






Norm Diffusion through US Military Training in Tunisia

Sharan Grewal

To cite this article: Sharan Grewal (2022): Norm Diffusion through US Military Training in Tunisia, *Security Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/09636412.2022.2065925](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2022.2065925)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2022.2065925>

 [View supplementary material](#) 

 [Published online: 29 Apr 2022.](#)

 [Submit your article to this journal](#) 

 [View related articles](#) 

 [View Crossmark data](#) 



Norm Diffusion through US Military Training in Tunisia

Sharan Grewal 

ABSTRACT

Proponents claim that US military training diffuses norms of democracy and civilian control into foreign militaries. I argue that foreign trainees are likely to absorb the United States' entire pattern of civil-military relations, including the more political trends that have emerged in recent decades, such as military personnel identifying with and voting for political parties, and serving in senior positions in government upon retirement. Through interviews and two surveys of Tunisian military personnel, I show that US trainees are more supportive than French trainees of active-duty personnel voting and of retired officers serving as president and defense minister. The diffusion of these more political attitudes to foreign trainees may help explain why US military training does not uniformly correlate with apolitical behavior.

Between 1999 and 2016, the United States trained over two million foreign military personnel spanning “virtually every country in the world”¹ through programs like International Military Education and Training (IMET). In justifying these trainings, US government officials have pointed to their potential to inculcate norms of democracy and civilian control into foreign militaries. Retired general Jim Mattis, former secretary of defense, claimed that US training has helped foreign militaries “become the professional forces they are today.”²

However, at the same time that the United States has sought to export its military norms abroad, it has also seen its norms evolve at home. Particularly since the 1990s, scholars have documented how the US military has increasingly engaged in political behavior, often without recognizing it as such.³

Sharan Grewal is assistant professor of government at William & Mary, nonresident fellow at the Brookings Institution, and nonresident senior fellow at the Project on Middle East Democracy.

 Supplemental data for this article is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2022.2065925>.

¹Theodore McLaughlin, Lee J. M. Seymour, and Simon Pierre Boulanger Martel, “Tracking the Rise of United States Foreign Military Training: IMTAD-USA, a New Dataset and Research Agenda,” *Journal of Peace Research* (forthcoming): 1.

²Hearings on S. 1253, Day 2, Before the Senate Armed Services Comm. on the Posture of US Central Command, 112th Cong. (2011) (statement of General James N. Mattis), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112shrg68084/html/CHRG-112shrg68084.htm>.

³Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Risa Brooks, “Paradoxes of Professionalism: Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in the United States,” *International Security* 44, no. 4 (Spring 2020): 7–44; Heidi A. Urben, *Party, Politics, and the Post-9/11 Army* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2021).

Among active-duty personnel, long-standing taboos against discussing, identifying with, and voting for political parties have eroded.⁴ Meanwhile, retired officers increasingly populate key positions in government, and many in the military would prefer the secretary of defense and president to have prior military experience as well.⁵ Both of these norms have been “normalized” in the United States and thus may not appear problematic, yet still represent a relative politicization of the military and a departure from the apolitical model of civilian control.

I theorize that these more political norms are also being socialized into foreign trainees. Foreign military personnel who train in the United States do so intentionally to observe and then emulate how the US military behaves. Accordingly, they are likely to adopt not only norms that are explicitly taught during their training, such as democracy and civilian control, but also those they observe from their US counterparts, such as voting in elections or serving in government upon retirement. Moreover, this norm transmission should not be limited to their time in the United States: having developed networks and contacts there, they may continue to be exposed to US norms long after they return home. In short, foreign military personnel with US training should be more likely to espouse the United States’ entire pattern of civil-military relations, including the more political norms that have emerged in recent decades.

In advancing this theory, this article leverages two methodological contributions. First, it tests these propositions through micro-level data on military officers’ attitudes, rather than broad, cross-national correlations. Second, it compares these socialization effects in US training programs to those in other Western democracies, particularly France, the second-most-active democracy in training foreign militaries.⁶ Although the French military exhibits similar respect for democracy and civilian control, it has remained a more apolitical force,⁷ and thus should provide a contrast in the attitudes held by their respective foreign trainees. US-trained personnel,

⁴Richard H. Kohn, “Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations,” *National Interest* 35 (Spring 1994): 3–17; Thomas E. Ricks, “The Widening Gap between Military and Society,” *Atlantic*, July 1997.

⁵Alice Hunt Friend, “A Military Litmus Test? Evaluating the Argument That Civilian Defense Leaders Need Military Experience,” *Just Security*, August 19, 2020; Risa Brooks, Jim Golby, and Heidi A. Urben, “Crisis of Command: America’s Broken Civil-Military Relationship Imperils National Security,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2021.

⁶Though French training data is sparse, Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan D. Caverley note that “France is probably the country with the most active FMT [foreign military training] effort after the United States,” particularly in its former colonies. In the 1990s and 2000s, between 1,000 and 2,000 African military officers a year studied in French military schools. See Savage and Caverley, “When Human Capital Threatens the Capitol: Foreign Aid in the Form of Military Training and Coups,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (July 2017): 542–57, 544; Philippe Vasset, “The Myth of Military Aid: The Case of French Military Cooperation in Africa,” *SAIS Review* 17, no. 2 (Summer–Fall 1997): 165–80; Bruno Charbonneau, *France and the New Imperialism: Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 81.

⁷Samy Cohen, *La défaite des généraux: le pouvoir politique et l’armée sous la Ve République* [The defeat of the generals: Political power and the army under the Fifth Republic] (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Grégory Daho, “L’érosion des tabous algériens: Une autre explication de la transformation des organisations militaires en France” [The erosion of Algerian taboos: Another explanation for the transformation of military organizations in France], *Revue française de science politique* 64, no. 1 (February 2014): 57–78; Chiara Ruffa, “Military Cultures and Force Employment in Peace Operations,” *Security Studies* 26, no. 3 (July–September 2017): 391–422.

I hypothesize, should be more supportive than French-trained ones of active-duty personnel voting in elections and of retired officers serving in political positions.

To test these hypotheses, this article conducts two surveys of military personnel in Tunisia. Tunisia is a particularly useful location for this study, as its officers are sent for training almost exclusively to the United States and France. In addition, as part of Tunisia's transition to democracy, both issues—military personnel voting and assuming political positions upon retirement—became highly salient in recent years.

The first survey, conducted with Tunisia's retired officers' association in 2016, surveyed 72 retired senior officers. The second, conducted online in 2018, surveyed 253 military personnel, both active duty and retired. Across both surveys, I find the same two results: US-trained personnel were more supportive of (1) active-duty personnel voting; and (2) retired officers assuming political positions, such as president and defense minister. These correlations hold when controlling for several covariates, including gender, rank, branch, region, support for democracy, and evaluations of the president and defense minister. While both surveys are relatively small, the consistent results across them lend credence to the idea that foreign trainees may absorb the precise pattern of civil-military relations they observe abroad.

The primary inferential obstacle is a selection effect: perhaps officers who trained in the United States were already more supportive of these issues, not that US training made them so. To mitigate these endogeneity concerns, I supplement the survey data with in-depth interviews of Tunisian military officers. The interviews reveal that these officers generally did not have a choice of where to go abroad for training; and in the limited cases when they did, did not choose based on the destination country's pattern of civil-military relations. Second and more importantly, the officers themselves recognized a causal effect of their time abroad on their attitudes and highlighted both mechanisms: that they observed, outside of the classroom, how their US counterparts behaved, and that they continued to follow developments abroad well after their return to Tunisia. Finally, in both surveys, US-trained personnel do not appear more political across the board, but only on aspects of civil-military relations that differentiate the United States from France.

In sum, both the survey and interview evidence from Tunisia suggest that US military training may be socializing foreign trainees into holding relatively more political attitudes than French training. These more political attitudes are not necessarily a harbinger of military coups or democratic breakdown. But a military that actively votes may be the first step toward growing partisanship that may cloud military judgment and

advice.⁸ Meanwhile, having retired officers serve in political positions often weakens civilian control of the military,⁹ contributing to less restricted defense budgets,¹⁰ less transparency over defense policy,¹¹ more securitized responses to domestic threats,¹² and potentially more hawkish foreign policies.¹³ In short, the growing political activity and influence of the US military, arguably a worrisome trend domestically, may also have troubling ramifications beyond its shores.

Foreign Military Training

A growing literature contends that US military training socializes foreign militaries into accepting values such as democracy, human rights, and civilian control. Samuel P. Huntington asserts that “exposure to the US military and training in its schools have been major factors in the diffusion and acceptance by military officers elsewhere of the liberal democratic norms of military professionalism and civilian control.”¹⁴ In a survey of 244 foreign officers at the end of their exchange in the United States, Carol Atkinson finds that in addition to technical skills, “returning home with the officers are their personal perceptions of the United States, US citizens, US civil-military relations, US government, and US foreign policy.”¹⁵ US training, she concludes, “led to more positive views of the United States and greater understanding of the values that the United States espouses.”¹⁶ Similarly, through interviews with foreign trainees, Edin Mujkic, Hugo D. Asencio, and Theodore Byrne find that “participation in the IMET program offered

⁸Charles G. Kels, “The Nonpartisan Military,” *Armed Forces Journal* (August 1, 2008): <http://armedforcesjournal.com/the-nonpartisan-military/>; M. L. Cavanaugh, “I Fight for Your Right to Vote. But I Won’t Do It Myself,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/19/opinion/i-fight-for-your-right-to-vote-but-i-wont-do-it-myself.html>.

⁹Risa Brooks and Alice Hunt Friend, “Career Military Officers and Political Appointments,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, May 11, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/career-military-officers-and-political-appointments>; Frances Tilney Burke and Mackenzie Eaglen, “Is Veterans’ Preference Bad for the National Security Workforce?” *War on the Rocks*, June 16, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/is-veterans-preference-bad-for-the-national-security-workforce/>.

¹⁰Danielle L. Lupton, “Military Experience and Elite Decision-Making: Self-Selection, Socialization, and the Vietnam Draft Lottery,” *International Studies Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (March 2022): <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab052>.

¹¹Octavio Amorim Neto and Pedro Accorsi, “Presidents and Generals: Systems of Government and the Selection of Defense Ministers,” *Armed Forces & Society* 48, no. 1 (January 2022): 136–63.

¹²Christian Davenport, “Assessing the Military’s Influence on Political Repression,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 119–44; Vincenzo Bove, Mauricio Rivera, and Chiara Ruffa, “Beyond Coups: Terrorism and Military Involvement in Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 26, no. 1 (March 2020): 263–88.

¹³Ole R. Holsti, “The Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976–96,” *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 5–42; Jessica L. P. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

¹⁴Samuel P. Huntington, “Armed Forces and Democracy: Reforming Civil-Military Relations,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (October 1995): 13.

¹⁵Carol Atkinson, *Military Soft Power: Public Diplomacy through Military Educational Exchanges* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 5.

¹⁶Atkinson, *Military Soft Power*, 14.

foreign officers the opportunity to acquire an understanding of American society and its democratic tenets.”¹⁷

At a cross-national level, however, the empirical record is relatively mixed. Atkinson finds that countries that send officers to the United States under the IMET program subsequently see increases in their levels of democracy as measured through Polity scores.¹⁸ In a follow-up study, Atkinson found a similar correlation between IMET training and a government’s respect for human rights, a finding later confirmed by Mariya Omelicheva, Brittnee Carter, and Luke B. Campbell.¹⁹ Tomislav Z. Ruby and Douglas Gilber employ a more expansive dataset of foreign military trainees, both IMET and self-funded, and find that US training is associated with a lower likelihood of a coup d’état.²⁰

Other scholars have contested these claims. Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan D. Caverley find that US training through IMET and the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) actually doubles the likelihood of a coup.²¹ However, a forthcoming reanalysis by Theodore McLaughlin, Lee J. M. Seymour, and Simon Pierre Boulanger Martel suggests this finding holds only for IMET and CTFP, not when examining all US training and education programs, where the relationship is simply null.²² Others single out the US Army School of the Americas as a “school of the dictators” for the number of its graduates later implicated in torture and coups.²³

Several scholars have offered explanations for this mixed empirical record. For some, socialization simply does not occur, or is too weak to outweigh rationalist impulses.²⁴ For others, other effects of foreign training, such as greater capacity to stage a coup, outweigh socialization.²⁵ For others still, the socialized norms may themselves conflict, such as whether to obey a president’s order to violate human rights, muddying any overall effect.²⁶

¹⁷Edin Mujkic, Hugo D. Asencio, and Theodore Byrne, “International Military Education and Training: Promoting Democratic Values to Militaries and Countries throughout the World,” *Democracy and Security* 15, no. 3 (July–September 2019): 285.

¹⁸Carol Atkinson, “Constructivist Implications of Material Power: Military Engagement and the Socialization of States, 1972–2000,” *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (September 2006): 509–37.

¹⁹Carol Atkinson, “Does Soft Power Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Student Exchange Programs 1980–2006,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6, no. 1 (January 2010): 1–22; Mariya Omelicheva, Brittnee Carter, and Luke B. Campbell, “Military Aid and Human Rights: Assessing the Impact of U.S. Security Assistance Programs,” *Political Science Quarterly* 132, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 119–44.

²⁰Tomislav Z. Ruby and Douglas Giber, “US Professional Military Education and Democratization Abroad,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (September 2010): 339–64.

²¹Savage and Caverley, “When Human Capital Threatens.”

²²McLaughlin, Seymour, and Boulanger Martel, “Tracking the Rise.”

²³Lesley Gill, *The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

²⁴Ronald R. Krebs, “A School for the Nation? How Military Service Does Not Build Nations, and How It Might,” *International Security* 28, no. 4 (Spring 2004): 85–124.

²⁵Savage and Caverley, “When Human Capital Threatens.”

²⁶Renanah Miles Joyce, “Mixed Messages: Foreign Military Training and Conflict between Norms,” *International Security* (forthcoming).

In this article, I offer another possible explanation: that democracy, human rights, and civilian control are not the only norms being socialized through US military training. Instead, trainees come to absorb the entire pattern of US civil-military relations, including the more unhealthy trends that have emerged in recent decades. As I detail below, these trends include an active engagement in partisan politics, and a preference for the secretary of defense and president to have military experience. These more political norms may also be socialized into foreign trainees and help explain why US military training does not necessarily correlate with apolitical behavior.

In some cases, these norms may be intentionally instilled into foreign trainees. US training programs increasingly include modules on civil-military relations, where voting in elections and serving in government are likely discussed. John A. Cope observes that programs often organize field visits “to acquire an understanding of US society, institutions, and values,” noting that foreign officers “attend[ed] a political debate between a male and female candidate running for the US Congress ... [and] went to the polling place to witness the election process.”²⁷ Such activities would provide a clear opportunity to see the United States’ acceptance of military personnel voting and being active in partisan politics.

But even when the United States is not intentionally “teaching” and “persuading”²⁸ foreign officers, they are still likely to passively observe these norms. After all, foreign officers going abroad for training and education are going, explicitly, to learn. They are there to observe how the US military functions, both inside and outside the classroom, and bring back lessons learned. They are thus likely to observe how their US counterparts behave, internalize that behavior as how professional militaries should act, and then reproduce that behavior in a desire to “emulate” or “mimic” the United States.²⁹ For instance, in a survey of African military personnel, Kwesi Aning and Joseph Seigle found that respondents by a two-to-one margin said that international training was more important than their domestic training in shaping the identity of their service, creating “shared standards, vision, norms, and values with international partners.”³⁰

Not only are foreign trainees likely to observe these norms while in the United States, but they may continue to observe them even after their return home. Having gained familiarity with the US military, these personnel are more likely to be selected to liaise with it moving forward,

²⁷John A. Cope, “International Military Education and Training: An Assessment,” *McNair Paper* 44 (October 1995): 13, 19.

²⁸Alexandra Gheciu, “Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization? NATO and the ‘New Europe,’” *International Organization* 59, no. 4 (October 2005): 973–1012.

²⁹Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

³⁰Kwesi Aning and Joseph Seigle, “Assessing Attitudes of the Next Generation of African Security Sector Professionals,” *Africa Center for Strategic Studies Research Paper* 7 (May 2019): 37–9.

interacting, for instance, with the US defense attaché. The United States, for its part, intentionally tries to maintain its contacts after training, so that those networks might be leveraged in the future.³¹ More informally, as we will see among Tunisian officers, foreign trainees may continue to watch American news and follow developments in the United States upon their return home. They may also remain in contact with American friends they made during their training, or see updates from these friends on their social media feeds, where US military personnel are thought to be particularly partisan.³² Foreign trainees may therefore be continually exposed to the US military's norms long after their return home, reinforcing these socialization effects.

In short, I argue that foreign trainees are likely to observe and emulate the US military's entire pattern of civil-military relations, not only its support for democracy and civilian control. They are likely to also adopt the more political norms that have emerged in recent decades. In this article, I focus on two such political norms: the increasing engagement of active-duty personnel in partisan politics and of retired officers serving in government.

Partisan Politics

The first political shift in the US military has been active-duty personnel increasingly discussing, identifying with, and voting for political parties. Although those serving in the US military have had the right to vote since the Civil War, “not one officer in five hundred, it was estimated, ever cast a ballot.”³³ Generals such as George Marshall and William Tecumseh Sherman “determined that even the slightest degree of political participation would compromise their professional independence and judgment.”³⁴ However, after World War II, and particularly after the shift to an all-volunteer force in 1973, this taboo eroded, with the military becoming increasingly partisan and active in elections.

According to data Ole Holsti collected, in 1976 about 55% of US military officers surveyed answered either independent, other, or none when asked about their political affiliation.³⁵ However, by 1996, only 26% stated these neutral categories, whereas 67% openly identified as Republican. “The

³¹During the Arab Spring, for instance, the United States made multiple calls to Egyptian officers who had trained in the United States to convince them not to crack down on protesters. See Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Crown, 2020), 646.

³²Heidi A. Urban, *Like, Comment, Retweet: The State of the Military's Nonpartisan Ethic in the World of Social Media* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2017).

³³Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 258.

³⁴Kels, “Nonpartisan Military.”

³⁵Holsti, “Widening Gap.”

professional military became politicized,” noted Richard H. Kohn, “abandoning its century-and-a-half tradition of non-partisanship. It began thinking, voting, and even espousing Republicanism with a capital R.”³⁶ “While officers consider themselves neutral servants of the state, the officer corps has developed a distinctive partisan affinity; it is greater, in fact, than that of civilians.”³⁷

Beyond partisan identification, the military has also seen increased voter turnout. Thomas E. Ricks claims that “military personnel have for the past decade been voting in greater percentages than the general population.”³⁸ Heidi A. Urben, citing Federal Voting Assistance Program surveys, finds that the portion of military personnel who voted in presidential elections increased from 53% in 1996 and 56% in 2000 to 73% in 2004. In her own survey of four thousand active-duty army officers in 2009, Urben then finds voter turnout increased to 81% in 2008, almost 23% higher than their civilian counterparts.³⁹ As Alice Hunt Friend concludes, “The data do suggest that professional standards for ‘citizen-soldiers’ have shifted over time from general abstention from any political affiliation to a broad comfort with registering with—and consistently voting for—political parties.”⁴⁰

This electoral participation is not just a private matter, but publicly acknowledged and encouraged within the US military. Department of Defense Directive 1000.04 instructs service chiefs to “encourage eligible voters in their organizations to register and vote in elections for federal, state and local office.”⁴¹ According to Urben’s survey, 93% of army officers said that active-duty personnel should vote, and 80% stated they have actively encouraged others to do so. About 74% said they have expressed their personal opinion about a political candidate to other officers during an electoral campaign, and 50% acknowledged politics is “often” talked about at work.⁴²

This trend of US military personnel identifying with and voting for parties has become both widespread and normalized, such that it no longer appears problematic. As Risa A. Brooks astutely observes, the military personnel engaging in these activities often do not even realize they are political.⁴³ Yet these activities depart from the notion of a professional military

³⁶Kohn, “Out of Control,” 7.

³⁷Feaver and Kohn, “Conclusion: The Gap and What It Means for American National Security,” in Feaver and Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 461.

³⁸Ricks, “Widening Gap.”

³⁹Heidi A. Urben, “Wearing Politics on Their Sleeves? Levels of Political Activism of Active Duty Army Officers,” *Armed Forces & Society* 40, no. 3 (July 2014): 568–91.

⁴⁰Alice Hunt Friend, “Military Politicization,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Critical Questions, 5 May 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/military-politicization>.

⁴¹Kels, “Nonpartisan Military.”

⁴²Urben, “Wearing Politics.”

⁴³Brooks, “Paradoxes of Professionalism.”

remaining “politically sterile and neutral.”⁴⁴ As Army Major M. L. Cavanaugh wrote for the *New York Times*:

The trouble is I will have exercised a personal, partisan choice, committing myself to a candidate, party and set of beliefs and policies. I would like to believe that I can separate my political and professional views, but I worry that, years from now, my decision could undermine my military judgment.⁴⁵

This trend has also served to differentiate the United States from other Western countries, particularly France. The French military has long been labeled *La Grande Muette* (“the Great Mute”) for its silence on political issues. French officers and soldiers were barred from voting between 1872 and 1945, and in the 1920s, when political parties began to debate granting them suffrage, officers themselves resisted these efforts.⁴⁶ Even after gaining the right to vote in 1945, the French military has remained far from partisan politics.⁴⁷ Officers and soldiers were in fact legally barred from discussing political topics without permission until 2005⁴⁸ and, unlike in the United States,⁴⁹ remain barred from joining political parties today.⁵⁰ Hence, French military personnel cannot vote in a primary if it requires membership in a party.⁵¹ More generally, the “Algerian taboo”—the social backlash to the coup attempts by French officers based in Algeria in 1958 and 1961—has served to silence military officers on political issues.⁵² Accordingly, in France, military service appears to depoliticize service members, with veterans being 16 percent less likely to vote than comparable nonveterans.⁵³ In the United States, meanwhile, Jeremy M. Teigen finds that veterans are significantly more likely to vote than nonveterans, which he attributes in part to socialization during their time in service.⁵⁴

I hypothesize that the US military’s growing partisanship and electoral participation may also be socialized into foreign trainees. Foreign officers

⁴⁴Huntington, *Soldier and the State*, 83–4.

⁴⁵Cavanaugh, “I Fight.”

⁴⁶Andrew Orr, “The Consequences Would Certainly Be Fatal’: Voting Rights and the French Army, 1920–1928,” *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 39 (2011): 278–89.

⁴⁷Jean Lacroix, “L’armée et la politique” [The Military and Politics], *Espirit* 167, no. 5 (May 1950): 749–53; Marie-Hélène Renaut, “Être soldat et citoyen en France de la Révolution à la Libération” [Being a Soldier and a Citizen in France from the Revolution to the Liberation], *La revue administrative* 58, no. 348 (November 2005): 625–35.

⁴⁸Michel Louis Martin, “The French Military and Union Rights: At the Margin of Full Citizenship?” in *Military Unionism in the Post-Cold War Era: A Future Reality?* ed. Richard Bartle and Lindy Heinecken (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51.

⁴⁹See US Department of Defense, “Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces,” Directive 1344.10, February 19, 2008, <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/134410p.pdf>.

⁵⁰French Defense Code Article L4121-3.

⁵¹Bertrand Quaglierini, “Le militaire: entre citoyen, agent public et soldat” [The military: Between citizen, public official and soldier], HAL tel-01753376, 2017, <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01753376/document>.

⁵²Daho, “L’érosion.” Only in the late 2000s has the ability of the Algerian taboo to silence high-ranking officers begun to wane.

⁵³Ryan J. B. Garcia, “National Service and Civic Engagement: A Natural Experiment,” *Political Behavior* 37, no. 4 (December 2015): 859.

⁵⁴Jeremy M. Teigen, “Enduring Effects of the Uniform: Previous Military Experience and Voting Turnout,” *Political Research Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (December 2006): 601–7.

training in the United States are likely to observe their US counterparts voting and discussing politics, and come to believe this is normal for a professional military. Meanwhile, those who train in France should observe the opposite: that a professional military should be apolitical and nonpartisan. Accordingly, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: US trainees should be more supportive than French trainees of military personnel voting.

Political Positions

A second political shift has been the growing number of retired officers serving in the US government. Huntington argued that the United States underwent a sea change in civil-military relations after World War II, witnessing an “influx of military officers into governmental positions normally occupied by civilians.”⁵⁵ He notes that as early as “1948 it was estimated that one hundred and fifty military men occupied important policy-making posts in civilian government.”⁵⁶ Jerome Slater subsequently observed a further

influx in the late 1960s and early 1970s of professional officers into the foreign policy bureaucracy at all levels... . One notes not merely the more dramatic instances, important as they are—e.g. Generals Maxwell Taylor, Alexander Haig, and ... Brent Scowcroft at the very core of high policy—but, equally or more important ... the major role of military men at policy-making levels of the CIA, the state department; ... the eleven generals and admirals who in 1974 were filling previously civilian positions at the deputy assistant secretary level in the Pentagon; ... and the increasing numbers of retired officers in nonmilitary ... positions throughout the government bureaucracy.⁵⁷

These trends have since grown exponentially. Between 2001 and 2014, “41,630 military retirees—many of them senior officers—walked back into the Defense Department as civilians.”⁵⁸ Retired officers today routinely staff all levels of government, including cabinet positions such as secretary of defense, secretary of state, and national security advisor. These trends are fueled in part by widespread perceptions, among both civilians and the military, that the military is more knowledgeable, patriotic, and selfless than civilians.⁵⁹ Surveys therefore show that large numbers of Americans

⁵⁵Huntington, *Soldier and the State*, 354.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 357.

⁵⁷Jerome Slater, “Apolitical Warrior or Soldier-Statesman: The Military and the Foreign Policy Process in the Post-Vietnam Era,” *Armed Forces & Society* 4, no. 1 (October 1977): 106.

⁵⁸Lisa Rein, “Military Retirees Have a Revolving Door to Civilian Pentagon Jobs. The Senate Voted to Shut It,” *Washington Post*, June 21, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2016/06/21/ttkk-3/>.

⁵⁹Risa Brooks and Sharan Grewal, “‘Twice the Citizen’: How Military Attitudes of Superiority Undermine Civilian Control in the United States,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (forthcoming): <https://doi.org/10.1177/2F00220027211065417>.

want the military's view to trump civilians' on a variety of political issues beyond national security.⁶⁰

Many in the military also prefer defense secretaries, and even presidents, to have prior military experience. Using Feaver and Kohn's survey of 2,901 elite military officers, Holsti finds that 42% agreed or strongly agreed that "to be respected as commander-in-chief, the President should have served in uniform."⁶¹ Likewise, Brooks, Michael A. Robinson, and Urben find that 57% of West Point cadets believed the secretary of defense should have military experience.⁶² Richard Morton, a lieutenant colonel at the Army War College, included prior military experience in a proposed list of criteria for choosing defense secretaries, noting "there is no substitute for military experience when dealing with military personnel."⁶³

The trend of retired officers serving in political positions accelerated under President Donald Trump, who appointed four retired officers and one active-duty general to his cabinet. While controversial for some civil-military relations scholars,⁶⁴ others downplayed any concern.⁶⁵ "Turning to general officers to fill these roles today is hardly abnormal," wrote Raphael S. Cohen.⁶⁶ Moreover, the sense of relief that there would at least be some "adults in the room" to advise and—if necessary—disobey Trump demonstrates how far the political role of the US military has come.

Although it has become normal to have—or even prefer—retired officers in these positions, it does challenge traditional conceptions of civilian control. For many in the military to say that the president only merits respect if he has served is "strikingly at odds with a classical civilian control perspective."⁶⁷ Moreover, having retired officers in these positions may also have corrosive effects on civil-military relations.⁶⁸ Both in the United States and abroad, the presence of military personnel in the legislative and

⁶⁰Ronald R. Krebs, Robert Ralston, and Aaron Rapport, "No Right to Be Wrong: What Americans Think about Civil-Military Relations," *Perspectives on Politics* (forthcoming): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592721000013>.

⁶¹Ole R. Holsti, "Of Chasms and Convergences: Attitudes and Beliefs of Civilians and Military Elites at the Start of a New Millennium," in Feaver and Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 83.

⁶²Risa A. Brooks, Michael A. Robinson, and Heidi A. Urben, "Huntington, Janowitz, or None of the Above? Conceptions of Professional Norms by Future Army Officers" (paper presented at APSA Annual Meeting, 2020).

⁶³Richard Morton, "Criteria for the Selection of the Secretary of Defense," US Army War College AWC Log #66-4-156 U (1966), 21.

⁶⁴Philip Carter and Loren DeJonge Schulman, "Trump Is Surrounding Himself with Generals. That's Dangerous," *Washington Post*, 30 November 2016; Jessica Blankshain, "Trump's Generals: Mattis, McMaster, and Kelly," *Texas National Security Review*, March 27, 2018; Lindsay P. Cohn, "The Precarious State of Civil-Military Relations in the Age of Trump," *War on the Rocks*, March 28, 2018.

⁶⁵Rosa Brooks, "Don't Freak Out about Trump's Cabinet Full of Generals," *Foreign Policy*, December 2, 2016; Peter Feaver, "A General to Be Secretary of Defense? A Good Choice for Civil-Military Relations," *Foreign Policy*, December 2, 2016; Kori Schake, "All the President's Generals," *Foreign Policy*, December 3, 2016.

⁶⁶Raphael S. Cohen, "Minding the Gap: The Military, Politics and American Democracy," *Lawfare* (blog), December 17, 2017.

⁶⁷Paul Gronke and Peter D. Feaver, "Uncertain Confidence: Civilian and Military Attitudes about Civil-Military Relations," in Feaver and Kohn, ed., *Soldiers and Civilians*, 154.

⁶⁸Burke and Eaglen, "Veterans' Preference"; Brooks and Friend, "Career Military Officers."

executive branches has been linked to less restricted defense budgets, less transparency over defense policy, more securitized responses to domestic threats, and more hawkish foreign policies.⁶⁹

The regularity with which retired officers assume political positions in the United States stands in stark contrast with France. If the Cold War era brought an increase in the US military's political position, France has witnessed the opposite trend.⁷⁰ After French officers stationed in Algeria staged coups in 1958 and 1961, the pendulum swung against the military. In *La défaite des généraux* [*The Defeat of the Generals*], Samy Cohen explains that “the Fifth Republic [1958–] was a major turning point in the relations between political power and military leaders. The political order took precedence over the military order.”⁷¹ “Compared with the Third and Fourth Republics, the [military’s] influence has declined in almost all major sectors. [Civilians] constantly encroach on what the military has always considered their exclusive jurisdiction.”⁷²

Two points of comparison between the United States and France help illustrate this divergence. In the United States since World War II, 77% of presidents and 70% of defense secretaries were at one point commissioned military officers (see list in [Online Appendix A](#)).⁷³ In France, by contrast, former officers accounted for just 40% of presidents and 23% of defense ministers. The data thus suggest that in this period, the United States’ conception of civilian control has been far more permissive than France’s of retired officers serving in these positions and overseeing the military.

I contend that these differing norms likewise diffuse to foreign military personnel training in the United States and France. Foreign trainees in the United States likely notice the number of American officers who serve in government upon retirement, as well as the widespread sentiments among both military and civilian circles that retired officers may even be preferable to civilians in these positions. Accordingly, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: US trainees should be more supportive than French trainees of retired officers assuming political positions such as defense minister and president.

⁶⁹Lupton, “Military Experience”; Neto and Accorsi, “Presidents and Generals”; Davenport, “Assessing the Military’s Influence”; Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa, “Beyond Coups”; Holsti, “Widening Gap”; Weeks, *Dictators at War*. Though see also Christopher Gelpi and Peter D. Feaver, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force,” *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (December 2002): 779–93; Danielle L. Lupton, “Out of the Service, into the House: Military Experience and Congressional War Oversight,” *Political Research Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (June 2017): 327–39.

⁷⁰Ruffa, “Military Cultures.”

⁷¹Cohen, *La défaite*, 48.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 30.

⁷³Legally, US military officers must be retired for seven years before becoming defense secretary. This requirement has been waived by Congress three times: for George Marshall, Jim Mattis, and Lloyd Austin.

The Case of Tunisia

To test whether these political norms diffuse to foreign trainees, this study draws upon two surveys of Tunisian military personnel. Tunisia is a particularly useful location for examining the effect of US versus French training. Historically, most Tunisian officers studied in France. However, a sizable minority studied in the United States, especially in the 1980s and again after the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. As Tunisia continues to move into the US orbit today, this increased US training may have major implications for the former's military culture.

A former French colony, Tunisia created its military upon independence in 1956, explicitly following the French model. The military was apolitical, with officers and soldiers denied the right to vote or to join political parties, and the defense minister has always come from a civilian background.⁷⁴ The military was formed originally from Tunisian troops serving in the colonial French army, and its first cohort of new officers were all sent to France's St. Cyr in October 1956 for their initial schooling.

From 1956 to 1966, Tunisian military officers received all their schooling abroad, primarily in France. Subsequently, with the establishment of the Military Academy in 1967, High Naval Institute (later the Naval Academy) in 1978, and Air Force Academy in 1984, most officers completed candidacy schools in Tunisia and subsequently went abroad for their specializations and additional training (such as the staff and war colleges). Even after the establishment of the Tunisian Staff College in 1979 and War College in 1994, the top officers, based on exam results, have been permitted to repeat these courses abroad. In addition, Tunisian officers regularly go abroad for specialized courses not offered domestically.

For those permitted to study abroad, the primary destination has been France. However, the United States has also accepted many trainees, as mentioned above. [Figure 1](#) plots (a) the number of Tunisians trained and (b) the amount spent by the United States on IMET and the CTFP in Tunisia between 1970 and 2017. While to differing degrees, both graphs show a strengthening of the US-Tunisia military relationship in the 1980s and again in the 2010s.⁷⁵

Tunisia therefore features important variation in whether military officers studied in France or the United States, making it a conducive location for this study. In addition, the case of Tunisia is fortuitous for helping to mitigate concerns of selection bias: that politically oriented officers may have

⁷⁴Risa Brooks, "Abandoned at the Palace: Why the Tunisian Military Defected from the Ben Ali Regime in January 2011," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2013): 205–20; Hicham Bou Nassif, "A Military Besieged: The Armed Forces, the Police, and the Party in Bin Ali's Tunisia, 1987–2011," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 1 (February 2015): 65–87; Sharan Grewal, "A Quiet Revolution: The Tunisian Military after Ben Ali," Carnegie Middle East Center, February 24, 2016.

⁷⁵Data from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and available in the replication files.

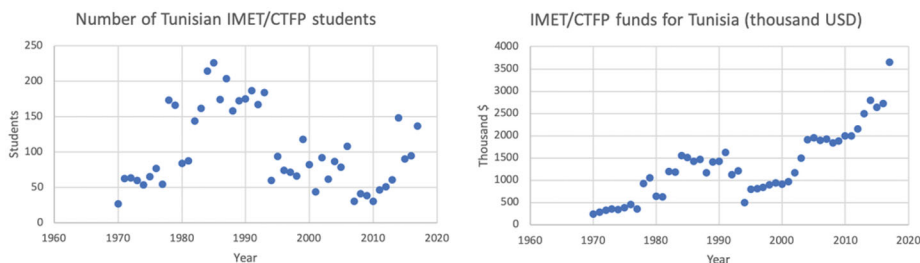


Figure 1. Increase in US-Tunisia military relations, 1970–2017.

chosen to study in the United States, rather than exposure to the United States having changed their attitudes. Generally speaking, Tunisian officers did not have a choice in where to study. According to retired colonel-major⁷⁶ Mahmoud Mezoughi, president of the retired officers’ association, officers were instead placed wherever Tunisia had an available spot in their particular specialty that year.⁷⁷ A retired Tunisian general concurred:

In some cases, there is choice, but in general, the officer is oriented towards a certain destination due to his specialty... . I did my training within the military police in the US because that was where my specialty was offered. Where there is more choice is for the War College. When the officers graduate [from the Tunisian War College], those with excellent records—usually seven of them—[get to repeat the course abroad and] have the right to choose where to go among France, Germany, the US, etc. If one of them speaks English, he would choose the US, Germany in case he speaks German, and so on.⁷⁸

In the cases where they had a choice, officers interviewed universally highlighted preexisting language skills as the factor influencing their choice, with a handful mentioning the material incentives (“in Germany or Turkey, you could buy a car!”). None mentioned the pattern of civil-military relations as a reason for choosing a given country for training. Moreover, both the United States and France were seen as equally desirable in terms of social status.

Tunisia was also an opportune location for this study given that it was in the midst of a transition to democracy, with both of the norms examined herein having become highly salient in the years prior to the surveys. The Tunisian military had always been banned from voting, but the parliament, in the spirit of democratization, decided to revisit this ban in 2016. After months of acrimonious debate, the parliament decided in 2017 to allow the military and security forces to vote in the 2018 municipal elections,⁷⁹

⁷⁶A unique rank created in Tunisia between colonel and general.

⁷⁷Interview with retired colonel-major Mahmoud Mezoughi, January 11, 2017. All interviews were conducted in Tunis.

⁷⁸Interview with a retired general, January 8, 2018.

⁷⁹Sharan Grewal, “Tunisian Security Forces Rock the Vote,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 16, 2017.

though not in the 2019 parliamentary or presidential elections. Similarly, whereas retired officers rarely assumed political positions under Habib Bourguiba or Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, several have done so after the 2011 revolution.⁸⁰ Though there has yet not been a retired officer as defense minister or president (other than Ben Ali, of course), retired general Mohamed Meddeb was floated for the position of defense minister in 2020, and retired general Mohamed El Hedi Ben Hassine attempted to run for president in 2019. With both norms highly salient, officers in Tunisia will likely hold strong attitudes on these issues (rather than responding “neutral” or “don’t know” in a survey), making it a useful case to test our theory.⁸¹

Qualitative Evidence

This article therefore examines whether US-trained Tunisian military personnel hold different attitudes than French-trained ones, particularly regarding the military voting and retired officers assuming political positions. Before turning to the surveys, I first examine qualitative evidence of these hypotheses.

When Tunisia’s parliament was debating whether to grant the military the right to vote in 2016–17, I asked retired officers what they thought of the military voting. Without prompting, several officers mentioned their time in the United States or France as justification for their positions. One retired colonel-major, in favor of the right of vote, observed that:

The officers I was with in the US could vote for the Republicans or the Democrats. When we are trained in a country, we are influenced—whether we want it or not. We are influenced by the environment and everything that takes place in that country. So, when I came back from the United States, my supreme desire was to see Tunisia like the US because I felt how comfortable I was in the States.⁸²

Although this officer was not taught this norm in his training, he noticed that American officers voted, and also recognized that his time in the United States had socialized him into accepting that this practice was healthy. By contrast, another retired colonel-major highlighted the opposite lesson he learned in France:

My understanding of the topic [the right to vote] has been shaped by my time in France, where I studied for all of my higher military education. At the time, France was debating whether to allow military officers to unionize. They had a big debate and ultimately decided no, because it would politicize the military and lead to internal divisions. The same in my mind applies to the right to vote.⁸³

⁸⁰Grewal, “Quiet Revolution.”

⁸¹At the same time, it is possible that results may not generalize to countries where these issues are less salient.

⁸²Interview with a retired colonel-major, January 11, 2017.

⁸³Interview with a retired colonel-major, June 20, 2016.

Retired officers who trained in the United States have taken the military's involvement in elections one step further. In 2019, a group of retired officers led by retired major Mustapha Saheb Etabaa created a political party—Helmou Tounes, or “Let’s Act for Tunisia”—which ran (unsuccessfully) in the 2019 parliamentary elections.⁸⁴ Three of the five party cofounders, including Etabaa, retired colonel Mohamed Adel Daou, and retired colonel Mohamed Kasdallah, studied in the United States⁸⁵ and decided to name their electoral program the “Victory Program,” a reference to the United States’ military plan for World War II.⁸⁶

Further evidence that this group was influenced by their time stateside comes from their party’s website, where the first blog post quotes George Washington stating that “when we assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the Citizen.” The post goes on to say that “this sentence applies perfectly to the team that is currently leading the Act for Tunisia movement. Its members were soldiers (and they still are), they were apolitical, but by necessity they were pushed to be politicized, using their right of citizenship. They believe that staying out of the political sphere is tantamount to treason.”⁸⁷

I met Etabaa and the other cofounders in Tunis in January 2019, and asked them whether they themselves would take ministerial positions if they were to win the elections. Etabaa remarked, in English, “Of course! We play to win, like in football!”⁸⁸ I then asked if they would serve as minister of defense, breaking Tunisia’s tradition of civilians in that post. Etabaa responded affirmatively, citing the United States: “In the United States, you have many retired generals in the team of Trump, including minister of defense.” I replied that even in the United States this is controversial, and he responded, “It is only controversial when they are active-duty,” clearly aware of current-day US civil-military relations, despite having trained in the United States back in the 1980s.

In addition to running in the parliamentary elections, Helmou Tounes also attempted to field a retired general as a candidate for president. The party nominated the former army chief, retired general Mohamed El Hedi Ben Hassine, for the 2019 presidential elections. Though his last-minute nomination did not manage to secure enough signatures in time, his selection suggests that the party was eager to have a retired officer assume the position of

⁸⁴Amel al-Hilali, “Former Military Officers Jump into Tunisia’s Political Arena,” *Al-Monitor*, July 19, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/tunisia-army-veterans-political-party-elections-neutrality.html>.

⁸⁵See their biographies here: *Agrissons pour La Tunisie* (blog), <https://web.archive.org/web/20191118164316/http://agissons-tunisie.org/Agissons-tunisie-cv/>.

⁸⁶When I met them in January 2019, they had been considering calling the program the “victory program for a new deal,” yet another reference to the United States.

⁸⁷See: “Le militaire et la politique,” *Agrissons pour La Tunisie* (blog), December 7, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191023033015/http://agissons-tunisie.org/blog/>.

⁸⁸Interview with Mustapha Saheb Etabaa and Helmou Tounes cofounders, January 10, 2019.

president as well. Ben Hassine, who also studied in the United States, likewise cited the United States as justification for running in elections:

In France and the United States, the military does not enter politics. Same thing here in Tunisia. But look at the number of generals who retired from the US military and then were nominated for presidential elections. They were nominated as retired [generals]! And the president today in America—he filled his staff with at least 8 or 10 generals! The chief of staff, national security advisor, etc. Why? Because they have patriotism and discipline!⁸⁹

In short, the interviews with retired military officers suggest that those who trained in the United States were more supportive of the military voting, and of retired officers serving as defense minister and president. Moreover, the interviews lend support for both channels for this socialization: first, foreign trainees observed these norms while abroad, even if they were not taught them explicitly. Officers who trained in the United States noticed, while there, that their American counterparts could vote. Second, the interviews show that the officers who studied in the United States continued to follow developments in the United States after they returned home, as indicated by Etabaa and Ben Hassine's knowledge of the generals serving in the Trump administration, and the debate surrounding it. They have therefore been continually exposed to the United States's military norms even after their return to Tunisia.

Surveys of Military Officers

To complement these interviews, I conducted two surveys of military personnel in Tunisia. Like most elite surveys, their selling point is not that they are randomized, representative samples of the Tunisian military—they certainly are not, and we should be conscious of the biases in these samples (detailed below). Instead, their strength is that they provide unique insight into a hard-to-reach group of elites. Although both samples are relatively small, the consistent results between them suggest a more generalized effect.

Survey 1: Retired Officers' Association, 2016

The first survey was fielded in Arabic in fall 2016 to the Association of Former Officers of the National Armed Forces. Established in 2011, the association was home to 174 members at the time of the survey. After building trust and rapport through a year of interviewing its members, the association allowed me to conduct a survey in fall 2016. Sixty-two members completed paper copies of the survey between August and December 2016,

⁸⁹Interview with retired general Mohamed El Hedi Ben Hassine, March 6, 2020.

and 10 others completed an online version in August 2016, resulting in 72 surveys total.

The survey sample consisted primarily of senior officers. Of the 72 officers surveyed, 67 (93%) were colonels or colonel-majors. The remaining 5 were lieutenant colonels and majors. These senior officers are roughly representative of the military in terms of service (see [Online Appendix B](#)), with the vast majority in the army or in the joint services (logistics, support, etc.). The survey sample is also fairly representative in terms of birthplace, although with a slightly higher proportion of officers hailing from the capital, Tunis, where the association was located.

The officers surveyed had retired between 2001 and 2015, with 46% retiring after the 2011 revolution. The survey sample thus derives from the cohorts who entered the Tunisian military in the 1960s and '70s. All had received foreign training, with many having benefited from the additional US trainings in the 1980s. Indeed, in the survey sample, 39 of the 72 officers (54%) had studied in the United States.⁹⁰ Two of these 39 completed their basic and advanced training in the United States, while the rest went to the United States only for advanced courses. Of the 33 officers who did not study there, 32 trained in France, and the last individual studied in Turkey. In the regressions below, I control for this one officer as “non-Western training,” permitting a more clean US versus France design. In short, Survey 1 allows us to compare the attitudes of US- versus French-trained Tunisian officers.

Survey 2: Online Recruitment, 2018

To examine whether results hold on active-duty, and not just retired, military personnel, I conducted a second survey in 2018, this time using targeted advertisements on Facebook. Facebook ads have become an increasingly common tool with which to recruit convenience samples for academic surveys, particularly given their low cost.⁹¹ However, Facebook ads also boast an underutilized advantage: the ability to target advertisements to specific groups. Facebook classifies its users into having certain interests based on information they report in their Facebook profile (such

⁹⁰Eight of these officers trained in both the US and France. In the main results, I include these eight as part of the US category, on the assumption that French training is simply reinforcing Tunisian norms, whereas exposure to the United States is changing them. However, results are robust to carving out these eight as a separate category, with the 31 US-only trained officers still significantly different from the 32 French-only trained ones (see [Online Appendix D](#)).

⁹¹See, for example, Erin C. Cassese, Leonie Huddy, Todd K. Hartman, Lilliana Mason, and Christopher R. Weber, “Socially Mediated Internet Surveys: Recruiting Participants for Online Experiments,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46, no. 4 (October 2013): 775–84; Baobao Zhang, Matto Mildenberger, Peter D. Howe, Jennifer Marlon, Seth A. Rosenthal, and Anthony Leiserowitz, “Quota Sampling Using Facebook Advertisements,” *Political Science Research and Methods* 8, no. 3 (July 2020): 558–64; Kimberly G. Guiler, “From Prison to Parliament: Victimhood, Identity, and Electoral Support,” *Mediterranean Politics* 26, no. 2 (April 2021): 168–97.

as their employment history) and their activity on Facebook (such as liking certain Facebook pages). These Facebook-assigned interests have been shown to be fairly accurate for most users.⁹² By targeting advertisements only to users with a particular interest, Facebook can oversample hard-to-reach populations. Social scientists have used targeted advertisements to oversample American Catholics, Polish migrants, and German far-right party supporters.⁹³

Building off this scholarship, I used Facebook to advertise the survey to Tunisian military personnel. The advertisement itself (see [Online Appendix C](#)) featured a picture of the military and invited Facebook users to take “a survey about security in the Middle East.” Clicking on the advertisement took users out of Facebook and into Qualtrics, a survey platform, where they filled out a consent form and then answered the survey.⁹⁴ Crucially, the advertisement was not shown to all 6.8 million Tunisians on Facebook, but only to the 440,000 Facebook has classified as having an interest in the military.⁹⁵ Not everyone interested in the military would have actually served, but this targeting succeeded in oversampling the number of military personnel.

Over the course of one month (July–August 2018), 1,609 Tunisians clicked on the advertisement and completed the survey. Of these, 253 (16%) self-described in the survey as having military experience, including 144 who claimed to be active-duty personnel and 109 who claimed to be former military personnel. While nationally representative 1,200-person surveys in Tunisia reach about 10 active-duty personnel,⁹⁶ this targeting succeeded in obtaining about 14 times as many.

There are two primary limitations to this second survey. The first is that all respondents are self-identified military personnel; there is no way to independently verify their military status.⁹⁷ The second limitation is that given the recruitment method (Facebook), the survey sample likely skews younger, wealthier, and better educated than the average Tunisian service member (for more on representativeness, see [Online Appendix C](#)). The youthfulness of this sample, however, also helps to complement Survey 1,

⁹²Paul Hitlin, Lee Rainie, and Kenneth Olmstead, “Facebook Algorithms and Personal Data,” *Pew Research Center*, January 16, 2019, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2019/01/16/facebook-algorithms-and-personal-data/>.

⁹³See, respectively: Christine Brickman Bhutta, “Not by the Book: Facebook as a Sampling Frame,” *Sociological Methods & Research* 41, no. 1 (February 2012): 57–88; Steffen Pötzschke and Michael Braun, “Migrant Sampling Using Facebook Advertisements: A Case Study of Polish Migrants in Four European Countries,” *Social Science Computer Review* 35, no. 5 (October 2017): 633–53; Kai Jäger, “The Potential of Online Sampling for Studying Political Activists around the World and across Time,” *Political Analysis* 25, no. 3 (July 2017): 329–43.

⁹⁴There are important ethical considerations about the data Facebook collects on its users. Because the survey is conducted on a separate platform, Facebook does not learn participants’ answers to any of the questions, or even if they took the survey at all.

⁹⁵I clicked all interests, occupations, and industries related to the military, including military, officer, colonel, etc. (see full list in [Online Appendix C](#)).

⁹⁶In the Arab Barometer, for instance, the percentage of respondents who self-report being members of the armed forces or security services in Tunisia was 1.1% in 2011, 0% in 2013, and 0.7% in 2016.

⁹⁷For the sake of anonymity, no names could be recorded; nor, for that matter, is there a public list of names in the military to cross-check.

which consisted entirely of senior officers. Instead, Survey 2's sample consists of younger military personnel. Of the 197 who stated their ranks, about 31% were soldiers, 34.5% noncommissioned officers, and 34.5% officers.

Of the 253 respondents, 28 had trained in the United States.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, 19 had trained in France. Another 13 had trained in other Western democracies.⁹⁹ Six had trained only in non-Western countries,¹⁰⁰ while the remaining 187 had no foreign training. The second survey will therefore allow us to compare US trainees not only to those with French training but also to those who trained in other Western democracies, as well as those who have trained only in Tunisia.

In short, the two survey samples are different but complementary, with the former capturing the senior ranks and the latter reaching the junior ones. Across both, we find consistent results that US training is correlated with more political attitudes.

Military Norms

To test the theory, the survey asked military personnel about two aspects of civil-military relations. The first was whether active-duty personnel should vote in elections. At the time of the first survey (fall 2016), the Tunisian parliament had begun debating whether to grant the military the right to vote. The survey therefore asked respondents for their level of agreement with the statement: "Soldiers and officers should have the right to vote in elections," on a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

By the time of the second survey (summer 2018), the military had already been granted the right to vote and the opportunity to do so in the 2018 municipal elections. Rather than asking about having suffrage, the survey instead asked: "How appropriate would it be for someone in the military to vote in elections?" on a 5-point scale from very appropriate to very inappropriate.

The second military norm is retired officers assuming political positions, such as defense minister or president. In the first survey, respondents were asked for their level of agreement with the statement, "the defense minister should be a retired officer" on a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the second survey, respondents were asked whether

⁹⁸Most of these (17) were officers, but 5 noncommissioned officers (NCOs), 3 soldiers, and 3 who declined to state their ranks also trained in the United States. As in Survey 1, 12 of the 28 who trained in the United States also trained in France. I again include these 12 within the US category for the main results, but [Online Appendix D](#) presents results when carving them out as a separate category.

⁹⁹The other Western countries include Canada (1), Spain (1), the United Kingdom (2), Germany (5), Italy (3), and Greece (3). Numbers do not add up to 13 due to some officers studying in multiple countries.

¹⁰⁰These included China (1) and Turkey (5).

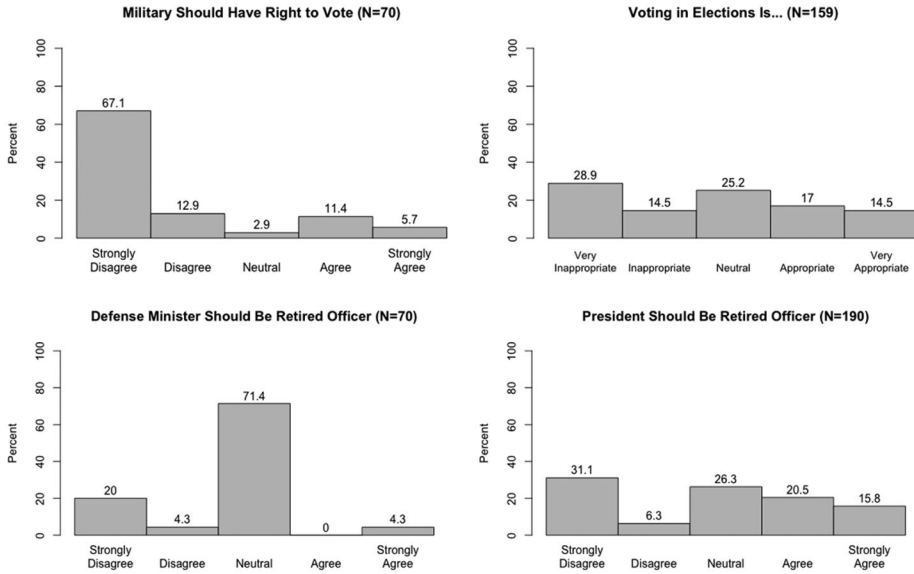


Figure 2. Attitudes toward civil-military relations.

“the president should be a retired officer,” also on a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Overall, support for all four statements was low (see Figure 2). Among the senior ranks (Survey 1), only 17% agreed or strongly agreed that the military should have the right to vote, and only 4% agreed or strongly agreed that a retired officer should serve as defense minister. Among the junior ranks (Survey 2), about 32% said it was appropriate or very appropriate for the military to vote in elections, and about 36% agreed or strongly agreed that a retired officer should serve as president.¹⁰¹

In short, Tunisian military personnel overall appear to match the French model of an apolitical military shying away from voting or assuming political positions. This makes sense, given that the Tunisian military was modeled on and primarily trained by the French. However, to what extent has US training affected these overall attitudes?

Results

Table 1 presents multivariate regression models to capture the correlation between US training and each of these four attitudes. To facilitate interpretation, I run linear regression, treating each 5-point Likert scale as a

¹⁰¹There appear to be important differences between Surveys 1 and 2, with respondents in Survey 1 tending to cluster toward the socially desirable answers and respondents in Survey 2 tending to have more variation. This could be function of their rank (junior vs. senior) or the mode of the survey (online vs. in the association). Likewise, perhaps due to its online nature, survey 2 features greater nonresponse, with, respectively, 63 (25%) and 94 (37%) of the 253 respondents declining to answer the two questions, compared to only 2 (3%) of the 72 respondents in survey 1.

Table 1. US vs. French training on civil-military attitudes (OLS).

	Dependent variable			
	Survey 1		Survey 2	
	Retired-MOD (1)	Right to vote (2)	Retired-president (3)	Voting (4)
US training	0.726*** (0.252)	0.708** (0.342)	1.111** (0.493)	1.170** (0.581)
Other western training			0.374 (0.560)	0.986 (0.628)
Non-western training	0.945 (0.953)	-0.194 (1.291)	0.292 (0.776)	-0.485 (0.824)
No foreign training			-0.145 (0.393)	0.305 (0.454)
Female	0.818 (0.726)	3.776*** (0.984)	-0.164 (0.625)	-0.661 (0.648)
Army	-0.249 (0.228)	-0.211 (0.309)	0.021 (0.202)	-0.133 (0.229)
Interior region	0.436* (0.260)	0.00003 (0.352)	-0.461** (0.211)	0.401* (0.242)
MOD Horchani/Zbidi	0.112 (0.167)	0.009 (0.227)	0.019 (0.109)	-0.079 (0.126)
Pres. Essebsi	-0.466** (0.204)	-0.357 (0.277)	0.226** (0.105)	0.015 (0.122)
Democracy	-0.002 (0.167)	-0.157 (0.226)	-0.256*** (0.072)	0.016 (0.082)
Retirement year	-0.113*** (0.036)	-0.054 (0.048)		
Active duty			0.546*** (0.204)	0.406* (0.230)
Rank fixed effect	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constant	3.734*** (1.174)	3.029* (1.591)	2.721*** (0.627)	1.740** (0.724)
Observations	70	70	190	159
R ²	0.297	0.290	0.212	0.124
Adjusted R ²	0.149	0.140	0.149	0.039

Note: Reference group is French-trained officers.

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

continuous variable. However, results are robust to running ordinal logistic regression.¹⁰²

Across all models, the baseline category is French training. Hence, the coefficient on US training compares US versus French training. In addition to US training, for Survey 1, I also control for non-Western training (the one Turkish-trained officer). For Survey 2, I control for training in other Western countries (not the United States or France), in non-Western countries (Turkey, China), and no foreign training.

In each model, I control for several political attitudes that may confound the analysis. I control for support for democracy, to demonstrate that the effect of US training on the military voting is not the result of increased support for democracy or elections. Given the literature on partisanship,¹⁰³ I also control for support for the at-the-time president (Beji Caid Essebsi) and the

¹⁰²Results available from author.

¹⁰³Krebs et al., "No Right to Be Wrong."

at-the-time minister of defense (Farhat Horchani for Survey 1; Abdelkrim Zbidi for Survey 2) to demonstrate that the preference for a retired officer in these positions is not the result of opposition to the current officeholders.

In addition, I control for several demographic variables, including gender, service in the army, and whether a respondent hails from Tunisia's interior or coastal regions, a major internal cleavage within the military.¹⁰⁴ In Survey 2, I control for active-duty or retired status, and in Survey 1, where all are retired, for year of retirement (2001–2015). Finally, in all models I include fixed effects for rank.¹⁰⁵

For all four dependent variables, the coefficient on US training is in the expected direction. In Survey 1, officers who trained in the United States were significantly more likely to say a retired officer should serve as defense minister ($p < 0.01$) and that the military should have the right to vote ($p < 0.05$). In Survey 2, US-trained officers were significantly more likely to say that a retired officer should serve as president ($p < 0.05$) and that voting in elections is appropriate ($p < 0.05$). Few of the covariates were significant; in fact, US training was the only consistently significant variable across all models.

To visualize the effect sizes, [Figure 3](#) presents the effect of US training while holding all covariates at their means.¹⁰⁶ As can be seen, the coefficient on US training is not trivial, representing about a full point on the 5-point scale.

In sum, the survey results suggest that Tunisian military personnel who trained in the United States were more political than their counterparts who trained in France; in particular, they were more supportive of the military voting and of retired officers assuming political positions. In [Online Appendix D](#), I show that these results do not vary by whether respondents went abroad for candidacy school or advanced courses, how long they were abroad, or their year of retirement.

Supplementary Results

The primary inferential obstacle is a selection effect: that officers who were more political may have chosen to study in the United States, rather than exposure to the United States having shifted their attitudes. The interviews above already helped to mitigate these concerns, demonstrating that officers did not choose where to study based on that country's civil-military

¹⁰⁴Sharan Grewal, "Military Defection during Localized Protests: The Case of Tataouine," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (June 2019): 259–69.

¹⁰⁵For Survey 1, I code these as major, lieutenant colonel, colonel, and colonel-major; in Survey 2, as anonymous, soldier, NCO, or officer.

¹⁰⁶The rank fixed effect is held at colonel for Survey 1 and officer for Survey 2. The P value in each figure reflects the difference between officers with US training and those with French training

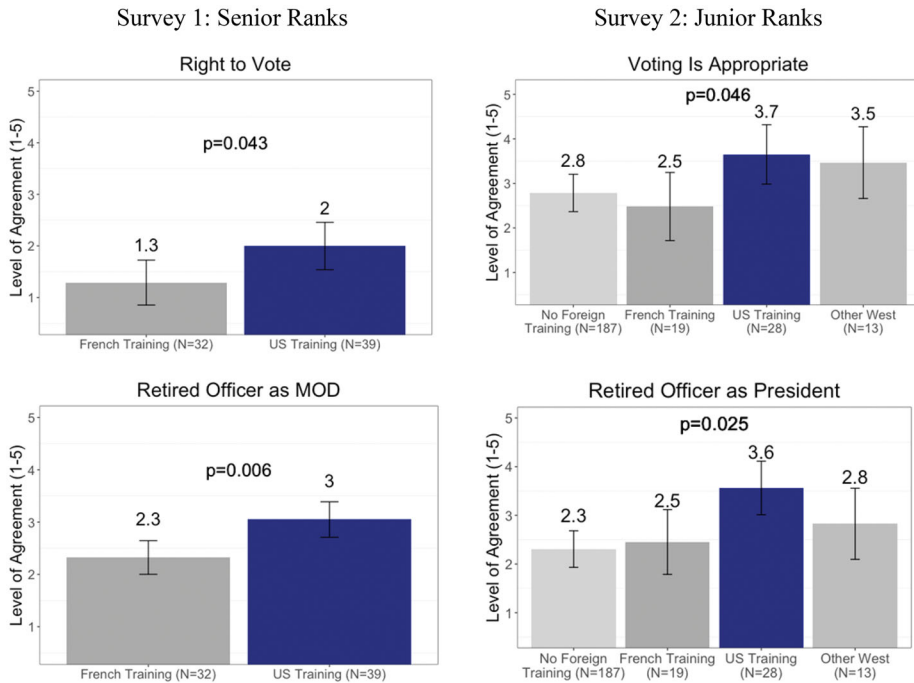


Figure 3. Impact of US training on civil-military attitudes.

relations, and that they themselves recognize a causal effect of their time abroad on their attitudes.

In addition, the surveys provide further evidence against selection bias. In particular, we would expect that if “political” officers chose to study in the United States, then they would appear more political across the board, and not just on attitudes in which the United States differs from France. The surveys included three questions for which the American and French models are similar. First, both the United States and France have one professional officer at the top of the military to coordinate the various services: the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the chef d’état-major des armées, respectively. For most of Tunisian history, however, the military has been deprived of this position (armed forces chief of staff), as autocrats feared the concentration of power in the hands of one officer at the top of the military.¹⁰⁷ The surveys therefore asked whether “the president should appoint a new chief of staff of the armed forces and create a plan outlining his duties.”

A second similarity between the United States and France is the lack of military representatives or advisors for the parliament/Congress. In Tunisia, however, retired officers have expressed frustration with parliamentarians

¹⁰⁷Grewal, “Quiet Revolution.”

Table 2. Null effect of US training on democracy, chief of staff, and advisor (OLS).

	Dependent variable					
	Survey 1			Survey 2		
	Democracy (1)	Chief of staff (2)	Parli. advisor (3)	Democracy (4)	Chief of staff (5)	Parli. advisor (6)
US training	-0.098 (0.195)	-0.034 (0.153)	-0.115 (0.164)	0.020 (0.456)	0.145 (0.418)	0.076 (0.494)
Other western training				-0.481 (0.539)	-0.246 (0.483)	-0.325 (0.570)
Non-western training	-0.130 (0.739)	-0.679 (0.577)	-0.073 (0.620)	-0.409 (0.718)	-0.888 (0.650)	0.509 (0.768)
No foreign training				-0.339 (0.367)	0.624* (0.331)	0.252 (0.391)
Female	-0.361 (0.557)	-1.007** (0.440)	-1.495*** (0.473)	-0.485 (0.639)	0.119 (0.524)	-0.396 (0.619)
Army	0.069 (0.170)	0.106 (0.138)	-0.102 (0.148)	-0.045 (0.194)	0.083 (0.173)	-0.135 (0.204)
Interior region	-0.200 (0.199)	-0.125 (0.158)	-0.144 (0.169)	-0.304 (0.200)	-0.070 (0.184)	-0.352 (0.217)
MOD Horchani/Zbidi	0.048 (0.124)	-0.014 (0.101)	0.425*** (0.109)	-0.144 (0.105)	-0.009 (0.094)	-0.263** (0.111)
Pres. Essebsi	-0.287* (0.149)	-0.044 (0.124)	0.064 (0.133)	0.184* (0.095)	-0.126 (0.091)	0.209* (0.106)
Democracy		0.156 (0.101)	-0.031 (0.109)		0.026 (0.061)	0.012 (0.072)
Retirement year	0.006 (0.027)	-0.013 (0.022)	0.027 (0.023)			
Active duty				-0.194 (0.193)	-0.246 (0.174)	-0.163 (0.206)
Rank fixed effect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constant	4.069** (0.704)	4.788*** (0.711)	3.488*** (0.764)	3.520*** (0.539)	4.047*** (0.533)	4.383*** (0.629)
Observations	72	70	70	225	181	182
R ²	0.144	0.267	0.327	0.052	0.089	0.097
Adjusted R ²	-0.012	0.112	0.186	-0.006	0.012	0.022

Note: Reference group is French-trained officers.

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

for having no expertise with the military.¹⁰⁸ The surveys therefore asked whether “a military advisor should be appointed for the parliament for deputies to consult with on technical and defense matters.” Finally, the United States and France are both democracies, and therefore should not be any different in socializing support for democracy. The surveys asked how suitable democracy was for Tunisia on a 5-point scale from very suitable to very unsuitable.

On all three questions in both surveys, US-trained officers were no different from French-trained ones (see Table 2). The former were no more likely to want an armed forces chief of staff or a military advisor to the parliament, nor any different in their attitudes toward democracy. This suggests that US-trained officers were not simply more political across the board, but only on the specific aspects of civil-military relations that

¹⁰⁸Hamza Mighri, “Barriers to Tunisia’s Security and Defense Reform,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 11, 2018.

differentiate the United States from France. Foreign training appears to socialize the precise pattern of civil-military relations of the host country.

Discussion and Implications

This article attempted to expand the literature on US military training in two ways. First, it sought to examine what other political attitudes, beyond support for democracy, may also be socialized into foreign military personnel. In particular, it asked whether the US military's increasing partisanship and participation in government were also being socialized into foreign trainees. Second, it sought to expand on the processes of socialization, arguing that beyond the norms explicitly taught by the United States, foreign trainees are likely to observe the United States' entire pattern of civil-military relations and to be continually exposed to these norms even after their return home.

Methodologically, it drew upon two unique surveys of Tunisian military personnel. Though the samples are small, and by no means representative of the military, the surveys provide unique insight into a hard-to-reach group of elites. The survey results, combined with the interviews of military personnel, suggest foreign military personnel training in the United States may absorb the United States' particular pattern of civil-military relations, including its norms of active-duty personnel voting and retired officers assuming political positions. Moreover, these surveys compared the effect of military training in the United States to other Western democracies, particularly France, the second-most-active trainer of foreign officers.

Substantively, these results suggest that civil-military relations can extend beyond one's shores through foreign training. Whether the US military's politicization is a worrisome trend domestically, it may also have unexplored and unintended consequences on foreign trainees. If foreign officers training in the United States are shaped by the US officer corps' partisan nature, and its desire for retired officers in civilian positions, they may feel encouraged to wade into politics or seek a greater political role upon their return home. These political norms may therefore help explain why the empirical record of foreign military training is relatively mixed, and does not always produce apolitical behavior. Even where these norms do not lead to military coups or democratic breakdown, they are corrosive to civilian control over the military, an essential component of democracy.

These findings also underscore the need to account for non-US military training in cross-national analyses. Existing correlations between US military training and country-level outcomes may be altered when controlling for European military training. Especially given that non-US training may

instill different orientations in foreign military officers, these training programs also need to be addressed.

Finally, these results have important policy implications for the Tunisian military. The legacies of French colonialism and the initial French training of the Tunisian military help to explain why, overall, the Tunisian military tends to prefer a civilian minister of defense and oppose the right to vote. If the Tunisian government, however, continues to increase its military-to-military engagement with the United States, as it has since the 2011 revolution, this may contribute to a long-term change in its officers' attitudes toward civil-military relations. If, for instance, the Tunisian government is not willing to appoint a former military officer as a defense minister down the road, it may wish to reconsider its recent enhancement of military relations with the United States.

Acknowledgments

For helpful feedback, I would like to thank Editor in Chief Ronald Krebs, Associate Editor Jonathan Caverley, and two anonymous reviewers. For useful discussions at earlier stages of the project, I thank Madiha Afzal, Holger Albrecht, Nate Allen, Risa Brooks, Dan Byman, Matthew Cebul, Jeff Feltman, Shadi Hamid, Natan Sachs, Stephen Saideman, Tamara Cofman Wittes, and audiences at the University of Montreal, the International Studies Association and the Brookings Institution. I also thank Intissar Samarat, Hamza Mighri, Mohamed Dhia Hammami, and Safa Belghith for research assistance, and retired colonel-major Mahmoud Mezoughi for help in administering the survey to the Association of Former Officers of the National Armed Forces. Interviews were approved through Princeton IRB #6749, Survey 1 through IRB #7866, and Survey 2 through IRB #10748.

ORCID

Sharan Grewal  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4563-5301>

Data availability statement

The data and code for replicating the findings in this study are available in the *Security Studies* Dataverse at: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/HL9K9X>.