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Berger, L and Gallagher, A orcid.org/0000-0002-2625-7715 (2022) Shared values or shared interests? Arab publics and intervention in Syria. Politics, 42 (3). pp. 376-392. ISSN 0263-3957

https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720967854

Shared Values or Shared Interests? Arab Publics and Intervention in Syria

Abstract

Analysing Arab public opinion on the international community's response to the Syrian crisis, we expand existing scholarship by injecting a non-Western perspective into the oftentimes Western-centric debates on intervention. We demonstrate that publics in two prominent Arab Spring countries were quite willing to embrace intervention in Syria in order to depose Bashar al-Assad. More specifically, our analysis reveals that both interests and values shape support for different types of international intervention in Syria. In the context of the distinction between policy-driven and culture-driven Anti-Americanisms, we show that Egyptian and Tunisian evaluations of US foreign policy behaviour and, to a lesser extent, US culture correlate with support for Western-led military intervention in Syria.

Keywords: Anti-Americanism, Egypt, Intervention, Public Opinion, Syria, Tunisia.

As we approach the tenth anniversary of the Syrian crisis, there are a wide range of retrospective accounts that seek to explain what went wrong and what could and should have been done differently (Bandeira, 2019; Strong, 2019). These form part of a broader post-Arab Spring discussion over international responsibilities in the wake of mass human rights violations (Bellamy and Dunne, 2016; Hehir and Murray, 2017; Ignatieff, 2013; Menshawy, 2019). What this literature is lacking is a closer examination of the views of citizens living in the region directly affected by the Arab Spring's upheavals and foreign interventions. Although path breaking research has been published on the sympathies of Syrian refugees with various Syrian conflict parties (Corstange, 2019) and opinion about NATO examined via an Algerian convenience sample (Saddiki, 2012), we lack an in-depth understanding of how publics in different Arab countries position themselves on whether or not foreign intervention should have occurred at the time.

We address this gap by looking at Egyptian and Tunisian public opinion in the early stages of the conflict in Syria when many observers still considered a US-led intervention a distinct possibility (Slaughter, 2012). We examine the differences in the attitudinal profiles of Egyptian and Tunisian supporters and opponents of a range of hypothetical scenarios of foreign intervention in Syria, which might have facilitated Bashar Al-Assad's removal from power. Our main research question is whether the normative preference for democratic governance or evaluations of either US culture or foreign policies correlate with support for such interventions.

Our results have crucial implications for the wider debate over US-led responses to conflicts in Arab states. First, we show that public opinion in the Arab world is not per se rejecting foreign intervention in cases where regimes have turned against their own citizens. Second, the main fault line is not over the question of *whether* to act or not, but over questions of *who* should act and *what* action should be taken. Third, Anti-Americanisms focusing on both US policies and culture help explain the deep scepticism towards interventions led by external actors such as the United States. On the one hand, the perception that the Obama administration was paying attention to the interests of the relevant respondent's home country is the only variable robustly correlating with support for Western military intervention aiming to force Bashar al-Assad from power. On the other hand, the much stronger support for Western intervention in Tunisia was, to a considerable extent, the result of a positive association between views of US culture and support for Western intervention among respondents in that country.

We structure this article in four parts. First, we address previous research on (humanitarian) interventions in the region and related public opinion in order to flesh out the hypotheses we test in our analysis. Second, we describe our methods and data. Third, we present and analyse the results of our multinomial regression analyses of Egyptian and Tunisian support (or the lack thereof) for various types of interventions aiming to force Syria's President Bashar al-Assad to resign from office. Fourth, we discuss the theoretical and policy implications of our findings.

Background

The ongoing conflict in Syria has profoundly shaped academic analysis of the international politics of the Arab Spring. It featured in appraisals of the success and failures of Obama and Trump administration's Middle East policies (Berger, 2020; Byman, 2016; Lynch, 2015b), the future of authoritarianism in the region (Heydemann, 2013), the development of transnational Islamist terrorism (Hegghammer and Nesser, 2015; Lister, 2016), Russia's (Allison, 2013; Dannreuther, 2015) and Turkey's re-emergence as regional players (Kuru, 2015; Öniş, 2014) as well as in debates over the application of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) in the aftermath of the 2011 military intervention in Libya (Averre and Davies, 2015; Gifkins, 2016; Morris, 2013; Welsh, 2016).

The survey data we analyse below measures support for external attempts to deal with the Assad regime's atrocities. It is necessary therefore to explain that when we use the term 'intervention' we do so in a broad sense in order to capture different policy options including economic sanctions and military intervention. Humanitarian motives may drive support for certain policies but of course, they may not. Within the literature on intervention, there is a long-standing debate over whether humanitarian intervention has to be driven by humanitarian motives. For instance, in his seminal account Wheeler (2000) controversially proposed that a military intervention for reasons other than human protection could still be considered legitimate humanitarian intervention if a by-product

of the action taken was that it saved strangers. To be clear, we are not claiming that the policy options we focus on are indeed underpinned by a humanitarian ethic and therefore refrain from using the term humanitarian intervention. Following on from this, it is also important to note that debates over intervention have gone hand in hand with discussions over whether governments can legitimately by-pass the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The fact that Russia and China have essentially protected the Syrian regime from a range of UNSC Resolutions being passed (Brumberg and Heydemann, 2013) has led to calls for actors to by-pass the UN all together (Erskine, 2019; Ignatieff, 2013).[1]

The primary concern here is that any call for Western-led intervention no matter how broadly defined has to demonstrate that the proposed type of intervention does not simply follow a logic of Western imperialism (Evans, 2008; Nuruzzaman, 2013). As Ayoob (2004) argued, post-colonial states are particularly concerned about the legitimacy of intervention without UNSC authorization. For example, the military intervention in Libya in 2011 created a legitimacy crisis as non-Western states challenged the idea that UN Resolution 1973 permitted regime change (Morris, 2013; Nuruzzaman, 2013; Ralph and Gallagher, 2015; Zongze 2012). Although those studies focus predominantly on the attitudes of political elites, concerns about the nature and aims of interventions are not limited to governments. The Arab world's scepticism toward outside intervention is informed by a long history of colonial and Cold War penetration by outside powers

(Ayoob, 2004; Brown, 1984) as well as outrage over the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Gilpin, 2005). This is why engaging with the views of people on the ground is critical.

It is also important to note that concerns over perceived Western motives make it easier for authoritarian human rights abusers such as Bashar al-Assad to delegitimize Western action. In a speech at Damascus University, Bashar al-Assad described the international community as 'a group of big colonial countries which view the whole world as an arena full of slaves who serve their interests' (cited in Maddy-Weizman, 2012: 77). Such unease is not just limited to those rulers with the worst human rights record. Former Jordanian Crown Prince, El Hassan Bin Talal, for instance, advocated a 'soft', 'long-term' version of RtoP which is 'aimed at prevention rather than crisis management' (Bin Talal and Schwarz, 2013: 2). He put it very cautiously:

> In circumstances where actors from within the region are neither willing nor able to provide humanitarian assistance themselves – and Syria comes to mind, where, despite attempts by the League of Arab States, the situation has remained precarious and instable – then it might be conceivable for the international community to step in and shoulder some of the burden and responsibility. Of course, the question would hinge upon the manner of such intervention, as well as its *purpose* (emphasis added, Bin Talal and Schwarz, 2013: 6).

This initial review of the ongoing debates over intervention suggests that we urgently need to develop a more in-depth and nuanced account of how publics in a region, which

has witnessed a substantial number of such interventions, have come to view them. This is what our paper aims to offer. It does so by situating the analysis of Arab public opinion on intervention within the academic examination of the political and cultural varieties of Anti-Americanism. In short, while we do not aim to contribute a new explanation of the potential drivers of political and cultural dimensions of Anti-Americanisms, we will assess the extent to which either dimension might correlate with support for US-led military intervention in Syria.

In many ways, the examination of public opinion on intervention in Syria brings together two central themes of research on the new Arab public sphere: the question of domestic legitimacy and the centrality of pan-Arab issues. A substantial body of research (Jamal et al, 2015; Lynch, 2006 and 2003; Telhami, 1999 and 1993; Valbjørn and Bank, 2012) has shown how the rise of pan-Arab satellite and social media and the ongoing legitimacy crisis of authoritarian governance in the region have seen discursive competition shift from being the exclusive domain of regimes during the first Arab 'Cold War' (Kerr, 1971) to one occurring between regimes and publics. Given the pan-Arab nature of this new Arab public sphere, regional issues like various Western interventions in Iraq or the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians have been particularly salient (Lynch, 2003; Telhami, 1993). The importance attached to such pan-Arab concerns and their concomitant role as symbols of commitment to the general interests of Arabs and Muslims mean that these 'transnational symbols of legitimacy' (Telhami, 1993: 439) act as an

enabler or constraint on the policies which regimes in the region can pursue. The attention to public opinion, which political leaders as diverse as Egypt's Mubarak, Syria's Assad and Saudi Arabia's late king Abdullah have exhibited, serves as evidence for this point (Lynch, 2003). Here, the academic analysis of public opinion (Benstead, 2018) has helped move the debate away from the Orientalist cliché of the 'Arab street'. We build upon this important earlier research to add new insights into whether and how different types of intervention can find legitimization across different cultural and political contexts.

Hypotheses

As mentioned above, our main interest lies in establishing whether shared values such as preference for democracy or affinity for US culture on the one hand or shared interests as expressed in perceptions of beneficial US policies on the other hand help explain support for a Western-led intervention in Syria with the aim of removing Bashar al-Assad. The following section thus looks at existing research to develop hypotheses we test in the ensuing analysis.

One obvious first avenue to explore is whether supporters of democracy differ in their views regarding the forceful removal from office of Bashar al-Assad from the opponents of democracy. An impressive earlier body of research, which focused on Western public opinion on international intervention (Clements, 2014 and 2012; Davies and Johns, 2016; Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2012; Reifler et al., 2014), has already shown how attitudinal

profiles can explain support for various types of foreign interventions. In the context of the burgeoning research on pro-democracy attitudes among Arab publics (Berger, 2019a; Tessler at. al., 2012), there are only few examinations of how and whether this might correlate with views on international politics (Berger, 2019b; Ciftci and Tezcür, 2016; Tessler and Nachtwey, 1998; Spierings, 2014). We are thus left with looking at published opinion and (social) media discourses as a first gauge of how views of democracy might affect support for different forms of intervention in Syria. A review of the Arab public sphere in the early days and months of the Arab Spring makes clear the considerable mutual sympathy among protesters across the region who saw themselves as part of the same historical moment and the same 'mobilized Arab public capable of imposing the popular will on previously unaccountable regimes' (Lynch, 2015a: 331). Whether it was the spike in tweets jointly mentioning Syria together with other Arab Spring countries such as Egypt (Lynch et al., 2014) or newly elected politicians such as Egypt's Islamist president Mohammad Morsi speaking of a moral duty to stand with the Syrian people (quoted in Bin Talal/Schwarz, 2013), the pan-Arab public sphere was very sympathetic towards the peaceful protesters in Syria. The question the following analysis answers is whether the normative preference for democratic governance in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia also translated into greater support for different types of interventions aiming to bring about similar change in Syria.

Hypothesis 1a: Support for democratic governance is associated with greater support for any type of intervention in Syria.

Hypothesis 1b: Support for democratic governance is associated with greater support for military intervention in Syria.

With the early debate over foreign intervention in Syria centring on a possible role for the United States (Byman, 2016; Lynch, 2015b), our main interest lies in establishing what sets apart supporters of Western intervention from its opponents. The literature on the Arab public sphere has paid considerable attention to the strength and sources of Anti-Americanism (Jamal et al., 2015; Nugent et al., 2018). Previous research on Anti-Americanism in general and in relation to the Arab world more specifically has already demonstrated at the conceptual and empirical level the importance of distinguishing negative attitudes toward US culture from negative attitudes toward US foreign policies (Berger, 2014; Ciftci and Tezcür, 2016, Jamal et al., 2015; Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007; Nugent et al., 2018; Walt, 2005). The former amounts to a 'psychological tendency to hold negative views of the United States and of American society in general' (Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007: 12). The latter focuses on US policies and involves resentment of the political consequences of US hegemony more generally (Walt, 2005) as well as unease and anger with the nature and consequences of US political involvement in the Arab world over the last half a century more specifically (Nugent et al., 2018).

Regarding our interest in explaining support for US-led military intervention in Syria, this would suggest two possible explanations. A first explanation would point to a type of Anti-Americanism (Keohane and Katzenstein, 2007) featuring a deeper resentment of US culture that corresponds to a 'disposition to believe negative reports about the United States and to discount positive ones' (Ibid: 26). In this perspective, the United States appears as inherently immoral and every US foreign policy initiative thus as driven by immoral motives. It must be pointed out of course that such culture-based Anti-Americanism is not, as some Orientalists might argue (Lewis, 1990; for insightful criticism see Halliday, 1993) a prerogative of audiences in Muslim-majority countries, but can be evidenced in European public opinion as well (Chiozza, 2009).

A second explanation would point to a type of Anti-Americanism (Keohane and Katzenstein, 2007) which rejects certain foreign policies based on an evaluation of the underlying motives and results. In this perspective, support for US-led initiatives would be possible, at least in theory, depending on the evaluation of their impact on national and regional interests. This is exactly what Furia and Lucas (2006) found in their analysis of Arab attitudes toward a range of global political actors. They concluded that Arab public opinion is best described by paraphrasing Hans Morgenthau insofar as public attitudes toward particular foreign countries are mostly determined by the question, 'what has this country done for (or to) my own country lately?' (Furia and Lucas, 2006: 30). Analysis of Arabic Twitter language (Jamal et al., 2015) similarly showed how Arab publics

distrust the United States and are sceptical regarding the interests it pursues. For Jamal (2015) and colleagues, negative sentiment towards US foreign policy is, in this analysis, therefore not linked to it being American, but to it being interventionist. Our final two hypotheses thus are:

Hypothesis 2: Negative views of US culture are associated with rejection of Western military intervention in Syria.

Hypothesis 3: Negative views of US policies are associated with rejection of Western military intervention in Syria.

Method and Data

Our analysis utilizes data gathered by the Pew Research Centre as part of its 2012 Global Attitudes Survey. Interviews in Egypt and Tunisia were conducted face-to-face in March and April 2012 and featured additional questions dealing specifically with the crisis in Syria and other aspects of the Arab Spring. Multi-stage clustering produced national samples, which are representative of the adult population. Tunisia and Egypt share some crucial similarities, yet also offer some differences. Most obviously, both countries had seen their long-term dictators deposed in 2011. While in Tunisia, this would set the stage for a fledgling democratization process, in Egypt, the military would soon take power directly again (Brownlee et al., 2015). Another difference is Egypt's role as US client

state with the regime depending on generous military and economic aid (Berger, 2020; Berger, 2011; Brownlee, 2012). These differences might matter in explaining different levels of support for (Western) intervention in Syria. Existing research demonstrated the association between experiences of intervention and levels of political and cultural types of Anti-Americanisms (Spierings and Glas 2020) as well as the close interaction between the international sphere and domestic politics (Solingen 2007).

At a regional level, the escalating violence in Libya affected both countries with terrorist attacks in Tunisia and Egyptian support for General Haftar (Mühlberger, 2016). Regarding Syria, both countries had openly declared their support for the opposition (Katz, 2014). PEW collected the data we use before the rise of ISIS, which is likely to have influenced public support for intervention in Syria. This does not affect, however, our research interest as we focus specifically on public support for different forms of intervention against the Assad regime as opposed to support for counterterrorism efforts against ISIS.

Dependent Variables

We constructed the dependent variables in our analyses from questions, which first asked respondents whether they supported the idea that Bashar al-Assad should step down. As table 2 makes clear, in early 2012, opposition to Bashar al-Assad was not just noticeable at the level of political elites, but also enjoyed overwhelming support among publics in

both Egypt and Tunisia. Respondents who indicated support for Assad's resignation were then asked whether they supported economic sanctions, Arab military intervention and/or Western military intervention to put pressure on Assad to step down (table 2). These responses form the backbone of our analysis. By looking at all three scenarios, we can examine whether variation in the type of intervention (military versus non-military) or lead actor (Western versus Arab) produces different patterns in terms of the socio-economic and attitudinal profile of their supporters. When running our regression analysis, we opted against running individual logistic regressions utilizing the responses to individual questions. Membership of these response categories was not mutually exclusive as the question wording allowed respondents to express support for more than one type of intervention. Running individual logistic regressions would thus not have allowed us to delve further into the differences between those who support specific interventions, but not others. That is why we recoded responses so that we ended up with mutually exclusive response categories as summarized in table 3. Our category 'sanctions only' included only those respondents who support sanctions while rejecting both Arab and Western military intervention. Our category 'Arab military intervention maximum' captures those respondents who supported only Arab military intervention, but not Western military intervention irrespective of their views on sanctions. Our final category 'Western military intervention' includes all respondents who support this option irrespective of whether or not they supported other options as well. This way, we can

offer a more fine-grained account of what sets apart those who support Western intervention from those who support other types of intervention or even belong to the noticeable number of people who wanted to see Assad go, but reject any kind of outside intervention.

Independent variables

In order to construct our independent variables, we rely on precedent set in earlier assessments of Arab public opinion. In order to test hypothesis 1, we use a question that explicitly asks about the preference for democracy over authoritarian rule (table 1). Such comparison between democracy and authoritarian alternatives has increasingly been employed in research seeking to examine the link between pro-democracy attitudes and foreign policy attitudes in the Middle East (Berger, 2019b; Ciftci and Tezcür, 2016; Köse et al., 2016). We thus compare respondents who preferred a 'strong leader' ('1') with those who thought that democracy was the best way to solve their country's problems ('0').

When testing hypothesis 2, we follow Blaydes and Linzer (2012) as well as Ciftci and Tezcür (2016) in considering questions querying views of US culture, business, television and technology. Factor analysis showed that these questions all share a single underlying dimension with views of US democracy loading particularly strongly onto this dimension.

In order to keep reduction in the overall N due to non-responses to specific questions about US culture to a minimum, we opted for constructing a variable which compares those with negative views of US democracy ('1') with those with positive views ('0') (table 1). Finally, in order to test hypothesis 3, we utilize a question that queries respondents' perception of US foreign policy under the Obama administration with those stating that the US did not take into account the interests of the respondent's country coded as '1' and those with a positive view of US policies toward their country as the reference category ('0'). Responses to these questions were strikingly similar in both countries when it came to the preference for democracy over a strong leader and the small number of respondents who saw the US as considering their country's interest. The only difference emerged regarding a generally more positive view of US democracy among Tunisians (table 1).

Table 1 - Views on democracy at home, democracy in US and US foreign policy (% agree, Pew 2012)

	Egypt	**Tunisia**
We should rely on a democratic form of government to solve our country's problems instead of a leader with a strong hand.	64.7	61.9
I like American ideas about democracy.	41.9	60
Obama has taken into account my country's interests.	17.4	15.6

In line with previous research (Clements, 2014, 2012; Johns and Davies, 2014; Reifler et al., 2014; Tessler and Nachtwey, 1998), we include additional controls covering age

(under 30s as reference), gender (men as reference), education (1 – illiterate/incomplete primary, 2 – completed primary, 3 – completed secondary, 4 – university), and personal economic situation (1 – very bad, 2 – bad, 3 – good, 4 – very good). [2]

Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

A comparison of the Egyptian and Tunisian responses to the main question of interest reveals some interesting patterns (table 2). Across all types of possible interventions, Tunisians appeared to be considerably more enthusiastic in their support. What both countries had in common was that support for sanctions was roughly on par with support for Arab military intervention. In other words, the drop-off in support for intervention only occurred when questions mentioned 'the West' as the lead actor. This drop-off in support for military intervention when led by Western countries as opposed to Arab countries is noticeable in both countries, yet even more dramatic in the case of Egypt. The dividing line is thus not between *types of intervention*, i.e. sanctions or military intervention, but between *types of actors*, i.e. Arab or 'Western'. Trying to find an explanation for this pattern is the goal of the following analysis.

Table 2 - Support for Interventions – Pew 2012 Survey (%)

		Yes	No	DK	Ref.	N
Q121. Do you think Syrian President Bashar al-Assad should step down or not?	Egypt	89.2	9.5	1.2	0.1	1000
	Tunisia	88.0	7.0	4.6	0.4	1000
Q122. Approve of tougher international economic sanctions on Syria to put pressure on President Assad to step down?	Egypt	55.4	42.8	1.0	0.8	892
	Tunisia	71.8	23.3	4.5	0.3	880
Q123. Approve of Arab states intervening militarily in Syria to put pressure on President Assad to step down?	Egypt	52.8	45.0	1.2	1.0	892
	Tunisia	69.5	26.7	3.4	0.3	880
Q124. Approve of Western countries intervening militarily in Syria to put pressure on President Assad to step down?	Egypt	12.2	87.4	0.3	0	892
	Tunisia	43.3	51.8	4.4	0.5	880

As mentioned above, our specific research interest requires us to construct mutually exclusive variables, which allow us to investigate whether type of intervention and/or type of intervener matter in shaping Arab public support for or rejection of intervention aimed at deposing Bashar al-Assad. We present the results of this recoding in table 3. First, it becomes clear that, particularly in Egypt, a significant number of respondents would have been happy to see Assad go but rejected any type of outside intervention. Second, Egyptians were also much less likely to support military intervention overall and Western-led military intervention more specifically. Here, the Tunisian and Egyptian responses constituted a mirror image of each other. While in Egypt, an overwhelming share of supporters of military intervention wanted to see this limited to Arab forces, in Tunisia, an equally overwhelming share of supporters of military intervention were willing to condone Western-led military intervention. The question of what sets apart this

last category of respondents from those who thought that Assad should not resign, no action should be taken or that either sanctions or Arab military intervention should only be employed is the focus of the following analysis.

Table 3 - Support for Interventions 2 – Pew 2012 (%, recoded from questions 121-124)

	Egypt	**Tunisia**
Assad should not resign	10.0	7.9
Assad resign, but no action should be taken	21.3	12.6
Assad resign, but only sanctions implemented	16.8	10.2
Assad resign, but maximum Arab military intervention	40.5	27.2
Assad resign, and Western military intervention	11.3	42.1
N	952	886

Regression Analysis

Results[3] presented in table 4 reveal how, in the case of Egypt, but not in Tunisia, views on democracy and foreign intervention in Syria are associated. Respondents who think that authoritarian rule is better suited to their own country are more likely to be supporters of Assad's rule or non-interventionist opponents of Assad. In other words, when compared to supporters of US-led intervention supporters of Assad's rule and non-interventionist opponents of Assad's rule are similar in their scepticism toward democratic rule in Egypt. Hypotheses 1a and 1b thus find partial support in our data. Further research would need to investigate whether the similarity in democratic preference between supporters of authoritarian rule and non-intervention can be detected in other contexts.

Table 4 – Multinomial Regression - Support for Intervention in Syria (Western intervention as reference category)

Egypt

	Assad not resign			Assad resign and… No action			Sanctions maximum			Arab military maximum		
	B.	S.E.	Odds	B.	S.E.	Odds	B.	S.E.	Odds	B.	S.E.	Odds
Intercept	0.137	0.641		0.331	0.569		-0.409	0.622		0.721	0.517	
Over 30	-0.231	0.354	0.794	-0.249	0.306	0.779	0.048	0.326	1.049	-0.102	0.280	0.903
Women	0.193	0.318	1.213	0.522	0.272	1.686	**-0.684***	**0.288**	**0.505**	-0.032	0.245	0.968
Education	0.118	0.159	1.125	-0.060	0.134	0.942	0.112	0.142	1.118	0.100	0.122	1.105
Economic status	-0.291	0.199	0.747	-0.215	0.167	0.807	-0.066	0.173	0.936	-0.037	0.150	0.964
Authoritarian Preference	**0.961****	**0.332**	**2.615**	**0.642****	**0.289**	**1.900**	0.235	0.306	1.266	-0.131	0.272	0.878
Neg. View of US democracy	-0.410	0.328	0.664	-0.182	0.280	0.833	-0.372	0.290	0.690	-0.253	0.253	0.777
Neg. View of US interests	-0.086	0.352	0.918	**0.832***	**0.326**	**2.298**	**1.353*****	**0.374**	**3.869**	**0.926****	**0.285**	**2.525**
N	797											

Note: R square = .11 (Cox & Snell), .11 (Nagelkerke). Chi square = 90.80, p < .001. * p < .05, ** p <.01, *** p.001

Tunisia

	Assad not resign			Assad resign and… No action			Sanctions maximum			Arab military maximum		
	B.	S.E.	Odds	B.	S.E.	Odds	B.	S.E.	Odds	B.	S.E.	Odds
Intercept	-3.565	0.812		-3.902	0.681		-3.092	0.769		-2.272	0.514	
Over 30	0.219	0.313	1.245	**1.094*** **	**0.294**	**2.985**	-0.069	0.285	0.933	0.256	0.204	1.292
Women	0.521	0.299	1.684	0.214	0.253	1.239	0.170	0.275	1.185	0.374	0.191	1.454
Education	**0.516****	**0.181**	**1.676**	**0.531*** **	**0.147**	**1.701**	**0.319***	**0.160**	**1.376**	**0.239***	**0.111**	**1.270**
Economic status	0.003	0.213	1.003	0.154	0.180	1.166	-0.191	0.183	0.826	0.096	0.135	1.101
Authoritarian Preference	-0.255	0.316	0.775	-0.045	0.259	0.956	0.156	0.276	1.169	0.052	0.196	1.053
Neg. View of US democracy	0.526	0.319	1.693	**0.659*** **	**0.264**	**1.933**	**0.678***	**0.283**	**1.971**	**0.557****	**0.205**	**1.746**
Neg. View of US interests	0.053	0.362	1.054	-0.222	0.288	0.801	**1.177****	**0.453**	**3.244**	**0.643***	**0.252**	**1.902**
N	700											

Note: R square = .10 (Cox & Snell), .11 (Nagelkerke). Chi square = 76.23, p < .001. * p < .05, ** p <.01, *** p.001

Hypothesis 2 also finds support only in one country. In Tunisia, supporters of US-led military intervention set themselves apart from supporters of non-intervention, sanctions, and Arab-led military intervention in their more positive view of US culture. We thus find some empirical evidence that cultural and political dimensions of anti-Americanism might overlap on some issues and at least in some parts of the Arab world. This corresponds with earlier studies which showed that in some Muslim-majority countries political and cultural Anti-Americanisms both correlate with support for political behaviour such as violence against US troops (Berger, 2014) or that views of US people correlate with assessments of the Iraq war among European audiences (Chiozza, 2009). There is no support for hypothesis 2 in the case of Egypt. Here, the sign for cultural anti-Americanism never turns significant and even remains negative throughout (table 4).

The one hypothesis, which finds robust support across both countries, is hypothesis 3 about the association between perceptions of US foreign policy and support for US-led military intervention aiming to topple Bashar al-Assad. Far from constituting an irrational response, any rejection of US-led military intervention among Egyptian and Tunisian publics is linked to their evaluation of the Obama administration's approach regarding their home country's interest. We thus find substantial support for the notion developed earlier (see Furia and Lucas, 2006) that Arab publics pursue an interest-based approach when looking at external actors and their respective policies. Rejection of their involvement is not uniform and unchanging, but directly tied to the evaluation of their policies.

Calculating predicted probabilities can offer us insights into the substantive impact of our central independent variables on support for Western intervention specifically (see table

7, online appendix, for underlying logistic regression). When looking at an average respondent as represented by an over 30 year-old men with completed secondary school, 'somewhat bad' family finances and preference for democracy, the size of the effect of views of US foreign policies is roughly similar in both countries. A change in views of US foreign policies from negative to positive increases support for Western intervention from 11.1% to 20.8% in Egypt and from 27.6% to 36.9% in Tunisia. What sets Tunisia apart is the additional positive impact of favourable views of US culture as the predicted probability of supporting Western intervention among the average Tunisian respondents with favourable views of both US policies and culture stands at 51.9%. This tells us that more positive Tunisian evaluations of US culture can explain a significant share of the difference in Egyptian and Tunisian views of Western intervention. At the same time, the difference in the probability of supporting Western intervention among Egyptian and Tunisian respondents with negative views of both US policies and culture suggests that other variables such as long-standing experiences with Western intervention (Spierings and Glas 2020) and different pathways of political development (Solingen 2007) need to be examined in further research.

Regarding our control variables, the role of education in Tunisia stands out. Our finding that, at least in this country, higher education is associated with lower support for intervention, irrespective of whether or not we include our attitudinal variables (see tables 8a and 8b, online appendix), aligns with Gribble's et al. finding (2015) that educational attainment was linked with lower support for UK military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq and with more critical views regarding the respective costs and motives. Future research could thus explore whether the scepticism towards the use of military force

among more educated segments of non-Western publics is also driven by concerns over corresponding costs and motives.

Conclusion

With over half a million people killed and 'half the pre-war population – more than 13.2 million people' displaced (UNHCR, 2020) the implications of the Syrian crisis will be felt for generations. Our analysis has shown that Arab publics are quite willing to entertain the idea of outside intervention when, as happened in Syria, governments turn against their citizens. When it comes to the involvement of external actors, our findings reveal a nuanced picture regarding the relative impact of policy-driven and culture-driven Anti-Americanisms. On the one hand, the interest-based evaluation of Obama administration's policies emerges as the only significant predictor of support for Western intervention in Syria in both countries. On the other hand, the positive impact of favourable views of US culture in Tunisia can explain to some extent the dramatic difference in support for such intervention across both countries. This has important implications for the wider literature on intervention.

First, publics in Egypt and Tunisia were, at least during the early stages of the conflict in Syria quite willing to support different, even military, types of foreign intervention in order to put pressure on Bashar al-Assad to step down. We thus find little reason to assume a general hostility toward (humanitarian) intervention in the region.

Second, our results reveal that when it comes to support for such interventions, Arab publics pay close attention to what they regard as their possible underlying motives. If

respondents believed that the Obama administration was paying attention to their own country's interests, then they were more likely to support Western-led military intervention. This suggests that publics in the region are basing their evaluation of foreign interventions on the extent to which perceived motives of the intervener correspond with the interests of the respective publics. We can therefore see how much the fall-out from the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq based on deliberately distorted intelligence (Pillar, 2006) as well as its failures in post-war reconstruction (Jervis, 2008) mattered as it helped feed a broader narrative of malign US motives regarding the Arab world. Our analysis suggests that such interventions played a central role in shaping scepticism regarding future US-led interventions.

Third, the fact that positive evaluations of US culture help explain the considerable difference in support for Western intervention across Egypt and Tunisia suggests that scepticism regarding Western interventions is at least partially tied to a fundamentally pessimistic view of the United States in what Katzenstein and Keohane describe as cultural Anti-Americanism. In addition, this finding offers some empirical support for the notion that 'soft power' (Nye 2011) can play a role in generating support for US policies in the context of the Arab-Muslim world as well.

Our findings thus have clear policy-implications. If the United States or other Western countries intend to increase public support for (humanitarian) interventions, they need to adopt policies that audiences in target regions see as benefiting them, or at least more clearly communicate how existing policies are of benefit. They also need to invest in and better utilize 'soft power' capabilities. In the end, Arab publics assess Western intervention based on a mix of perceived shared interests and shared values.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank participants at the POLIS research seminar at the University of Leeds as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this article.

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[1] It is noteworthy how present the Libyan case was in the minds of both protesters and regime in the early months of the uprising against Bashar al-Assad as something either to be emulated (in terms of eliciting a foreign intervention) or something to be avoided at all costs. While the opposition took care to present a non-sectarian and non-Islamist outlook, the regime tried to avoid a Benghazi scenario by calibrating its ruthless repression in a way that it would remain below the threshold of provoking foreign intervention (Lynch et al., 2014; Leenders, 2013).

[2] Robustness checks utilizing either different measures of views of US culture or the original continuous measure of age confirmed the substantive findings of the models presented here (see online appendix tables 4a and 4b as well as 5a and 5b).

[3] Robustness checks utilizing a Heckman Selection model confirmed the substantive findings of our multinomial regression (see online appendix tables 6a and 6b).