to political violence. If education appeases the masses and increases peace by co-opting them into the system, then we should see reductions in civil expressions of discontent (protests, marches, violent clashes with police) as education enrollments increase amongst the general public. However, if we see a correlation of where publics are becoming increasingly educated yet willing to engage in either/both peaceful and violence populist movements-then there may be more to be said about the role of education upon peace studies.

*Hypothesis1: As the percentage of the general public enrolled in university increases within an authoritarian regime, authoritarian states becomes more likely to experience destabilizing*

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<sup>7</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators & Global Development Finance. 2012.

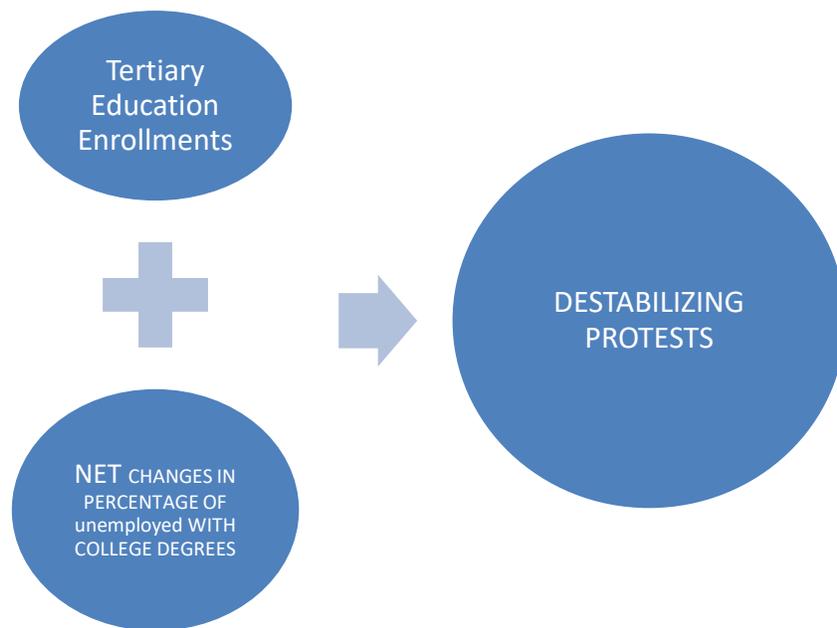
*populist protests. The sharper the education increases, the more likely the protests will be destabilizing.*

*Hypothesis 2: The presence of educated unemployed is important to political stability. The greater the percentage of the unemployed who have higher education, the more likely a state is to experience mass protests intended to challenge the state.*

Most regions in the world have experienced the march of democratization movements, whether successful or not. Latin American, Europe, and Africa all experienced widespread democratization movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only a few regions (S.E Asia, the Middle East, and Eurasia) have shown exceptionalism in resisting democratization movements. Only in recent years have these regions shown a well-spring of civil resistance movements with a clarion call for more democracy. While this research question can be applied to any authoritarian state that experiences populist mass uprisings, the sample size here is limited to Middle Eastern and North African states as the Arab Spring only occurred in this region. Days of Rage called for local populations to violate long-standing restrictions on assembly and demonstrations and challenge their governments for increased political and economic inclusion. This indicates a breakdown in state authority. As all states within the region (with the exception of Turkey, Israel, and according to some scholars Lebanon) are either pure autocratic systems or anocracies (weak authoritarian regimes), there is similarity of the cases (and thus lack of variation) on their overall regime characteristics (lack of open election, free press, free assembly, one-party states, etc. To determine if the MENA region is simply different from other regions, Hong Kong is included here as a test case. In the future, the sample size will be expanded to include all states of the above mentioned regions resistant to democratization movements and protests. In this paper, success rates of the demonstrations in prompting their telegraphed goals is not considered (that is for a future paper). Rather, here we examine simply whether state experienced a large

demonstration (500+ demonstrators) to denote whether a state falls within the positive or negative case sets.

*Model: Given the steady expansion of access to public education in Middle Eastern and North African States, where the populace is disproportionately under the age of 35, we should see increased populist calls for regime change as the number of college attendees increase, in conjunction with higher rates of unemployment for their degree holders.*



### *Data*

This paper seeks to examine the role of education in the onset of destabilizing protest activity within a country. In order to properly grasp the impact of long-term trends in education in a single event, this paper employs a direct as well as an interactive model employing event history from 1990-2014. The dependent variable examined is dichotomous, indicating the presence or absence of populist protest uprisings within an individual state with the purpose of challenging the existing regime. The independent variables, annual university enrollments ratios and the composition of unemployment are analyzed from 1990-2012. Thus by examining net changes in

the independent variables; we are able to cross-analyze education from state to state despite variation within educational systems.

*Independent Variable (Education and GDP growth):*

University enrollments are measured as the ratio of total enrollment to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to college education. As Wickham Crowley posits, “increased social density in the university should be associated with a generalized student radicalism...therefore we should expect to find greater radicalism [i.e. protest behavior] where relative increases in enrollments have been the greatest” (47). Western countries have had a steady increase of college enrollments since World War II, and as such will be less likely to experience this education effect in comparison to developing countries where university enrollments have exploded in the past twenty years. The sudden sharp increase in education access for the public in developing countries has been dramatic, and as such, should be a better breeding ground for unrest based on increased access to higher education. While graduation rates may speak to the number of educated job seekers in terms of employment status, it fails to capture the revolutionary potential of a generation due to attrition, whereas university schooling give a snapshot of the percentage of the population that can be expected to be exposed to the ideas of political freedoms as a norm or ideal. As such, net changes in annual enrollments are evaluated as a source of grievance leading to mass protests. Secondary enrollments are also included to determine whether the level of education is a countervailing issue in terms of propelling mass protests.

In order to test the alternative explanations of whether economic and political grievance, rather than education, are better predictors of civil conflict onset, economic and political

measures traditionally utilized in the civil war and civil conflict literature are included in this study. A potentially conflicting alternative explanation is whether civil unrest is simply the reflection to poor economic performance of the country. According to Acemoglu et al (2005), GDP has no direct impact upon the likelihood of civil war onset, while Collier and Hoeffler (2004), along with Sambanis (2002) and Fearson and Laitlin (2003) believe that high poverty levels and slow economic growth as the main economic grievances of combatants. Here, I examine the potential role of unemployment, drawn from the *World Development Indicators* (World Bank 2012). Unemployment has been argued to be a better indicator of potential unrest as government as unable to meet employment expectations of college graduates. Unemployment, however, is too general of a category as it does not capture the interaction of education and unemployment. As it is hypothesized here that who is unemployed is more important than general unemployment, unemployment is parsed out into unemployment by education attainment, to better capture the role high unemployment with university students/graduates has upon political stability of these authoritarian regimes. Secondary unemployment is also examined here to determine whether there existing an education tipping point in the interaction between education and unemployment. If holders of secondary degrees believe that a tertiary degree is necessary to obtain consistent employment, there would be presumably little protests over high levels of unemployment amongst their ranks. However, university students and graduates, believing their degrees the echelon of employment merit, would be more likely to protest high unemployment amongst their ranks.

### *Control Variables*

Unemployment may simply be a reflection of poor government economic progress, and as such endogenous to more traditional measures such as GDP. As such, GDP growth (annual) is

included as a control. Political grievances are also a potentially conflicting alternative explanation and are often included in conflict studies. According to Hegre et al (2001), there is an inverted U shape relationship between the level of democracy and the risk of civil war onset. The positioning that democratic regime are more resistant to regime change than autocracies (Gurr 2000, Hegre et al 2001) has been challenged in recent years, with a clearer delineation of types of autocracies (anocracies, etc) and the likelihood of regime transition (Brumberg 2002, Mello 2012). The inclusion of regime type is intuitive. A liberalized hybrid autocracies appeared to be the most affected by the Arab Spring, and more “pure” forms of autocracies, as exemplified by the monarchies of the Arab World, were able to defuse or bypass the Arab Spring altogether. However, a simple dummy variable as a category variable, fails to address for magnitude and variation within these categories, as in the case of a monarchy like Jordan having better Polity IV scores than an anocracy like Libya. Thus, heterogeneity is addressed by using Polity IV composite scores for each state’s repressiveness as a measure of potential sources of grievance and probability of protest onset within a society. The Polity IV scale is a 21-point scale from -10 (totalitarian/absolute monarchy) to 10 (full democracy). It should be noted that repression and poor economic performance alone fail to address the root reason of why university holders would have high levels of unemployment. As such, it is also crucial to address state system organization along neo-patrimonial or bureaucratic structures. If governmental job are allocated along tribal, ethnic, or kinship patronage, especially in rentier states, even university graduates might find themselves squeezed out of higher paying jobs. Education, in such a system, would not necessarily be a vehicle to employment, despite traditional literature on the topic. Rather, education instead might be the channel utilized by non-elites missing the network linkages

necessary to garner high-paying governmental jobs, and thus education could be negatively associated with both income and employment.

### ***Research Design***

The sample here is limited to state of the Middle east and North Africa, with the inclusion of Hong Kong (see Appendix Table 1B). This study suffers from missing data across state and within variables. While all states reported university enrollments, reporting for some states were extremely spotty. This trend is worrisome, especially as the states with the worse reporting practices in enrollments (Libya, Oman, and Yemen) are completely missing reporting of unemployment figures. Here there is the concern that these three states are somehow different from the states that did report numbers. There is a of course the issue of a high correlation between university enrollments and secondary enrollments as of course university enrollments are dependent on secondary graduates. As such, separate tests are run for each.

Here, the temporal span of the paper is from 1990-2014. Any fluxuations in the durability, or likelihood of an authoritarian state experiencing destabilizing protests, is driven primarily by the covariates: unemployment composition and university enrollments. Educational enrollments, as well as the unemployment upon the likelihood of an authoritarian state experiencing destabilizing protests were examined, controlling for both regime type, structure, and annual GDP growth. The impact of GDP growth or slowdown is felt gradually by a society, and thus year to year data reporting fails to account for overtime impacts upon college graduate expectations. Time is a significant factor, and needs to be modeled due to the nature of the data for educational attainment, the continuous nature of the dependent variable, and to address the impact feel of GDP.

## *Conclusion*

There is a significant gap in the literature on civil conflict and regime transitions on the role of education. When the educated publics, made conscious of the universality of rights and the accountability of their governments, begin to express themselves, then modification in the government's status quo (either leadership, political freedom, or even regime change) should be expected. The education effects are muted in this paper, however, the small N-size potentially masks the impact of education attainment, as well as introduced the issue of bias. The use of linear interpolation needs to be replaced with multiple imputation using Amelia. Better parameterization is needed in this study as well as an comparative analysis to other regions where authoritarian regimes continue to avoid destabilizing protests. However, this area of research is a rich vein of analysis. A vigorous examination of the role of education in prompting civil conflict within authoritarian regimes have important predictive implications. The role of education in increasing public political participation is well documented across various disciplines. In authoritarian states, where publics have little access to the traditionally peaceful methods of political participation, we might see these public seek alternative methods to express themselves. Thus, non-sanctioned methods of political participation, from mass peaceful protests to violent revolutions, may be predicted via the rising tide of the educated masses.

## Appendix

### Appendix Table 1A

List of Available country data by Variables of Interest

Enrollments	Unemployment
Algeria	Algeria
Bahrain	Bahrain
Egypt, Arab Rep.	Egypt, Arab Rep.
Iran, Islamic Rep.	Iran, Islamic Rep.
Jordan	Jordan
Kuwait	Kuwait
Libya	Qatar
Oman	Saudi Arabia
Qatar	Syrian Arab Republic
Saudi Arabia	Tunisia
Syrian Arab Republic	United Arab Emirates
Tunisia	
United Arab Emirates	
Yemen, Rep.	

### Appendix Table 1 B

List of variables and data sources

Variable Names	Description	Source
School enrollment, tertiary (% gross)	Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that	(UNESCO) Institute for Statistics

Unemployment with secondary education, (% of total unemployment)	officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Unemployment by level of educational attainment shows the unemployed by level of educational attainment, as a percentage of the unemployed. annual, cross-national, time-series and polity-case formats coding democratic and autocratic "patterns of authority" and regime changes in all independent countries with total population greater than 500,000 in 2013	International Labour Organization
Polity IV Scores		Center for Systemic Peace
GDP growth	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2005 U.S. dollars	World Development Indicators (World Bank)

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