Abstract

This study argues that the military is the key actor in ensuring the survival of non-democratic regimes in cases of anti-regime mass mobilisation by exerting potentially lethal violence. Following a principal-agent approach it suggests that the likelihood of military loyalty in such cases is a result of the military’s autonomy from the regime and the effectiveness of the regime’s strategies to tie the military to its own survival. It therefore examines the impact of group incentive based regime strategies on military loyalty. Those strategies comprise of ascriptive recruitment into the military, institutional competition between branches of the security apparatus, and identitarian ties between regime and military, including ethnic, religious, and tribal affiliations. In terms of methodology, the paper challenges the prevalence of small-N studies in the field and employs statistical analysis to determine more generalisable findings. Its investigation period spans from the end of the Cold War up to the most recent events of the Arab Spring in 2011.