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Successful and failed democratic transitions from military rule in majority Muslim societies: the cases of Indonesia and Egypt

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As majority Muslim societies with significant minorities and dominant militaries, Indonesia and Egypt experienced strikingly similar political trajectories between the early 1950s and the late 1990s. Yet, their respective democratic transitions have seen vastly different outcomes: while Indonesia solidified its democracy by extracting the military from politics, Egypt's democratic experiment ended after only two years with the return of the armed forces to the apex of government. This article highlights the reasons for this divergence. Contrary to existing scholarship that exclusively focuses on different geographical or economic circumstances, this contribution emphasises dissimilarities in the patterns of authoritarian rule, military organisation, intra-civilian conflict and international support. Conceptually, the discussion locates the Indonesian and Egyptian cases within the broader debate on civilian control in post-authoritarian states, arguing that this discourse needs to pay more attention to the creation of intra-civilian agreements on fundamental issues of governance as the best strategy to establish strong democratic oversight over the armed forces.

Keywords: democratic transitions; military; coups; Islam; Indonesia; Egypt

When Egypt's military removed popularly elected President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, and killed hundreds of his supporters one month later, the country's democratic transition came to a dramatic end. While the new rulers promised a speedy return to democracy, they eventually reconstructed a polity that resembles the military-backed autocracies of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. With the collapse of the democratic experiment, ending too was a much-discussed parallel with another large majority Muslim nation: Indonesia. Until Morsi's fall, there had been striking similarities in the political trajectories of the two countries (Sidel 2012): both are nations with large Muslim populations, but significant religious minorities; both traditionally witnessed deep military involvement in politics; both had anti-Western ideologues as presidents in the 1960s and turned into allies of the West in the 1970s; both recorded similar GDP–per-capita levels; both saw 30-year presidencies by increasingly sultanistic ex-generals; and in both countries, these autocracies ended after popular protest and the military's withdrawal of support from their former leaders (Brownlee *et al*. 2013, p. 38). Most importantly, after the fall

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of their respective long-time autocrats, both Indonesia and Egypt embarked on highly complex post-authoritarian transitions, amidst economic decline, communal tensions, rising Islamist assertiveness and attempts by the military to defend its privileges.

The end of the two nations' common journey in 2013 – when Indonesia celebrated the 15th anniversary of its regime change and Egypt's attempt at electoral democracy faltered after only two years – highlighted the vastly different patterns of their post-authoritarian civil–military relations. While Indonesia succeeded in extracting the armed forces from politics and establishing a civilian-dominated polity, Egypt's military retained its dominant position and ultimately used it to restore the pre-2011 status quo. It was this fundamental difference that decided over the success and failure of Indonesia and Egypt's democratic transitions – other factors, while present, were of a secondary nature. This article, therefore, focuses on the reasons for the successful marginalisation of the military in Indonesia, and the failure of this effort in Egypt. As will be demonstrated, the reasons for Indonesia and Egypt's divergent transition outcomes do not only lie in different 'geographic and economic realities' (Murphy 2012) or Indonesia's better economic performance under authoritarianism (Pepinsky 2012). More significantly, they relate to specific differences in the ways the two countries' armed forces were organised and used during authoritarian rule; decisions that determined the military's role in the immediate post-autocratic period; the attitude of civilian elites in negotiating key questions of political reform; and the different security priorities of the USA.

Thus, analysing the pathways of democratic transition in Indonesia and Egypt requires making use of the rich literature on the quality of civilian control over the military (Alagappa 2001, Feaver 2003, Beeson and Bellamy 2008). In particular, this article builds on the work of Croissant *et al*. (2013), who concentrate on the strategies civilians must use in order to strengthen their control of the armed forces. In their attempts to consolidate their power over the military, civilian leaders can choose from a menu of options, ranging from 'robust' strategies of sanctioning, counterbalancing and monitoring to the 'weak' strategies of appeasement, acquiescence and appreciation (Croissant *et al*. 2013, p. 55). The effectiveness of these strategies depends, in turn, on the availability of political resources, that is, a supportive environment. Against this background, both the strategic choices and environment faced by Indonesian and Egyptian leaders exhibit important dissimilarities – crucially, these differences also concern decisions made by pre-democratic rulers. However, this article will divert from Croissant *et al.* in two key aspects, and thus add to the existing literature on transitional civil–military relations in significant ways: first, it highlights that the establishment of effective oversight over the armed forces depends primarily on the creation of an intra-civilian consensus on fundamental issues of general governance – in the case of Indonesia and Egypt, the most important of these issues has been the role of Islam in state organisation. Moreover, unlike Croissant *et al.*, this article treats the creation of such a consensus not as a resource, but as a strategic choice. Second, the discussion emphasises the importance of international factors – something that Croissant *et al.* as well as other civil–military relations scholars tend to ignore.

Naturally, any discussion focusing on the role of civil–military relations in democratic transitions gets entangled in debates on the usefulness of the transition paradigm and the definition of democracy. This article does not intend to contribute to these controversies; nevertheless, it is necessary to define some key terms. For instance, 'democratic transition' here is not understood as a teleological concept, as the critics of the transition paradigm suggest (Carothers 2002). Instead, this article views 'transition' simply as

> the interval between one political regime and another [-] delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative. (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, p. 6)

A 'democratic' transition, then, is one in which the new rulers openly announce their goal of introducing 'some form of democracy', and take measures in that direction. In most cases (and certainly in the cases of Indonesia and Egypt), transitional leaders limit their immediate aspirations to instituting an 'electoral' democracy, that is, a polity in which free, fair and competitive elections are held. By contrast, the additional goals associated with a liberal democracy (strong rule of law, civil rights, social equality) are typically seen as part of a post-transition agenda (Diamond and Morlino 2004). Thus, for our purposes, a 'successful' democratic transition denotes the establishment of electoral competitiveness, while a 'failed' democratic transition describes an aborted attempt at such an establishment. In other words, the criteria against which this article measures democratic transitions and their outcome are not derived from the normative expectations of Western democracy 'transitologists', but from the reform targets set by post-autocratic states themselves.

Discussing the crucial importance of civil–military dynamics in shaping the democratic transition outcomes in Indonesia and Egypt, this article proceeds in five main steps. First, it focuses on the 'initial conditions' of the two democratic transitions, highlighting the fact that Indonesia's military entered the post-autocratic era largely discredited, much in contrast to its Egyptian counterpart. The second segment discusses the role of both militaries in the first governments after the regime change, with Indonesia's military playing no key role and Egypt's assuming direct control. In its third section, the article highlights two details of internal military management that had a tremendous impact on the transitions in both countries: the military business complexes and the retirement age regulations. The two countries' specific arrangements on these issues meant that Egypt's generals had a much higher stake in defending their material privileges than their Indonesian counterparts. Fourth, the discussion moves to the attempts to forge an intra-civilian compromise on the most important ideological question in both Muslim nations: the role of Islam in state organisation. In Indonesia, this quest for a consensus was successful, while in Egypt, it failed spectacularly. As a result, the Indonesian military found it impossible to exploit intra-civilian conflict to engineer its return to power, while Egypt's generals did precisely that. Fifth, the article discusses the role of international sanctions, with especially Washington taking very different positions towards Jakarta and Cairo. The conclusion, finally, reflects on the implications of the Indonesian and Egyptian cases for the scholarship on strategies towards stronger civilian control.

The initial conditions: discredited vs. popular military

According to Aguero (1995, 1998), the initial conditions of a democratic transition are decisive in determining the trajectory of post-authoritarian reform. In Croissant *et al.*'s model, these initial conditions are part of the resources civilian leaders possess when facing the question of how to deal with the armed forces. In assessing the difficulties democratic politicians are likely to experience in extracting the military from politics, most scholars focus on the level of involvement of the armed forces with the fallen authoritarian regime (Alagappa 2001). If this engagement was broad, deep and long-lasting, a quick establishment of civilian control is improbable. If, on the other hand, the military's entanglement with the previous regime was superficial, the chances of its speedy marginalisation from politics are better. In this regard, Indonesia and Egypt had similar legacies: Indonesia's armed forces had played a significant role in the country's war of independence (1945–1949), were part of Sukarno's Guided Democracy regime (1959–1965), and formed the backbone of Suharto's New Order government (1965–1998). Similarly, the Egyptian armed forces – which were founded in the first half of the nineteenth century – had been at the centre of national politics since 1952, when the Free Officers under Gamal Abdel Nasser had taken power. Between 1956 and 2011, all Egyptian presidents were members of the armed forces.

But there was one vital difference in the 'initial conditions' of Indonesia and Egypt's democratic transitions as far as the role of their militaries was concerned. While both armed forces were institutionally and culturally anchored in their respective societies, the Indonesian military had played a much larger role in the repression of the opposition than Egypt's. As a result, when Suharto fell, the armed forces were largely discredited, and most Indonesians demanded that the military be excluded from the new polity (Murphy 2011). Mubarak, on the other hand, had given the military many privileges, but he relied on other institutions to repress dissidents (Frisch 2013, p. 183). Consequently, the military was not blamed for Mubarak's excesses in the same way that the Indonesian generals were associated with Suharto's. This insight not only sheds light on the reasons behind the different post-autocratic trajectories of Indonesia and Egypt, but also adds important nuances to Aguero's notion of 'initial conditions' and Croissant *et al.*'s model of strategic choices and resources. Apparently, in some cases, it is not the deep entanglement of a military with the previous regime that complicates efforts to pull the post-autocratic armed forces from politics; instead, it is the *absence* of such an entanglement in the area of regime oppression that has the potential of undermining the prospects for depoliticising the military during a transition.

These different levels of military involvement in the repression of dissent were the result of divergent 'coup-proofing' strategies developed by the two autocrats. Like democratic civilian leaders, authoritarian ex-generals too have to worry about their control of the armed forces (Makara 2013). Indeed, they understand best that the most credible challenge to their rule is likely to come from within the military. Suharto, for his part, designed a number of strategies to prevent such a scenario. First, he rejected requests from the army for a significant troop expansion (Sundhaussen 1978, p. 65). Second, he undermined the autonomy of the services by subordinating them to a new, heavily centralised armed forces headquarters. Third, in the 1970s and 1980s, he appointed a disproportionate number of Christians and non-Javanese officers to senior military positions – knowing that these members of religious and ethnic minorities could never be president. Fourth, since the early 1990s, he promoted relatives and former adjutants to the top brass, believing that they would feel tied to his fate. Having applied these strategies to pre-empt possible military subordination, Suharto saw no reason to exclude the armed forces from his apparatus of repression. Quite on the contrary, he was convinced that the military's complicity in unpopular practices of suppression would work in his favour – it made the idea of regime change even less palatable to the officer corps.

Hence, the Indonesian military was at the centre of Suharto's system of repression. Military units carried out arrests, put down labour strikes, controlled schools and campuses, intimidated journalists and dispersed demonstrations. The police, which formed only the second line of regime defence, was institutionally subordinated to the armed forces (Clark 2014). Consequently, society often viewed the police as a 'victim' of Suharto's military-based rule as well, while blaming most of the abuses on the armed forces. Indeed, the military's involvement in the intimidation of the opposition continued until the last days of the regime. In early 1998, Suharto's son-in-law and commander of the Special Forces, Prabowo Subianto, kidnapped a number of anti-government activists. Some of them were tortured, and some disappeared forever. When the kidnappings became public, they put a spotlight on the military's deep involvement with the unpopular autocrat. For many Indonesians, the decision by the military leadership under General Wiranto to withdraw their support from the president in May 1998 and dismiss Prabowo from active service was too little, too late. While it protected Wiranto and his associates from a post-transition purge (Mietzner 2009), it was insufficient to lift the military's popularity. The armed forces, so much was clear, would begin the democratic era with heavy historical baggage.

Mubarak's coup-proofing strategies were fundamentally different, and allowed the Egyptian armed forces to enter the post-authoritarian transition with their reputation relatively intact.

Unlike Suharto, Mubarak tried to keep the military in check by building up an alternative apparatus of repression. At the heart of this system of surveillance and intimidation was the Ministry of the Interior, which controlled the Central Security Forces, the Egyptian National Police, and the State Security Investigations Service (SSI). While this apparatus began to grow under Sadat in the 1970s, it was Mubarak who made it the regime's largest instrument of societal control. At its peak, the forces under the Interior Ministry were 'thought to have employed as many as 1.4 million people' (Barany 2011, p. 28). The SSI in particular was notorious for its brutality (Lesch 2011, p. 40). In 2002, the United Nations Committee against Torture pointed to 'the widespread evidence of torture and ill-treatment [by] the [SSI]'.[1] The SSI became the symbol of Mubarak's rule, and while the military resented its influence (Barany 2011, p. 28), it also diverted societal anger away from the military's own involvement in the regime. A similar role fell to the much-despised National Democratic Party (NDP), Mubarak's electoral machine (Heiss 2012). Unsurprisingly, both the SII and the NDP were dissolved after the autocrat's fall in February 2011.

The military, on the other hand, enjoyed comparatively high levels of popularity throughout Mubarak's rule. Unlike Indonesia's armed forces, whose only foreign combat mission was an unsuccessful operation in Malaysia in the 1960s, Egypt's generals could draw legitimacy from their past wars against Israel – particularly the 1973 campaign (Karawan 2011, p. 44). The inscription under a statue of an Egyptian soldier at Cairo's military museum ('The Best Soldiers on Earth') may be a typical act of self-glorification, but it also reflects a widely held view in Egyptian society. This view, in turn, has been strengthened by the military's status as a conscript army with a vast web of contacts in the community – much in contrast to Indonesia's army of professional recruits (Makara 2013, p. 347). Said (2012, p. 404) pointed out that the idea of a symbiotic relationship between the Egyptian people and the military may be 'historically […] not especially accurate', given that the army had not hesitated to defend its vested interests under Mubarak. In the eyes of many ordinary Egyptians, however, the military's heroic image was ultimately confirmed by the fact that it did not participate in the crackdowns on Tahrir Square in early 2011, forced Mubarak to step down, and even allowed him to be put on trial. The blame for Mubarak's abuses, in this logic, lay solely with the Interior Ministry and the NDP. Thus, Suharto and Mubarak created vastly different 'initial conditions' for their countries' democratic transitions: while Indonesia's military was disgraced, its Egyptian counterpart could offer itself as the key to post-autocratic rebuilding.

The transition: marginalisation vs. full control

The role militaries play in the first post-authoritarian government after the fall of the regime is critical in determining the further trajectory of the transition. According to Croissant *et al.* (2013, p. 10),

> the stronger the military influence over the democratic transition, the more the prerogatives of the military are likely to survive the transition and the more institutional power the military will have to stifle post-authoritarian reforms.

Importantly, the decision on the composition of the transitional government is part of the strategic spectrum of options civilian leaders possess – it no longer belongs to the 'initial conditions' of the regime change itself. Of course, the initial conditions have a strong influence on the decisions made in this context, but many options are usually considered before one (or a combination of several) is chosen (Alagappa 2001). Militaries too have to weigh a number of scenarios: for instance, what is the public reaction likely going to be if the armed forces try to take power? Is there a possibility of international sanctions, and if so, are they likely to have a serious

effect? Does the military have the capacity to rule, and how would a poor performance in government impact on the armed forces' long-term institutional interests? In Indonesia and Egypt, these extended discussions led to very different results, with serious repercussions for their respective democratic transitions.

In Indonesia, Suharto transferred power to his vice-president, B.J. Habibie. While this was the constitutional default setting, it was by no means the only possible outcome. A wide variety of options were on the table: the demonstrating students demanded that Habibie step down together with Suharto, making way for a leadership council of opposition figures; Suharto also expected Habibie to resign, with power then transferred to a triumvirate of the Defence, Interior and Foreign Ministers; Wiranto, head of the armed forces and Minister of Defence and Security, held a letter from Suharto that authorised him to assume emergency powers; others again wanted the People's Consultative Assembly to elect a new president. It quickly emerged, however, that the student movement would continue its protests if the military took over, in whatever form and however temporarily. This was also conveyed to Wiranto, who chaired a meeting of his civilian associates on the day before Suharto's resignation (Mietzner 2009, p. 133). There, Wiranto decided that the constitutional transfer of authority to Habibie was the only realistic option, and that a military assumption of power was neither possible nor desirable. Other civilian leaders accepted Habibie as well – they viewed him as weak and thus unlikely to harbour long-term ambitions. Accordingly, they allowed him to take office with the limited mandate of organising fresh elections.

Habibie's ascension to the presidency played an important role in the civilianisation of post-Suharto politics. A German-trained aeroplane engineer, Habibie had a tense relationship with the military when he served in Suharto's cabinet between 1978 and 1998. Once president, he immediately demonstrated his constitutionally enshrined powers to the top brass: he planned to replace Wiranto as commander of the military, but after the latter asked him to reconsider, he agreed – under the condition that the military would not sabotage his reform plans. Having made his point, Habibie proceeded to radically revamp Indonesia's polity (Carothers 2011): he lifted almost all restrictions on the formation of political parties; freed political prisoners; removed press censorship; launched an unprecedented decentralisation programme; and even offered East Timor to decide on its future. None of these initiatives found the approval of the armed forces, but there was not much the generals could do to stop them (to be sure, the military tried to intimidate the East Timorese into endorsing continued rule by Indonesia, but its plan backfired badly). Had the military – instead of Habibie – assumed power in May 1998, post-Suharto Indonesia would have looked much different: the number of parties would have been limited to a handful; restrictions on press freedom would have remained in place; and centralist government would have been maintained (Mietzner 2009, p. 236).

In Egypt, by contrast, the military took full control of the government after Mubarak's fall – leading some to suggest that the democratic transition was doomed from the beginning (Bayat 2012). Between February 2011 and July 2012, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) ruled Egypt with unparalleled executive and legislative powers. However, this military takeover was not inevitable. On 12 February 2011, the day after Mubarak's fall, protest leaders at Tharir Square issued 'People's Communique No. 1', in which they demanded the creation of a transitional presidential council made up of four civilians and only one member of the military (*Reuters* 2011). Significantly, much-respected figures stood ready to fill the slots on this planned council, including Mohamed ElBaradei and Amr Moussa. But the military decided otherwise (as we will see below, mostly because it was keen to protect its large business empire), and its above-mentioned popularity helped to secure public support for this decision (Cole 2012, p. 491, El-Khawas 2012, p. 58). In a poll taken in October 2011, 89.8% of Egyptian respondents stated that 'they trust [SCAF] to lead the transitional period after the January 25 Revolution'

(*Daily News Egypt* 2011) – a much higher level of support for the military than in Indonesia, where only 28% of respondents expressed trust in the armed forces in 2000 (Mietzner 2009, p. 221). Even critical civil society activists tended to support SCAF's takeover, preferring 'a military junta not unlike the one that seized power in 1952' (Masoud 2011, p. 25) to the prospect of a potentially unstoppable rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

The Egyptian military made maximum use of its control over the transitional government. Primarily, it protected its institutional interests, quelling any calls for military reform. Among others, it defended its right to try civilians in military courts – a significant source of socio-political power. In 2011, SCAF tried almost 12,000 civilians in military courts – more than during Mubarak's entire 30-year regime. Furthermore, it cracked down ruthlessly on those challenging its rule (Saikal 2011, p. 538). In 2011 and 2012, SCAF and its affiliated paramilitary forces killed dozens of protesters – 40 activists died in street protests in November 2011 alone. Politically, SCAF used its power to design what one expert described as 'the most complicated electoral system ever used in a post-authoritarian country'.[2] Even before the ballots, observers speculated that SCAF had created this highly complex system to make it vulnerable to subsequent legal challenges. Sure enough, after the electoral victory of MB's party, parliament was dissolved by the courts on a technicality in June 2012 – just weeks before SCAF had to hand over power to a civilian government (Kienle 2012, p. 536). The Upper House was also declared unconstitutional, on similar grounds, in June 2013. Crucially, the legal chaos surrounding the legislative branch supplied welcome ammunition to the military to remove President Morsi in July 2013.

After toppling Morsi, the military pushed through a new constitution that expanded its powers. The 2012 constitution adopted during the MB government had allowed the President to pick the Minister of Defence (who is ex-officio commander of the military). Under the 2014 constitution, by contrast, the President needs SCAF approval to appoint a Minister of Defence (article 234). Moreover, the military holds a majority of the votes in the National Defence Council, which is the only forum where the defence budget can be discussed (article 203). Thus, the Egyptian military used its leadership of the transitional government to consolidate its position, create a political system in which civilian institutions were exposed to constant court challenges, and further increase its power after the first democratic government unsurprisingly collapsed. In Indonesia, on the other hand, the institutional set-up of the post-Suharto polity was largely civilian-made, with the military forced to watch from the sidelines. As a result, civilian governance took roots much faster and more solidly than in Egypt. These contrasting Indonesian and Egyptian experiences highlight the importance of the composition of transitional governments for the trajectory of democratic reform. There are few examples of successful democratic transitions that begin with a military takeover – unfortunately, Egypt has not proven to be an exception.

Military organisation: institutional businesses and political careers

One of the most difficult challenges facing civilian post-authoritarian leaders is the reform of military structures that allow the generals to intervene in politics (Beeson and Bellamy 2008). Civilian leaders can opt to sanction, counterbalance and monitor the military, that is, demand changes to its institutional behaviour and framework (Croissant *et al.* 2013). Alternatively, politicians may appease, acquiesce and appreciate military leaders, buying their cooperation but compromising on reforms. In Egypt, civilian leaders initially deprived themselves of any of these options by permitting the military to lead the immediate post-Mubarak government. After Morsi became president, he developed a mixed strategy of military control, consisting of both sanctioning (he dismissed SCAF leader Mohamed Hussein Tantawi in August 2012) and appeasement (he agreed to the retention of some military privileges in the 2012 constitution). Even as head of

state, however, Morsi found it difficult to deal with two particularly salient elements of SCAF's power: first, the large military business complex; and second, the de facto absence of a retirement age for senior generals, which discouraged them from building careers in civilian politics. SCAF protected these two domains while at the helm of the transitional government, limiting Morsi's subsequent chances to reform them. Indonesia, by comparison, took steps to control the military's business empire, and actively pushed leading generals out of military service.

Before Suharto's fall, Indonesia's military business complex was thought to be one of the largest in the developing world. It was widely accepted that the armed forces raised about 70% of its expenditure through off-budget sources – mostly through foundations, cooperatives and affiliated businesses (Rieffel and Pramodhawardani 2007). At the same time, military officers were placed in leadership positions of state-owned enterprises, and they received regular payments from (often ethnic Chinese) tycoons who expected protection in return. But three specific characteristics made the Indonesian military business complex extremely vulnerable to political change: first, most military businesses required constant cash injections as senior generals treated them as personal ATM machines. As a result, the businesses could not develop institutionally, but were merely the instruments through which the military circulated its rents. Second, the sponsorship money obtained from private enterprises was dependent on the latter's continued economic success – and on the ability of the armed forces to offer socio-political protection in return. And third, as we will see in more detail below, senior officers had little interest in the sustainability of the military business complex as they retired at the age of 55; if anything, it was in their interest to empty the military's business coffers before leaving active service.

Consequently, the Indonesian military business complex declined rapidly after 1998 – and the officer corps did not go out of its way to save it. Indeed, it had to accept that the environment in which it operated had dramatically changed. To begin with, the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 and 1998 had hit Indonesia hard, financially draining both military-controlled state enterprises and the officers' tycoon sponsors. As the military was not a key part of the transitional government, its political power was waning too. Thus, fewer and fewer businesses sought out the military for protection – instead, they turned to the new power centres: parliament, political parties and even the police. State banks also suspended the credits that had kept the cash flow to the military running throughout Suharto's rule. Hence, when an international consulting firm audited the army's businesses in 2000, it concluded that they were, with a few exceptions, technically bankrupt (Mietzner 2009, p. 383). As a consequence, civilian leaders found it relatively easy to deal with the remains of the former military business empire: in 2004, parliament mandated the government to take over all military businesses by 2009, and although President Yudhoyono was unenthusiastic about this task, the process was largely completed by 2010 (Mietzner and Misol 2012). Concurrently, the percentage of military off-budget funding declined to approximately 20%.

The Egyptian military's business complex was equally large under authoritarian rule, but it was structured in a way that made it more vital to the armed forces as an institution and its individual leaders (Nepstad 2013, p. 342). First, unlike the Indonesian military, the Egyptian armed forces control much of the food industry, including olive oil, milk, bread and bottled water. This gives the military a highly political instrument in times of crises – during societal unrest in 2008, the military helped the Mubarak regime by distributing bread (it extended no such favours to Morsi in 2013, when his government also experienced an extended food crisis). Second, the financial interests of Egypt's military were – and are – much more linked into the international financial system than those of Indonesia's (Amar 2012, p. 190). Through joint ventures, the Egyptian military attracted 'tens of billions of dollars in investment from foreign firms' (Marshall and Stacher 2011). Third, military businesses in Egypt have developed higher levels of institutionalisation, with most enterprises remaining under the control of the armed forces as an organisation

(through the Ministry of Military Production, among other bodies). As a result, there has been much more money in Egypt's formal military businesses than in Indonesia's – which became clear when the armed forces 'loaned' US$1 billion to the SCAF government in 2011.[3]

Thus, for Egypt's generals – who, as we will see below, can retain key positions until they are in their 70s – it was much more important to defend the military's businesses than it was for Indonesia's officer corps. While Indonesia's top brass viewed military companies as temporary cash cows, Egyptian officers had a long-term interest in maintaining their businesses as profitable tools of socio-economic power. And indeed, SCAF made the defence of the military's financial interests the primary focus of its attempts to insulate the armed forces from the turmoil of the democratic transition. During its direct rule, it did not respond to any demands for greater transparency of the defence budget and the military businesses operating within its parameters. Of course, after the MB-controlled Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) won the parliamentary elections of late 2011 and early 2012, its officials promised that the military would have to open up its books. 'The army must go back to its normal role as defender of the nation', said FJP leader Karim Radwan in April 2012, 'and it should not have this kind of economic control' (*Global Post* 2012). However, President Morsi viewed it as necessary to compromise with the military, and the 2012 constitution therefore explicitly protected its budget and business interests from parliamentary scrutiny. Following Morsi's fall, the armed forces further strengthened those stipulations in the 2014 constitution.

Clearly, then, the different degrees of interest of the Indonesian and Egyptian militaries in the preservation of their respective business complexes go a long way to explain the different transition outcomes in the two countries. In Indonesia, the double crisis of an external economic shock and sudden regime change destroyed the institutionally weak foundations of the military's commercial empire, and the generals were thus prepared to pursue alternative avenues of self-enrichment outside of their military institution. Accordingly, they refrained from sabotaging the democratic transition to save their (seriously damaged) companies. Not so the Egyptian generals: they defined the business complex as the core of their institutional interests and were willing to defend it by all means. As indicated earlier, one important factor in this calculation was the absence of an effective retirement age in the Egyptian military, which encouraged its officers to maintain the armed forces' commercial network as an instrument of career advancement and personal enrichment until the last stages of their lives.

But the different retirement age regulations for Egyptian and Indonesian officers not only shaped their divergent views on the importance of military businesses. These rules also had a more general impact on how the two militaries viewed the democratic transition ahead of them. In the Indonesian case, generals had retired at the age of 55 for many decades, making post-military career planning a normal part of their lives. Some officers shifted into the bureaucracy; others took a senior role in Suharto's party, Golkar; and others again accepted offers from private businesses. Thus, for Indonesia's top generals in May 1998, the regime change only accelerated already ongoing plans for their post-retirement scenarios. The most senior officers were two or three years away from retirement – as it turned out, some entered politics and became highly competitive electoral contenders (Crouch 2010). Yudhoyono, the Chief of Staff of Socio-Political Affairs in 1998, became Indonesia's president between 2004 and 2014; Wiranto ran in the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections; Prabowo, the Special Forces chief, was a presidential candidate in 2014; and many others served as ministers, governors or legislators. In other words, the Indonesian retirement regulations made it inevitable for officers to build long-term careers outside of their institution, and the democratic transition offered them a wide spectrum of positions.

By contrast, officers of the Egyptian military have the prospect of spending their entire professional life in the armed forces, creating incentives to defend their institutional interests as a

matter of personal self-advancement. While there is a low legal retirement age, this is not enforced for senior officers. At the time of Mubarak's resignation, SCAF chairman and Defence Minister Tantawi was 76 years old – having served in the latter office for 20 years. The inner circle of SCAF was only slightly younger: Sami Hafez Anan, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, was 63; Abd El Aziz Seif-Eldeen, the Commander of Air Defence, was 62; and Mohab Mamish, Navy Commander in Chief, was 63. The example of these elderly generals sent a clear signal to the next generation of officers that it was in their interest to maintain the military's position as the nucleus of Egyptian politics. While Morsi retired 70 aging generals together with Tantawi in August 2012, he did not change the retirement system as such. In fact, even Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Tantawi's replacement, was 58 at the time of his appointment. When el-Sisi assumed the presidency around two years later, in June 2014, he did so thanks to the military's full institutional backing – much in contrast to Yudhoyono, who was elected Indonesia's president five years after his retirement from the armed forces, and who had created a political party as his civilian power base.

Civilian consensus: pluralism vs. Islamism

While details of military management – and the decisions politicians make in this field – are critical in shaping transition trajectories, the outcome of intra-civilian negotiations on the principles of democratic governance is of equal importance (Mares 1998, Mietzner 2011). These negotiations do not necessarily relate to the role of the military per se, but can have a significant influence on increasing or reducing it (Yilmaz 2012, p. 487). In democracies with majority Muslim populations, the most controversial issue in designing a functional post-autocratic polity is often the proper position of Islam in the constitution. In this debate, liberal and secular forces like to draw a line between a religiously neutral state and the private practice of one's faith, while more Islamic groups demand that Islamic teachings define the foundations of the polity. The extent to which a post-authoritarian society succeeds in peacefully settling this dispute (or similar ones) can determine whether the military is marginalised or, by contrast, able to stage a political comeback. In Croissant *et al.*'s model, the existence of a broad politico-ideological consensus is treated as a *resource* for civilian leaders to enforce certain strategies of civilian control; this article, however, argues that the creation of such a consensus is part of the primary *strategic decisions* civilian elites must take. In fact, the outcome of these efforts is likely to decide over the success or failure of the democratic transition, as the Indonesian and Egyptian cases demonstrate.

Indonesia's civilian elite started the post-Suharto transition in the knowledge that a badly mishandled discussion on state–Islam relations could fail the democratic experiment. The country had been at these crossroads before: between 1956 and 1959, a constitutional assembly was hopelessly deadlocked over the question of whether sharia (Islamic law) should become obligatory for Muslims (Nasution 1992). Ultimately, President Sukarno dissolved the body in 1959 and established a military-backed autocracy – six years later, the country was under full praetorian rule. Indonesian leaders were aware of this history when they approached the issue again after Suharto's fall: between 1998 and 2002, the elite agreed on a package of constitutional amendments that introduced key reforms, but preserved Indonesia's status as a multi-religious state (Horowitz 2013). Importantly, this compromise was made possible by long-term doctrinal changes in Indonesia's largest Muslim organisations: Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which had both supported the implementation of sharia in the 1950s, now favoured a pluralist constitution. The two groups had moderated their stance in three decades of co-optation by Suharto, who had given them a variety of influential posts in the regime's patronage network – much in contrast to Egypt, where the MB was never part of the state's politico-bureaucratic infrastructure and thus did not assume the latter's pragmatic outlook (Ghanem and Mustafa 2011, p. 399).

To be sure, Indonesia *almost* experienced a constitutional breakdown in 2001. Then President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001), a highly erratic Muslim cleric, had antagonised parliament, the military and much of the rest of the political elite through ill-conceived reform initiatives. The impeachment proceedings against Wahid paralysed politics for more than a year between mid-2000 and mid-2001, and seemed to offer the military increased opportunities for political rehabilitation. For example, the popular support for the military suddenly increased twofold to 58% (Mietzner 2009, p. 221). But once Wahid was impeached, the elite decided that it would not allow the military to exploit the crisis of civilian politics for its own benefit. Immediately after the turmoil was over, civilian leaders accelerated the process of constitutional amendments, established new politico-legal arbitration institutions (including a Constitutional Court), settled the dispute over an Islamic state – and decided to remove the military from the People's Consultative Assembly five years earlier than planned. Unsurprisingly, the armed forces tried to abort the constitutional amendments in the last minute. But the three-star general sent by military headquarters to the Assembly in August 2002 to lobby for the military's position returned empty-handed: 'The civilians told me that we [the military] had two options: to accept the amendments, or be pushed aside. We eventually chose the former'.[4]

In Egypt, on the other hand, the intra-civilian failure to reach an amicable settlement on the appropriate role of Islam in state affairs went hand-in-hand with the failure to agree that the military needed to be extracted from politics (Nafi 2012, p. 11). Of course, Egypt had a more difficult starting position in the debate over the role of Islam than Indonesia, with Islam controversially defined as the state's official religion (and sharia as the source of all legislation) since 1971. However, the MB was not satisfied with simply maintaining this legal status quo: within six months of coming to power in July 2012, the MB-led government forced its heavily pro-Islamic draft constitution through an assembly boycotted by liberals and Coptic Christians. This process, and the flawed outcome it produced, revealed fundamental misperceptions on both sides of politics: in the view of the MB and Islamist parties such as the Al-Nour, the overwhelming result for the Islamic camp in the legislative elections (it had received a combined 65% of the votes and 72% of the parliamentary seats) gave it an indisputable mandate to implement its 'Islamist conception of the state as a moral actor responsible for social transformation' (Dunne and Radwan 2013, p. 98). Minorities, so the MB and its associates believed, deserved basic protection but otherwise had to yield to majority rule (Radros 2012). The liberal-secular and non-Muslim groups, by contrast, who had been almost obliterated in the elections, were unwilling to accept that the MB's victory would lead to a more Islamic Egypt (Brown 2013, p. 51). They wanted an explicitly pluralist constitution, and viewed any concession to the MB as a violation of Egypt's nationalist foundations.

This conflict provided the entry point the military needed to stage its return to the helm of government. Aware that the MB was consolidating its position, many liberal-secular groups decided that Morsi had to be removed through 'another revolution'.[5] And while many of these groups had been involved in bringing down Mubarak, they now viewed the MB 'as so strong and so fundamentally undemocratic that core liberal-democratic values could only be saved if secular liberals cut a deal with […] the military' (Stepan and Linz 2013, p. 21). The military, unsurprisingly, was receptive: as early as April 2012, SCAF stated that the MB-supported constitutional assembly was 'unrepresentative of Egyptians' (*BBC News* 2012). Far from recognising the need to compromise with the opposition in order to build an anti-military coalition, the MB only agreed to establish a slightly revised assembly that was soon abandoned by pluralist politicians. With this, the Islamists had provided the military with the ammunition it needed to justify the MB's removal from government. Most nationalists, on the other hand, were oblivious of the fact that their alliance with the military paved the way not only for the MB's downfall but also for the resurrection of a Mubarak-style regime. Ironically, then, the '30 June Revolution' – as

Morsi's overthrow was soon called – terminated Egypt's democratic transition with the help of the very liberal civil society groups that had triggered it.

The different experiences in Indonesia and Egypt show that the creation of a broad political consensus on vital issues of state organisation is an integral part of any campaign to extract militaries from politics (Landolt and Kubicek 2013). If this consensus can be created, like in Indonesia, the chances for solid civilian control are high; if it fails through 'bad choices' (Brown 2013, p. 53), as in post-Mubarak Egypt, the military has an opportunity to re-establish full control. Thus, questions of intra-civilian disputes, even if they do not directly relate to military issues, are intrinsically linked to the strategic options civilian leaders need to pursue if they want to consolidate their control over the armed forces. Morsi, for example, would have had a better chance of succeeding with his sanctioning of the military (i.e., the August 2012 dismissals) if this move had been accompanied by consensus-oriented negotiations with the opposition. This is precisely what happened in Indonesia: there, it was the forging of a civilian consensus on central politico-ideological subjects – much more so than targeted military reforms – that allowed the elite to institute its supremacy over the armed forces. Thus, it is evident that the settlement of intra-civilian conflicts does not only provide a support infrastructure for civilian leaders, as Croissant *et al*. suggest; instead, successful political dispute resolution is as much an item on the menu of strategic choices aimed at robust civilian control as are the options of sanctioning, counterbalancing and monitoring.

International factors: post-Cold War dynamics and Israel

Another factor that can be decisive in determining civil–military transition outcomes is the support or sanctioning of politically assertive armed forces by great powers. Since the end of the Cold War, however, most scholars of civil–military relations have moved away from studying international factors in extracting militaries from politics or encouraging them to stay (Alagappa 2001). The era in which the USA had backed up military dictatorships just because they were anti-communist seemed long gone, and every US administration since Clinton had – at least rhetorically – declared its opposition to military coups and other forms of political intervention by the armed forces. Rejection of military adventurism in politics appeared to be the new global norm, despite the fact that China and Russia continued to lend support to the shrinking number of military-backed regimes, such as Myanmar and Fiji. But even these two praetorian governments seemed to bow to international (or more precisely, Western) pressure in the early 2010s, promising reforms and a return to democratic rule. The Indonesian and Egyptian cases highlight, however, that Western support for or punishment of interventionist military leaders continues to be determined by the global strategic interests of Washington and its allies – and that their behaviour can have a significant impact on whether democratic transitions fail or succeed.

In Indonesia, the USA imposed significant sanctions on the military during much of the democratic transition – from 1999 to 2005. Washington found it easy to take this step because the Indonesian armed forces were no longer needed as a key partner in the US campaign against communism. Thus, when the Indonesian military laid waste to East Timor after its citizens had voted for independence in the August 1999 referendum, Washington and most of its European allies cut off all military aid. As a consequence, the Indonesian military was internationally isolated at the height of the democratic transition. For the military, it seemed, the sanctions were not so much of material than of symbolic relevance. Materially, US military aid to Indonesia was small. Between 1946 and 2010, Indonesia's defence force received US$2.2 billion from Washington – 0.33% of the entire US military aid budget during that time (Shell and Stiles 2012). But as a US military attaché in Jakarta reported in the early 2000s, 'Indonesian generals constantly ask us what they need to do so that the restrictions are lifted – they say they are tired of being seen as a

pariah'.[6] As it turned out, the sanctions were only removed in 2005, when the Bush administration needed the military's cooperation in fighting terrorism in Southeast Asia. By that time, however, Indonesia's civilian leaders had already consolidated their power.

The situation in Egypt has been fundamentally different – mostly because all US governments since 1979 have courted the Egyptian military as the guarantor of the country's peace with Israel (Snider and Faris 2011, p. 50, Solomon 2011). This has been reflected in the extent of American aid granted to the Egyptian generals: between 1946 and 2010, they obtained US$57.1 billion. This made Egypt the third-largest recipient of US military aid since World War II, after Israel and Vietnam (Shell and Stiles 2012). Importantly, this sum included an annual US$1.3 billion payment deposited into a US-based bank account, from which Egyptian military leaders could purchase equipment of their choice from the US defence industry. But while the US funds mattered greatly to the Egyptian military, its leadership was also aware of its indispensability to US interests. Egypt's generals knew that there was no greater fear in Washington than that a more Islamic post-Mubarak government would abandon the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (Farag 2012, p. 221). Consequently, the Obama administration was relieved that the military, and not an unpredictable people's council, had taken the reigns in February 2011. US military aid thus continued to flow to SCAF, despite the fact that its coming to power technically constituted a military takeover. The aid did not stop either when SCAF killed dozens of anti-government protesters in November 2011, or when it put thousands of civilians on trial in military courts (Stein 2012, p. 54).

The USA only suspended some of its military aid to Egypt after the SCAF-backed government killed hundreds of Morsi supporters in August 2013. In July, when the military toppled Morsi, the USA refused to call this a 'coup', given that such a classification would have automatically frozen US military assistance.[7] Indeed, US Secretary of State John Kerry helped the Egyptian top brass to defend its narrative of Morsi's removal, saying that 'the military was asked to intervene by millions and millions of people, all of whom were afraid of a descent into chaos', and that it overthrew Morsi to 'restore democracy' (*Washington Times* 2013). Even in November 2013, three months after the massacre of MB followers, the arrest of thousands of others and the ban of the Brotherhood as an organisation, Kerry declared in Cairo that the MB had 'stolen' the Egyptian revolution (Cairo Post 2013)[8] – another important element of the military's justification for the coup. The suspension of military aid in October, according to Kerry, was therefore 'not a punishment', but a minor bureaucratic necessity, 'a reflection of policy in the United States under our law' (*New York Times* 2013). And the US administration took quick measures to change this law: in December 2013, the Senate passed a bill that allowed President Obama to waive the 'coup law' restrictions. Hence, even the suspension of military aid – which came at a time when the military had already solidified its power – was punctured with legal qualifications, undermining the political message that such suspensions are supposed to send.

At the end, the Egyptian military felt so unassailable that it decided to challenge even these half-hearted sanctions. Fully aware of its strategic worth to the USA, the military expressed outrage over Washington's stance and threatened to shift its allegiance to Moscow. Pro-government commentators celebrated the scenario of a new partnership between el-Sisi and Putin, reviving 'the golden era of Cairo–Moscow co-operation in the 1950s and 1960s' (*The Egyptian Gazette* 2013). Clearly, the USA was paying the price for its long, uncritical support for Egypt's military, which stretched from 1979 to the crackdowns of 2013. Prioritising its strategic interests over human rights concerns, Washington let several opportunities for imposing credible sanctions pass. Arguably, the last such opportunity had been in late 2011, when the violent nature of SCAF's rule became fully evident. After that, the threat of sanctions had lost its teeth. Accordingly, the USA was responsible for creating an environment in which SCAF felt it could carry out two power grabs and major abuses in front of the international press. In Indonesia, on the other

hand, Washington made a small contribution to the political marginalisation of the military by imposing sanctions at a critical juncture of the democratic transition. Conceptually, these highly divergent experiences in Egypt and Indonesia show that it is much too soon to discount the importance of international influences in establishing civilian control and safeguarding democratic transitions.

Successful and failed democratic transitions from military rule: the cases of Indonesia and Egypt

Despite sharing many politico-demographic characteristics, Indonesia and Egypt experienced very different democratic transition outcomes. Indonesia sidelined its military from politics to become one of Southeast Asia's most democratic societies, while Egypt returned to military-backed rule. Indeed, as el-Sisi was sworn in as president, Indonesia watched with great enthusiasm how a former small-town mayor from Central Java, Joko Widodo, won the 2014 presidential elections, defeating the hard-line ex-general and Suharto protegee Prabowo Subianto in the process. This article has shown that the reasons for this stark divergence between Egypt and Indonesia lie both in specific dissimilarities in the patterns of pre-democratic rule *and* in the different decisions civilian leaders took during the transition. To begin with, Mubarak's strategy of excluding the military from the regime's apparatus of repression – while Suharto placed the armed forces at its centre – handed Egypt less favourable 'initial conditions' for civil–military reforms. Similarly, the stronger institutionalisation of Egypt's military businesses – as opposed to their casual structure in Indonesia – gave Egyptian generals a bigger material stake to defend (Abdelrahman 2012, p. 626). In addition, the strict imposition of a retirement age of 55 in Indonesia's military made the transition to civilian life a much more routine affair for its generals than for Egypt's. On the civilian side, the chances of a stable intra-civilian consensus on Islam–state relations in Egypt were undermined by the clandestine mindset the MB had groomed during decades of exclusion from government, while Indonesia's leading Muslim organisations had 'softened' through effective regime co-optation.

But the different transition trajectories were not only determined by pre-existing structures and legacies – equally important were decisions civilian leaders and groups took at various junctures of the post-authoritarian reform process (Brown 2013, p. 55). Most importantly, civilian protest leaders and elites in Indonesia were adamant that the military should not lead the first post-Suharto government – they were not convinced that it was sincerely committed to democracy. In Egypt, on the other hand, civilians – including many critical civil society groups – entrusted the military with the management of the democratic transition, with predictable results. In the same vein, the Indonesian elite managed to overcome intra-civilian fissures to settle on a compromise on the role of Islam in the state and other key issues of democratic governance. While this process took four long years, it led to a solid agreement. In Egypt, neither the MB nor the largely Cairo-based liberal-secular elite were prepared to compromise on their positions: the former rushed a pro-Islamic constitution through formal-legal channels without much consultation, while the latter dragged the military into what should have been an exclusively intra-civilian discourse. Ultimately, these two major miscalculations by Egypt's civilian actors weighed heavier than the military legacies left behind by the Mubarak era: they turned a difficult starting position for any democratic transition into certain and spectacular failure.

For the comparative literature on civilian control and democratic transitions, the Indonesian and Egyptian cases deliver valuable insights. First, and most essentially, key decisions on basic issues of governance – even if they seemingly do not relate to military affairs – cannot be analytically separated from the arena in which the quality of civilian oversight over the military is negotiated. Many scholars of civil–military relations have ignored such debates as possessing

only marginal significance for the status of the armed forces (Alagappa 2001, Croissant *et al.* 2013), and have instead focused on decisions that directly impact the military: strategies of sanctioning (i.e., dismissals of senior officers), monitoring (i.e., establishing technical mechanisms of oversight), or – alternatively – appeasement (i.e., offers of concessions to the officer corps). In most cases, however, the collapse of a democratic transition and the return of military rule are more likely to be caused by the breakdown of intra-civilian negotiations on broader societal issues than by flawed military control systems (Mares 1998). In democracies with Muslim-majority societies, this intra-civilian discourse mostly concerns the question of the role of Islam in state organisation; in other countries – such as Thailand – it may be related to class issues or regional schisms. Whatever the core of such intra-civilian debates, they need to gain more prominence in the study of strategies to depoliticise militaries during processes of post-authoritarian transition.

This also implies that the recent trend in civil–military relations scholarship that grants intra-civilian agreements on fundamental political issues merely the status of a 'resource' is conceptually unsatisfactory. Instead, the creation of such a consensus is best integrated into the menu of strategies civilian leaders need to pursue in order to consolidate their control over the post-autocratic military. Indeed, Indonesian leaders focused almost exclusively on strengthening the foundations of civilian politics, with the marginalisation of the military occurring almost as a by-product. In Egypt, on the other hand, civilian control remains improbable as long as no agreement is reached on vital issues of state governance. Against this background, the classification of an essential policy consensus as a 'resource' instead of a strategic option falsely suggests that (a) such agreements are only indirectly linked to the issue of civilian control and (b) they are out of reach for civilian decision-makers. In order to counter these misperceptions, the main focus of political action – and scholarly research – should be on the complex interaction between decisions taken in the seemingly separate realms of general governance and control of the military. Finally, this article has also demonstrated that fresh attention needs to be paid to the international factors in democratic transitions after military rule; while this influence is waning in some cases, the Egyptian example shows that the action or non-action of international players continues to shape transition outcomes in decisive ways.

Notes

1. Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee against Torture: Egypt. 12/23/2002. CAT/C/CR/29/4 (concluding observations/comments).
2. Interview with Antonio Spinelli, Egypt representative of IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems), Cairo, 7 December 2011. See also Faris (2012).
3. Estimates vary, but one more moderate estimate – by Mohamed Kadry Said, a retired general and a military analyst – puts the annual turnover of Egyptian military businesses at around US$14 billion (*Jerusalem Post* 2012).
4. Interview with Agus Widjojo, Jakarta, 15 August 2007.
5. Confidential interview with a liberal NGO activist, Cairo, 17 December 2013.
6. Confidential interview, Jakarta, May 2001.
7. Section 508 of the Foreign Assistance Act stipulates that no assistance shall be given 'to any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup or decree'.
8. A Pew research poll taken one month before Morsi's overthrow showed that the MB maintained favourable ratings among almost two-thirds of Egyptians, down around 10% from the year before. Fifty-three per cent of respondents held a favourable view of President Morsi (*Wall Street Journal* 2013).

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