

# Military Effects on Political Stability: A Seemingly Unrelated Regression (Sur) Model Applied To MENA Countries

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**Abstract:** Within the literature, there are two contrasting views about whether military interventions affect a region's stability. One body of research indicates that military interventions positively influence political stability. The other body suggests that military interventions decrease stability within a region. In response to the two contrasting views regarding the impact of military intervention on political stability, the researcher hypothesizes that military interventions undermine the conditions for political stability and that an increase in levels of military hostility will negatively affect all factors underlying political stability within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). To test these hypotheses, the researcher uses data gathered between 1984–2010, compiled by the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) and the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) Project. The findings indicate that as levels of military hostility rise within MENA, religious and ethnic tensions are likely to increase, while law and order is likely to decrease. This provides further evidence that military intervention negatively affects political stability.

**Keywords:** military intervention, political stability, conflict, Middle East, North Africa.

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## Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been afflicted by coup d'états, wars, terrorism, bombings, and many other destructive acts.<sup>1</sup> The World Bank estimates that as of 2016, war had directly affected 87 million people in Iraq, Syria, and Libya.<sup>2</sup> These conflicts have resulted in stunted modernization, political repression, rampant unemployment, high infant mortality, child displacement, and inadequate education levels.<sup>3</sup> The gross domestic product (GDP) of MENA countries

- 1 Although there is no formal definition for which countries comprise MENA, the World Bank (2019) defines MENA as Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.
- 2 “By the Numbers: The Cost of War & Peace in the Middle East”, World Bank, last modified February 4, 2016. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/02/03/by-the-numbers-the-cost-of-war-and-peace-in-mena>.
- 3 Černý, “Information Needs in Competitive Technical Intelligence,” *Journal of Systems Integration* 7, no. 1, (January 2016): 3-12; Lilli Mottaghi. “How Do People in MENA Evaluate their Economic Prospects?” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), accessed February 12, 2022, <https://ideas.repec.org/p/wbk/wboper/24385.html>.

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involved in conflict has declined, causing economic struggle post-conflict.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the effects of war have led to stagnant growth in these countries and created political instability.<sup>5</sup> Conflict and political instability are intertwined in MENA countries, and these two factors have created a challenging environment in the MENA region and caused distress for the region's inhabitants.

Generally, the goal of military intervention is to stabilize precarious regional situations and produce positive outcomes for the host country (i.e., the country in which the intervention takes place). The success of a military intervention is often judged by whether it successfully ended a conflict or created security and stability.<sup>6</sup> Kavanagh et al. note that out of the 145 ground and air conflicts that the US participated in between 1898 to 2016, the US<sup>7</sup> achieved succeeded in achieving its goals 63% of the time.<sup>8</sup> However, such efforts have not brought political stability to many conflict-stricken areas in MENA. Although US officials may believe these interventions have been a success, difficulties in MENA countries remain.

Countries with superior defensive capabilities, military strategies, healthcare services, and financial resources often intervene militarily to assist host countries in increasing their stability and economic viability. The MENA region has received assistance from large regional powers, yet the countries in the region have continued to experience instability and economic and political decline. Key variables associated with political stability may offer insights into why military interventions are often ineffective; variables such as democratic accountability, socioeconomic conditions, ethnic and religious tensions, law and order, corruption, and GDP growth all influence political stability. Examining indices that track changes in these seven factors might assist one in determining what effect a contemplated intervention will have on political stability. However, merely tracking variables may be insufficient to develop a holistic understanding of what factors influence post-conflict stability.

Although the above variables allow one to measure political stability, it is necessary to develop an inclusive definition of political stability to understand how military interventions may affect it. In a 2010 study, Margolis argues that the concept of political stability relates to the degree to which informal and formal institutions correspond to one

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4 Mottaghi, "People in MENA".

5 Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael Kenwick, and Matthew Lane. "The MID4 Dataset, 2002–2010: Procedures, Coding Rules and Description." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, no. 2 (January 2015): 222–42

6 Marie Olson Lounsbury, Frederic Pearson, and Andrea Kathryn Talentino, "Unilateral and Multilateral Military Intervention: Effects on Stability and Security," *Democracy and Security* 7, no. 3 (August 2011): 227–257.

7 Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan A Frederick, Alexandra Stark, Nathan Chandler, Meagan L Smith, Matthew Povlock, Lynn E Davis, Edward Geist, Arroyo Center, and Rand Corporation, *Characteristics of Successful U.S. Military Interventions* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 2019).

8 The objective of Kavanagh's et al 2019 paper was to define success for U.S. military interventions. Ambitious objectives and a conflict's intensity are reasons for success to diminish (Kavanagh et al., 2019).

another.<sup>9</sup> The narrower the “gap” between formal and informal intuitions, the greater the political stability in a polity.<sup>10</sup> Although the gap Margolis discusses may be challenging to capture using quantitative measures, the variables listed above offer valuable insight into a region’s political stability.

However, the relationship between military intervention and political stability is often unclear. Some authors assert that those in politically unstable regions may welcome military interventions. Others suggest that military intervention is necessary to ensure post-conflict recovery in an area plagued by violence. There is no clear consensus on this debate in the literature, creating opportunities for further research. In understanding a military’s intentions and the impact of its interventions, this paper attempts to uncover what effects interventions have on political stability by studying components that affect it.

Scholars have tested political stability empirically using a variety of indices that provide information about or measure variables in a country or region. Authors have used these indices in multiple studies.<sup>11</sup> Typically, these authors create political stability indices by aggregating key variables. In many cases, these indices are used in multiple studies. Generally, these aggregated variables present data in basic, easy-to-understand numerical terms, allowing for efficient and simple research examination. However, this aggregative approach poses some challenges. For example, researchers may have difficulties determining how exogenous variables affect the individual components of political stability. As a result, studies in which these variables are combined frequently do not reflect critical underlying elements of the topic under examination.

In this paper, I argue that disaggregation allows one to test the effects military intervention has on individual factors related to political instability. Disaggregation can assist in determining how military interventions help foster political stability. Rather than regressing interventions on a political stability index, I regress military interventions on democratic accountability, corruption, ethnic tensions, religious tensions, law and order threats, socio-economic conditions, and GDP growth to detail the effect military intervention has on each component. Moreover, I test the hostility level of military interventions within MENA (i.e., the amount of force utilized in a conflict) to determine how an increased hostility level may affect each component.

9 J. Eli Margolis, “Understanding Political Stability and Instability,” *Civil Wars* 12, no.3 (September 2010): 326-345.

10 Margolis, “Understanding Political Stability,” 331.

11 Nurudeen Abu, Mohd Zaini Abd Karim, and Mukhriz Izraf Azman Aziz, “Corruption, Political Instability and Economic Development in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Is There a Causal Relationship?,” *Contemporary Economics* 9, no. 1 (2015): 45–60; Minh Ngoc Ngo, and Loc Duc Nguyen, “The Role of Economics, Politics and Institutions on Budget Deficit in ASEAN Countries,” *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 7, no.9 (September 2020): 251–61; Emrah Sofuoğlu, and Ahmet Ay, “The Relationship between Climate Change and Political Instability: The Case of MENA Countries (1985:01–2016:12),” *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 27 (February 2020): 14033–14043; Abdelaziz Hakimi, and Helmi Hamdi, “Does Corruption Limit FDI and Economic Growth? Evidence from MENA Countries,” *International Journal of Emerging Markets* 12, no.3 (July 2017): 550–71.

In the next section, this paper discusses how external military interventions in the MENA region may affect political stability. I refer to several leading works regarding political stability, civil conflict, and military intervention. Afterward, I present applicable definitions and offer a framework that explains how different political stability factors may increase the intensity of military interventions. I then discuss the research design for the purpose of data analysis and report the results. I conclude with a detailed discussion of the findings on political instability and military intervention.

## Relevant Literature

There is a dearth of literature on the topic of military interventions and their effects on political stability. Moreover, there are no studies that examine how military interventions affect political stability in MENA. One possible explanation for these research gaps is a difficulty in measuring political stability and a lack of consideration regarding how variables underlying political stability interact. However, the small number of studies on this topic that do exist offer two competing theories: that military interventions increase political stability and, conversely, that military interventions decrease political stability.

These two theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the effects of foreign military interventions. Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom believe post-conflict peace is fragile.<sup>12</sup> An external military presence is a prerequisite to stability, as military personnel can assist in the gradual process of economic recovery. According to this view, political design plays a subsidiary role in economic restoration, with a state's autonomy being of the most importance. Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom's study demonstrates how interventions can support host countries by creating political structures and buttressing recovery after a conflict.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Seybolt's study examines 17 successful and unsuccessful military interventions to identify the parameters that influence whether such acts are successful.<sup>14</sup> He concludes that, depending on intervenors' objectives and military strategies, humanitarian interventions can save lives and have positive effects on a region's political stability in some cases.<sup>15</sup>

The other theoretical framework demonstrates how interventions can negatively affect a variety of components that comprise political stability. One set of authors studies the impact of political factors that can place strain on a state and lead to unrest. They demonstrate that weak structures can incubate civil unrest and increase the likelihood of instability.<sup>16</sup> Pickering and Kisangani's 2006 study shows how larger foreign military

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12 Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom, "Post-Conflict Risks." *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 4 (July 2008): 461–478.

13 Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom, "Post-Conflict Risks," 465.

14 Taylor B. Seybolt, and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Humanitarian military intervention: Causes of success and failure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 75.

15 Seybolt, "Humanitarian military intervention," 75.

16 James D. Fearon, and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political*

interventions affect autocratic and democratic political structures.<sup>17</sup> Their study shows that foreign military interventions in democratic regions had no significant impact on either type of political structure. However, foreign military interventions in autocratic regions tend to produce democratic, long-term economic growth.<sup>18</sup>

Olson Lounsbry et al. suggest that unilateral and multilateral interventions do not necessarily affect a target state's governance, its citizens' quality of life, or its economic growth.<sup>19</sup> Olson Lounsbry et al.'s findings support the argument that interventions are an ineffective means of increasing political stability.<sup>20</sup> In another study, Peksen and Olson Lounsbry find that supportive missions can have stabilizing effects, while impartial conflicts have negligible effects, and hostile interventions increase the likelihood of civil war.<sup>21</sup> This study is significant because it reflects how an intervention's level of hostility may affect post-conflict stabilization efforts.

In one of his earlier studies, Collier focuses on how economic opportunities often lead to instability and war.<sup>22</sup> By observing behavior between 1965 and 2000, the author concludes that economic agendas and building wealth are the driving force of civil conflict, rather than hatred of a people.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Fosu studies the economic effects of coups in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>24</sup> Fosu's study finds that abortive and successful coups generally inhibit economic growth.<sup>25</sup> Another study by Sweidan concludes that instability and conflict have had a statistically significant negative effect on economic growth in Jordan; moreover, their study provides that the stunted economic growth has reduced government expenditures.<sup>26</sup>

Two studies present the idea that governance, both weak and strong, plays a critical role in a region's stability. Dorff suggests that a lack of governance might prompt rebel forces to establish themselves in specific regions and offer sanctuaries to sympathizers,

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*Science Review* 97 no.01 (2003): 75–90; Scott Gates, Håvard Hegre, and Mark P. Jones, and Håvard Strand, "Institutional Inconsistency and Political Instability: Polity Duration, 1800–2000," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 4 (October 2006): 893-908.

- 17 Jeffrey Pickering, and Emizet F. Kisangani, "Political, Economic, and Social Consequences of Foreign Military Intervention," *Political Research Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (September 2006): 363-376.
- 18 Pickering and Kisangani, "Political, Economic, and Social," 365.
- 19 Lounsbry, Pearson, and Talentino, "Military Intervention," 230.
- 20 Lounsbry, Pearson, and Talentino, "Military Intervention," 236.
- 21 Dursun Peksen, and Marie Olson Lounsbry, "Beyond the Target State: Foreign Military Intervention and Neighboring State Stability," *International Interactions* vol. 38, no. 3, (March 2012): 348-374.
- 22 Collier, Paul, "Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 6. (December 2000): 839–853.
- 23 Collier, "Rebellion," 845.
- 24 Augustin Kwasi Fosu, "Political Instability and Economic Growth: Implications of Coup Events in Sub-Saharan Africa," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 61, no.1 (January 2002): 329–48.
- 25 Fosu, "Political Instability," 339.
- 26 Osama D. Sweidan, "Political instability and economic growth: evidence from Jordan," *Review of Middle East Economics and Finance* 12, no. 3 (November 2016): 279-300. <https://doi.org/10.1515/rmeef-2015-0025>

further eroding regional stability.<sup>27</sup> Quirk studies weak states with a particular focus on why some rebellions and insurgent alliances within weak states are effective and others are not.<sup>28</sup> He argues that internal partnerships are likely to develop to support the survival of a fragile state's regime.<sup>29</sup> These weak states are conducive to the development of government intervention and rebel insurgencies. Both Quirk and Dorff postulate that weak governance will affect a region's stability and induce conflict.<sup>30</sup>

Corruption can also factor into how stable a country ultimately becomes following a period of conflict. Fjelde and Hegre study the relationship between political corruption and political institutions<sup>31</sup> and find that highly corrupt autocracies and hybrid governments are more stable than less corrupt governments. However, their study also shows that less corrupt democracies are more durable than highly corrupt democracies.<sup>32</sup> This broad study highlights that post-conflict stability within a host state is contingent upon corruption; moreover, stability may be more or less corrupt depending on which type of government structure is corrupt.<sup>33</sup>

Houle and Bodea argue that ethnic inequality is a prominent factor that has affected levels of political stability in Africa.<sup>34</sup> Their research supports the hypothesis that inequality between ethnic groups increases the likelihood of a coup.<sup>35</sup> In other words, when ethnic and income disparities arise, these disparities create an environment where instability can potentially occur.

In Carsten Anckar's work, he studies the relationship between religion and democratic stability within the Middle East. Anckar's study indicates that religion does not affect levels of democratic stability within a state.<sup>36</sup> His findings regarding how survey respondents reply to the question of the importance of religion are even more significant. Low levels of democracy are related to high levels of religiosity.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, Mustapha Kamel Nabli writes about reforms in MENA countries with respect to economic improvements.<sup>38</sup> Although these improvements are likely to be

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27 Robert H. Dorff, "Failed States after 9/11: What Did We Know and What Have We Learned?" *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 1 (January 2005): 20–34.

28 Patrick W. Quirk, *Great Powers, Weak States, and Insurgency: Explaining Internal Threat Alliances* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 165-180.

29 Quirk, *Great Powers*, 169.

30 Doff, "Failed States," 22; Quirk, *Great Powers*, 173.

31 Hanne Fjelde, and Håvard Hegre, "Political Corruption and Institutional Stability," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 49, no. 3 (June 2014): 267–299.

32 Fjelde and Hegre, "Political Corruption," 275.

33 Fjelde and Hegre's study looks at 133 different countries between the dates of 1985- 2008.

34 Christian Houle, and Cristina Bodea, "Ethnic Inequality and Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 3 (May 2017): 382–96.

35 Houle and Bodea, "Ethnic Inequality," 387.

36 Anckar Carsten, *Religion and Democracy: A Worldwide Comparison* (London: Routledge, 2013).

37 Carsten, *Religion and Democracy*.

38 Mustapha Kamel Nabli, "Breaking the barriers to higher economic growth: better governance and deeper reforms in the Middle East and North Africa," (Washington, Dc: World Bank, 2008). accessed February 12, 2022, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/6914/439690PUB0Box310only109780821374153.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

complex and challenging to implement, Nabli argues they are necessary for growth.<sup>39</sup> The implementation of these improvements will foster job creation and employment. Furthermore, he posits that unemployment is a consequence of socioeconomic conditions and may directly affect a region's stability.<sup>40</sup>

Additionally, Jones et al. argue that restructuring internal security, police, and security forces post-conflict are essential to building or rebuilding a country.<sup>41</sup> Laying the foundation for the protection of civil liberties creates societal order.<sup>42</sup> Also, weak justice systems often lead to corruption, organized crime, and the overall degradation of the legal system. They make the theoretical argument that post-conflict, law and order remain essential to fostering societal stability. If law and order is not present or legal institutions are inappropriately structured, instability will follow.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, Su et al. present the results of their quantitative study on the BRICS<sup>44</sup> countries.<sup>45</sup> They examine the relationship between GDP and political stability in these countries. Their findings suggest that there has been an increase in political stability, which has translated into GDP increases among the BRICS.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, in their study of 169 countries, Aisen et al. find that higher degrees of stability yielded higher GDP growth.<sup>47</sup> Instability adversely affects development and, therefore, GDP.<sup>48</sup>

These studies highlight an underlying theme: that governance, corruption, ethnic differences, religious differences, law and order, GDP, and socioeconomic development all play a role in, and therefore reflect, a region's political stability. These factors serve as variables that can be used to measure fluctuations in political stability. Although some research suggests that military interventions can bolster a host country's stability, this paper contends that more hostile military interventions lead to greater political instability. Although interventions may be well-intentioned, with the intent of assisting a host country, they may in actuality hurt the host country's development. Moreover, an intervention's hostility level may be critical in determining the effects and effectiveness of military interventions.

Conflicts are very diverse in nature, and they commence and end for a variety of

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39 Nabli, "Breaking the barriers."

40 Nabli, "Breaking the barriers."

41 Seth G. Jones et al., *Establishing Law and Order after Conflict* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005), 228-245.

42 Jones et al., *Establishing Law and Order*, 240.

43 Jones et al., *Establishing Law and Order*, 232.

44 BRICS countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

45 Mingcui Su, Zeng Lian, and Jianjun Li, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Energy Consumption and Economic Growth: Evidence from the BRICS," *Economics and Policy of Energy and the Environment* no. 1 (March 2017): 73–89.

46 Su, Lian, and Li, "Energy Consumption and Economic Growth," 75.

47 Ari Aisen, and Francisco José Veiga, "How Does Political Instability Affect Economic Growth?" (Working Paper No. 5/2010, SSRN Electronic Journal, 2010), 16. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1560524](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1560524).

48 Aisen and Veiga, "Political Instability," 17.

reasons. Some may be the result of religious or ethnic tensions, weak governance, or poor governance structures. Others may arise from economic factors, such as access to natural resources. Each of the studies included in this literature review focus on one factor that affects either political stability or military intervention. The analyses each study offers point to multiple causes and effects to highlight the variables studied in this paper. However, to the author's knowledge, there have been no studies that test numerous factors of political stability to understand which are most relevant.

Based on existing literature, it is challenging to identify a strong argument as to whether interventions increase a nation's stability. Additionally, global studies on interventions rarely focus on how a military intervention's hostility level affects political stability, particularly within the MENA region. This paper utilizes the existing literature to construct theoretical arguments about military interventions and their effects on political stability. It is essential to study the quantitative score of each political stability factor, how they interact, and the impact of military intervention's hostility levels. Therefore, this paper will employ a SUR regression to the seven political stability variables and the one military intervention variable to conclude how military interventions affect political stability.

## Hypothesis

As stated in the previous section, scholars have identified seven factors that relate to political stability that have historically been affected by various military interventions throughout MENA. By disaggregating these components, a researcher can measure and weigh them separately to understand how interventions may jeopardize or bolster a region's stability. The results of this study provide data that support a better understanding of the consequences of military interventions. Based on the research presented in the literature review, this paper proposes several hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is as follows:

*H1: Military intervention decreases the likelihood of democratic accountability in the MENA region.*

Democratic accountability reflects how reactive a government is to its people. Governments that are responsive to their people are less likely to suffer from internal conflict and become unstable. Governance, simply put, refers to a state's ability to govern an area. The ability to react to citizens and ensure democratic accountability is indicative of the effectiveness of governance. Poor governance can increase a rebel force's ability to make an area unstable.<sup>49</sup>

The second hypothesis is set out below:

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<sup>49</sup> Dorff, "Failed States," 31; Quirk, *Great Powers*, 175; Peksen and Lounsbury, "Beyond the Target State," 352.

*H2: Military intervention increases the likelihood of corruption in the MENA region.*

According to the PRS Group, corruption distorts a country's economy, reduces a government's efficacy, and often increases instability.<sup>50</sup> The International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) incorporates all forms of corruption when compiling the guide; however, ICRG places greater emphasis on factors like, “Nepotism, job reservations, [and] excessive patronage...”<sup>51</sup> Fjelde and Hegre emphasize that lower levels of corruption make democracy more durable.<sup>52</sup> A more resilient democracy can be a precursor for stability. Their research creates a link between corruption and determinations if a region is stable.

The third hypothesis states:

*H3: Military intervention increases the likelihood of ethnic tensions in the MENA region.*

The ICRG assesses ethnic tensions that stem from discrimination based on race, nationality, and language.<sup>53</sup> Lower ratings are assigned to countries with less tolerance for diversity. Houle and Bodea’s 2017 study demonstrates that inequality among ethnic groups can lead to conflict.<sup>54</sup> The correlative link Houle and Bodea identify in their study of sub-Saharan Africa underlie this paper’s hypothesis that ethnic tensions harm political stability in the MENA region.<sup>55</sup>

The fourth hypothesis is set below:

*H4: Military intervention increases the likelihood of religious tensions in the MENA region.*

Religious tensions, which are measured by the ICRG, may occur in cases where religious groups attempt to dominate a region and suppress diversity. Like ethnic tensions, religious tensions create an apparent disparity in the population, among a region. This disparity can lead to tensions within a community. Alhassan et al. test the relationship between financial inclusion and political stability. They found that religious tensions negatively affected financial inclusion.<sup>56</sup>

The fifth hypothesis is as follows:

*H5: Military intervention increases the likelihood of threats to law and order in the MENA region.*

One can measure law and order by examining a justice system’s strength and

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50 “The International Country Risk Guide (ICRG),” The PRS Group, accessed 11 February 2022, <https://www.prsgroup.com/explore-our-products/international-country-risk-guide/>

51 “ICRG.”

52 Fjelde and Hegre, “Political Corruption,” 272.

53 “ICRG.”

54 Houle and Bodea, “Ethnic Inequality,” 390.

55 Houle and Bodea, “Ethnic Inequality,” 385.

56 Abidin Alhassan, Leon Li, Krishna Reddy, and Geeta Duppatti. 2019, “The Relationship between Political Instability and Financial Inclusion: Evidence from Middle East and North Africa,” *International Journal of Finance & Economics* 16 (November 2021): 353-374.

impartiality and citizens' adherence to the legal system.<sup>57</sup> Jones et al. note that a weak justice system weakens political stability; thus, law and order is an essential component of political stability.<sup>58</sup>

The sixth hypothesis states:

*H6: Military intervention increases the likelihood of socioeconomic decline in the MENA region.*

According to the IGRC, poor socioeconomic conditions are forces that place pressure upon the government and promote public dissatisfaction. Poverty, unemployment, and consumer confidence all inform socioeconomic conditions measurements. Nabli identifies a strong link between unemployment, socioeconomic conditions, and political stability.<sup>59</sup> Nabli's approach in connecting these three factors is critical in evaluating stability. Viewing socioeconomic conditions in light of unemployment acts as an essential pillar of political stability.

## Data

The data used to analyze how military interventions affect the components of political stability were collected from the ICRG and the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) datasets. To test the hypotheses set out in the preceding section, the researcher used longitudinal data pertaining only to MENA countries from 1984 to 2010, which are discussed in greater detail below.

The ICRG is a 146-country, 22-component rating matrix that comprises a 100-point system for rating a country's political risk.<sup>60</sup> It is used to assign risk ratings to countries around the world. Researchers categorize and weigh each variable to assess the political stability of a given region.<sup>61</sup>

For this research, I extracted the relevant components of political stability from the ICRG to assemble a set of disaggregated dependent variables.<sup>62</sup> Table 1 details the weight afforded to each category and highlights correlations between six of the seven factors of political instability presented in the literature review. It excludes GDP for use as a control variable. The ICRG treats countries with lower ratings as unstable and countries with higher ratings as stable.<sup>63</sup> For example, a corruption rating of 4 is stable, while a corruption rating of 0 is unstable.

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57 "ICRG."

58 Jones et al., *Establishing Law and Order*. 243.

59 Nabli, "Breaking the barriers."

60 "ICRG."

61 "ICRG."

62 Anthony Cordesman (2018) postulates that poor governance, corruption, ethnic differences, unemployment, rising populations, and failed economic development are six pillars that comprise political stability.

63 "ICRG."

*Table 1*

<b>Measures of political instability:</b>	<b>ICRG's corresponding components:</b>	<b>Total points:</b>
Poor Governance	Democratic Accountability	6
Corruption	Corruption	6
Ethnic Differences	Religious Tension	6
	Ethnic Tension	6
Unemployment	GDP Growth	10
Failed Economic Development	Law and Order	6
	Socioeconomic Conditions	12

This paper also reflects the independent variable by drawing on the MID Project version 4.0. The MID is a dataset that includes information about all militarized interstate disputes that occurred between January 1, 1816, and December 31, 2010. The dataset lists the countries involved in a particular conflict and the conflict's hostility level grade on a scale from 1 to 5. More hostile conflicts have higher grades, which are set out as follows: factor 1 – no intervention; factor 2 – threat of force; factor 3 – display of force; factor 4 – use of force; and factor 5 – war (MID dataset [v4.01] available - Correlates of War, n.d.).

Pearson and Bauman define military intervention as troop movements from one country to another or military action by troops who are already located in a foreign country amidst a political issue or dispute.<sup>64</sup> This study employs the MID dataset, Pearson and Bauman's definition of military intervention as well as the less hostile uses of force.<sup>65</sup> The MID dataset is the ideal tool to highlight the various stages of increased hostility. The ICRG and MID datasets overlap between the years 1984 and 2010. All MENA countries were incorporated into the SUR regression model except for Djibouti, the West Bank, and Gaza, as no ICRG data existed for these regions.

I expected that military intervention would influence several components of political stability. As a result, I included a control variable specific to political stability in an effort to achieve a clear understanding of the relationship between the independent variable and the multiple dependent variables. The literature suggests that there is a strong correlation between GDP and political stability; thus, GDP growth was used to control for the relationship between military intervention and political stability).<sup>66</sup> In other words, military intervention, as the independent variable, was expected to affect political stability components negatively, while GDP growth was expected to affect them positively.

The ICRG expresses GDP growth as a percentage increase or decrease over a one-year period. The percentage change may range from 6.0% to -6.0%, where 6.0% and -6.0% are assigned a 10- and 0-point score, respectively. As intervention characteristics are likely to influence all political stability measures, GDP growth can indicate variable influence

<sup>64</sup> Frederic S. Pearson, and Robert A. Baumann, "International Military Intervention, 1946-1988," (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1993): 05-13.

<sup>65</sup> Pearson and Baumann, "International Military Intervention", 09.

<sup>66</sup> Su, Lian, and Li, "Energy Consumption and Economic Growth," 73; Aisen and Veiga, "Political Instability," 17.

when the other variables fluctuate. I believed that outcome measures associated with post-conflict countries would likely affect political stability. Testing GDP growth in tandem with the control created a contrast in total variable movement and enhanced the validity of the regression in limiting confounding variables.

When running the regression models, the Schwarz criterion (SC) was utilized for optimum lag selection.<sup>67</sup> The SC is the most conservative and more inclusive formula and is therefore appropriate for this regression.<sup>68</sup> The SC indicates that the optimal number of lags to test all components is three. I also utilized the seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) model. The SUR model is a linear regression model in which error terms and exogenous variables are correlated and vectors can be stacked for modeling efficiency.<sup>69</sup> One could perform separate ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions; however, the SUR model is preferred if error terms can be shared.

## Analysis

Democratic accountability, law and order, corruption, ethnic and religious tensions, GDP growth, and socioeconomic conditions all play a role in political stability. Additionally, all seven ICRG elements move independently of each other and therefore should be tested separately. To illustrate the restrictive effects of aggregating components to perform a regressive analysis, Table 2 presents an analysis that is similar to the SUR analysis performed in Table 3. The OLS regression regresses the independent variable, military intervention, on a single dependent variable: political stability. However, Table 2 aggregates all components of political stability (i.e., democratic accountability, corruption, socioeconomic conditions, ethnic tensions, religious tensions, and law and order) and averages the results.

*Table 2*

	<i>OLS Regression</i>
	Political Stability Index
Military Intervention	-0.030 (0.050)
Constant	3.836*** (0.158)
Observations	202
R <sup>2</sup>	0.002
<i>Note:</i>	* <i>p</i> < 0.1; ** <i>p</i> < 0.05; *** <i>p</i> < 0.01

67 “Akaike Information Criterion - an Overview,” ScienceDirect, accessed 11 February 2022, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/akaike-information-criterion>.

68 “Akaike Information Criterion.”

69 James Powell, “Zellner’s Seemingly Unrelated Regressions Model,” Econometrics Laboratory (EML), University of California at Berkeley, accessed 10 February 2022, [https://eml.berkeley.edu/~powell/e240b\\_sp10/surnotes.pdf](https://eml.berkeley.edu/~powell/e240b_sp10/surnotes.pdf).

When the variables are aggregated, the results are not only statistically insignificant, but they also do not reflect what may occur when the hostility level of a military intervention increases. Aggregating the variables only allows for a crude regression to be performed.

Therefore, to accurately test how military intervention affects political stability, the six dependent components of political stability were each regressed on one independent military intervention variable. Table 3 details the results of this SUR regression. To accurately reflect the potential for a lag in the effects of military interventions within MENA, each dependent component was lagged for two years to identify any potential trends with respect to the effects of military interventions.

As expected, all components moved independently of one another. Each had a different y-intercept and had a varying degree of lag. The dependent components, when tested with the independent variable, moved in the negative direction. In contrast, the control variable generally caused the dependent components to move in a positive direction, indicating the intervening statistically significant effect.

The *democratic accountability hypothesis (H1)* states that more intense military interventions in MENA tend to decrease democratic accountability. In other words, when military interventions are applied to governments, those governments typically become less responsive to their people. Table 3 indicates that the results do not reveal a statistically significant relationship between military intervention and democratic accountability. When the control variable (GDP growth) was applied to democratic accountability, there were also no statistically significant results. As such, I find no support for the *democratic accountability hypothesis (H1)*.

The *corruption hypothesis (H2)* provides that military interventions in MENA can be expected to increase corruption levels. The results of this study show that corruption had no statistical significance with respect to military intervention. Although corruption may increase around the time when military intervention occurs, this paper finds no evidence that military interventions directly increase corruption levels. Additionally, the regression performed for this study found no relationship between GDP growth and corruption, and lagging the results also produced no significant results. Therefore, I find no support for the *corruption hypothesis (H2)*.

The *ethnic tension hypothesis (H3)* suggests that ethnic tensions in MENA can be expected to increase when military interventions occur in the region. The SUR regression revealed that, at the time when interventions occurred, ethnic tensions did increase in a statistically significant manner. However, there was no lag between these events. Additionally, the regression found a statistically significant relationship between GDP growth and ethnic tensions. When GDP growth increased, ethnic tensions decreased. Therefore, the *ethnic tension hypothesis (H3)* is supported without lag.

The *religious tension hypothesis (H4)* indicates that an increase in military intervention events in MENA can be expected to increase the likelihood of religious tensions in the

region. The results show that an increase in military intervention events was coupled with a statistically significant increase in religious tensions. The research also found a positive relationship between GDP growth and religious tensions; in instances where GDP growth increased, religious tensions decreased. The results show no lag. The *religious tension hypothesis (H4)* is thus supported without lag.

The *law-and-order hypothesis (H5)* provides that military intervention in MENA leads to a decrease in law and order in the region. This study found a statistically significant negative relationship between law and order and military interventions. The study also found a positive relationship between GDP growth and law and order. In other words, when GDP growth in MENA increased, law and order increased, and when stronger military interventions in the region occurred, law and order decreased. The data shows no lag in these relationships. Consequently, the *law-and-order hypothesis (H5)* is supported without lag.

The *socioeconomic condition hypothesis (H6)* states that military interventions in MENA lead to worsening socioeconomic conditions. This study found no relationship between military intervention and socioeconomic conditions. However, the results show a statistically significant relationship between GDP growth and socioeconomic conditions. When GDP growth occurred, socioeconomic conditions improved immediately. Ultimately, I found no support for the *socioeconomic condition hypothesis (H6)*.

Only three of the six dependent components were statistically significant in the regression model; the ethnic tensions, religious tensions, and the law-and-order hypotheses are supported. In other words, when the hostility level within a MENA country increases, ethnic and religious tensions tend to increase and law and order tend to decrease.

The timeframe of this analysis captures key examples of each statistically significant result related to countries within MENA. The Iraq War began in 2002, for three key reasons. First, Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, had the ability to pass weapons of mass destruction to allied terrorists; second, the US wanted to transform Iraq into a democracy; and lastly, the US wanted to demonstrate American resolve.<sup>70</sup> After the invasion, the US assisted in establishing police and security forces, the rule of law, and laws that would assist Iraq in policing its citizens. Scholars have argued that the war and subsequent structural assistance were ultimately unsuccessful and led to a deterioration in law and order.<sup>71</sup> The US invasion of Iraq illustrates how an increase in hostility levels through military interventions can cause an immediate decrease in the ability of the host nation to maintain law and order.

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70 Hakan Tunc, "What was it all about after all? The causes of the Iraq war," *Contemporary Security Policy* 26, no. 2 (August 2005):335-335.

71 Jones et al., *Establishing Law and Order*: 244; Tom J. Farer, "The Prospect for International Law and Order in the Wake of Iraq," *American Journal of International Law* 97, no. 3 (July 2003): 621–28; Mark Furness, and Bernhard Trautner, "Reconstituting Social Contracts in Conflict-Affected MENA Countries: Whither Iraq and Libya?" *World Development* 135 (November 2020): 105085.

The most prevalent example of an increase in military hostility leading to an increase in religious and ethnic tensions is the Arab Spring, which commenced in 2010. The Arab Spring was an anti-government protest that began in Tunisia and spread to Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, and Kuwait, among other MENA countries.<sup>72</sup> As the protests developed, governments, including those of Yemen and Syria, met the protestors with force. Although these protests began for myriad reasons, including extreme poverty, unemployment, corruption, and sectarianism, an increase of government hostility perpetuated and sharpened ethnic and religious tensions.<sup>73</sup> The Arab Spring clearly exposes the negative interaction between military hostility level and religious and ethnic tensions.

*Table 3*

*SUR Regression*

		Socioeconomic Conditions				Democratic Accountability				Ethnic Tensions			
Military Intervention	Est.	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag
		6.04*** (0.15)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.06)	2.79*** (0.10)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.03)	4.52*** (0.10)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.01				0.01				0.04			
GDP Growth	Est.	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag
		3.78*** (0.24)	0.24*** (0.06)	0.01 (0.08)	0.03 (0.06)	1.87*** (0.16)	0.05 (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)	2.37*** (0.15)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	0.00 (0.04)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.10				0.03				0.20			
		Religious Tensions				Corruption				Law and Order			
Military Intervention	Est.	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag
		3.54*** (0.09)	-0.11*** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	2.42*** (0.06)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	4.14*** (0.10)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.03				0.00				0.05			
GDP Growth	Est.	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag	Constant	0 lag	1 lag	2 lag
		2.41*** (0.16)	0.10*** (0.04)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	2.75*** (0.10)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	1.98*** (0.15)	0.22*** (0.04)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.05				0.02				0.20			
Observations		4452											
Note:		*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001											

## Conclusion

This study suggested that an increase in the hostility level of military interventions within the MENA region can be expected to negatively affect key components of political stability. I tested all military interventions within MENA with reference to six critical elements of political stability. The elements were selected based on my research of the essential indicators that reflect regional political stability. This is the first article that has focused on the MENA region in examining how the components of political stability interact with military interventions.

72 Ahmed K Al-Rawi, "Sectarianism and the Arab Spring: Framing the popular protests in Bahrain," *Global Media and Communication* 11, no.1 (March 2015): 25–42.

73 Muhammed Kürsad Özkin, and Hasan Hüseyin Akkas. 2014. "An Empirical Look to the Arab Spring: Causes and Consequences," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1&2 (February 2014): 75-87. <https://doi.org/10.21599/atjir.15384>; Al-Rawi, "Sectarianism," 29.

The aim of this study is to offer conclusions for the purpose of making generalizations. In other words, the study's goal is to provide policymakers and scholars with potential explanations about the effects of military intervention. As only three of six components were statistically significant, the study was not able to provide a full breadth of answers. The increase in military hostility levels in the MENA region has led to increased ethnic and religious tension and diminished law and order, demonstrating the negative effects that foreign interventions have had on the region from 1984-2010. If the primary objective of an intervention is, for instance, to deescalate tensions within a MENA country, this research suggests that the intervention is likely to have the opposite effect. Alternatively, if the goal of the intervening government is to create stability, its actions are likely to create instability. This result legitimizes theoretical arguments that well-intentioned military interventions may harm the host country's political stability and that hostility levels are essential in determining a military intervention's effects.

Additionally, this paper's argument is not contingent solely on humanitarian efforts. The research examined all forms of conflict, including invasions. The results of this research should assist scholars and policymakers, helping them become more informed about the potential impact of interventions. As a result, this research may have a positive and far-reaching effect on military strategy. The results suggest that optimal military strategy in the future should involve fewer interventions and that countries should minimize the number of humanitarian interventions they undertake, given the negative impacts of such actions detailed in this study.

Further research can benefit from the framework presented in this paper in several ways. First, the study only examined the MENA region. As such, scholars can collect new data to reflect the consequences intervention has on other large regions or continents. Different regions of study may shed light on characteristics that are prevalent in other areas that can have adverse effects on political stability. Additionally, a comparative study demonstrating how other regions and continents compare to the MENA region may assist in the creation of other theoretical frameworks that alter key components of political stability. Likewise, a more extensive study of global consequences stemming from military intervention and its effects on components of political stability would be valuable. Again, comparisons of a variety of regions may reveal trends not likely found within a small-*N* analysis.

Studies regarding the impact of military intervention are essential to understanding how to handle a conflict, negotiate issues and decide whether to intervene militarily or otherwise. A qualitative, in-depth study of regional the characteristics of regions that have experienced military interventions and political instability would complement the quantitative analysis conducted in this paper. A broader understanding of the impacts of interventions and instability gained through interviews and focus groups may shed light on variables that did not appear in this study and may require additional research. In this

way, this research paves the way for the development of broader perspectives on concepts related to the impact of insecurity.

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