Contentious Coups: Understanding the United Nations' Behavior Toward Coups d'état

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After the fall of the Soviet Union, the international community reconsidered the importance of democracy. What was formerly "an ideal form of government" became "a universal human entitlement." In this environment, one would expect all coups d'état to be strongly denounced for their inherent undemocratic nature; however, this is not the case. The United Nations, arguably the most influential international governing body, condemns some military coups, while supporting others. Why does it do this? What factors influence its behavior? I seek to address these questions, hypothesizing that the level of democracy, the presence of reasonable timetables for democratic elections, and the role of the military in coup countries affect the actions of the United Nations in condemning or supporting a coup d'état. I analyze the 2012 coup in Guinea-Bissau, the 2011 and 2013 coups in Egypt, and the 2009 coup in Honduras to test these hypotheses, and I find support for all three. Although my results are not generalizable, they suggest that a predictable force is behind the UN's behavior toward coups d'état and that it deserves further investigation.

I. Introduction

Intervening in Guinea-Bissau in 2012 and Egypt in 2013, both nations' armed forces supported a coup d'état in hopes of ousting their democratically elected leaders. The coup attempts drew international attention and after their success, the world was expected to respond. The United Nations immediately released statements outwardly condemning the coup in Guinea Bissau, but offered little opinion on the military's intervention in Egypt.[1,2] The UN condemned one situation, but made no definitive comment about the other. What factors influence this behavior? This study focuses on defining these dynamics and applying them to past cases of military coups.

Including those in Egypt and Guinea-Bissau, the world has seen 471 coup attempts since 1950.[3] Whether successful or unsuccessful, these occurrences directly affect the political, economic, and social aspects of their respective nations. Coups d'état are often violent, resulting in hundreds of deaths during the power struggle itself or in the years after the new regime takes over (e.g. 1960 coup attempt in South Vietnam, 1996 coup in Burundi). They also aim to alter the political and social order, changing dynamics both locally and abroad. With 13 attempts around the globe in the last three years, coups are not disappearing, and neither are their consequences.[4]

This study seeks to examine international reaction to coups, specifically fo-

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cusing on the United Nations' response. I will begin my analysis by reviewing existing literature on coups d'état and the way in which they are perceived by international actors. I will then assert and defend three hypotheses about the behavior of the United Nations when reacting to military coups. Finally, I test my hypotheses' viability through four case studies taken from Powell and Thyne's most recent compilation of successful and unsuccessful coup attempts.[5]

II. Reviewing Past Literature

By examining existing literature on the theme of coups d'état and the manner in which international organizations (IOs) perceive them, the argument of this paper is put into a larger context. A review of scholars' work on the definitions of coups, their causes, and the actions of IOs in dealing with them provides valuable background information and demonstrates the relevance of this study.

A. Defining A Coup

When studying any subject, exact definitions are necessary to fully grasp the implications of the research on the topic. Authors may use varying definitions that are equally valid. In their recent work, Powell and Thyne arrive at a working definition of a coup d'état after analyzing definitions proposed by 14 different studies in the past sixty years.[6] Each author offers varying interpretations of a military coup's target, perpetrator, and tactics; some are extremely specific, while others are relatively undefined. Moreno et al. (2004), for example, find only 19 coups between 1950 and 2000, while O'Kane (1987) identifies 163 coups in half that time frame.[7] This discrepancy may be attributed to Moreno et al.'s specific definition of a coup, only including instances where the perpetrator is the military leader or executive himself. In contrast, O'Kane's description encompasses coups led by any civil or military institutions. Through the comparison of fourteen definitions, including those by Moreno et al. and O'Kane, Powell and Thyne preserve the commonalities and resolve the large variations, arriving at a well-informed description of a coup d'état: any "illegal and overt [attempt] by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive."[8]

B. The Causes of Coups

The bulk of coup literature is devoted to exploring the causes of military coups. O'Kane introduces several leading theories in this area, asserting that coups are more likely to occur in countries that have already experienced coups, have exceedingly divisive social cleavages, and have perpetually poor economic conditions.[9] Thirty years later, Hiroi and Omori attack the same question in a study that yields similar results. The authors again affirm that poverty, social backwardness, and instability contribute to coups, also pointing to the culpability of regime transitions.[10]

Although O'Kane's article is thirty years senior to Hiroi and Omori's work, these two studies assert strikingly similar claims. When it comes to the causes of coups, there is not a shortage of case studies or empirical analyses, but examination

of the aftermath of coups receives little attention. It is for this reason that I propose a study directed not at the roots, but at the consequences of military coups. While a better understanding of their causes can aid us in coup-proofing regimes and foretelling the next military uprising, it is an imperfect art. Familiarizing oneself with their effects is more pragmatic; it is much harder to prevent coups than it is to accept their inevitability and prepare for their consequences.

C. International Organizations (IOS) And Coups

There is no research on the specific actions of the United Nations when dealing with military coups. Moreover, there is relatively little work on the reactions to coups by other IOs. Omorogbe (2011) focuses on the African Union (AU) and its actions toward coups d'état in Africa.[11] "When responding to coups," he writes, "the AU has consistently favored the constitutional order, irrespective of the conduct of incumbent regimes, the claims made by those challenging them, or the likelihood that the coup might advance democracy."[12] Through five case studies, the author demonstrates the regularity of the AU in condemning military coups.

A similar characteristic of the Organization of American States (OAS) is highlighted in Boniface.[13] Exploring the perceived democratic norm in the Americas, he asserts, "there is limited consensus among member states how the OAS's democratic mandate should be applied to democratic crises that are beyond the scope of coups and self-coups."[14] The only unanimity that exists among OAS members is the policies regarding the condemnation of military coups.

Omorogbe's and Boniface's findings about the AU and OAS, however, starkly contrast with the inconsistencies of the United Nations. Unlike the AU and OAS, the UN has no specific coup doctrine. Its actions are not immediately predictable through mandates and declarations and there is no existing research that attempts to understand the organization's behavior. This study is necessary to explore the factors at play in the UN's support, or lack thereof, when confronted with military coups.

E. Moving Forward

An examination of existing literature on coups d'état and the manner in which IOs perceive them yields valuable background information. It puts the central argument of this paper into a larger context and demonstrates the relevance of this study. This analysis results in three key conclusions. First, I choose to define a coup d'état as an "illegal and overt [attempt] by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive."[15] The authors' analysis of existing work results in a well-informed definition, and it is for this reason that I believe it to be the most accurate. Second, I demonstrate that the study of the causes of military coups has been exhausted in the past decades. More attention should be focused on researching their consequences. This area is relatively unexplored, and the findings will serve a more pragmatic and prospective function. Third, I highlight that the reactions of IOs to coups lacks sufficient literature. A few authors demonstrate the consistency

of IOs like the AU and the OAS in condemning military coups; however, the UN has no such regularity, nor literature exploring it. It is for this reason that a study of the UN's actions toward coups is necessary to understand the underlying reasons for its support or condemnation. Applying these three lessons from the existing literature, I move toward a discussion of my research design.

III. Research Design

Through my research, I seek to explore the factors that motivate the United Nations to support or condemn a coup d'état. The behavior of the UN toward military coups is associated with several characteristics of the coup country, including its measure of democracy, the proposal of a reasonable timetable for elections after the coup, and the role of its military. My thesis generates three hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 1*: Coups in more democratic countries will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those in less democratic countries.
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> *Hypothesis 2*: Coup governments that do not propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections after coming to power will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those that make that proposal.
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> *Hypothesis 3*: Coups in countries in which the military does not play a large, positive role in the public realm will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than in countries where it does have that role.

In testing these hypotheses, I attempt to explore the validity of my thesis and answer my overarching research question: what factors motivate the United Nations to support or condemn a coup d'état?

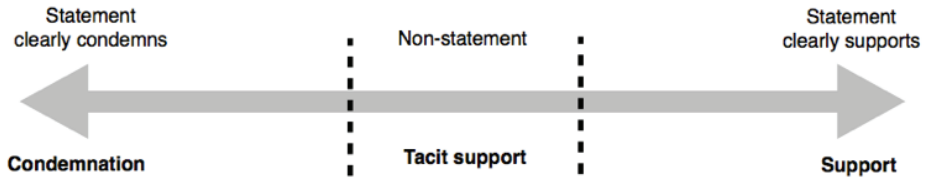
A. Variables

I seek to investigate the relationship between my dependent variable, the support or condemnation by the United Nations, and the independent variables outlined in my hypotheses.

Dependent Variable

I operationalize my dependent variable by examining the statements released by the UN on the subject of coups after they occur. I define a "statement" as any published opinion by an official or group of officials authorized to represent the United Nations. This includes the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Secretary-General. Interpreting the statements made by the UN involves sorting them on a spectrum according to their contents. As illustrated by Figure 1, a statement can use language that either clearly condemn or clearly support a coup.

Figure 1: UN Statements as measures of condemnation or support for military coups



If there is no clear praising or denouncing of the coup, or the UN fails to release an opinion entirely, it will be deemed a non-statement. Non-statements are considered to represent tacit support for the coup. It is well known that the United Nations favors democracy and elections over autocracies and dictators.[16] The organization is less likely to speak out in favor of measures that are hardly democratic, and thus, it can be concluded that the UN expresses covert support by issuing non-statements.

Independent Variable

My hypotheses outline three independent variables that I believe directly influence the likelihood that the UN will condemn or support a coup d'état. These include the country's level of democracy at the time of the coup, the presence of reasonable timetables for democratic elections after the coup, and the historical role of the military within the country.

My first hypothesis states that coups in more democratic countries will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those in countries that are less democratic. I record the level of democracy in each country immediately before their coups as determined by Freedom House scores, a recognized measurement for the democratic quality of governments around the world. I then compare the country's score with the UN's support or condemnation of the coup.

My second hypothesis focuses on the promise of democracy, claiming that the lack of a reasonable timetable for elections after a coup will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those that provide this reasonable timetable. I define a "reasonable timetable" as a specific proposal that aims to remove the military government in one to two years and is seen as acceptable by the UN.[17] Using statements made by the UN, coup governments, and news outlets, I compare the status a reasonable timetable for democracy by the coup government with the support or condemnation by the UN.

My third hypothesis concerns the role of the military in the social, political, and economic aspects of coup countries. I examine the military's involvement in each nation before its coup d'état as determined by constitutional provisions and public sector participation. I define a "large, positive role" as one in which the military is

heavily involved with an aspect of the public sector and makes a favorable impact through that involvement. The presence or absence of a positive military role will then be considered with the support or condemnation by the UN.

B. Case Selection

In making my case selections, I draw my data from Powell and Thyne.[18] While the authors create a dataset of both successful and unsuccessful coup attempts, I choose to focus on only those that they term successful. Successful attempts have more longstanding consequences than failed attempts, and thus, are more likely to evoke reactions from the UN. Additionally, unsuccessful coups will not have the opportunity to propose a reasonable timetable for elections, failing to provide insight into my second hypothesis. I define a successful coup as one in which "the perpetrators seize and hold power for at least seven days."[19]

To test my hypotheses, I utilize four comparative case studies: the 2009 military coup in Honduras, the 2012 military coup in Guinea-Bissau, and the 2011 and 2013 military coups in Egypt. I elect these cases for several reasons. First, since they are all within four years of each other, they share a similar UN evaluative body. Therefore, the statements that supported or condemned the coups came from a relatively consistent group of officials and were evaluated in similar manners. UN opinions on them, thus, can be compared. Second, they are recent. As I illustrate later in my argument, the international attitude toward coups and democracy dramatically changed with the end of the Cold War. I wish to examine cases within a similar global environment, rather than comparing coups that occurred both before and after the fall of the Soviet Union in completely different contexts. Finally, they come from various regions of the world: South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and North Africa, respectively. Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa are different in that North African Egypt shares more characteristics and tighter bonds with Arab countries of the Middle East, whereas Sub-Saharan Guinea-Bissau is more representative of the rest of its continent.

By electing case studies to test my hypotheses, I cannot generalize my results to include all coups d'état. Each coup is unique, and although I attempt to encompass multiple regions in the same international environment, time and resource constraints prevent me from examining all military coups to adequately test my hypotheses; however, I still believe my study will be of value to the academic community in laying the groundwork for further research on this relatively unexplored topic.

IV. Hypotheses

After the fall of the Soviet Union, states and IOs reconsidered the importance of democracy. What was formerly "an ideal form of government" became a "universal human entitlement"as the world entered the last decade of the twentieth century.[20] The dissolution of two former communist states (i.e. the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia) created the opportunity for nations formerly under their rule to

make a run for independence and look towards a new type of governance. Outside Europe, conflicts that raged in Africa and Latin America drove citizens to seek alternatives to their authoritarian regimes.

No longer plagued by deep divisions between two of its veto-possessing Security Council members, the United Nations took on a much more interventionist peacekeeping role, citing its purpose to "maintain international peace and security" and supporting democracy in the process.[21] From 1948 to 1988, only 13 peacekeeping forces were established; however, under its new interventionist directive, the UN increased the number of peacekeeping operations from 13 to 33 between 1988 and 1993.[22] The mandates of these missions often included the promotion of democratic governance and the protection of human rights. Countries recognized this strong commitment to democracy and, between 1989 and 1996, more than sixty states requested electoral assistance from the United Nations in hopes of transitioning to democratic governance.[23] Ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution affirming "that everyone is entitled to a democratic and equitable international order," explicitly demonstrating its partiality toward democracy.[24]

Any "illegal and overt [attempt] by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive," a coup d'état, is inherently undemocratic.[25] Leaders are replaced by the threat or use of violence, not by elections based on popular consent. Coups violate the UN's post-Cold War commitment to supporting democratic processes and are often condemned; however, "not all coups are equally undemocratic."[26] Those that occur in an authoritarian or corrupt regime, for example, may serve as an opportunity to improve democratic governance rather than worsen it. Situations in which "the military takes power from a corrupt and inept civilian administration and promises to return the country to elections after reforming the system" are deemed "guardian" or "democratic" coups[27]. Including military uprisings in authoritarian regimes, these guardian coups are not immediately condemned for their undemocratic nature. Their counterparts, coups that occur in democracies and do not propose a timetable for elections, directly violate UN democratic principles. As Linz and Stepan (1996) explain, "the strongest democratic countervailing power to the nondemocratic dynamic of an interim government is free elections with a set date."[28] A promised election date signals that the coup government "acknowledges the limited nature of its role and signals that its term is, in fact, temporary."[29] It is this right to democracy and need for elections from which my first two hypotheses stem:

> *Hypothesis 1*: Coups in more democratic countries will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those in less democratic countries.
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> *Hypothesis 2*: Coup governments that do not propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections after coming to power will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those that make that proposal.

After the Cold War, the UN began to define political legitimacy in terms of democracy, measured by the free and fair elections that precede it.[30] Coups that occur in democracies are almost certain to be condemned for their undemocratic nature in accordance with UN principles. Contrastingly, coups in less democratic countries often receive tacit support in ousting an authoritarian or corrupt government because they attempt to remove undemocratic regimes. Free and fair elections are necessary for the creation and maintenance of democracy. By introducing a timetable for democratic elections, coup governments are more likely to be tacitly supported by the UN.

The first two hypotheses attempt to incorporate the effect of the coup country's political environment on the support or condemnation of the coup d'état by the United Nations. But what if this environment is accustomed to frequent military interplay? The armed forces of nations such as Egypt, Myanmar, and Sudan have had a significant role in their respective countries' public realm both before and after their coups. 75% of Latin American countries grant their armed forces the ability to "protect the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the nation" in their constitutions, while all countries in the region "explicitly or implicitly allow their militaries to engage in internal security operations of one form or another, including the preservation of public order and security."[31] The illegitimacy of coups in countries where the military plays an active role outside the external defense of the nation is less clear than in the countries that explicitly prohibit the armed forces from intervention. A coup by a military already positively and significantly involved in the social, economic, and political realms of the country may be seen as less surprising and more acceptable. Thus, it is more likely to receive tacit support from the UN. Contrastingly, if the armed forces play a negative role before mounting a coup, the UN is more likely to immediately condemn their actions against the government. My third hypothesis stems from this idea:

> *Hypothesis 3*: Coups in countries in which the military does not play a large, positive role in the public sector will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than in countries where it does have that role.

Supported by theory, I move forward with the aforementioned hypotheses, testing their validity through four case studies.

V. Analysis

Through four comparative case studies, I attempt to test my hypotheses. Part II.A addresses Guinea-Bissau's 2012 coup, Egypt's 2011 and 2013 coups, and Honduras' 2009 coup, exploring their basic backgrounds and determining if the UN supported or condemned each event. Part II.B applies my hypotheses to the four cases in hopes of testing their validity.

A. Case Studies

1. Guinea-Bissau: April 2, 2012

A month after a highly contested first-round of presidential elections, and in the context of strained political-military relations, branches of Guinea-Bissau's armed forces led a coup d'état on April 2, 2012. The self-named "Military Command" that instigated the intervention cited as its motive a supposed "secret agreement" between Guinea-Bissauan and Angolan governments that would have allowed Angolan troops to enter Guinea-Bissau. According to a UN Security Council special report on the coup, the Command "had 'no ambition for power', but had been 'forced to act to defend themselves against the Government's attempts to annihilate the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau.'"[32] The Command arrested several key public figures, including the nation's president, and the military assumed control of the government in hopes of stabilizing it. The coup occurred approximately two weeks before the second round of presidential elections were set to occur.

Although there were no deaths or injuries resulting directly from the upheaval, the coup immediately met international condemnation. Many IOs and countries around the world expressed discontent with the situation in Guinea-Bissau, but, adhering to my focus on the UN's reaction to military coups, I examine only the statements authored by the United Nations. On April 13, one day after the upheaval, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon "condemn[ed] in the strongest possible terms the unconstitutional seizure of power by the Armed Forces of Guinea-Bissau."[33] The same day, the Security Council also "strongly condemn[ed] the forcible seizure of power from the legitimate Government of Guinea-Bissau [and] firmly denounce[ed] this incursion by the military into politics."[34] While neither statement explicitly calls this movement a coup, a report released only days later quoted the Secretary-General's "top envoy in Guinea-Bissau," exclaiming, "it was clearly a political-military coup and an act of military insubordination to the democratically elected civilian authorities."[35] These statements, along with others that continue to outwardly denounce the armed forces' actions, plainly illustrate that the UN saw this movement as a coup d'état and chose to clearly condemn it.[36]

2. Egypt: February 11, 2011

Inspired by the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, Egyptians protested against long-standing authoritarian President Hosni Mubarak for nearly three weeks. Strengthened by claims of human rights abuses and violations by the state, public discontent with the regime mounted until Mubarak relinquished his political office to the Egyptian military on February 11, 2011. Upon coming to power, the armed forces immediately dissolved the parliament and suspended the constitution. The military quickly reassured the Egyptian people and international community in a series of statements that its rule was "not a substitute for the legitimacy the people aspire for."[37]

Although the event falls under our definition for a coup, the UN never used that language when addressing the military's seizure of power. Instead, the IO termed

it a "revolution," one that should be respected despite the integration of the military into politics. While the Secretary-General denounced the violent tactics used by protesters and government police in uprisings following the "revolution," neither he, nor any other representative of the UN, outwardly condemned the military's new role at the head of the government.[38] In a speech in March 2011, the Secretary-General instead "commended the [Supreme Council of the Armed Forces] for their public commitment to a democratic transition."[39] He recognized their legitimacy as actors of the state by meeting with the Council and the new Prime Minister that the Council had put into place. Avoiding the term "coup d'état" and issuing what I code as non-statements, the UN tacitly supported the military's position as head of state.

3. Egypt: July 3, 2013

In the military government's transition to democracy after Egypt's 2011 coup d'état, the country hosted elections in June 2012 and chose the first democratically elected leader in its political history. While in power, President Mohamed Morsi performed poorly. He failed to improve economic conditions, and many Egyptians complained of his government's oppression of activists and journalists, as well as his "Islamic-slanted" proposal for a new constitution.[40] The people again took to the streets, and the Egyptian military moved to support them. Giving Morsi and his regime forty-eight hours to meet the demands of the people or face removal from office, the armed forces led what was later termed "coup with two days' notice."[41] On July 3, 2013, the military detained Morsi on house arrest, rounding up his fellow members of the Muslim Brotherhood and suspending the constitution in the process. In a televised speech, General Abdel-Fatah El-Sisi explained that Morsi "did not achieve the goals of the people," and that it was the military's "historic responsibility" to protect Egypt in such a manner.[42]

The UN Secretary-General immediately released a statement that detailed his "concerned" attitude toward the events in Egypt. He expressed that "military interference in the affairs of any State is of concern," no matter how legitimate the complaints of the public about the government may be.[43] In another statement, the Secretary-General voiced concern about the military's "failure to apply due process and restrictions on freedom of expression and the press."[44] Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his unease with the military's unlawful arrests of government officials, including Morsi, calling on the military to release those detained and review their cases, but he never suggested that the military return the democratically elected leaders to power.[45] In the fourteen months since the coup, the Secretary-General's office has been the only UN body to release statements on the events in Egypt. It never termed the military's movement to power a "coup d'état" and focused on denouncing the violence of the protests in the majority of the statements. Issuing only non-statements, the UN did not clearly condemn the military's new position as head of the government or call the event a "coup." Thus, I consider the UN to have tacitly supported it.

4. Honduras: June 28, 2009

Honduran military officials removed President Manuel Zelaya from office on June 28, 2009, acting on an arrest warrant for charges of treason and abuse of authority endorsed by their Supreme Court.[46] The charges stem from complaints about Zelaya's "unconstitutional" presidential decrees, brought to the attention of the Court by the country's Chief Prosecutor. In March and May of 2008, Zelaya issued two decrees ordering a referendum to gauge opinion on the creation of a National Constituent Assembly that would draft a new constitution and extend presidential term limits. The Honduran Court of Administrative Litigation recognized this referendum as unconstitutional and ordered Zelaya to suspend the poll and all acts in its support. The President, however, did not respect the Court's ruling. Instead, he issued another decree ordering the National Institute of Statistics to take the poll and the armed forces to lend logistical support.[47] The Court requested that Zelaya respect its ruling, but he was uncooperative. On June 26, the Chief Prosecutor filed a criminal complaint before the Supreme Court, asking that Zelaya be arrested for action against the established form of government, treason against the country, abuse of authority, and usurpation of presidential functions. Two days later, the military arrested Zelaya and evacuated him from the country.[48] Honduran armed forces insisted that the removal of the President was not a coup d'état, pointing to the arrest's legal nature and the fact that the military did not take power after Zelaya left office.[49]

The United Nations, however, felt otherwise. The Secretary-General immediately released a statement "condemn[ing] the arrest [...] of the constitutional President of the Republic."[50] The next day, the President of the UN General Assembly followed by "express[ing] outrage at the coup d'état in Honduras," while the General Assembly unanimously condemned the coup, "demanding the immediate and unconditional restoration of power for the President and the established authority in that country."[51,52] To make their position even more perspicuous, the UN released a statement clarifying its position "condemn[ing] the coup d'état in the Republic of Honduras that […] interrupted the democratic and constitutional order and the legitimate exercise of power in Honduras."[53] This plainly illustrates that the UN saw the movement in Honduras as a coup and chose to outwardly condemn it. Table 1 summarizes the UN's reaction to the 2009 coup in Honduras, as well as its reaction to the coups in my other case studies.

Table 1: Summary of Coups and UN Reactions

Coups d'état	**UN Reaction**
Guinea-Bissau 2012	Clearly Condemn
Egypt 2011	Tacitly Support
Egypt 2013	Tacitly Support
Honduras 2009	Clearly Condemn

B. HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Coups in more democratic countries will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those in less democratic countries.

In measuring my first hypothesis, I employ Freedom House scores to dictate the level of democracy in a country at the time in which a coup took place. I use the organization's "freedom rating," an average of political rights and civil liberty scores that determines a nation's overall democratic status. Scores between 1.0 and 2.5 reflect a "free" state, scores from 3.0 to 5.0 represent a nation that is "partly free", and countries that receive a score between 5.5 to 7.0 are deemed "not free."[54] According to my hypothesis, coups in countries with lower Freedom House scores, those that are more democratic, are more likely to be clearly condemned, while coups in countries with higher Freedom House scores, those that are less democratic, are more likely to be tacitly supported.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF COUPS, UN REACTIONS, AND FREEDOM HOUSE SCORES

Coups d'état	UN Reaction	Freedom House Score at time of the coup	
Guinea-Bissau 2012	Clearly Condemn	4.0	Partly Free
Egypt 2011	Tacitly Support	5.5	Not Free
Egypt 2013	Tacitly Support	5.0	Partly Free
Honduras 2009	Clearly Condemn	4.0	Partly Free

My case studies support this hypothesis. As shown in Table 2, the countries that are freer at the time of their coups (Guinea-Bissau in 2012 and Honduras in 2009) are clearly condemned, whereas the less free countries (Egypt in 2011 and 2013) are tacitly supported. Freedom ratings for each country are typically constant from year to year, only increasing or decreasing when there is a significant change in trends of political rights and civil liberties.[55] Although appearing minute, the 1.0 to 1.5 point difference between the scores of Guinea-Bissau and Honduras over those of Egypt are noteworthy in that they represent a significant difference in these trends in each country.

Hypothesis 2: Coup governments that do not propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections after coming to power will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those that make that proposal.

To address my second hypothesis, I examine the presence of a timetable for free and fair elections by the new government after the coup is over. I analyze statements made by both the UN and coup governments for references to such a schedule,

as well as examine news outlets for further details on these statements. If my hypothesis is supported, coup governments that fail to propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections should receive clear condemnations by the UN, while those that do make that proposal may be tacitly supported.

After the 2012 coup in Guinea-Bissau, the Military Command responsible for the uprising took control of the government. Attempting to adhere to their initial statements that they had no ambition for power, the Command quickly worked to relinquish this control to the appointed, civilian-led National Transitional Council (NTC); however, there was no word of elections. A Radio France Internationale correspondent reported that "the coup leaders had not clarified election plans."[56] Additionally, a military spokesman confirmed that the NTC would run Guinea-Bissau for two years after which a new president and parliament would be elected.[57] The Command lacked a tangible date and timetable for elections. Months after the coup, the UN Security council still called for the new leaders of Guinea-Bissau to "establish a clear timetable for the organization of free, fair and transparent presidential and legislative elections, in line with national legislation and international standards."[58]

In contrast to the situation in Guinea-Bissau, the military government in power after the 2011 coup in Egypt furnished a reasonable timetable. Issuing five press releases to clarify the manner in which the coup occurred and their plans for the nation in its aftermath, the military worked transparently to restore democratic order. They created a Constitutional Amendment Committee, tasking them with amending the existing constitution within ten days to restructure the presidency and the electoral process in order for elections to occur.[59] Elections would be planned after the people confirmed their support for the amendments through a referendum to be held within the following two months.[60] In the meantime, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces stated that they would oversee "the country's affairs for six months or until parliamentary and presidential elections [were] held."[61] All of the Council's plans resulted in a reasonable timetable where "generals would remain in control for just six months, within which time new elections would be held."[62]

After Egypt's most recent coup in 2013, the coup government again released a reasonable timetable for elections. Interim President Adly Mansour introduced a constitutional declaration less than a week after the coup, dedicating an entire article (i.e. Article 30) of the declaration to the "electoral timetable." Under the declaration, "the country will have five months to amend the current draft constitution, suspended following Mohamed Morsi's removal last week, ratify it in a referendum, and then hold parliamentary elections."[63] Article 30 placed a time stamp on executive elections, requiring that "no later than one week after the first session of the Council of Representatives, the call for presidential elections shall be made."[64]

Contrastingly, Honduras did not make any new efforts to hold elections after their 2009 coup. Instead, the new government stated that they would continue to support the presidential elections that were already scheduled for November 29, 2009. In his first chance to directly address members of the Organization of American States

since the coup, Interim President Roberto Micheletti explained, "there will be elections on November 29 unless we are invaded, that is the only way to stop them. Not because of a personal whim, but because they were already scheduled."[65] The UN neither supported nor condemned this decision, but expressed that it "would recognize no Government other than that of President Zelaya" and "demand[ed] the immediate and unconditional restoration of power for the President and the established authority in that country."[66] The UN would not accept any elections proposed by the interim government because it saw them as illegitimate. Honduran Foreign Minister Patricia Isabel Rodas explained this view in a UN-sponsored press conference, claiming that allowing these elections to occur under the authority of a coup government would legitimize "succession by force." She reasoned, "elections are a right, not the way to resolve coups, not the way to resolve illegitimate situations."[67] The President of the UN General Assembly supported a similar argument in a press conference weeks after the coup. Asked about the possibility of early elections to restore constitutional order, the President claimed that "such talk was only for those who knew nothing about constitutionality." He argued that "President Zelaya had been constitutionally elected to a term of office, which he must be allowed to fulfill, [and, thus the international community] should not be talking about early elections but about 'early incarceration' of those that had led the coup.'"[68] The UN did not see any election timetable as legitimate because it did not respect the authority of the coup government.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF COUPS, UN REACTIONS, AND REASONABLE TIMETABLES

Coups d'état	UN Reaction	Reasonable Timetable Proposed?
Guinea-Bissau 2012	Clearly Condemn	No
Egypt 2011	Tacitly Support	Yes
Egypt 2013	Tacitly Support	Yes
Honduras 2009	Clearly Condemn	No, but the UN would not have accepted a timetable for new elections without the reinstatement of ousted President Zelaya

The status of reasonable timetables for elections in the context of each case study is summarized in Table 3. If my hypothesis is supported, coup governments that fail to propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections should be clearly condemned by the UN, while those that do make that proposal may be tacitly supported. Three of my case studies suggest the validity of this hypothesis. After both coups in Egypt, the interim military government released a reasonable timetable for democratic elections. They worked in conjunction with the people to reach elections, receiving no condemnation from the UN for their actions. The interim government of Guinea-Bissau in 2012 did not attempt to lay out a specific timetable or plan to hold presidential elections, and instead gave the appointed civilian leaders of the NTC

power to govern the country for two years. Lacking a reasonable timetable, the coup met condemnation.

The Honduran case study is more difficult to decipher. The government that came to power after the 2009 coup d'état did not lay out a timetable for elections; however, the presence or lack of such a timetable was irrelevant. The UN would not see any election timetable as legitimate because it did not respect the authority of the coup government. It called for the reinstatement of ousted President Zelaya so that he could finish the term for which he was constitutionally elected.

Complicating my analysis, the condemnation of any timetable clearly illustrates the inconsistencies of the UN in its behavior toward military coups. Egypt ousted a democratically elected leader in its 2013 coup, but the UN did not call on the government to reinstate President Morsi before elections could be legitimized. This directly contrasts with the situation in Honduras in which President Zelaya's return was imperative in legitimizing the coup government and their planned elections. The presence of such inconsistencies illustrates the need for a larger data sample. Without the time or resources to investigate such a sample, the evidence from my case studies suggests that my hypothesis is supported. Coup governments that failed to propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections (Guinea Bissau in 2012) were clearly condemned by the UN, while those that did make that proposal (Egypt in 2011 and 2013) were tacitly supported.

Hypothesis 3: Coups in countries in which the military does not play a large, positive role in the public sector will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than in countries where it does have that role.

In exploring the validity of my third hypothesis, I examine the military's involvement in each country before their coups d'état through constitutional provisions and participation in the public sphere. If the armed forces are significantly and positively involved with the nation's public sector (i.e. it is heavily involved with an aspect of the public sector and makes a favorable impact through that involvement), a coup in the country is more likely to be tacitly supported by UN. If the military is not heavily involved in a positive manner, the coup is more likely to be clearly condemned.

Before the 2012 coup in Guinea-Bissau, the military regularly intervened in politics. This intervention, however, was seldom in support of civilian institutions. Instead, a president has never served a full term since Guinea-Bissau's independence in 1974 due to frequent coups led by the country's armed forces. With eight coups in the last thirty-three years, the military often exercises its political power to oust regimes that attempt to undermine it. Guinea-Bissau's constitution does not support this role. Alternatively, the document adopted in 1984 clearly states, "none of [the country's armed] forces or active parts may exercise any kind of political activity."[69] Nevertheless, "the armed forces rose to prominence in Guinea-Bissau's war of independence from Portugal in 1974 and have remained its most powerful institution."[70]

Military leaders that meddle unconstitutionally with politics and manage to take the presidency are difficult to depose. Vincent Foucher, a West Africa analyst with the International Crisis Group, explains, "since the 1990s, all the army chiefs have been killed or removed in a coup; there's no history of a chief retiring."[71] This, in addition to the inability of elected officials to finish their terms and the unconstitutionality of the military's political interventions, suggests that the role of the armed forces in Guinea-Bissau is a negative one. Acting to protect their own power and sovereignty in the 2012 coup, the armed forces appeared to care little for civilian well-being. They have no significant role in the social or economic realms of the country, and are thus characterized by the negative part they play in Guinea-Bissau's politics.

The military in Egypt, however, performs an extremely different role. "A positive and effective institution in Egypt's domestic society, the armed forces carry a heavy influence in the economy and serve as a transitionary force in politics."[72] From the 1952 overthrow of the monarchy through the mid-1970s, "the Egyptian military was the strongest institution with the Egyptian polity."[73] In the past thirty years, the armed forces have taken on a much more economically-focused role, only retaking political power to facilitate transitions to democratic rule after the 2011 and 2013 coups d'état. "Equipped with valuable and vast real estate and a conscript, low-paid workforce," a *National Geographic* story reports, "the military began to insinuate itself into civil society through business, its holdings ranging from bread factories to chemical plants to hotels."[74] President Hosni Mubarak's economic liberalization policies in the 1990s encouraged the military to become an "enterprise." Now, the military's economic activities make up 15 to 20% of Egypt's GDP, bringing jobs and income to positively impact the country's civilian sector.[75] "The majority of Egyptian people today see the army as a patriotic institution that can be trusted to act in the interests of the nation," remarks Joel Beinin, a professor of Middle East History at Stanford University.[76] Integrated into the country's political, economic, and social realms, the military plays a favorable role in Egypt and "should remain a reliable positive agent of influence, modernization, and stability in the coming years."[77]

Heavily involved in Honduras' government since the early 1960s, the country's military sports a lengthy history of political domination and disregard for civilian authority. In the midst of the 1980s Cold War environment, "the armed forces often behaved as if civilian allies were superfluous," abusing human rights and engaging in illegal activity because they "knew they could do so with complete impunity."[78] As "fear of the military, the source of its power over civil society, gradually began to dissipate," the end of the Cold War brought a civilian reexamination of the armed forces' largely oppressive political role.[79] The majority of the private sector terminated their alliances with Honduran forces, no longer feeling that a relationship in favor of the military was compulsory for protection. Meanwhile, the government reclaimed military-led businesses like the Honduran Telecommunications Enterprise. The 1990s and early 2000s saw a gradual shift in civilian control over the armed forces, as the once politically dominant institution receded from the civil sphere. This is evident

in Honduras' constitution, adopted in 1982 after the Cold War; it emphasizes the armed forces' role as an "apolitical, obedient, and non-deliberative" institution and significantly reduces the military's power to control public affairs.[80] Until 2009, the Honduran armed forces resisted interfering directly in the public realm. While the military did not play a significant, negative role in the years immediately before the coup, civilians and governmental organizations were wary of the institution's capabilities considering the adverse part they played in the country during the Cold War.

The military's role in each case study's country is summarized in Table 4. If my hypothesis is supported, coups in countries in which the armed forces are significantly and positively involved in the public realm should be tacitly supported, while coups in countries in which the military is not heavily involved in a positive manner are likely to be clearly condemned.

Table 4: Summary of Coups, UN Reactions, and Military Roles

Coups d'état	UN Reaction	Military Role
Guinea-Bissau 2012	Clearly Condemn	Significant, negative political role
Egypt 2011	Tacitly Support	Significant, positive economic and political role
Egypt 2013	Tacitly Support	
Honduras 2009	Clearly Condemn	Previous significant, negative political role

My findings reinforce this hypothesis. The Egyptian military is both heavily and positively involved in its country's politics and economy. Its intervention into government may have been seen as less surprising and more acceptable, thus receiving tacit support from the UN after coups in 2011 and 2013. In contrast, the armed forces in Guinea-Bissau behave in a negative manner, blatantly disregarding their nation's constitutional provisions for an apolitical military. No democratically elected president has ever served his full term because of the military's self-serving coups. The UN already understood Guinea-Bissau's military as a negative force, possibly leading them to immediately condemn their actions against the government. Similarly, the armed forces in Honduras played an extremely negative role in their country's history, one that is not soon to be forgotten. In a statement released by the UN General Assembly immediately after the coup, GA President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann proclaimed, "'this is a throwback to another era that we hoped was now a distant nightmare,' […] stressing that Central America's record as the world's most coup-filled region had no place in the twenty-first century."[81] In this clear reference to the oppressive role of Honduras' military before the end of the Cold War, President d'Escoto condemned the 2009 coup with the military's past plainly on his mind. My analysis of the 2009 coup in Honduras, in addition to my other case studies, provides

support for my last hypothesis.

VI. Conclusion

My research attempts to bring order to the inconsistencies of the United Nations' coup policy. The changing international environment sees democracy as a right, and it is evident that the UN agrees with such a depiction; however, it does not have a consistent policy toward military coups, condemning some, while tacitly supporting others despite their inherently undemocratic nature. What factors drive this behavior?

Academic literature focuses on defining coups and thoroughly examines their causes, but it severely lacks an analysis of their aftermath. Few scholars have investigated the behavior of international organizations when dealing with coups, and even fewer have ventured to extend that analysis to the United Nations. With four case studies, I undertake such an effort. I offer three hypotheses in an attempt to explain the factors that affect the UN's acceptance or condemnation of military coups. In doing so, I lay the preliminary groundwork for future, more empirically based studies on this subject.

After analyzing the 2012 coup in Guinea-Bissau, the 2011 and 2013 coups in Egypt, and the 2009 coup in Honduras, I find support for my hypotheses. Evidence from these case studies suggests that coups in more democratic countries will elicit clearer denunciations by the UN than those that are in less democratic countries. Additionally, coup governments that do not propose a reasonable timetable for free and fair elections after coming to power are more likely to evoke clearer condemnations by the UN than those that make that proposal. My case studies also suggest that coups in countries in which the military does not play a large, positive role in the public realm will generate clearer denunciations by the UN than in countries where it does have that role.

Based on four case studies, these findings are not generalizable. A larger sample is necessary to fully understand the factors that drive the UN's behavior toward military coups. Several other independent variables may also affect the UN's support or condemnation of coups, including, but not limited to: strategic interests, levels of conflict in the region, and the country's preexisting social and economic conditions. Future research should seek to address these areas, in addition to testing my hypotheses with a data from a larger sample.

Although my analysis is certainly not representative of all coups, it suggests that a predictable force is behind the UN's behavior toward these events. Coups d'état are not going to disappear, and the UN will certainly need to react to future cases of military intervention. My research is the first attempt to clarify the organization's relatively opaque attitude toward coups and illuminate the place of the military coup in an international environment that favors democracies.

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