

## Introduction

This paper applies hypotheses pertaining to coercion in security relations in a contemporary time frame, i.e., security relations between the United States (major power) and 41 Muslim-majority minor states in the post-2001 time period. In doing so, the importance of religious opposition parties towards determining the extent of international security agreements is highlighted. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the eradication of terrorism overseas became a major American priority and national security goal, ushering in a new era of US involvement abroad. One way in which this goal was achieved was through the disbursement of US military aid to minor states vulnerable to political forces sympathetic to terrorism. As terrorism erodes legitimacy and creates adverse governance problems, threatened minor states also cooperated with the US to gain access to critical security resources for ensuring domestic stability. The disbursement of aid established a security relation between the major power and other minor states therefore, but it is important to note that these relations were replete with coercive characteristics. Resisting the major power's demands could have created several problems for minor states, including crippling international censure and economic sanctions. Coercion was even more likely in this case as military aid creates direct contact between military cadres in each partnering state, thus guaranteeing the support of a powerful domestic group in the minor state in the event of regime change. This paper therefore hypothesizes that minor state incumbents, wary of the major power's resources and influence, approached their relations with the US with caution and strategy, keeping in mind their domestic constraints. To this end, this paper suggests that an important constraint that determined the extent of cooperation between the major power and the minor state incumbents post-2001 was the strength of religious Islamist opposition parties in the minor state. The analysis in this paper suggests that Muslim-majority minor states with strong anti-major power oppositions cooperated more extensively with their major power partners, as the risk of coercion from the major power was lower.

Islamist opposition parties present themselves as viable alternatives to the incumbents in minor states, and frequently co-opt elements of radical ideologies in order to shore up their political standing in domestic politics. Ideological differences towards the sociopolitical structure of the

society aside, Islamist parties have also been repressed by the incumbents in Muslim-majority states, often at the behest of promoting US interests (Jamal 2012). The anti-US platforms of Islamist oppositions were especially pronounced in the post-2001 period, as security cooperation between the US and minor states against terrorism not only threatened traditional sources of support for such parties, but also translated into further restrictions on their political activities. As such then, a strong Islamist opposition could produce enough anti-major power public sentiment to threaten the incumbent regime as well as the security relation, which is a factor of crucial interest to the minor state's incumbents. In this context, minor states can use the existence of strong Islamist oppositions as leverage in the security relation, which can allow them to cooperate more extensively with the major power without the threat of coercion: coercing the incumbents in this case would lead to unfavorable outcomes for the major power, as anti-major power factions may assume power. On the other hand, minor states with weak or non-existent Islamist opposition are more likely to be coerced by their major power partner, since pro-major power factions can be co-opted by the major power; this can result in lower levels of cooperation in the security relation. Religious opposition parties can therefore greatly impact the nature of international agreements, and this paper tests this hypothesis in a sample of 41 Muslim-majority minor states during the 2002-2015 period.

The following section will cover some background research regarding coercion in asymmetric security relations, as well as its relevance for the sample at hand. It will be followed by the theory section containing the main hypothesis of interest, revolving around observable outcomes emerging from coercion in security relations. Afterwards, the research design section will outline the empirical test, and the results section will present the evidence gathered. A discussion of two Muslim-majority minor states, i.e., Algeria and Tunisia, that received US military aid but had varying Islamist opposition strengths in the 2002-2015 period will also be included. Conclusions and future research directions will follow.

## Existing Approaches and Contributions of this Research

Asymmetric security cooperation<sup>1</sup> among major powers and minor states<sup>2</sup> emerges out of the need for security. The acquisition of security, i.e., the ability of a state to have control over its territory and the freedom to choose its own form of rule (Lake 1996), is fundamental for the survival of the incumbent regime in a state. States can achieve security through the aggregation of security capabilities of other states they choose to partner with (Morrow 1991). However, security cooperation among states of different size and capabilities is marked by a bargain, such that the more powerful states provide security - something that the minor state may need but cannot produce on its own - in exchange for the minor states' allegiance or control over some of their policies. This 'security-autonomy' tradeoff was popularized by Morrow (1991) who posited that in asymmetric alliances, the minor state can get security support from the major power in return for losing its autonomy.

However, while the security-autonomy tradeoff itself provides a framework for security relations, most research on asymmetric security cooperation only focuses on developing theoretical arguments from the major power's perspective. Most of the work on security cooperation (Kim 1989; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990; Gowa and Mansfield 1993; Lake 1996; Mousseau 1997; Biglaiser and DeRouen

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<sup>1</sup>This term is taken to mean security interaction between major powers and minor states, and is not limited to formal security alliances. Therefore, other less formal avenues of cooperation between major powers and minor states, such as administrative and military aid, arms transfers, provision of troops for security, etc. all fall under the category of asymmetric security cooperation. Furthermore, the terms 'security cooperation' and 'security relation' are used interchangeably in the text.

<sup>2</sup>For the purpose of this paper, being a major power means that a state enjoys relatively abundant wealth, can ensure its own security through enhanced material capabilities - through higher military expenditures, for instance - and also is more active in its foreign policy, i.e., it defines its foreign policy interests quite broadly, often including the domestic policies of other states. Alternatively, a minor state is characterized by lower levels of wealth and material capabilities, as well as a lower frequency of international engagement. The Correlates of War Project (2017) identifies the following states as 'major powers' during the specified time periods: Austria-Hungary (1816-1918), France (1816-2000), Prussia/Germany (1816-1945), Russia/USSR (1816-2000), United Kingdom (1816-2000), Italy (1860-1943), Japan (1895-1945), United States (1899-2000), China (1950-2000). All other states in the remaining time periods are considered minor states for this paper.

Jr. 2009; Butt 2013; McDonald 2015) delineates incentives for cooperation among asymmetrically powerful states only from the perspective of the major power. This prevalence in the security cooperation literature to ignore minor states in theoretical constructs is a significant problem, since neglecting the minor state as an important player leads to several theoretical problems. The main issue is that minor states are neither replicas of major powers nor obedient partners in security relations, and in ignoring these critical aspects, existing approaches to security cooperation fail to incorporate important inter-state dynamics. A consequence of such neglect is that even when the literature does include minor states in the theoretical frameworks, it treats minor states and major powers as symmetric partners in security cooperation, whereby cooperation bears equal or similar consequences for each partner; this also is not a factual representation of the security arrangement. It is important to understand that minor states, while undoubtedly the less resourceful partners in security cooperation, still possess the ability to acquire concessions from the major power. Similarly, cooperation with a major power does not bear identical costs and benefits for minor states, as minor states significantly differ in their motives and capacities for security cooperation from major powers.

Consequently, existing theoretical frameworks fail to capture a crucial element of asymmetric security cooperation - coercion by the major power towards the minor state - that is built into asymmetric security relations. Coercion can be defined as intervention in the internal politics of the minor state in an effort to alter its policy preferences. Some examples of coercion in security relations can be the empowerment of the political opposition, withholding security benefits, or even pushing for regime change in the minor state. A central difficulty with asymmetric security cooperation is that minor states are faced with finite resources and thus must make difficult tradeoffs between maintaining their policymaking independence while at the same time acquiring enough security to counter external threats. Since a major power can define its national interests broadly to include the domestic politics of the minor state, as well as enjoy access to higher levels of resources that can be used to coerce the minor state for asymmetrically favorable policies, a minor state that chooses to cooperate with a major power therefore must choose between its desire to continue its independent function and acquiring security from the major power, all within the shadow of coercion. Coercion is also different from the loss of autonomy in that it runs in one direction only,

i.e., from the major power towards the minor state, whereas autonomy in the ‘security-autonomy’ tradeoff operates in a symmetrical fashion. Therefore, fear of *coercion* in the security cooperation is a factor that figures prominently and *only* for the minor state that has allied itself with a major power.

This paper theorizes about such coercion and presents a hypothesis linking the fear of coercion to concrete outcomes, such as the level of cooperation between minor states and major powers in a contemporary time frame. Moreover, this paper also highlights the role played by a minor state’s domestic politics - strength of religious opposition parties - thus attributing critical agency to minor states in asymmetric security relations. Furthermore, the analysis produced in the following lines clearly underscores the fact that coercion in asymmetric security relations is not a historical artifact - such as security relations during the Cold War - but a contemporary reality. More importantly however, this paper attributes a critical role to religious opposition parties towards determining the extent of international security cooperation, a viewpoint that is seldom analyzed in the security cooperation literature. The following section will present the major theoretical argument framed for the sample at hand, which will be followed by the research design section.

## **Asymmetric Security Relations Post 9/11**

The United States (US) was jolted into action on the international stage after the horrific September 11, 2001 attacks. While these attacks engendered two massive military campaigns geared towards eradicating terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq, an entirely different component of US foreign policy, i.e., foreign aid, was also extensively used in the post-2001 period to help vulnerable minor states with security and governance capabilities. As Savun and Tirone (2018) discuss, foreign aid was extensively used as a counterterrorism tool by the US abroad after 2001, a policy shift from previous years. More importantly however, a specific type of foreign aid, i.e., military aid, was widely disbursed to several minor states to provide assistance towards ensuring regime stability and provide security as well: in just the year 2016 alone, the US disbursed \$6 billion in military aid to other states (US Department of State 2017) and similar amounts were provided in prior years as well. As can be seen, the magnitude of military aid provided by the US to other minor states was

gargantuan, and it underscores the importance attached to counterterrorism abroad by the US towards its national security goals after 2001.

This dimension of the major power's behavior is entirely in line with the actions of the US during the Cold War, where similar military aid and other security apparatus were provided to other minor states to deter the spread of Communism. The Cold War era was defined by the rivalry between the US and the former USSR, which greatly impacted the potential for coercion. Minor states had to choose between allying with either major power, and the possibility of defection to the other may have kept the potential for coercion in check. However, after 2001, the United States enjoyed the status of the sole hegemon, which can reasonably be expected to impact the potential for coercion in the security relation. In the absence of an alternative, minor states desirous of acquiring security post-2001 were stuck with the US, which meant that they had to follow the direction set by the major power. This aspect of the period under study may have resulted in a greater risk for experiencing coercion in comparison to the Cold War era. That being said, one mitigating factor in this regard could be the lower level of threat posed by Islamist parties in comparison to Communism globally; whereas Communism had the potential to reach every corner of the globe, Islamist parties have had a hard time in consolidating their reach in a similar manner. As a matter of fact, even in Muslim-majority minor states, Islamist parties frequently occupy the opposition benches. Nonetheless, the risk of popular revolt against American intervention owing to Islamist parties was still significant, as the examples of Tunisia and Algeria (discussed later) will demonstrate. Another important point to note regarding this paper is that examining security relations predicated on military aid also provides an additional test for the hypothesis that all asymmetric relations are prone to coercion by the major power, irrespective of the cooperation instrument - troops, military aid, etc. Lastly, security relations revolving around military aid make for a valid test of the argument presented here as the possibility of coercion by the major power in this case is quite pronounced: in the event that the major power decides to coerce the incumbents and seek regime change, it can already count on the support of a powerful domestic ally, i.e., the military in the minor state.

Incumbents in recipient minor states cooperated with the United States in fighting terrorism in

their domestic territories, although they did so with caution and strategy. It has been discussed previously that minor states, although in need of security relations with more powerful partners, are nonetheless wary of doing so; this is the case because a security relation with a major power engenders inconvenient situations in which major powers may use their higher stature and influence on the security relation to coerce minor states into making undesirable decisions. After all, major powers have significant resources at their disposal and can bring them to bear heavily on the minor state's incumbent regime. Nonetheless, the prospect of securing military aid from a powerful partner cannot be completely resisted. Not only are minor states resource-starved with regards to security (Powell 1999; Morgan and Palmer 2003) but resisting American efforts in the period after 2001 could also have created several problems for minor states, including crippling international censure and economic sanctions. Consequently, out of either necessity or tact, the United States (major power) and several minor states entered into security relations after 2001 focused around counterterrorism. The important point to note here is that an impetus for the establishment of security relations was present after 2001, which is similar to the Cold War era, during which the threat of Communist expansion enabled the US to secure relations globally with other minor states. Thus, the desire for security relations and the scale of the major power's global agenda are similar to the Cold War period, albeit with different strategies and targets.

However, while US military aid was disbursed globally, the current analysis is limited only to the case of Muslim-majority minor states. Before moving further, this restriction must be clarified. Dubious views proposing that Muslim societies are prone to terrorism due to inherent religious exhortations (Huntington 1996; Fish 2002) and unfounded policy assumptions that Muslim countries experience more terrorism than other states notwithstanding, there are important reasons as to why this is a reasonable inclusion criteria. Put simply, this restriction ensures that the theoretical and empirical analysis is done with a representative sample in mind, for which the proposed mechanisms regarding coercion in cooperative security arrangements were operational. Significant empirical evidence linking the political climate of a state, including the level of civil liberties and rule of law, to the number of terrorist attacks has been gathered through extensive research (Abrahms 2007; Krueger 2007; Choi 2010; Piazza 2011). Consequently, it has been shown

that political repression, lack of peaceful channels to voice discontent, and weak rule of law reduce the legitimacy of a state, provide radicalization opportunities to political moderates, and thus push aggrieved groups and individuals towards terrorism (Choi 2010; Piazza 2017). In other words, minor states exhibiting these characteristics are likely to experience more terrorism than other minor states. These factors are relevant to the present analysis as Muslim-majority states lag behind others in terms of political and economic liberties; therefore, such minor states can be prone to experience terrorism more frequently than others, thereby making the need for security from a more powerful partner valid and critical to national security. Moreover, Piazza (2008) has shown that most counterterrorism aid by the US was dedicated towards Muslim-majority states in the Middle East in the period under examination (2002-2015), thus providing a sound empirical reason to focus on Muslim-majority states as the comparison group in this paper. With these aspects in mind, it becomes abundantly clear that the central mechanism discussed in this paper - minor states wary of a major power partner's domestic reach strategically expanding or limiting cooperation - was operational and easily observable for Muslim-majority minor states during 2002-2015; hence, the argument is restricted to only include Muslim-majority minor states.

Lastly, it must be noted that the analysis is not limited to democracies alone, even though formal Islamist parties are of particular interest. Instead, all Muslim-majority minor states that allow some form of electoral representation - despite low Polity scores on other dimensions - are included in the analysis. For instance, even though minor states like Morocco, Egypt, and Bahrain restrict political activity and may be considered authoritarian, they nonetheless have legislative assemblies for which Islamist parties compete in elections. Such minor states are therefore included in the sample, along with Muslim-majority democracies such as Indonesia. The following lines will now state the theoretical argument, accompanied by the hypothesis used in the empirical test.

## **Hypothesis: Islamist Oppositions and Coercion**

Oppositions in a minor state can comprise of actors or factions that compete for the control of government. Following Putnam (1988), it is reasonable to expect that the incumbent regime must take into account the domestic opposition it faces while negotiating international agreements - such



as security cooperation - as doing so is required for considerations of regime survival. This paper expands this concept further by comparing strong and weak anti-major power oppositions, thereby restricting the comparison to only anti-major power oppositions. The theoretical expectation is that strong anti-major power political oppositions should lead to higher levels of cooperation between the major power and minor state. If the anti-major power opposition is strong, then the major power does not have a viable alternative to replace the incumbents with in case of disagreement; knowing this, the incumbents can extend the security relation without fearing reprisals from the major power. On the other hand, if the anti-major power opposition is weak, then outside options remain open for the major power to coerce its allies. In this case, coercion towards regime change would ensure that while the incumbent is replaced - preferably with a more pro-major power regime - the weak anti-major opposition would never come to power. For this reason, security cooperation in the presence of weak anti-major power oppositions should be limited, as the potential for coercion by the major power cannot be reliably allayed.

For this analysis, the opposition of interest is Islamist parties. Even though the minor states in the sample have a majority Muslim population, Islamist parties still struggle politically and remain the opposition group. This is the case for several reasons, both domestic and foreign. Domestically, Islamist parties enshrine conservative values, preach traditional ethos, and support Islamic (*shari'a*) rule, which some groups in the populace support; however, such policies fail to find a broader audience due to their narrow focus and restrictive agendas which run counter to social sensibilities informed by global economic pressures and a growing emphasis on the importance of the Quranic verse that categorically asserts no compulsions in religion (Stepan and Linz 2013). While access to alternative views may yet not result in a transformation of such societies or political liberalization, Islamist parties have nonetheless failed to capture the public sentiment in Muslim-majority societies (Kurzman and Türkoğlu 2015): it is worth noting that while Islamists back an Islamic caliphate, none of the Muslim-majority democracies - such as Indonesia - have embraced *shari'a* as the legal doctrine or made Islam the official religion of the state (Stepan and Linz 2013). This fact indicates the hesitance of the broader voter base in Muslim-majority minor states towards Islamist parties, and establishes the opposition status of Islamist parties in the sample under study.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that several Muslim-majority states are run in an authoritative manner, through formal monarchies or personalist regimes. This aspect is relevant here as such concentration of power in one institution or individual leaves little room for Islamist opposition parties to thrive. Many Muslim-majority states such as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia routinely restrict the political activity of Islamist parties through formal bounds on political participation as well as state repression (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002). Such restrictions have the direct effect of keeping the Islamists in perpetual opposition, even in Muslim-majority states. Relatedly, the use of religion as a political weapon by politicians has also left the public in such minor states hesitant of putting Islamists in charge of national policies, as the cases of Algeria and Tunisia (discussed later) will show (Wolf 2017; Sakthivel 2017).

Therefore, Islamist parties occupy the opposition benches in Muslim-majority states, but are also characterized by anti-major power (anti-US) stances. As mentioned earlier, Islamists aspire towards a legal and political system derived from religious values; while their ideologies may be enough for them to view the US - a bastion of liberal values predicated on the separation of religion and state - with discontent, a much more pertinent factor cementing the anti-US credentials of Islamists is the role of historical American involvement with Muslim-majority minor states even before 2001. US relations with Muslim-majority minor states have often focused on keeping anti-American factions out of power, a motivation that has resulted in repression from minor state incumbents towards Islamist parties. If democracy were to be allowed to thrive in such states, the argument goes, groups unsympathetic to American interests and domestic lobbies reliant on the flow of aid and access to trade would come to power, a possibility which is anathema to both the major power and the minor state incumbents. Such US involvement has had the unfortunate consequence of rampant anti-American sentiment throughout the Middle East, as well as most of the Muslim-majority minor states. Jamal (2012) puts it succinctly while describing the dearth of democratic consolidation in the Arab world:

“... one can’t understand the lack of Arab democratic transitions - or the nature of future political liberalization and consolidation trajectories more generally - without taking into account U.S. entrenchment. In the Arab world, U.S. involvement has stifled indigenous democratization gains of the last several decades and levels of anti-

Americanism have intersected with the growing influence of Islamism to stifle citizen democratic contestation across most Arab states.”

Consequently, Islamist parties, more than any other political faction, have made anti-Americanism the hallmark of their foreign policy agendas. Doing so is not only in line with their ideological goals, but also is politically prudent for domestic politics. As such then, the presence of Islamist opposition parties can inform the need for the establishment of the security relation, as Islamist parties present themselves as viable alternatives to the incumbents in minor states, and frequently co-opt elements of radical ideologies in order to shore up their political standing in domestic politics. More importantly however, a strong Islamist opposition can produce enough anti-major power public sentiment to threaten the incumbent regime as well as the security relation owing to its anti-major power character, which is a factor of crucial interest to the minor state’s incumbents and the major power. The corollary to this of course is that incumbent regimes - wary of the major power’s reach within their domestic politics - can strategically use this characteristic of the opposition to their advantage, thus limiting or extending security cooperation with the major power accordingly. If the Islamist opposition in a minor state is strong - Egypt, for instance, in the form of Muslim Brotherhood - then the minor state can cooperate more extensively with the major power security partner (US, in this case). This is the case as the lack of viable alternatives to the incumbent regime restricts the major power in its coercive endeavors towards the minor state, as doing so would adversely affect the major power’s national security goals. Therefore, a strong anti-major power opposition - the Islamists, in the present inquiry - will lead to more extensive cooperation between the minor state and the major power.

The above is a unique consequence that is not present when the anti-major power opposition is weak; in this case, the possibility of coercion by the major power is high. If the anti-major power opposition is weak, then outside options - such as coercion for policy or regime change - remain open for the major power. In this case, coercion towards regime change would ensure that while the incumbent is replaced - preferably with a more pro-major power regime - the weak anti-major opposition would never come to power. As the case of Algeria - discussed in later pages - demonstrates, minor states with weak anti-major power oppositions limit their security relations

as the possibility of being replaced with an even more pro-major power faction remains possible. For this reason, security cooperation in the presence of weak anti-major power oppositions should be limited, as the potential for coercion by the major power cannot be reliably allayed. The related theoretical expectation is given below.

**Hypothesis** *Muslim-majority minor states with strong Islamist opposition parties will allow for higher levels of security cooperation with their major power security partners than similar minor states with weak Islamist opposition parties.*

## Research Design

This section will outline the research design employed to test the above-stated hypothesis. The unit of analysis is country-year, the time period under study is from the year 2002 to 2015, and the major power being focused on is the United States.<sup>3</sup> The sample of minor states is restricted to only Muslim-majority states, with a total of 41 minor states included in the sample. A minor state is considered to be Muslim-majority if its citizens are over 50% Muslim, and population and religion estimates are taken from The World Factbook (2019).<sup>4</sup>

The main dependent variable is the natural log of US military aid disbursements to other minor states, taken from The Green Book published by United States Agency for International Development (2017).<sup>5</sup> As the main dependent variable is normally distributed, OLS regression with robust standard errors is used to estimate the model. The main independent variable comes from the work on the political representation of Islamist parties in Muslim-majority states by Kurzman and Türkoğlu (2015). Kurzman and Türkoğlu (2015) identified Islamist parties through an examination of party manifestos in Muslim-majority states based on a 13-point questionnaire, reproduced in Online Appendix A. The available data provides the figures for the total number of legislative assembly seats in the minor state, and the number and percentage of seats won by

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<sup>3</sup>The year 2001 is excluded to ensure that no pre-2001 observations are included in statistical estimations, as the argument of this paper does not apply to that period.

<sup>4</sup>The list of states in the sample can be found in Online Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup>The aid figures are logged so as to normalize the distribution and remove the effect of any outliers.

Islamist parties during election years. As different electoral rules may inhibit Islamist representation in various ways, the percentage of seats won by an Islamist party - as opposed to the actual number of seats won by the same - is used to construct a binary variable indicating strong Islamist parties. This binary variable equals 1 (strong Islamist party) for each country-year in which an Islamist party gained more than 25% seats in the legislative assembly, and 0 otherwise (weak Islamist Party).<sup>6</sup>

Besides the above-stated variables, the model will also make use of several control variables.<sup>7</sup> First, the natural log of *per capita GDP* of the minor state is added to the empirical test in order to control for the varying resource levels of minor states. This variable comes from the Penn World Tables (Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer 2015) and is expected to have a negative beta coefficient, as countries endowed with higher levels of wealth may not need significant military aid for maintaining their security. Additionally, the variable is also appropriate in this context as it is required for the interaction term required for the second hypothesis. Second, the level of *internal conflict* that a minor state faces in a given year is also added to the test. This is the case because higher levels of threat are experienced by incumbent regimes in minor states that are in a state of civil war, and military aid by the major power might be required to address the severity of the security situation. Therefore, a dummy variable equaling 1 for every year that a minor state is embroiled in civil war is added to the regression. This variable comes from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002) and is expected to have a positive beta coefficient in the regression.

Third, by using the PolityIV data (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2016) the *Polity Score* of each minor state for every year in the data is added to the analysis as well. The reasoning behind this inclusion is that since democracies and autocracies allow for varying degrees of opposition

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<sup>6</sup>The 25% cutoff is arrived at by taking the global mean of the seats percentage variable and adding one standard deviation above the mean to reach the cutoff figure. Additionally, a rolling average method is used to fill in seats between election years. Therefore, if an Islamist party gained 1 seat in year  $t$ , and 3 seats in year  $t+2$ , then the party is assumed to have 2 seats in year  $t+1$ . This reasonable transformation ensures that the empirical test is not reduced to election years alone. No imputation is done to years that occur after the last election year in the sample.

<sup>7</sup>Where appropriate, missing values for control variables are calculated through multiple imputation; however, such imputation is limited to control variables that are missing for less than 5% of the observations. The results produced in the following section remain the same with or without the replacement.

presence, the Polity Score controls for structural differences in the acceptable range of outcomes for incumbent regimes in minor states. Since democracies routinely allow for the existence of political oppositions as well as opportunities for regime turnover via elections, the fear of coercion owing to opposition characteristics may be lower as compared to authoritarian regimes for such minor states. Democratic oppositions can seek relief by staying within the system whereas oppositions in authoritarian minor states may need the major power to intervene, hence increasing the potential for coercion in the latter case. Therefore, this variable is expected to have a positive beta coefficient, i.e., more cooperation with the major power for minor states higher on the Polity scale. Moreover, ideological congruence with the United States may be higher for democracies as compared to authoritarian regimes, leading to higher demand for approaching the US as the guarantor of security.

Fourth, the total number of domestic terrorist attacks experienced by a minor state is also added to the regression. This variable is taken from the Global Terrorism Database (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) 2016) and is expected to have a positive beta coefficient; since the purpose of the security relation in the present context is counterterrorism, it is entirely reasonable to expect more domestic terrorist attacks leading to higher levels of military aid disbursements to the respective minor state.

Fifth, a binary variable indicating minor states that receive a disproportionate share of US military aid (more than \$500 million each year) is included in an alternate specification of the empirical test (Model 1b). This variable equals 1 for Iraq, Afghanistan, and Egypt (United States Agency for International Development 2017) and 0 for every other minor state; additionally, this variable is expected to have a positive beta coefficient. Lastly, the log of total oil production (barrels per day) is added to the regression in order to account for varying military aid levels (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2019). This variable is expected to have a negative beta coefficient, as some minor states - Saudi Arabia, for instance, have strong security relations with the US but are wealthy enough to not need aid from the major power. The following table (Table 1) presents summary statistics from the empirical sample.

**Table 1: Summary Statistics (41 Minor States)**

Variables	Expected Direction	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Year		565			2002	2015
US Military Aid (ln)		565	13.38	5.816	0	22.58
Strong Islamist Opposition	+	565	0.251	0.434	0	1
Disproportionate Aid Recipient	+	565	0.0496	0.217	0	1
Oil Production (Log of Barrels/day)	-	565	3.679	3.186	0	9.400
GDP/capita (ln)	-	565	8.656	1.258	6.575	12.01
Civil Conflict	+	565	0.216	0.412	0	1
PolityIV Score	+	565	-0.742	6.057	-10	9
Domestic Terrorist Attacks	+	565	73.71	321.5	0	3,933

## Results and Discussion

The table below (Table 2) contains the results of the empirical analysis undertaken per the research design discussed above. This paper examines the impact of domestic factors - such as the strength of anti-major power opposition - on the level of cooperation extended towards a major power by the respective minor state. Through an examination of the literature, I developed a theory of asymmetric security cooperation centered around the role of coercion by the major power towards the minor state in a contemporary time frame, and derived a hypothesis regarding different outcomes owing to the strength of religious opposition parties. The results presented in Table 2 provide broad support for the hypothesis.

**Table 2: Results of OLS Regression (DV: US Military Aid (ln))**

VARIABLES	Model 1a	Model 1b
highper	2.248*** (0.582)	1.522*** (0.572)
civ_war	-0.022 (0.647)	1.016 (0.670)
polity2	0.113** (0.049)	0.111** (0.048)
lnpcap	-0.754*** (0.226)	-0.051 (0.281)
dom_attack	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
mre		7.669*** (1.216)
loil		-0.390*** (0.110)
pctagreeus	11.483*** (3.718)	10.715*** (3.603)
Constant	17.734*** (1.868)	12.871*** (2.145)
Observations	552	552
R-squared	0.145	0.209

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses

In Table 2, the dependent variable for the selection equation is a binary variable equaling 1 when the anti-major power opposition (Islamist parties) is strong, and 0 otherwise. The dependent variable for the regression equation is the natural log of US military aid disbursed. An analysis of the above results reveals that the beta coefficient for strong Islamist opposition parties is positive and significant at the 95% confidence level, which was expected from the theory. This result implies that when the incumbent regime in a minor state faces a strong anti-major power opposition domestically, the level of cooperation extended to the major power is higher, based on the possibility that the incumbents fear less coercion in the security relation as the major power does not have viable alternatives to the regime.

To provide a more intuitive understanding of the substantive effects, Figure 1 below plots the predicted levels of US military aid levels (ln) in a minor state over the values of the opposition strength dummy variable; therefore, Figure 1 demonstrates the predicted levels of US military aid for a minor state in the case of weak and strong anti-major power opposition parties. As can be seen in Panel (a) representing Model 1a, the prediction for strong anti-US opposition parties is positive, statistically significant, and higher than the prediction for weak anti-major power oppositions, leading to the conclusion that minor states in the former situation fear less coercion in the security relation and are able to allow for higher security concessions to the major power - for instance,



accepting higher military aid disbursements. The prediction for weak anti-major power opposition parties is statistically significant (different from zero) but lower in comparison with the prediction for strong anti-major power opposition parties. The same pattern can be seen in Panel (b), which includes two additional control variables in the form of a binary indicator as to whether a minor state receives a disproportionate share of military aid in the given time period, as well as the logged oil production numbers for the respective minor state (Model 1b). This additional specification still provides support for the hypothesis, and it is worth noting that the additional control variables are significant in the expected directions.

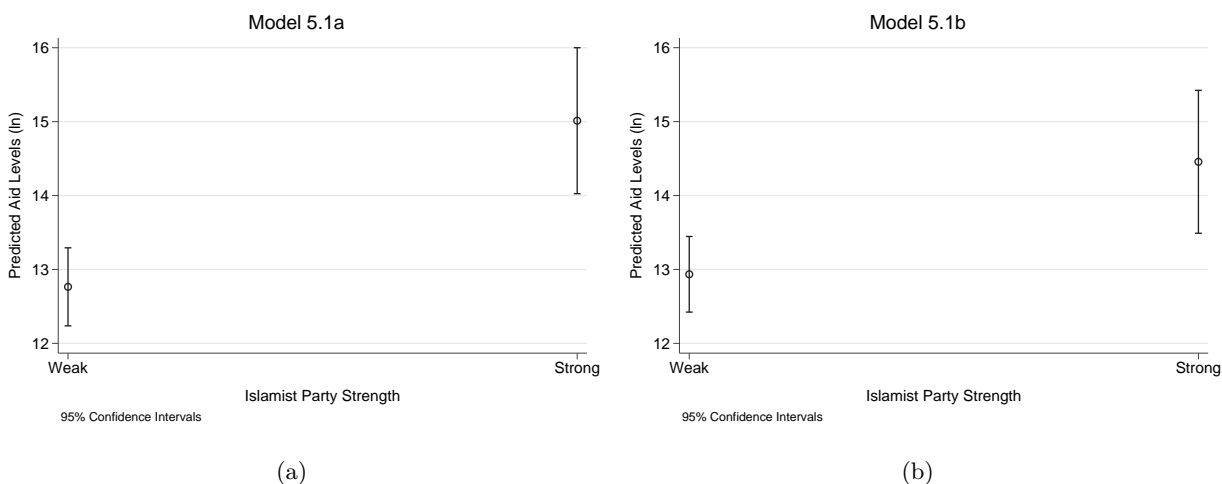


Figure 1: Predicted Values of US Military Aid given Opposition Strength for all Models

Moreover, the beta coefficients for the PolityIV, GDP/capita (ln), and number of domestic terrorist attacks variables are all significant in the expected directions. The research design section discussed the potential impact of these variables towards US military aid disbursements, and it can be seen from Table 2 that the predictions line up with the expectations. Higher PolityIV scores can be expected to lead to more military aid disbursements, as higher levels of democratic norms may not only promote ideological similarity with the US, but may also impact the opportunities for oppositions to vie for office through constitutional means, thus leading to lower risks of coercion towards regime change (and higher cooperation). Similarly, wealthier minor states receive less military aid, as they can manufacture security for themselves domestically, without the need to

establish international security arrangements. Lastly, as posited, more domestic terrorist attacks lead to marginally higher levels of military aid disbursements; as the impetus for the security relation is to counter terrorism, military aid is directed at minor states that are under greater threat. The statistical effect in this case is quite small, but nonetheless significant.

## Two Cases: Algeria and Tunisia

The results of the empirical test demonstrate support for the hypothesis that Muslim-majority minor states with stronger Islamist opposition parties are more likely to cooperate extensively with the US, while similar minor states with weaker Islamist oppositions only allow for limited cooperation. In the former case, the major power security partner does not have a viable alternative to replace the regime with, which leads to a lower likelihood of coercion and potentially greater cooperation. While the empirics are encouraging, the following comparison between two Muslim-majority minor states, i.e., Tunisia and Algeria, will provide further evidence towards the hypothesis and cement the central argument of this paper in fact.

Tunisia and Algeria are neighboring Muslim-majority minor states in North Africa. Both states are former French colonies, and they are chosen for comparison due to two reasons. First, both minor states are fairly similar in their sociopolitical composition (overwhelmingly Muslim societies under the rule of authoritarian regimes), both received US military aid during 2002-2015, and both states had similar Islamist parties inspired by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood; such similarity provides a fruitful avenue for comparing the security relations of each minor state through the sole lens of anti-major power oppositions. However, as the following lines will highlight, Tunisia's Islamist opposition was much stronger in the post-2001 period in comparison with its Algerian counterpart, so much so that the Tunisian Revolution in 2011 - the precursor to the capricious 'Arab Spring' - brought the Islamists to power in Tunisia but failed to produce an Islamist regime in Algeria. This aspect only helps in making the comparison, and further highlights the validity of this paper's main hypothesis. Additionally, the absence of any special military relations with the US - as in the case of Egypt - for both of these states makes the comparison even more valid, as no special allowances need to be made in explaining the level of cooperation that each minor state

extended towards the US.

Tunisia during 2001-2011 was headed by Prime Minister Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who ruled through an iron fist, suppressing all opposition to his dictatorial rule. As Wolf (2017) explains, the success of Ben Ali's rule largely emanated from the fact that Ben Ali's regime kept the Islamists at bay. The largest Islamist party in Tunisia during the period under study was Ennahda, which was banned from political participation in 1991 after a strong showing in the parliamentary elections; the party remained banned until the 2011 Tunisian Revolution. During the 2000s however, Ben Ali started to co-opt some Islamist factions into his fold to sow divisions among his opposition; his regime also appealed to moderate Islamists in Tunisia, a sizable chunk of the electorate and a source of support for Ennahda (Wolf 2017). However, despite being the target of repression and poaching among its ranks, Ennahda remained organized and slowly gained a foothold in Tunisian politics after 2005 through its presence in universities (Wolf 2017). Additionally, the rise of Salafism - a quietest Islamic ideology focused on piety - provided Ennahda with a surge of support from the moderates and the conservatives alike. This development was also aided by the Tunisian regime's failed attempts to portray itself as the religious benchmark through banning the veil in Tunisia, a move broadly opposed by the Tunisian society. Such changes meant that Ennahda emerged as the moderate Islamist option, and Ben Ali's fortunes started changing for the worse. Rampant corruption and poor economic performance only added to the regime's weaknesses, which resulted in its overthrow and the establishment of Ennahda as the incumbent in the 2011 revolution in Tunisia.

In comparison, the Islamists in Algeria had a tougher time gaining traction, especially after 2001. The Algerian Islamists - first the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party (until 1992) and later on the Movement for a Society of Peace (MSP) (after 2002) - were faced with repressive authoritarian regimes bent on keeping the Islamists out of power in Algeria. Much like the Tunisian case, the FIS party was banned in the early 1990s after a strong electoral victory. The military in Algeria, fearing an Islamist takeover, voided the results of the election and took power in a coup (Kepel 2002). The result of this was a decade-long, bloody civil war in Algeria, fought between the Islamists and the military which claimed thousands of lives. The civil war only ended in 2002 after the Islamists laid

down arms, which further weakened their standing in Algerian society. More importantly however, the long civil war left Algerians with a distaste for Islamists and dealt a lasting blow to their chances of coming to power (Sakthivel 2017). Additionally, the Algerian regime under President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was successful in co-opting traditional sources of Islamist support within its ranks in the 2000s. This development, combined with state repression and disorganization, kept the Islamist MSP party in opposition (Ghanem 2019). In fact, in the wake of the 2011 revolution in neighboring Tunisia, the Islamists were unable to consolidate their position in Algeria, and remained a weak political faction.

In Tunisia, the Islamists were a strong opposition, strong enough to ultimately gain power in 2011. In comparison, the Algerian Islamists - despite operating in a Muslim-majority society with support for conservative values - were weak. Islamists in both countries faced state repression from their respective regimes, but the Islamists in Tunisia posed a much greater threat towards the regime. The difference between the cases of Tunisia and Algeria therefore is the strength of the Islamist parties. The corollary to this is of course the realization by the US as the major power to refrain from coercing the Tunisian regime. Cognizant of this constraint, Tunisia under Ben Ali cooperated extensively with the US, while no such cooperation emerged in Algeria, despite the two neighboring countries being virtually identical. Such differences in cooperation, measured through the disbursement of US military aid, can be clearly seen in Figure 2 below, which shows the total US military aid provided to Tunisia and Algeria during 2002-2015.

As the figure demonstrates, military aid to Tunisia far exceeds similar aid provided to Algeria, despite the two minor states being similar in their social and political composition. This paper contends that this difference can be explained by the strength of Islamist opposition in each minor state. Despite Islamists being ostracized from power in both states, such parties had better luck in reorganization in Tunisia during the 2000s than their Algerian counterparts, which directly speaks to the argument at hand.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, Algeria's larger territorial size and history of prolonged civil conflict - two factors that may engender additional support from the major power - should have produced even more US military aid in the above-stated time period than the aid

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<sup>8</sup>The sharp decline in US military aid after 2011 can be attributed to the Islamists coming to power in Tunisia, and a reorientation of American interests in the country.

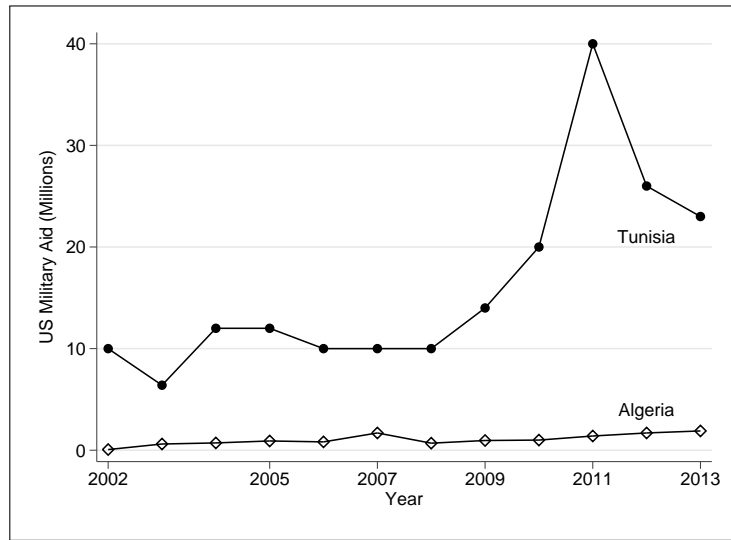


Figure 2: US Military Aid (millions) to Tunisia and Algeria during 2002-2015 (United States Agency for International Development 2017)

levels extended to Tunisia. The absence of any such aid reflects well on the central argument of this paper, and clearly demonstrates that minor states with strong anti-major power oppositions cooperate extensively with the respective major power, as the potential for coercion towards regime change in the presence of strong religious oppositions is low.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has extended theoretical frameworks suggesting that religious opposition parties play an important and distinct role in minor state decisionmaking with regards to asymmetric security relations. Through the examination of one particular concession, namely, US military aid disbursements from 2002-2015 in 41 Muslim-majority minor states, this paper shows that Muslim-majority minor states with stronger Islamist (anti-major power) oppositions cooperate more extensively with major powers than their counterparts with weak Islamist oppositions. This is the case because minor states in the former situation can reliably allay the possibility of coercion by the major power, while the latter cannot. The discussion revolving around the security relations of Algeria and Tunisia, two similar Muslim-majority minor states with varying Islamist oppositions, also provides support for this paper's central hypothesis. In doing so, this paper attributes a

critical role to religious opposition parties towards determining the extent of international security cooperation, a viewpoint that is seldom analyzed in the security cooperation literature. Not only do the theory and empirical evidence presented here point to a need for understanding foreign policies of states through the lens of their internal politics, but they also contribute towards research on asymmetric security relations through incorporating a role for coercion and minor state agency in the larger academic discussion as well.

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