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# The Arab Spring: Success in Tunisia and *reverse-wave* in Egypt (2010-2014)

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*‘‘Expectations should not always be taken as reality; because you never know when you will be disappointed.”*

- Samuel P. Huntington

**Abstract**

The Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in December 2010 rapidly swept through the Middle East and Northern African (MENA) region, with the main requests by protesters being the improvement of standards of living and political change; key to the latter were demands for the ousting of corrupt and autocratic leaders and the transitions to more open and democratic regimes.

Many observers were quick to label this stream of protests and demands for change as the 'Fourth Wave of Democratization' (an allusion to Samuel Huntington's work *The Third Wave*). This idea was short-lived and by 2012 the *spring* had thawed into a *winter,* with a wave of violence and general instability sweeping through most of the countries and leading to widespread regional political, social and economic volatility. Few countries proved to be successful in implementing some degree of change, amongst these were Egypt and Tunisia.

Nevertheless and while in both countries the first-ever free elections were held in 2011, by 2014 the aftermath of the revolution had proven very different. While Tunisia successfully passed a new 'democratic' Constitution, Egypt's first democratically elected government was ousted in a military coup.

The ultimate purpose of this thesis is to, departing from democratization theories and passing through a background analysis of the pre-Arab Spring realities and a comparison of the unfolding of events in the two countries, analyse why the results became so dissimilar.

In the *Conclusion*, we maintain that it was Tunisia's 'forward-looking' attitude, openness to dialogue and attempt at consensus by the different 'stakeholders', in contrast to the absence of these realities and to the overpowering role of the army in all phases of the process in

Egypt, which ultimately dictated the arguable success of the former's and failure of the latter's transition to Democracy.

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## Introduction

The analysis of whether Islam and Democracy are compatible has, ever since the 1990's, been a central and recurrent issue in scholarly debates on democratization. The end of the Cold War, the demise of Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe and the strong belief in the embracing of Democracy as the only natural course -and thus almost a *fait accompli*- by the former Soviet satellite states, led western academics and scholars to shift their attentions from Eastern Europe to the Middle East / North Africa. Here, Islam –rather than Communism- is the 'belief-system' under examination.

Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington, despite their contrasting views, were two of the pioneers of the aforementioned debate. While Fukuyama believed that the Soviet Block's collapse meant that the world had reached *The End of History*[1] and that liberal Democracy had triumphed, Huntington rebuked this statement by arguing that a *Clash of Civilizations*[2] still existed and that thus the 'end of history' had not been yet attained.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the consequent 'war on terror' undertaken by the US and its close allies led to the relaunch of discussions on the 'democratibility' of Islamic states. Furthermore, the arguably failed attempt of Democracy implantation in Iraq led to a deepening and expansion of the debate, from the mere 'simplistic' assessment of whether Islam and Democracy are compatible to a more complex one, on which preconditions must be present for Democracy to take root in Islamic societies.

While Islam in itself –especially interpretations of the *Quran* and the *Sunna*- raises many different understandings and viewpoints on whether secularization or at least some degree of

[1] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), xi.
[2] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 21.

separation between religion and the state is acceptable, venturing into this discussion would require a breadth of analysis and span of action too extensive to be successfully and respectably covered in a MA thesis.

This is why we have decided to concentrate our study on more political-theory related, rather than religious and orthodox, viewpoints on the success chances for some kind of democratization in Islamic countries, and have further narrowed this investigation to two of the countries involved in the Arab Spring: Egypt and Tunisia.

Our work was based on a qualitative analysis and its aim is to study -bearing in mind political theory concerning democratization processes, as well as historical backgrounds and their different political, geographical and social realities- the reasons and factors which led to such divergent results in Egypt and Tunisia's transitions.

It is important to mention that while it has been necessary, for reasons of contextualization and perspective, to address both countries' past, especially the political decisions made following the end of European dominion, the timeframe of the thesis is concentrated on the years 2010-2014. This 'limited' time-span allows us to concentrate our endeavour on a manageable 'universe of study', providing clear and understandable boundaries.

This thesis has hence been divided in three chapters:

The first chapter covers *Theories of Democratization, Islam and Democracy - what hurdles to overcome?* and provides a skeleton and foundation to the thesis by exploring some of the theories, aspects and ideas that are involved in the following chapters.

The second chapter addresses *The Arab Spring - causes, developments and results in the case studies of Egypt and Tunisia* and represents the central axis of the work, as it demarcates and explores the key phases of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia - Political,

social and economic realities on the eve of the Arab Spring and the implications of these: How the public demonstrations arose and what did the protesters demand? What events took place in the interim period between the beginning of demonstrations and the leaders' overthrow? How was the transition to the post-Arab Spring? What institutions were involved and how successful was this transition?

In the third chapter, we discuss *Why did Tunisia 'work out' and Egypt not? What lessons can be learnt*? as a conclusion of the previous chapter's outline by analysing, arguing and attempting to understand why the Arab spring had such differing results in Egypt and Tunisia.

Finally, in the *Conclusions* and besides a quick recapitulation of the main findings, we attempt to address what lessons -concerning preconditions, developments and actions required to ensure the planting, enrooting and consolidation of democratic societies in Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) countries- can be learnt from Tunisia's arguably successful transition.

## Chapter 1

## Theories of Democratization, Islam and Democracy - what hurdles to overcome?

The debate on 'democratization theories' in general and on 'Islam and Democracy' in specific has come to develop and be enhanced over most recent decades. While in the former field we can find texts such as Larry Diamond's *What is Democracy*, Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz's *Toward Consolidated Democracies*, Mark J. Gasiorowski and Timothy J. Power's *The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation: Evidence from the Third World*, in the latter we encounter an array of books and articles such as Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*, or the Journal of Democracy's compendium *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*. This first chapter of our thesis will resort to these texts in order to contextualize and propose an initial, theoretical approach to the subject being studied: that of Egypt and Tunisia's participation in the Arab Spring.

### 1.1 - The general concepts of democratization theories

In his 1960 book *Political Man*, Seymour Martin Lipset argued that economic *"*development and legitimacy, or the degree in which institutions are valued for themselves and considered right and proper", are both fundamental parts of a stable Democracy[3]. Through a comparative study of European and Latin American countries, Lipset further supported the preposition that education, industrialization and urbanization seemed to have a positive correlation with the level of Democracy[4], which means that the diversification of social structures, advances in literacy and education as well as greater urbanization and greater political participation, are some of the factors associated with a greater likelihood for democratization. This idea is most commonly referred to as the 'modernization theory'. In a

[3] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1960), 46.
[4] *Ibidem*, 50-56.

further study conducted with Larry Diamond and Juan Linz entitled *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, Lipset, through a more profound study of those Countries, further developed the modernization argument and reached three main conclusions: firstly that economic performance is more important for Democracy than socioeconomic development; secondly, that socioeconomic development leads to social changes that can be seen as enablers of democratization; and thirdly, that socioeconomic development produces other developments such as the expansion of social structures and the growth of a middle-class[5].

At the eve of the Arab Spring, both Tunisia and Egypt seemed to have all the necessary conditions for a successful transition to Democracy. In a *Foreign Policy* article dating January 2011, Eric Goldstein argued that:

> Anyone who travelled throughout the [MENA] region could see that Tunisians enjoy[ed] a relatively high standard of living and quality of life. The country's per capita income [was] almost double that of Morocco and Egypt. (…) Tunisia score[d] high in poverty reduction, literacy, education, population control, and women's status. (…) Tunisians export clothing, olive oil, and produce, and welcome hundreds of thousands of European tourists each year[6].

Egypt on the other hand, was described in a 2010 article as "a country attracting investment, privatising industry, reducing the deficit and otherwise embracing difficult reforms". On a social level the article went on to add that under President Mubarak "literacy rate[s had increased] to 72 per cent, [l]ife expectancy [saw] a dramatic increase, fertility rates decreased to about three births, while infant mortality (...) more than halved since 1990"[7].

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[5] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Riener Publishers, 1989), 44.
[6] Eric Goldstein, "A Middle-Class Revolution", *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2011, https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/18/a-middle-class-revolution-2/.
[7] Shadi Hamid, "In Egypt, Mubarak's Regime May Be a Victim of Its Own Success", *Brookings*, July 29, 2010, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/in-egypt-mubaraks-regime-may-be-a-victim-of-its-own-success/.

Other scholars, such as Professor Raymond Hinnebusch rebuked Lipset's thesis by giving the examples of India on one hand and Communist and Fascist Europe on the other. Hinnebusch argued that:

> While the classic case of India suggests that democratic regimes are possible at relatively low levels of modernization, the robustness of European fascist and communist regimes suggests that authoritarianism can remain viable at quite high levels of income and social mobilization[8].

The same can be said of current day China, where an autocratic form of government did not prevent it from having become the world's second largest economy, with an economic behaviour and development that has led many observers to 'paradoxically' label it as an 'authoritarian capitalist state'[9]. As Hinnebusch goes on to add:

> Modernization levels are evidently not determinate and merely constitute an environment that maybe more or less facilitative of certain kinds of regime, deterring democracy only at the very lowest levels and authoritarianism only at the very highest levels[10].

These examples illustrate the difficulty of pinning down modernization as either a necessary or a sufficient condition for Democracy. It can nonetheless be affirmed that modernization seems to ease the path towards democratization.

Globalization is argued to be one of the 'propellers' of modernization and thus, a 'facilitator' of democratization. The shrinking of space and time and an increased interdependence, as well as the quasi-elimination of borders between nations, is understood to have eased the process. In his essay on *Democracy's third wave*, Samuel Huntington sustains this point by arguing that, when and if conditions favourable to democratization exist, democratization in a certain region or nation of the world may cause a so-called '*snowballing effect*' in other –

[8] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East: An overview and critique", *Democratization* 12, no. 3 (June 2006): 375, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340600579243.
[9] Kevin Rudd, "The Rise of Authoritarian Capitalism", *The New York Times*, September 16, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/16/opinion/politics/kevin-rudd-authoritarian-capitalism.html.
[10] Hinnebusch, "Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East", 375.

neighbouring or not- nations or regions[11]. It is nonetheless important to underline the necessity for preconditions to be present, as while the transition to Democracy in a country "may create an external environment conducive to democratization (…) it cannot produce the conditions necessary for democratization within a particular country"[12].

The unfolding of the Arab Spring is a characteristic example of the above, with the Tunisian spark quickly overflowing to other nations in both North Africa and the Middle East. Similar historical backgrounds, social and political demands as well as a common Islamic denominator, facilitated the rapidity of the overspill effect.

Even though not all cases are identical and it is unreasonable to expect the existence of a 'cookie-cutter' template that can be directly transposed from one to the other, throughout most recent decades a general compromise has been established amongst scholars and academics of democratization, that a country's economic and social development makes it more likely to embark on -and follow- the democratization path.

But what is necessary for Democracy to take root? Robert A. Dahl's *On Democracy* famously listed six 'institutions' as necessary for there to be any possibility of "large-scale Democracy: elected officials; free, fair and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy and inclusive citizenship"[13]. For Dahl, the importance of the above was as follows: *elected officials* would ensure representativeness; *free, fair and frequent elections* would mitigate the possibility of coercion; *freedom of expression* would allow citizens to speak up on "political matters broadly defined", without fear of punishment; access to *alternative sources of information* would give citizens the possibility to consult 'reports' which are "not under the control of the

[11] Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's third wave", *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 16, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1991.0016 .
[12] *Ibidem*.
[13] Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 85.

government or any other single political group attempting to influence public political beliefs and attitude"; *associational autonomy* would ensure the ability for citizens to form "relatively independent" groups (associations, organizations and even independent political parties), thus fulfilling "their various rights, including those required for the effective operation of democratic political institutions"; and finally, *inclusive citizenship* means that "no adult permanently residing in the country and subject to its laws can be denied the rights that are available to others and are necessary to the five political institutions just listed"[14]. These factors should thus not only ensure the ability to establish a large-scale Democracy, but that this Democracy could be a modern and truly representative one.

Following the ousting of the autocratic leaders in both Egypt and Tunisia, and with the election of, respectively, *Ennahda* and the *Freedom and Justice Party* (*FJP*), the above factors seemed to be on the good path to become a consolidated reality in both nations. Both parties were conservative, yet liberal. Their leaders knew that to be successful they had to create a very clear balance between the Islamic roots and traditions in which they would operate, and a relatively liberal outlook on the role of politics and power. Albeit with Islamic principles and doctrine underpinning the new reality, liberal democratic concepts such as the division of powers, protection of both civil and political rights, freedom of worship, gender equality and parliament's responsibility to, alone, pass laws, were initially embraced.

Democracies more often than not derive from, and follow, authoritarian forms of governments. The transitions from authoritarian regimes to democracies are accordingly intricate and phased processes, requiring several elements to be present *a priori* for there to be a chance of success.

[14] *Ibidem*, 85-86.

In his influential article, *Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,* political scientist Dankwart Rustow argued that more important than a country's social and economic development, factors such as "national unity, conscious adoption of democratic rules and – most importantly- both [the] politicians and the electorate [being] habituated to these rules" are fundamental requisites for democratization[15]. For the transition to be successful, there must thus be a strong willingness and commitment from both the elites and the citizens to embrace Democracy, with all that it entails.

As Rustow states:

> The basis of democracy is not maximum consensus. It is the tenuous middle ground between imposed uniformity (such as would lead to some sort of tyranny) and implacable hostility (of a kind that would disrupt the community in civil war or secession)[16].

Democracy is a very fragile concept that, in order to thrive and prosper in a given country, must not only be strongly desired, but also continuously and unconditionally protected.

While in Tunisia both the new elites and the citizens seemed determined from the outset to willingly receive the 'seeds of Democracy' and allow these to be fertilized and grow into strong and firm notions and edifices, in Egypt a different reality transpired. Soon after the first freely elected government was inaugurated in power, a clear rift began to emerge between the newly installed officials and the citizenry on one hand, and the old-regime's loyal supporters and elites on the other, presaging the collapse of the 'freshly laid' democratic foundations.

Unfortunately, democratic backsliding or regression has been a reality for many countries that reached a first level of Democracy but did not manage to achieve its effective consolidation. If the transition to Democracy is seen as a difficult and tumultuous process,

[15] Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model", *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (April 1970): 361, https://doi.org/10.2307/421307.
[16] *Ibidem*, 363.

often involving a range of sacrifices, Democracy's consolidation is an even severer task. Newly constituted or, if you will, 'embryo democracies' are very weak in their composition and structure and are thus very easily wilted. Strong democratic - rather than autocratic - leaders and firm policies and rules are therefore needed, if the new political regime is to be maintained.

What is necessary for democratic consolidation? In Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz's view, "democracy cannot be thought of as consolidated until a democratic transition has been brought to completion"[17]. For them:

> A necessary but by no means sufficient condition for the completion of a democratic transition is the holding of free and contested elections (on the basis of broadly inclusive voter eligibility) that meet the seven institutional requirements for elections in a polyarchy that Robert A. Dahl has set forth[18].

For this to be the case, 'checks and balances' must nonetheless be in place and a clearly established commitment to the 'rule of law' must exist, as the concept of free elections is by itself not necessarily a prerogative of Democracy. As Stepan and Linz go on to argue:

> In many cases (e.g., Chile as of 1996) in which free and contested elections have been held, the government (…) lacks the de jure as well as de facto power to determine policy in many significant areas because the executive, legislative, and judicial powers are still decisively constrained by an interlocking set of "reserve domains," military "prerogatives," or "authoritarian enclaves"[19].

For a transition to Democracy to be labelled as successful and 'complete', a legitimately elected leadership must be instated. Furthermore, only full-fledged democracies where links with any previous authoritarian or partially democratic regimes are completely broken, can transition to consolidated democracies.

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[17] Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz, "Toward Consolidated Democracies", J*ournal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 14, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1996.0031.
[18] *Ibidem*.
[19] *Ibidem*, 14-15.

Gasiorowski and Power take this idea even further by putting forward two possible indicators of successful democratic consolidation:

> Whether a new democratic regime survives the holding of a second election for the national executive, subsequent to the founding election that inaugurated the new regime and whether a democratic regime survives an alternation in executive power through constitutional means, in which alternation in power refers to an unambiguous change in the partisan character of the executive branch[20].

The success of these two indicators would demonstrate that the different contenders for power have become accustomed to and accepting of the 'democratic game' and the alternations and shifts in power that this naturally entails. The authors develop the argument of successful democratic consolidation even further by introducing a third measure, one of longevity. They place at 12 years (which in many western democratic countries is synonymous to 3 parliamentarian electoral cycles), the durability beyond which the breakdown of a democratic regime is much less likely to occur[21]. One of Democracy's greatest achievements is the possibility of a peaceful turnover of power when the electorate is unhappy with their elected representatives, thus, as Samuel Huntington argued:

> A second turnover shows two things[:] [f]irst, two major groups of political leaders in the society are sufficiently committed to democracy to surrender office and power after losing an election[;] [s]econd, both elites and publics are operating within the democratic system[,] when things go wrong you change the rules, not the regime[22].

The above, as Huntington goes on to demonstrate, is by no means an easy task for newly instated democracies. Huntington reveals that:

> In three countries (Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan) of twenty-nine that had transition elections between 1974 and 1990, the governments installed by those elections were removed by military or executive coups. In ten other countries with transition elections in 1986 or later, no other national election was held before the end

[20] Mark J. Gasiorowski and Timothy J. Power, "The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation: Evidence from the Third World", *Comparative Political Studies* 31, no. 6 (1998): 746, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414098031006003.
[21] *Ibidem*, 747.
[22] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 267.

> of 1990. In fifteen of the sixteen remaining countries that held one or more elections after the transition election, a first turnover had occurred, the exception being Turkey[23].

As Huntington contends, "selecting rulers through elections is the heart of democracy, and democracy is real only if rulers are willing to give power as a result of elections"[24].

One of the greatest obstacles to 'embryo democracies' transitioning out of authoritarian regimes is the threat of counter-activities from the 'old-regime's *apparatchik*', which most often than not remains deeply enrooted in society and power cadres, namely the military. Furthermore, the ousted authoritarian leader and his closest advisors and allies tend to retain support from these cadres as well as from certain fringes of the population, broadening the possibility of a counter-democratic coup. It is thus a very difficult undertaking for the newly instated leadership to eradicate links with the previous regime, enforce democratic rules and enroot itself in power.

The military-led coup commanded by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, which in July 2013 ousted Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected President, and suspended the newly adopted 2012 Constitution, is unfortunately a practical demonstration of the above theoretical conception. As Professor Bruce K. Rutheford explains, the Military had for decades been at the heart of, and deeply enrooted in, Egyptian Political and Civic life and benefitted from a quasi-total independence and autonomy from central authority. As such the possibility of full democratization, and the accountability and transparency that this would entail, posed a clear threat to its '*status quo'* and 'had thus to be stopped'[25]. The new regime's fragility and vulnerability, especially vis-à-vis an insurrection from the structure meant to protect it, further guaranteed that any military attempt to oust the new regime would

[23] *Ibidem*.
[24] *Ibidem*.
[25] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, ed. Mark L. Hass and David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2013), 55.

basically result in a *fait accompli*. Processes of democratization are complex, require time, and are the object of permanent challenges by the former holders of power. Strong foundations and a firm desire by both a country's elites and its population to pursue such path, with all the hurdles and difficulties that it entails, is the cornerstone of any democratic consolidation.

## 1.2 - Overview and analysis of Islam's evolution and its democratization 'thought process'

While different understandings and viewpoints on Islam in itself –especially interpretations of the *Quran* and the *Sunna*- give rise to a key question on whether secularization, or at least some degree of separation between religion and the state, is acceptable, venturing into this discussion would require a breadth of analysis too extensive to be appropriately covered in an MA thesis. This is why we have chosen to concentrate our analysis on political theory - rather than on religious and orthodox - related viewpoints, as to whether some kind of democratization in Islamic countries is at all conceivable.

Without entering the debate on Democracy's compatibility with the Islamic religion, it seems nonetheless important to state that the religious precepts of Islam have been -and are still- often invoked by autocratic leaders as a justification for not 'loosening their grip' on power. In his 1996 *Journal of Democracy* essay, American academic and Middle East expert Robin Wright argued that:

> The resistance to political change associated with the Islamic bloc is not necessarily a function of the Islamic faith. Indeed, the evidence indicates quite the reverse. Rulers in some of the most antidemocratic regimes in the Islamic world –such as Brunei, Indonesia, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Syria and Turkmenistan- are secular autocrats who refuse to share power with their brethren[26].

[26] Robin Wright, "Two visions of Reformation", in *Islam and Democracy in the Middle* East, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 220.

Islam, as Wright goes on to add and alike the two other monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity, "also preaches equality, justice and human dignity [and is not deficient of] tenets and practices that are compatible with pluralism. Among these are the traditions of *itjihad* (interpretation), *ijma* (consensus), and *shura* (consultation)"[27]. Islam is thus not necessarily an impediment to liberalization. As many Western and Islamic thinkers argue, Islam and notions such as those of equality and social and political freedoms may well coexist.

Even though the foundations of the Muslim religion, with its concepts and beliefs concerning the interdependence of religion and state are today still very present in academic thought, when it comes to the idea of democratization, as Abdou Filali-Ansary argues, "the past that is most relevant today is not, as is commonly thought, the early centuries of Muslim history but rather the nineteenth-century encounter of Muslims with the modernizing west"[28]. For Filali-Ansary and other thinkers, present day Islam is indissoluble from the "beliefs and traditions" devised at the moment in which Muslim societies adopted it. As such:

> The past is ever-present and is more determining than present-day conditions, and the character of Muslim societies has been determined by a specific and remote period in their past during which the social and political order that continues to guide them was established[29].

This notion serves as a 'bedrock' of Muslim societies and, even though it does not mean that technological, social and economic developments cannot occur, leads to the perception that "for Muslims alone a remote past has defined, forever and without any possibility of evolution, the ways in which fundamental issues are perceived and addressed"[30].

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[27] *Ibidem*, 221.
[28] Abdou Filali-Ansary, "Muslims and Dh", in *Islam and Democracy in the Middle* East, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 193.
[29] *Ibidem.*
[30] *Ibidem*,194.

The nineteenth century marked a clear rift in power between the Islamic and European societies, with the retreat of the former and advance of the latter. Before then and as historian Bernard Lewis has stated, "as late as 1683 an Ottoman army was encamped before the very gates of Vienna [and] earlier in the seventeenth century, North African corsairs were raiding as far north as the British Isles"[31]. It was nevertheless the nineteenth century "that saw the rise of elected assemblies in a number of Western countries, and Democracy in our modern sense was beginning to take hold"[32]. These developments led many Muslims to suspect it was:

> Here – in this most exotic and alien of western practices – [that] lay the secret to the West's wealth and power, and hoped that the adoption of constitutions and the creation of elected legislatures in the Islamic world would redress the civilizational balance[33].

However, despite some initial reforms and openings to parliamentary elections namely in the Ottoman Empire, these were short-lived and more often than not mere 'facades' of change. The seed of reformation had nonetheless been laid and such embryonic desire for change was carried through into the twentieth century.

The analysis of whether Islam and Democracy are compatible has, ever since the 1990's, and as seen before, been a central and recurrent issue in scholarly debates on democratization. The end of the Cold War, the demise of Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe and a strong belief in the embracing of Democracy as the only natural course -and thus almost a *fait accompli*- for the former Soviet satellite states, led western academics and scholars to shift their attentions from Eastern Europe to the Middle East where the focus-point of Communism would be replaced by that of Islam.

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[31] Bernard Lewis, "A Historical Overview", in *Islam and Democracy in the Middle* East, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 212.
[32] *Ibidem*, 213.
[33] *Ibidem*.

Fukuyama believed that the demise of soviet communism meant that the world had reached the end of history in so much as, in his words, "liberal democracy may constitute the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the final form of human government, and as such constituted the end of history"[34].For Fukuyama, the 'end of history' meant the triumph of Liberal Democracy as the only truly legitimate form of government and the consequent belief that its continued expansion would put an end to any and all ideological conflicts.

Samuel Huntington disagreed with this notion and stated that conflicts would persist which, instead of being based on political disagreements, would be linked to religious and civilizational antagonisms. He stated that, with the end of the Cold War, "the most important groupings of states are no longer [found in its] three blocks but rather [in] the world's seven or eight major civilizations"[35]. For Huntington thus, "in this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations"[36].

Truth be told, the demise of Soviet Communism gave rise to a new and protracted conflict, that between western powers, or 'the West', and Islam. As Roger Scruton states in his book *The West and the Rest*, the "world has divided into two spheres – the sphere of freedom and Democracy, and the sphere of despotism, 'failed states' and religious zeal". This idea, Scruton goes on to add, "reverses the familiar Islamic division between the *dar al-islam* and the *dar-al harb*: the house of submission and the house of war, reflecting a habit of mind against which Huntington and others have warned"[37]. Thus, the above-depicted conflict is no longer a political or -*stricto senso*- ideological one, but is now based on differences in cultures, traditions and ways of life.

[34] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, xi.
[35] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 21.
[36] *Ibidem*, 28.
[37] Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat,* (New York: Continuum, 2002), vii.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the consequent 'war on terror' undertaken by the US and its close allies led to renewed discussions on the 'democratibility' of Islamic states. The classic idea that 'democracies do not wage wars with democracies' may be argued to have been the basis of this renewed interest. If Islamic states could be successfully democratised, theoretically we would have reached a baseline at which new wars would hence be very unlikely to occur.

Nonetheless, the arguably failed attempt of implanting Democracy in Iraq led to a deepening and expanding of the debate, from the mere and 'simplistic' assessment on whether Islam and Democracy are compatible, to a more complex one on what preconditions must be present for Democracy to take root in Islamic societies.

Scruton concludes that

> Western "Universalism", as Huntington calls it, sees the whole world in terms of values that have their origin, meaning and natural climate in what is in fact only a small (…) part of it. Thus, to transfer those values to places that have been deeply inoculated against them by culture and custom is to invite the very confrontation that we seek to avoid[38].

As we have seen, economic development, a well-structured civil society and some degree of freedoms, equality and rule of law, must be present in order for democratisation to have a possibility of taking root.

The western attempt to implant Democracy in Iraq provides an elucidative 'case-study' for democratization in the Middle East. While it is true that "the United States did succeed in holding and protecting relatively free and fair elections in Iraq[,] [nevertheless and u]nfortunately, it did not succeed in establishing genuine reconciliation among Iraq's three main [Arab Sunni majority, Shia and Kurdish minorities] communities". Thus, if "reconciliation did not occur when America maintained a large military presence in Iraq, it

[38] *Ibidem*.

does not appear likely that it will occur as the American military presence declines and perhaps even ends"[39].

The central lessons that can be extrapolated from the Iraqi venture are that different nations and regions of the world have different realities, thus it is not rational to pick one's model of democratization and expect it to immediately bear fruit in all cases. Like Iraq, most MENA countries incorporate different cultures, tribes and religions, making consensus on the form and pace of liberalization and increased freedoms a very delicate task. As Bernard Lewis argues, "as a rule, gradual and unforced change is better than sudden and compulsory change. Democracy cannot be born like Aphrodite from the sea foam"[40]. It is thus most probable that no real democratization of Iraq will ever occur, unless some kind of peaceful compromise is reached amongst the three main communities concerning power sharing. Iraq's case reveals that it cannot be expected that Islamic states 'run before they walk' in matters concerning Democracy.

A re-adapted idea of the Ottoman Empire's system of *millets,* which Scruton revisits in *The West and the Rest*, could very well be a possible solution to this stalemate. The Ottoman Empire that "included Christians and Muslims of almost every obedience [as well as] Jews" allocated a 'millet', "defined primarily by religious custom or confession"[41] to every subject. This resulted in a division of jurisdiction between the public and the religious spheres. "The Ottoman Empire was a territorial jurisdiction only in the sense that the dominant creed community asserted its overreaching control over all local administration", but in matters relating to "religious custom, marriage family and inheritance the millets were sovereign and

[39] Mark N. Katz, "The U.S. and Democratization in Iraq", *Middle East Policy Forum*, https://www.mepc.org/commentary/us-and-democratization-iraq.
[40] Bernard Lewis "A Historical Overview", 218.
[41] Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest,* 26.

they dealt with conflicts by a system of appeals to the office of their respective religious leaders"[42].

In the case of Iraq, the autonomy that the millet system would give to each of the communities in specific and 'personal' issues, while ensuring that they are kept under a central authority of the state in general matters, could be the sort of 'middle-ground' and compromise that may be able to shed 'some light at the end of the tunnel' for this issue.

The second half and specially the last quarter of the twentieth century brought with them an end to European 'colonial rule' in the MENA states leading, as John L. Esposito and John O. Voll assert, to a change in the role of Islam and Islamic institutions in society which, by the 1970's, began to develop in a positive way[43]. This surge in Islamic groups wanting to have an active role in their societies developed *pari passu* and as a direct result of a development in the Islamic school of thought of the 'so called' Islamic reformers. Tunisia's Rachid Ghannouchi, founder of the *Ennahda* party, is possibly at the helm of this tendency and has been so since the final decade of the twentieth century. By that time it was already clear that:

> Ghannouchi advocate[ed for] an Islamic system that feature[d] majority rule, free elections, a free press, protection of minorities, equality of all secular and religious parties, and full women's rights in everything from polling booths, dress codes, and divorce courts to the top job at the Presidential Palace. For Ghannouchi Islam's role was to provide this system with moral values[44].

This school of thought is most commonly referred to as Islamic Democracy. What Ghannouchi, as well other liberal Islamic thinkers did –and continue to - advocate, is for a balance to be struck between the precepts of the Islamic religion and reality: sort of an

[42] *Ibidem*, 27.
[43] "The role of Islam in politics began to change in important ways by the 1970's. Rather than simply being a reactive element within the political community, Islamic groups emerged as sources of new initiatives for political change and development. In the 1970's, many of the leaders and governments in the recently established nation-states faced serious difficulties. The hopes and aspirations of the era of nationalist struggles had sometimes given way to disappointments, political instability, and major economic problems"
John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.
[44] Robin Wright, "Two visions of Reformation", 229.

Islamic *realpolitik*. In a 1995 London speech, Ghannouchi materialized this thought by stating that:

> Once the Islamists are given a chance to comprehend the values of Western modernity, such as democracy and human rights, they will search within Islam for a place for these values where they will implant them, nurse them, and cherish them just as the Westerners did before, when they planted those values in much less fertile soil[45].

It is this idea of Islamic Reformation we believe to be at the heart of the matter of the 'Islam and Democracy' debate: can Islam reform itself in order to harbour Democracy? And most importantly, what must this reformation entail?

The full-fledged 'laicization' and secularism adopted by European states is more often than not frowned upon by Islamic states as a complete breaking away from, and even betrayal of, its roots and traditions. A clear depiction of the above idea is the very reaction of Muslim immigrants in the west. In Roger Scruton's words:

> In the context of Western *anomie* and self-indulgence, therefore, Muslim immigrants cling to their faith, seeing it inevitably as something superior to the surrounding moral chaos, and therefore more worthy of obedience than the law that permits so much sin[46].

The adoption of secularist agendas in MENA countries following the end of colonial rule were in the majority of cases (e.g. Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia) challenged by the rise of Islamic factions or parties, who advocated a change to the political scene and denounced the 'complete abandonment' of the Islamic values. As Bernard Lewis states:

> Turkey alone has formally enacted the separation of religion and the state. Its constitution and laws declare it a secularist republic. In many practical respects, however, Islam remains an important and indeed a growing factor in the Turkish polity and in the Turks' sense of their own identity[47].

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[45] From a lecture by Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi, Chatham House, London, 9 May 1995, in Robin Wright, "Two visions of Reformation", in *Islam and Democracy in the Middle* East, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 230.
[46] Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest,* 105.
[47] Bernard Lewis "A Historical Overview", 218.

Turkey's reality seems to have reverted and re-crystalized since Bernard Lewis' essay, written in 1996. Erdogan's actions, through his AK party, first as Prime Minister (2003-2014) but most importantly now as President of Turkey (2014 – present), have rendered "the constitutionally secular country more religious and conservative"[48].

The different Islamic groupings can be divided into radical and fundamentalist, whose tones and actions often result in violence, aggressions and terroristic tendencies, and more moderate or even democratic Islamists, who opt for peaceful and 'legal' means to voice their opposition. As Robin Wright argued, "the common denominator of most Islamist movements, then, is a desire for change. The quest for something different is manifested in a range of activities, from committing terrorist acts to running for political office"[49]. Wright furthermore adds that, while:

> Reactive groups -motivated by political or economic insecurity, questions of identity, or territorial disputes– are most visible because of their aggressiveness, (…) [a]t the opposite end of the spectrum are proactive individuals and groups working for positive change[50].

Secular governments before the Arab Spring used the rise of Islamist groups and parties as a justification to clamp down on civil society and pluralism, often becoming autocratic in nature. At the same time, it was arguably these same autocratic, secularist tendencies that fostered the rise of Islamist movements. Secularism thus seems to be a 'double-edged sword' in as much as, in the name of 'modernization', the century-old Islamic heritage is often forgotten, leaving a vacuum and fostering the rise of contending factions. In *The West and the Rest*, Scruton gives a key example of the above, referring the example of Modern Turkey. Under Ataturk, and in a attempt to modernize and 'westernize' through "both a deliberate move away from Islamic ideas of legitimacy, and a ruthless secularization of society", what

[48] Ahmed El Amraoui and Faisal Edroos, "Is Turkish secularism under threat?", *Al Jazeera*, June, 3 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/turkish-secularism-threat-180528131157715.html.
[49] Robin Wright, "Two visions of Reformation", 222.
[50] *Ibidem*.

actually occurred was that "Modern Turkey [was] effectively severed from its past and its [traditional] culture by social and linguistic reforms that have made the [old] literature of the country unreadable to all except the specialist scholar"[51]. The consequences of this is that in a search for some sense of renewed and 'true' values, "young people are repeatedly attracted to radical and destabilizing identities, both Islamist and utopian"[52].

The Arab Spring's emergence of moderate, Islamic Political parties such as *Ennahda* in Tunisia and the *FJP* in Egypt, which developed from arguably more orthodox Islamist parties –respectively, the *Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique* and the *Muslim Brotherhood*– demonstrates that a reform in Islamic thought concerning modernization has been taking place, and that an equilibrium between politics and religion searched for. As Noah Feldman argues, the victory of the *Ennahda* party in the first 'post-Arab Spring' democratic elections should not be seen as a "puzzling disappointment for the forces of democracy", but as the proof of the fact that "Tunisians see Islam as a defining feature of their personal and political identities"[53].

Secularism brings with it many threats and problems, and full-fledged Islamism, when radicalized, is clearly illiberal in nature. A state where the rule of law, freedoms and equality between people of different genders, religions, creeds, cultures and traditions are protected and enforced, while developing and maturing from its Islamic roots and traditions, could be the key to resolving the 'Islam and Democracy' enigma.

[51] Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest,* 109.
[52] *Ibidem*.
[53] Noah Feldman, "Islamists' Victory in Tunisia a Win for Democracy: Noah Feldman", *Bloomberg*, October 30, 2011, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2011-10-30/islamists-victory-in-tunisia-a-win-for-democracy-noah-feldman.

An ‘Islamic Democracy’, where a constructive balance between Religion and a non-Autocratic form of State will have been achieved, may thus very well be the most adequate solution for Islamic states.

## Chapter 2

## The Arab Spring – causes, developments and results in the case studies of Egypt and Tunisia

The Arab Spring had its spark in Tunisia and rapidly produced a 'spill-over effect' throughout Northern Africa and the Middle East with Egypt, whether because of intrinsic affinities such as economic problems and protester's demands and aims or other underlying factors, or else due to pure coincidence, being the next country to be taken over by this 'revolutionary' wave.

What were the realities in both countries before the movements began? What factors led to the arising of protests and what were the protesters' main grievances and demands? Which events took place between the beginning of the protests and the overthrowing of the standing rulers? How was the transition to the post-'Arab Spring' carried out, which institutions were involved, and how successful was this transition? These are all questions that the present chapter aims to address.

### 2.1.1 Social, Political and Economical framework in Tunisia preceding the Arab Spring (2009-2010) and their implications

On the eve of the Arab Spring and despite what, to outside observers, seemed an increase in overall prosperity transpiring from Tunisia, the internal reality was very different. Steep socio-economic and regional disparities, as well as deep-rooted political grievances, meant that the possibility of revolution was comparable to a dormant volcano, waiting for a trigger to erupt. That trigger proved to be the self-immolation, out of despair, of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in the city of Sidi Bou Zid as a result of having had his fruit-cart confiscated

and thus losing his livelihood and means of economical subsistence[54]. What could have been an isolated incident proved to serve as the symbol and spark that ignited the revolution into motion.

In socio-economic terms, as Professor Mohamed Nachi argues:

> It was known that the relative economic prosperity of the country only benefited a small minority, who enjoyed exorbitant fiscal privileges and made massive use of illegal means in order to rob public goods and the resources of the land. Important public enterprises were privatized and sold at derisory prices, private enterprises were created and financed with public funds, and so forth. What ensued was that a wealthy minority (around 10 percent of the population) disposed of a third of the GNP, whereas the poorest Tunisians (30 percent of the population) had to make do with less than a tenth of the GNP. Unemployment affected 15 to 20 percent of the population, and among educated youth it reached 30 percent[55].

The above facts clearly led to grievances, especially among the youth and the poorest Tunisians, and furthermore led to the latter's feelings of pessimism, disillusionment and desire for change and for an inversion of this unfair and uneven *status quo*. As Professor Julia Clancy-Smith states, this reality began to materialize in the final decades of the twentieth century, in a mixture of poor political decisions, international hostility and other often 'nature-led' setbacks, and eventually progressed into a wide-scale sentiment for change[56].

In terms of human geography, Tunisia's reality was that of a coastal country, with the decade -if not even century- long predilection for developments and investments concentrated in its Mediterranean cities leading to a continued neglect of the interior.

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[54] Mohamed Nachi, "'Spontaneous Revolution' in Tunisia: Yearnings for Freedoms, Justice and Dignity", *The Institute Letter*, Institute for Advanced Studies (Spring 2011), 1, https://www.ias.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/SpringNewsletter.pdf.
[55] *Ibidem*.
[56] Julia Clancy-Smith, "From Sidi Bou Zid to Sidi Bou Said: a *Longue Durée* Approach to the Tunisian Revolution", in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, ed. Mark L. Hass and David W. Lesch (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2013), 16.

As Clancy-Smith states:

> Progressively from the late eighteenth century on, and rapidly during the succeeding centuries, coastal cities, elites, and economic interests turned their back on Tunisia's interior and its people (…) Due to the growing importance of transnational exchanges and communication, Tunisia's Mediterranean provinces were ever more firmly, if disadvantageously, enmeshed in European, trans-sea, and transatlantic/global circuits. The shifting hinterland for the Tunis-Cap Bon area was no longer the interior but instead became Malta, Sicily, and Marseille even before 1881[57].

Such long-term 'coastalization' phenomenon, as would be expected, led to a profound socio-economic 'backwardness' effect in the interior. As Mohamed Nachi contends, "economic development, real-estate investment, and tourism were all concentrated around the capital, Tunis, and the coastal regions of the northeast and of the Sahel"[58] and as such:

> [the] interior regions remained rural zones of extreme poverty disproportionately affected by unemployment; whence a profound sense of injustice that was constantly manifested by the inhabitants of these areas. It is no accident that the demonstrations and the demands made by protestors emerged from Sidi Bouzid, a [disfavoured], rural, and poor region in the interior[59].

Moreover, the increase in real-estate developments and tourism in the coastal regions resulted in an increased demand for North Africa's *blue gold* –fresh water- and consequently threatened "the arid region's future water supplies and the agrarian economy"[60].

The practical effect of this disparity, other than a prolonged feeling of economic insecurity of the farmers and inhabitants of the interior, was that by the eve of the Arab Spring:

> 80 percent [of] national production [was] concentrated in coastal areas[,] [t]he provinces of the southwest and center-west, home to 40 percent of the total population of more than 10 million, [could] claim only 20 percent of GDP. And two of the greatest ecological threats to the Mediterranean rim- fossil fuels and tourism- [had] converged upon Tunisia with great force[61].

Tunisia had, until the 20th century and like other countries in Northern Africa, been colonized by a European state. This colonial heritage meant that at the time of full-

[57] *Ibidem*, *20*.
[58] Mohamed Nachi, "'Spontaneous Revolution' in Tunisia", 8.
[59] *Ibidem*.
[60] Julia Clancy-Smith, "From Sidi Bou Zid to Sidi Bou Said", 19.
[61] *Ibidem*, 22.

independence from France in 1956, it had to choose its own political and socio-economic path.

Socio-politically, Tunisia's first post-independence President and 'Supreme Combatant', Habib Bourguiba strongly believed in the importance of the 'new' Tunisia maintaining a decisive link with the West. He was "a child of the enlightenment, educated in law and political science in France at the Sorbonne" and very conscientious of the 'western' culture and society's qualities and thus, since the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's, had began a process of transforming Tunisia into a "western-oriented" political state[62]. Heavily influenced by Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Bourguiba early on declared "Basically and profoundly, we are with the West"[63]. Through undertakings such as the unifying of the educational system (eliminating religious schools) and implementing French (and not Arabic) as the official language of the curriculum, reforming the traditional law of marriage and divorce and as such significantly improving the rights of women and prohibiting the use of the hijab in public spaces, Bourguiba attempted to implement a "more modernist version of islam"[64]. Although clearly controversial and highly criticized, especially by the most conservative wings of Tunisia's society, the importance of these more liberal and 'forward-thinking' policies cannot be underrated.

Socio-economically, Tunisia, as was the case with many other former-colonies, adopted an 'egalitarian'-inspired 'social-contract', largely due the overwhelming inspiration derived from the French revolution of 1789[65].

[62] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 176-177.
[63] *Ibidem*, 177.
[64] *Ibidem.*
[65] Onn Winckler, "The "Arab Spring": Socioeconomic Aspects", *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 68, https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12047.

By the mid 1960's however, the failures of this system were clear and the 'socialist' experiment was abandoned by the early 1970's[66], thus allowing the country to embark "on an era of successful economic growth, fuelled by a modest but comfortable hydrocarbon income and drawing on the resources of both public and private sectors"[67].

From a political standpoint and preceding the Arab Spring, Tunisia was a full-fledged dictatorship, with Zine El Abidine Ben Ali having been in power for more than two decades by the time of the revolution. Tunisia experienced little political freedom, allowed to some extent for opposition parties which were severely monitored, had little or no space for public opinion and discontentment to be voiced, and had a vast and 'well-oiled' network of censorship and repression which ensured that the outside viewer had little to no insight of its true internal reality. As Mohamed Nachi describes:

> Ben Ali's hold on power and exercise of it had become increasingly centralized and personalized, reducing to the barest minimum the role and function of the political institutions (parliament was no more than a recording chamber), the juridical apparatus (the courts were at the order of the dictator, with unjust trials and verdicts), and the public administration (corruption, nepotism, and so forth). The omnipotence of the executive branch was crushing the country and stifled all political play, reducing all forms of plurality to naught[68].

Political parties such as *Ennahda* were forced underground and its leaders, such as Rachid Ghannouchi, often opted for exile[69]; as a result and even though a political opposition did exist in Tunisia, its voice was muted under Ben Ali's regime.

As one can imagine, corruption and nepotism were widely spread. One of its clearest faces in Tunisia was the government's favouring its personal interests -namely those of the ruler and his family- above those of its citizens. As described by Mohamed Nachi:

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[66] Emma C. Murphy, "Ten Years On - Ben Ali's Tunisia", *Mediterranean Politics* 2, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 114, https://doi.org/10.1080/13629399708414633.
[67] *Ibidem*, 114.
[68] Mohamed Nachi, "'Spontaneous Revolution' in Tunisia", 8.
[69] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016),184.

> The president's party (the "Constitutional Democratic Rally" or RCD) was essentially the state, and its interests came before the general interest. The state served the increasing private wealth of the president and the family of his wife, which constituted, according to the American ambassador in Tunisia, a "quasi-mafia." The president of the RCD was the President of the Republic, and he named all the members of the political leadership, from the federations to the local sections of the party[70].

### 2.1.2 Factors leading to the arising of protests and protesters' demands in Tunisia

In the decades preceding 2011, Tunisia had witnessed several revolutionary precedents. Perhaps the most emblematic movement preceding the 'Jasmine Revolution' was that of the Gafsa mineral field. This protest movement began in inner Tunisia, "the region that had been neglected and even ignored by the Tunisian regime, in contrast to the coasts and the northern districts of the country", and quickly developed to become "the most extensive protest movement in Tunisia since the bread revolt of 1984"[71]. The adherence soon comprised not only the workers and their families, but was exported by activist members of the Tunisian diaspora in France as a banner representing the claim for improved working conditions, for an end to corruption and for overall change to the realities present at the time[72]. This protest wasn't easily supressed, as Farhad Khosrokhavar explains:

> The security and police forces were unable to suppress the revolt, which lasted six months, because they faced a new type of social movement from below, with no leadership and no circumscribed group of activists. Gafsa inaugurated a new pattern of mobilization and new types of actors in a decentralised,

[70] Mohamed Nachi, "'Spontaneous Revolution' in Tunisia", 8.
[71] "The Gafsa mineral field, which was the fifth largest mining center in the world, "exploiting calcium phosphate, with an annual production of some 8 million tons", was located in the "governorate of Gafsa with a population of around 28,000 people (in 2006)". Its sole company the CPG (Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa) had been nationalised after Tunisia's independence and thus had "monopoly of [the Gafsa mineral field's] exploitation and [was] the only major industrial employer in the town. Drastic reduction of the company's number of workers in the previous decade (from 15,000 to 5,000) led to high rates of unemployment; furthermore, fraudulent personnel recruitment for the phosphate mines led to workers that had not been hired, to enact a sit-in outside the office of the worker's trade union (UGT- Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail)."
Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolutions That Shook the World,* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 28-29.
[72] *Ibidem*, 29.

> loosely tied action, extended beyond the customary patterns of social protest in Tunisia that usually lasted only a few weeks[73].

On a more political level, we find the '18 October Movement for rights and freedoms'. This movement, which began to organise in 2005 and by October of that year had formed a political alliance comprising leftists, liberals and Islamists, had as its main demands greater political and media freedoms and a wide legal amnesty, in particular for political prisoners[74]. The movement "was launched following a hunger strike by the leaders of [the above mentioned political] forces, who initiated the struggle against the so-called "Anti-Terrorism Law" issued in 2003, which unleashed a wave of repressive police practices against opposition forces"[75]. Moreover, the movement's members also called into question the nearly three-decade long domination of Ben Ali's RCD party. The demands and requests ended up not being addressed nor fulfilled by the regime, but the 'seed of discontentment' existed and had been manifested and planted.

Another precedent of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution was the Ben Guerdane revolt of 2010. This revolt occurred in that town on the Tunisian-Libyan border, where in August 2010 the Libyan forces closed the 'free passage' and imposed an unreasonable 150 Tunisian Dinar (equivalent to more than 50$) tax on cars wanting to cross the border. The main income source of the inhabitants of Ben Guerdane is cross-border trading with Libya and as such this 'border tax' threatened their livelihood. Protests were immediate to arise and quickly spread to the neighbouring regions of Skhira and Fériana[76]. Angry protesters clashed with police and –alike what had happened in the Gafsa revolt- these protests were met with "ruthless

[73] *Ibidem*.
[74] *Ibidem,* 31.
[75] *Ibidem*.
[76] Fadhel Kaboub, "The making of the Tunisian Revolution", in *Understanding the Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings*, ed. Ishac Diwan (Singapore: World Scientific, 2014), 63.

treatments, arrests and abuse"[77] by the police. As Farhad Khosrokhavar explains, Tunisia's UGT labour union intervention and mediation between protesters and local authorities was fundamental in putting an end to the unrest, ensuring that "all those arrested were freed [without charge], and [that, despite there not obtaining a lifting of the imposed tax] ensuring the frontier between Libya and Tunisia, closed down during the revolt, was reopened"[78].

"The long Gafsa strike and demonstrations in 2008, the Ben Guerdane movement in August 2010, and other minor movements in the Skhira and Fériana regions pointed to the fact that the period of [Tunisian's] fear and apathy was over" [79]. As Farhad Khosrokhavar contends:

> [the] major characteristics of these movements that were adopted and reshaped by the Jasmine Revolution were their spontaneous and unpredictable emergence and their formation in underdeveloped areas of the country, where the population was either economically marginalized or socially under the threat of marginalization, in particular the youth[80].

It can thus be argued that the Tunisian Revolution resulted from an expansion and the development to a national level of protests that had previously been concentrated and restricted solely at local and regional levels.

Despite these precedents and the growing desire for change, the December 2010 self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi would probably have gone practically unnoticed in a different context. As Diogo Noivo argues:

> [i]t could have been an isolated act if it was not for the wave of street protests that followed and spread nationwide to towns such as Gafsa, Monastir, Sousse, Sbikha and Thala – events which are rare due to the state's tight and forceful control over society. Moreover, other suicides took place after Mohamed Bouazizi took his own life: for example, Lahseen Naji electrocuted himself out of frustration caused by unemployment; and Ramzi al-Abboudi committed suicide due to mounting business debt[81].

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[77] *Ibidem*, 63.
[78] Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolutions That Shook the World,* 32.
[79] *Ibidem*.
[80] *Ibidem*.
[81] Diogo Noivo, "The spillover effects of Sidi Bouzid: a survivability test to the Tunisian regime", *IPRIS Viewpoints*, January 2011: 1.

What caused such apparently isolated acts to so quickly 'spill-over' and fuel the rise of protests and generalized turmoil? Diogo Noivo lists the lack of job opportunities, lack of social freedoms (speech, press etc.), corruption and the control of socio-political decisions being in the hands of the Ben Ali and their close trustees, as the main factors which fuelled the protests[82]. Concerning corruption, "Transparency International's *2010 Corruption Perceptions Index* [gave] 4.3 to Tunisia in a scale where 10 [stood] for "highly clean" and 0 for "highly corrupt[83]", while in the "World Bank's *World Wide Governance Indicators* in 2009 [where] on a scale ranging from -2.5 to 2.5, Tunisia obtained: 0,017 in 'Control of Corruption'; 0,414 in 'Government Effectiveness'; and -1,27 in 'voice and Accountability'"[84]. In a free and non-corrupt regime, with an economic arena ensuring equal opportunities for competition and social mobility, there would have been certainly lesser reasons for frustration.

While the rise in food costs was also one of the short-term causes of the protests, high levels of unemployment and low levels of purchasing power led many Tunisians to exasperation and powered the revolts[85]. It can thus be argued that in Tunisia, besides the economic disparities, which were seen as an injustice by protesters, the sources of discontent were broadly political in nature.

The spark of the revolution was the self-immolation of Bouazizi, and the propellant agent the social media's capability to unite in a common assembly and arena the efforts of differing discontentment and disillusionment-charged groups with a desire for change who, had they protested as individual 'pieces', would most probably have been steam-rolled by the regime.

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[82] *Ibidem*, 2.
[83] *Ibidem*.
[84] *Ibidem*.
[85] Peter Popham, "The price of food is at the heart of this wave of revolutions", *The Independent*, February 27, 2011, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/the-price-of-food-is-at-the-heart-of-this-wave-of-revolutions-2226896.html.

### 2.1.3 Main events that took place between the beginning of the protests in Tunisia and the overthrow of the standing rulers, and their nature

The timeline of Tunisia's 2010 revolt was considerably short; it began in the interior and quickly spread to key cities on the coast, powered by the Tunisian Federation of Labour Union's backing of the ordinary citizens and the youth. As described by *Al Jazeera*:

> Within days [of the Mohamed Bouazizi incident], uprisings mushroomed across the whole country with protesters chanting slogans and demanding a solution to the vast unemployment and the dire economic state of the country. Ben Ali officially resigned after 28 days on January 14, 2011, putting an end to his 23-year-long rule[86].

The demonstrations soon turned violent, with several clashes between protesters and police. Initially the position of the government was one of condemnation of the protests, with Ben Ali warning on December 28th "in a national television broadcast that protests [were] unacceptable and [would] have a negative impact on the economy", criticizing the "use of violence in the streets by a minority of extremists" and stating that the law [would] be utilized "in all firmness" to punish protesters[87]. On the same day the first consequences were seen, with the dismissal of "the governors of Sidi Bouzid, Jendouba, and Zaghouan provinces (…) for unspecified reasons related to the uprising[88]". The continued protests and violent repressions by police resulted in "[t]he Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights [on January 12] tall[ying] 66 deaths since the protests began"[89].

By January 12th the protests had evolved into a 'revolution', leading to extensive international interest and condemnation of police repression and brutality. Possibly feeling cornered and in a last effort to maintain power, later that day in a televised address President Ben Ali "vowed not to seek re-election in 2014[,] promised to institute widespread reforms,

[86] "Tunisian Revolution", *Al Jazeera*, December 17, 2015, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/12/tunisian-revolution-151215102459580.html.
[87] "Timeline: Tunisia's uprising", *Al Jazeera*, January 23, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/tunisia/2011/01/201114142223827361.html.
[88] *Ibidem*.
[89] *Ibidem*.

introduce more freedoms into society, and to investigate the killings of protesters during demonstrations [which had] spread throughout the country over the past month"[90].

Such concessions were nonetheless late and came at a time when the revolution had expanded so widely that protesters were looking for much more, and felt that the only possible end at the horizon was that of Ben Ali's ousting. In a final, desperate effort to prevent his fall, on January 14th Ben Ali:

> Impose[d] a state of emergency and fire[d] the country's government amid violent clashes between protesters and security forces. He [further] promise[d] fresh legislative elections within six months in an attempt to quell mass dissent. [Furthermore, s]tate media report[ed] that gatherings of more than three people [had] been banned and arms [would] be used if orders of security forces [were] not heeded[91].

On the night of January 14th the Tunisian army, having defected the regime two days earlier upon Ben Ali's calling on them to enter the streets and use force against the protesters[92], seized control of the airport, closed the country's airspace and arrested members of Ben Ali's extended family. Ben Ali himself managed however to leave the country and as a result Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi replaced him in power[93] for one single day, being succeeded –as a result of the Constitutional Council's revision and interpretation of the situation and the Constitution- by the President of the Council of Ministers Fouad Mebazaa[94].

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[90] "Tunisians cautious on concessions", *Al Jazeera*, January 14, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/201111441336340951.html.
[91] "Timeline: Tunisia's uprising", *Al Jazeera*, January 23, 2011.
[92] Risa Brooks, "Abandoned at the Palace: Why the Tunisian Military Defected from the Ben Ali Regime in January 2011", *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 2 (February 2013): 206, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2012.742011.
[93] "PM replaces Tunisia's President", *Al Jazeera*, January 15, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/2011114172228117723.html.
[94] David K. Kirkpatrick, "In Tunisia, Clashes Continue as Power Shifts a Second Time", *The New York Times*, January 15, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/world/africa/16tunis.html.

### 2.2.1 Social, Political and Economical framework in Egypt preceding the Arab Spring (2009-2010) and their implications

Also Egypt had up to 1956 –when it became fully independent- been a colony of a European state, in this case the United Kingdom. Upon independence and having to choose a social policy to follow, Egypt's then leader Gamal Abd al-Nasser also opted for the French-inspired 'social-contract'. Unlike what occurred in Tunisia and even though the 'social-contract' system was clearly failing and had not foreseen enormous rises in population and greater demands for subsidies, his successor Sadat and later Mubarak insisted on maintaining it[95].

As a result**,** it can be argued that the true root of the problem derived from the socio-political decision taken in 1952 by Nasser. As Bruce K. Rutheford argues:

> [f]or many observers, the uprising that removed Husni Mubarak on February 11, 2011, was a surprise. Mubarak's regime had been the model of authoritarian stability[,] [but i]n reality, the foundations of the Mubarak regime had been eroding for decades. Its origins lay in the revolution began by Gamal Abd al-Nasser in 1952, which created a political order based on an informal social contract: citizens would cede the political arena to Nasser and the ruling party; in exchange, the regime would provide material prosperity and security[96].

The social result of the above was the creation of "an extensive network of subsidies that provided food, electricity, gasoline, public transportation, education, medical care, and a host of other services either free or at heavily subsidized prices[97]". What Nasser didn't consider when implementing the system, was that in the long run it would become unsustainable and what were seen as positive consequences– e.g. increased life expectancy, decrease in infant mortality rates, population growth - would eventually become the causes for its inevitable fate. "By the mid 1990's, [and thus already under Mubarak,] 1.3 million Egyptians were born every year. Each of these new citizens expected the full panoply of state subsidies promised

[95] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 35.
[96] *Ibidem*.
[97] *Ibidem,* 36.

by Nasser as well as a decent job for life[98]". Unfortunately, the state-centred economy implemented by Nasser did not progress *pari passu* with the growth in population, making "the subsidies that were essential to the Nasserist social contract, unaffordable" [99]. As a result, in order to try to curtail and reverse this downwards spiral and unable or unwilling to abandon the social contract -the basis of legitimacy and loyalty of the regime-, the government had to turn to international borrowing and thus found itself indebted to institutions which followed 'realistic' criteria on their credits.

While at the beginning of the 1990's Egypt was lent a helping hand by Europe and the US, both through bi- and multi-lateral assistance, it was at the same time obliged by the creditors to implement a "more market-driven, export-oriented economy that was fully integrated in the global economy"[100]. Theoretically, the dismantling of the decade-long *safety net* should have been done in a way such as to have the least possible impact on the population, ensuring worker's jobs security and other such guarantees. Nonetheless Mubarak and his cabinet did not follow this plan and, even though the neo-liberal developments of Egypt's economy led the private sector to emerge in force, with a significant growth in technological services and an increase in the exports of agricultural products, the results were not wholly positive. Bruce K. Rutheford explains that:

> [even though o]verall the economy reached very respectable growth rates of 6-7 percent in the mid-2000's [and that] Egyptians with the specialized skills and the connections needed to perform these new jobs did well[,] Egyptians without these skills and connections saw their quality of life deteriorate steadily[101].

[98] *Ibidem*, 35-36.
[99] *Ibidem*, 36.
[100] *Ibidem*.
[101] "Public sector workers, civil servants and pensioners saw their incomes remain largely stagnant while inflation rose at double-digit rates for much of the 2000's. Families who thought of themselves as solidly middle class saw their standard of living steadily decline until they were poor."
*Ibidem*, 37.

The result of all the above was that:

> At the time of the uprising, 44 percent of Egyptians were "extremely poor" (unable to meet minimum food needs), "poor" (unable to meet basic food needs" or "near-poor" (able to meet basic food needs, but not much more)[102].

Furthermore, and even though the social-contract had also led Egypt to experience a steady development in literacy rates and percentage of youth reaching tertiary (university) education, "i[n] 2008, unemployment among university graduates reached 25 percent"[103]. Disillusionment, grievances and demands for change were most strongly felt amongst a specific population band of Egyptians: that which encompassed the youth and the poor.

Politically, on the eve of the Arab Spring Egypt's reality was that of a more than two-decade long dictatorship with Husni Mubarak 'at the helm'. Other than concentrating power in the executive branch of government, Mubarak played the 'state of emergency' that had been imposed after Sadat's assassination in 1981 and had lasted for 3 decades, as a further 'trump card'[104]. As Ann M. Lesch maintains, this state of emergency:

> [C]onsolidated the president's absolute authority by empowering him — and, by delegation, the prime minister and minister of interior — to restrain the movement of individuals, search persons or places without warrants, tap telephones, monitor and ban publications, forbid meetings and intern suspects without trial. Gatherings of more than five people were illegal. The state could choose to refer civilians not only to the criminal courts but also to Emergency State Security Courts and draconian military courts, where officers served as judges and there was no judicial appeals process[105].

Mubarak had initially a further 'security-blanket' in the form of protection by a fundamental institution, the Army. Mubarak had always cajoled the army at his side, as any dictator that wants to ensure continued backing and protection; he was well aware of the need to treat extremely well this key 'backbone' of the regime's protection.

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[102] Joel Benin, "The Working Class and the Popular Movement", in *The Journey to Tahrir*, ed. Jeannie Sowers and Chris Toensing (New York: Verso, 2012), 105.
[103] *Egypt Human Development Report 2008*, (New York: United Nations Development Program, 2008), 296.
[104] "Egypt's Emergency Law Explained", *Al Jazeera*, April 22, 2017, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/04/egypt-emergency-law-explained-170410093859268.html.
[105] Ann M. Lesch, "Egypt's Spring: Causes of the Revolution", *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 36, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00496.x.

As Bruce K. Rutheford describes:

> The senior officer corps were all Mubarak's men. They were appointed by him and rewarded with relatively high salaries and an array of privileges. They owed their careers, status and prosperity to him. Furthermore, they saw themselves as an integral part of the ruling elite[106].

By 2011, Egypt's by then 'consolidated' dictator Husni Mubarak had been in power for more than 30 years. Under Mubarak, civil and political liberties were close to inexistent, some political and civil liberties were allowed but these were highly scrutinised. Corruption was widespread, censorship closely controlled and monitored, and repression highly effective, but practically undetectable from the outside and to the foreign eye.

Corruption was to be found both at the wider governmental level and more specifically at the level of the ruler and his family. Ann M. Lesch explains that:

> [a]long with promoting privatization, many ministers appointed in the mid-2000s promoted corruption on an unprecedented scale. They sold significant portions of the public sector for their personal benefit and decreased public investment in agriculture, land reclamation, housing, education and health. In turn, they promoted private investment in rarely successful export-oriented agriculture, the construction of gated communities for the elite, and the establishment of for-profit private universities and hospitals[107].

In the case of Mubarak and besides the dubious sources of his own wealth and the real ends of his wife's charitable accounts:

> It is known that the Mubaraks' sons took commissions on business deals, held free or discounted shares in businesses, used their roles in investment agencies to leverage business for themselves and their business partners, and received land and villas *gratis* or for minimal payment[108].

This state corruption at the highest level once more added to the already general popular bitterness and distrust towards Mubarak and served as a further justification for the protests.

[106] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 41.
[107] Ann M. Lesch, "Egypt's Spring: Causes of the Revolution", 40.
[108] *Ibidem*, 41.

### 2.2.2 Factors leading to the arising of protests and protesters' demands in Egypt

Egypt's 2011 uprising wasn't a precedent-less event, as socially motivated revolts had occurred from time to time in the previous decade.

The *Kefaya* ('enough') movement was most probably the best-known independent political group able to arise in the Egypt's "carefully managed political arena", which organized "demonstrations in 2005 calling for Mubarak to leave office"[109] [110]. As Farhad Khosrokhavar explains:

> [t]he movement inaugurated a new style of mobilization outside the realm of political parties. It encompassed a wide spectrum of people ranging from Nasserists to liberals, Islamists, Secularists and Marxists. The goal of this heterogeneous movement was the end of Mubarak's rule[111].

The protest soon gained force, demanding "the cancellation of the state of emergency law and all the special laws that restrict[ed] freedoms" and "In April, simultaneous demonstrations were planned in 13 cities under a banner of 'No Constitution Without Freedom'"[112].

Even though the movement wasn't successful, Farhad Khosrokhavar contends that:

> In retrospect the movement can be regarded as a preface of the forthcoming Egyptian revolution of 2011. It failed, but the experience gathered by its protagonists helped the social imagination push towards new paths. Nonviolent, non-ideological, based on new social categories (human rights activists, lawyers, young middle class people, Internet-savvy youth with non-antagonistic views of the West), it became a source of inspiration for future uprisings[113].

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[109] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 38.
[110] "Kefaya's first rally, held on December 12, was a historic event, being the first time a protest was organized mainly to demand that the president step down. Surrounded by riot police, between 500 and 1,000 activists gathered on the steps of the High Court in Cairo. They "remained mostly silent and taped over their mouths a large yellow sticker emblazoned with "Kefaya"."
Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolutions That Shook the World*, 45.
[111] *Ibidem*.
[112] *Ibidem*.
[113] *Ibidem*, 46.

Another social precedent of Egypt's 2011 revolution was the 'April 6 Youth Movement' (*haraka shabab 6 abril*). This movement originated in a predominantly primary sector, worker based town. "The movement began in 2008 in Al-Mahalla al-Kubra, an industrial town where workers planned to strike on April 6 [and] the movement planned to support their strike". The town, located amidst the Nile Delta, had a predominantly textile industry and a population of 450,000. "In 2008, labour unrest was intensifying through violent confrontation with police forces, and work stoppages were staged in reaction to rising food prices and police repression"[114]. A revealing characteristic of this movement was its predominantly youth component. "In January 2009, the movement had some 70,000 young and educated members who defended free speech and denounced cronyism in the government"[115]. While the group initially organized sporadic protests, they soon became more sophisticated in as much as they studied ways in which to surprise police and other security personnel by congregating at the protests arriving from different directions and how to protect themselves from police's tear gas and riot police aggression[116].

The importance and significance of the 'April 6' movement, as Farhad Khosrokhavar goes on to explain, was that:

> the group took on characteristics that would become paramount in part in the Tunisian and more importantly in the Egyptian revolutions: a non-political group cutting across political lines, with no hierarchic structure or leadership, whose aim was to promote democratic reform[117].

Even though the group failed to achieve its goals, as on the 9th of October 2009, it was met and attacked by non-uniform policemen with many of its members being arrested, it still was able to provide another valid social-revolt precedent of the 2011 uprisings. "These movements brought forward a new era of turbulence into which Egyptian society entered

[114] *Ibidem*, 47.
[115] *Ibidem*.
[116] *Ibidem*.
[117] *Ibidem*.

after more than half a century of authoritarian regime. A new spirit of peaceful, nonviolent insubordination among youth groups impregnated the society"[118].

Police brutality was a constant denominator of the Egypt 2011 uprisings, a 'flagship' example being when, in June 2010, 28 year-old Khaled Said, a young businessman from Alexandria, was killed due to his brutal beating by two police officers. This single death would again, in normal circumstances, have raised little protests; if one however adds social media to the equation, Khaled Said's death and his mutilated body soon became the 'poster-child' of the revolts. As a *New York Times* article explained, "[w]ithin five days of [Khaled Said's] death, an anonymous human rights activist created a Facebook page — We Are All Khaled Said — that posted cellphone photos from the morgue of his battered and bloodied face[,] [b]y mid-June, 130,000 people [had] joined the page to get and share updates about the case"[119]. This example once more depicts the importance and fundamental role of social media in the Arab Spring. Not only did the "Facebook page set up around his death [offer] Egyptians a rare forum to bond over their outrage about government abuses"[120], but it gave protesters a further 'palpable' means to fuel their protests demanding the ousting of President Mubarak.

Factors such as concentrated power, lack of freedoms, high youth unemployment and blatant corruption were some of the vindications of the citizens. Demographically, Egypt had another clear problem, the reality being that of:

> [a]n explosive mix of high population growth, leading to a "youth bulge", combined with urbanisation, jobless growth partly linked to structural adjustment, and the rapid expansion of university education [which all combined produced a new diffused reality which Paul Mason from the BBC called] 'the graduate with no future'. [This was the reality resulting from Egypt's population pyramid and

[118] *Ibidem*.
[119] Jeniffer Preston, *"Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave It an Outlet"*, *The New York Times*, February 5, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06face.html.
[120] *Ibidem*.

development as t]wo-thirds of Egyptians [were] under 30, and each year 700,000 new graduates chase[d] 200,000 new jobs[121].

This being said, had the spill over effect of Tunisia's Revolution not provided the spark towards protest and revolution, the *status quo* would probably have remained unaltered. As Ann M. Lesch argues:

> By the end of 2010, people were pushed to the brink by the sharply rising prices of basic foods, escalating unemployment, crackdowns on the media and universities, outrageous rigging of the parliamentary elections, an ever-lengthening list of corrupt actions by the elite, and fear that 82-year-old Mubarak might run for election again in September 2011 or, even worse, hand power over to his hated son. Nonetheless, the protesters themselves agree that it took the swift removal of Ben Ali to make them think that, if sudden change was possible in Tunisia, it might be possible in Egypt[122].

Many Egyptians had, on the eve of the revolution, a deep feeling of anger towards Mubarak due to his monopoly of power, corruptness, curtailing of political oppositions, and clampdowns on dissent, basic freedoms and public opinion. As Ann M. Lesch describes:

> Anger at Mubarak's rule had built up over the past decade. An accidental president, who came to power because of Anwar Sadat's assassination on October 6, 1981, [and despite initial concession of freedoms and liberties] as soon as he began his second term, in 1987, he refused to reform the constitution, extended the state of emergency, promulgated laws to exclude opposition parties from local councils and tightened the grip of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) over parliament. He denounced opposition groups for criticizing his policies and asserted, threateningly, "I am in charge, and I have the authority to adopt measures…. I have all the pieces of the puzzle, while you do not"[123].

On another perspective, reports that Mubarak's health was deteriorating may very well have given a 'push' to protesters, as they saw this fragility as an opportunity to be taken advantage of. Bruce K. Rutheford maintains that:

> On top of [the] deteriorating economic and political conditions, there were growing rumours about Mubarak's health. The president was eighty-three years old in 2011 and had spent several months abroad for medical treatment in 2010. For some demonstrators who would flow to Tahrir, there was a sense that

[121] Duncan Green, "What caused the revolution in Egypt?", *The Guardian*, February 17, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/feb/17/what-caused-egyptian-revolution.
[122] Ann M. Lesch, "Egypt's Spring: Causes of the Revolution", 46.
[123] *Ibidem*, 35-36.

> Egypt was at a pivotal moment of succession, and they wanted to have some input into how it would unfold[124].

The development of Egypt's social protest movements, from *Kefaya* to "We are all Khaled Said" depicted a gradual yet steady and rapid deterioration in the respect and obedience to President Mubarak, and one can even argue that these helped to depict and forebode "the gradual demise of the Egyptian leader"[125] that would eventually materialize with the 2011 uprisings.

### 2.2.3 Main events that took place between the beginning of the protests in Egypt and the overthrow of the standing rulers, and their nature

Even though Egypt's revolution developed as a 'domino effect' off Tunisia's events, as Farhad Khosrokhavar details, there were several immediate differences between both revolutions:

> The Egyptian model was different from the Tunisian: The influence of trade unions on the movement [was] less important than in Tunisia, and the small towns did not play an important role, whereas the large cities (Cairo, and Alexandria) were epicentres of the uprising[126].

Egypt's 2011 protests began on January 15th in downtown Cairo. Despite being pacific at first, clashes between protesters and the police eventually arose and in Cairo's Tahrir square "police fire[d] tear gas and use[d] water cannons against demonstrators crying out "Down with Mubarak"[127]. Protests soon spread to other major cities and to the countryside and, in a bid to deflect responsibilities, the "interior ministry issu[ed] a statement blaming the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's technically banned but largest opposition party, for fomenting the

[124] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 39.
[125] Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolutions That Shook the World*, 48.
[126] *Ibidem*, 43.
[127] Timeline: Egypt's revolution, *Al Jazeera*, February 14, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112515334871490.html.

unrest - a claim that the Muslim Brotherhood denie[d]"[128].

In the following days protests spread and grew in numbers, with a quasi-*pari passu* growth in police repression and brutality causing the number of deaths and injured to rise not just in Cairo but also in other densely 'protester-populated' cities[129].

On January 29th and in a first attempt to meet protesters' demands for governmental renewal, "in a speech delivered shortly after midnight, Mubarak announce[d] that he ha[d] sacked the cabinet, but he himself refuse[d] to step down" and also appointed "a vice-president for the first time during his three decades in power[,] Omar Suleiman, the country's former 'spy chief', who ha[d] been working closely with Mubarak during most of his reign"[130]. On February 1st in a further attempt to mitigate protests and bring the country back to tranquillity, "Mubarak announce[d] in a televised address that he [would] not run for re-election but refuse[d] to step down from office [-the protesters' central demand-]" he also "promise[d] reforms to the constitution, particularly Article 76, which ma[de] it virtually impossible for independent candidates to run for office[, saying] his government [would] focus on improving the economy and providing jobs"[131]. By February 1st protesters already amounted to more than a million and the military remained well positioned, with tanks within and in the vicinities of Tahrir Square. On February 7th, the government announced its first concessions with the approval of a 15 per cent raise in salaries and pensions[132]; the following day and with the protests showing no sign of ending, "Omar Suleiman, the vice-president, warn[ed] that his government [wouldn't] put up with continued protests for a long time[;] [he then went on to separately announce] a slew of constitutional and legislative

[128] *Ibidem*.
[129] *Ibidem*.
[130] *Ibidem*.
[131] *Ibidem*.
[132] Chris McGreal and Ewen MacAskill, "Egyptian opposition says no deal until Hosni Mubarak steps down", *The Guardian*, February 7, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/07/egypt-opposition-no-deal-mubarak.

reforms, to be undertaken"[133].

The persistence of protesters was slowly but steadily bearing fruits. February 10th proved to be the decisive day of the Egyptian revolt, as:

> Amid rumours that he [would] be stepping down [that night], Mubarak [gave] a televised speech which he [said was] "from the heart" [and where he repeated] his promise to not run in the next presidential elections and to continue to shoulder his responsibilities in the peaceful transition that [would take] place in September[134].

Even though these were clearly positive news, protesters demanded more and "wave[d] their shoes in the air [demanding] the army join them in revolt"[135].

The following day, whether out of exhaustion or because he couldn't see any possibility to maintain power, Mubarak finally resigned from his post, handing the power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)[136].

### 2.3 Comparison of the Tunisian and Egyptian cases

The above-described events in Tunisia and Egypt depict several similarities. First and foremost, in both cases it can be argued that the protests represented a 'constant' and the government's actions and responses were the 'variable'. In both cases the protesters maintained their ground and were not taken aback or deterred from their initial aims by 'small-scale' governmental concessions or by police repression. They had well-defined aims, and they wouldn't stop protesting until they achieved them.

The rulers attempted in both cases to end the protests through a series of minor changes to

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[133] Timeline: Egypt's revolution, *Al Jazeera*, February 14, 2011.
[134] *Ibidem*.
[135] *Ibidem*.
[136] "Hosni Mubarak resigns as president", *Al Jazeera*, February 11, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/02/201121125158705862.html.

the *status quo* and concessions that would however not endanger their seat in power.

Only when running out of 'acceptable' concessions, realizing there was no more room for 'juggling' and with their 'backs against the wall', did they realize the time had come to step down.

Another factor that was decisive in both of these case studies was the role of –or lack thereof- the army.

In Tunisia's case, the army had no actual role in controlling or opposing the protests, sitting as a bystander; when the time came, it disobeyed the leader's orders to repress the protests and only got involved to 'dispose of' the old regime.

In Egypt, in contrast, the army was involved in 'controlling' the protests but, as Bruce K. Rutheford argues, the protesters' efforts "would have been for naught if the military had intervened to disperse the demonstrators. The military's decision not to intervene was pivotal and was a surprise to many"[137]. Several suggestions of reasons for the army's lack of action have arisen. Opinions vary from whether this occurred because many of the low-rank military resonated themselves in the demands made by the protesters and the Generals realized they would most likely have ignored orders to fire on the protesters; or:

> It may have been a purely pragmatic calculation. Senior officers may have concluded that Mubarak had lost the support of the public and key international actors [thus as it was clear that] Mubarak's days were numbered, so the generals facilitated his departure as quickly as possible[138].

The 2011 protests weren't isolated acts; in previous years, anger towards the *status quo* had existed and had steadily grown in both countries. While it is true that opposition parties and civil society groups existed but were carefully monitored, labour and political movements had in preceding years succeeded in organising several demonstrations and other activities.

[137] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 41.
[138] *Ibidem*, 42.

These movements occurred in the areas and sectors most affected by the negative socio-economic outcomes resulting from the leaders' policies and decisions.

The grievances and vindications that fuelled the protests were another point of convergence between both cases: large economic inequalities, low purchasing power, high youth unemployment, regional or class disparities and ineffective or out-dated socio-economic policies were some of the factors leading to a growing demand for change. Nonetheless and while it is true that all these factors were valid, had these grievances not been able to be turned into actions, no full-fledged revolution would ever have been put into motion. All of the above socio-economic factors in addition to widespread corruption among the respective political elites and their families resulted in a generalized sentiment of lack of political legitimacy of both regimes, as well as in a distrust of its leaders and their aging dictatorships.

As we have seen, dissatisfaction and dissent had been 'bubbling' for decades in both Tunisia and Egypt and would most likely have persisted 'underground' until a trigger for change occurred. The immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi was to provide the push for open protests to take place in Tunisia, while the violent death of Khaled Said helped fuel the protests in Egypt.

Perhaps one, if not the most important, of the factors enabling the spreading and development of both uprisings was the role of Social Media. The function of the Internet and social-media tools was key in both cases, facilitating the communication and spread of information amongst civilians, allowing protesters to publicize venues of concentrations and generally diffusing the news of revolts and vindications both nationally and globally, thus raising awareness for protesters demands. According to an online survey carried out in March 2011 by the Dubai School of Government:

> In both countries, Facebook users were of the opinion that Facebook had been used primarily to raise awareness within their countries about the on-going civil movements (31% in both Tunisia and Egypt), spread information to the world about the movements (33% and 24% in Tunisia and Egypt respectively), and organize activists and actions (22% and 30% in Tunisia and Egypt respectively). Less than 15% in either country believed Facebook was primarily being used for entertainment or social reasons[139].

The Internet and social media were definitely key enablers in the Arab Spring, with the authors of the above report concluding that it played a fundamental part in "mobilization, empowerment, [the] shaping [of] opinions, and influencing change"[140].

In both revolutions, the very short time interval from the beginning of protests to the overthrowing of the standing leaders – 27 and 18 days, respectively for Tunisia and Egypt – can be seen as proof of both the true state of 'ultra-deterioration' of the regime and the positive outcome of protesters' persistence, as well as the idea that both regimes eventually felt walled and knew they had to act quickly in order to attempt to curtail and reverse the doom of their demise. This fate, eventually and despite the leaders' efforts to prevent it, became however inevitable.

## 2.4 The post-Arab Spring, main institutions involved and degrees of success of the transition

### 2.4.1 In Tunisia

Tunisia's transition to the post-Arab Spring can be argued to have been a relative pacific and successful one.

The first step was made on January 17th, 2011, when Prime Minister Ghannouchi announced the formation of a national unity government comprising of himself, the former defence,

[139] Racha Mourtada and Fadi Salem, "Civil Movements: The Impact of Facebook and Twitter", *Arab Social Media Report* 1, no. 2 (May 2011): 6, http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/dsg/unpan050860.pdf.
[140] *Ibidem*, 24.

foreign, interior and finance ministers –who would keep their previous posts in this new government - in addition to the nomination of several opposition members to key posts. "Najib Chebbi, founder of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) (…), was named minister for regional development, Ahmed Ibrahim, leader of the Ettajdid party, was named minister of higher education and Mustafa Ben Jaafar, head of the Union of Freedom and Labour, got the health portfolio"[141]. This idea to 'unite Tunisia in its diversity' was an attempt to foster dialogue and debate between contending factions with the intent of building a new and, as much as possible, agreeable Tunisian political arena, where socio-political and economic issues could be discussed and addressed in a plural yet orderly manner. Despite this broad representativeness in the unity government, fresh street protests arose contesting the inclusion of former Ben Ali ministers. Ghannouchi and the other disputed ministers understood that the endeavours towards a new Tunisia needed a complete break with the past. As such, within 10 days Prime Minister Ghannouchi and the other ministers that had links with the former regime resigned[142] and President Mebazaa appointed Caid Essebsi as new interim Prime Minister[143]. Essebsi immediately nominated a new "caretaker government", whose composition, -even though it did not differ too much from the previous one- included people that had not run for elections, and as such was defined as a 'technocratic cabinet' being understood that its purpose was "to see through a delicate transition in which Tunisians [would] elect a constituent assembly"[144]. Protesters having understood the temporary nature of the structure, there was consequentially greater flexibility in the choice of cabinet members.

[141] "Tunisia PM forms 'unity government'", *Al Jazeera*, January 17, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/201111715545105403.html.
[142] "More Tunisian ministers resign after protests", *CNN*, March 1, 2011, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/03/01/tunisia.government/index.html.
[143] Tarek Amara, "Tunisian interim PM to appoint new government", *Reuters*, March 4, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-55330120110304.
[144] "Tunisian PM names new cabinet", *Al Jazeera*, March 7, 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/03/201137142987373.html.

In March, banned Islamic party *Ennahda* (headed by Rachid Ghannouchi a moderate Islamic intellectual who had been exiled in London for some 20 years) was legalized thus allowing it to compete in future elections[145]. This legalization came as further proof that Tunisia was on a path to democratization.

Having formed a unity government and legalized banned opposition parties, the next step was to create an independent electoral committee that would oversee and prepare the elections for a Constituent Assembly, whose task would be that of drafting Tunisia's new Constitution. The Independent High Authority for Elections was soon established and its work included attracting and incentivizing voter participation. By the eve of the elections, 4 million out of a possible 7.5 million eligible voters had registered[146].

The elections for the Constituent Assembly took place on October 23rd 2011. The importance of these elections was twofold: they were the first elections in Tunisia since it gained independence in 1956 and were at the same time the first elections in the Arab World since the beginning of the Arab Spring. Their successful outcome thus held an additional level of importance in as much as it would not only prove a success for post-revolutionary Tunisia itself, but would serve as a 'banner' for the entirety of the 'Arab Spring' countries. It was therefore crucial that as many Tunisians as possible would participate in the vote, as this would both give legitimacy and demonstrate political awareness and involvement of the population. With a 50% voter turnout, *Ennahda* received 40% of the votes, immediately agreeing to a coalition with the two runner-up parties: *Congress for the Republic* (CFR) and *Ettakol*[147]. On December 13th the Constituent Assembly elected -with 155 votes for, 3

[145] "Tunisia legalizes Islamist group Ennahda", *BBC*, March 1, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12611609.
[146] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 190.
[147] *Ibidem*.

against, and 42 blank votes- Moncef Marzouki as the new President of Tunisia[148]. Growing civil unrest due to poor economic conditions marked the first six months of transition. The revolution had caused a decline in Tourism and a loss of Foreign Direct Investment; as such and due to economic stagnation, unemployment rose to 20%[149]. Nevertheless and despite its differences, the coalition government continued to work together in the name of Tunisia's stability[150].

The shooting of secular activist Chokri Belaid in February 2013 exacerbated differences within the coalition and proved a first hard test for the elected government, as nation-wide protests re-mushroomed and demands for change and justice were voiced[151]. As a result and in order to appease protesters and to attempt to placate criticisms by the opposition, Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali, member of *Ennahda*, resigned and was replaced by Ali Larayedh, a former opposition member and survivor of the Ben Ali regime's torture, and also a key *Ennahda* leader[152]. Whether due to the sympathy felt towards Larayedh or as a result of the symbolic nature of this substitution –both he and Belaid had been outspoken activists against the inset regime- this substitution was widely well-accepted. Larayedh attempted to curb growing tensions in the coalition; consequentially compromise was reached concerning the appointment of independent candidates for key ministerial positions[153].

In March 2013 the new coalition government, that would "oversee the country's affairs until the end of the year, when elections would be held"[154], was announced by Larayedh. "Though Larayedh and his *Ennahda* associates had hoped to build a broad-based coalition that

[148] "Tunisian activist, Moncef Marzouki, named president", *BBC*, December 12, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16149119.
[149] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 191.
[150] Anne Wolf and Raphaël Lefèvre, "Tunisia: a revolution at risk", *The Guardian*, April 18, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/18/tunisia-revolution-at-risk.
[151] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 191-192.
[152] *Ibidem*, 192.
[153] *Ibidem*.
[154] *Ibidem*, 193.

reflected a more diverse swathe of the population, three of the parties that were initially invited to participate in the talks pulled out, leaving the task of forming a new government up to Larayedh's *Ennahda* Party, *Ettakol*, and the Congress for the Republic"[155]. The last two Parties were respectively Centre-Left and Secularist in nature, and had both backed the new government. This 'failure' of the government in greatly expanding the breadth of Political Parties present in the debate "underscored the delicate nature of the post-Ben Ali transition"[156].

Mostly the *Ennahda* party made concessions, giving up the key Justice and Interior ministries to independent candidates as a means to maintain national unity. These undertakings in the name of stability were "an act of good faith on the part of Larayedh, who hoped to avert further instability and strife[.] [Furthermore t]he act also set a standard for other states in the region, where similar difficult negotiations often failed to reach resolution as each side refused to cede its position"[157]. Despite these concessions and the party's openness to compromise, its position continued to be questioned and it continued to face political upheaval. A 'Tamarod' (rebellion group) emerged and demanded the dissolution of parliament, and incentivised Tunisians to take the streets demanding *Ennahda*'s resignation[158]; the General Labour Union "called for a technocratic government to replace the Ennahda-led government, charging that it was incapable of doing its job"[159]. Eventually, and in order not to further disrupt the fragile democratic transition that was being constructed, *Ennahda* once more gave in to pressures and resigned from the government on September 23rd.

[155] *Ibidem*.
[156] *Ibidem*.
[157] *Ibidem*.
[158] *Ibidem*, 196.
[159] *Ibidem*.

Sensing the deep-rooted instability that was present in the coalition government, and it having lost one of its member parties, several groups of Tunisia's civil society and worker's union joined forces in a 'round-table' whose aim was to nurture dialogue and curtail possibilities of a 'no deal' on the new Constitution. This 'round-table', known as the 'dialogue quartet', was comprised of members of the Tunisian General Labour Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Tunisian Human Rights League and the Tunisian order of Lawyers. Soon joined by members of opposition parties, its plurality, wide span of membership and overall weight meant that it had a strong leverage capacity to steer the government's decisions towards the common desire and good, and not just personal or sectorial preferences[160]. As Sara Chayes stated, "Without the muscular involvement of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (…) - perhaps the only organization whose power and legitimacy rival[ed] the Islamists'- it is unlikely that Tunisia's remarkable political settlement would have come about"[161].

The power vacuum left by *Ennahda* was handed "to an interim caretaker government to guide the country towards parliamentary elections". As a means of ensuring 'checks and balances' and preventing any one party from becoming too powerful, "the assembly, in which *Ennahda* held the largest number of seats, remained intact, serving as a check on the new administration"[162].

A further reshuffling of the government saw the industry minister Mehdi Jomaa named as the new prime minister and head of the new 'caretaker government'. Tunisia had entered the process of finalizing the Constitution, marked by debate and discord between conservatives

[160] *Ibidem*, 198.
[161] Sara Chayes, "How a Leftist Labour Union Helped Force Tunisia's Political Settlement", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 27, 2014, https://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/27/how-leftist-labor-union-helped-force-tunisia-s-political-settlement-pub-55143.
[162] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 196.

and secularists who disagreed on issues -fundamental to any Democracy- such as freedom of speech, women's rights and the role of religion. Eventually, and despite disagreements and concerns on certain aspects of the Constitution, it was passed on January 26, 2014, roughly three years after the ousting of Ben Ali[163].

Tunisia's democratic transition was finalized with the 2014 parliamentarian elections, which gave victory to *Ennahda*'s main opponent, *Nidaa Tounes* headed by Essebsi. Despite initial rejection of a link with *Ennahda*, *Nidaa Tounes* ended up forming a coalition with Rachid Ghannouchi's party.

Notwithstanding set-backs and changes of leadership, it can be maintained that the players in Tunisia's transition –namely *Ennahda*'s Rachid Ghannouchi- valued stability and had as their priority aim the establishment of a new, plural and as much as possible mutually agreed Constitution, which would be the foundation of a new and democratic Tunisia. The role played by Tunisia's 'dialogue quartet' was furthermore arguably crucial in the positive outcome of the new Constitution's final drafting and approval process.

### 2.4.2 In Egypt

Egypt's post-revolutionary transition was decisively more tumultuous, namely due to the active presence of a peculiar post-revolutionary decision making institution: the Army. The army had strong links with Mubarak's regime and advantages deriving from these ties and, despite "at the [most] critical moment, [showing him] the door"[164], Mubarak still opted to hand over power to the SCAF, thus demonstrating the extreme trust and faith he *quasi*-unconditionally held towards this institution. Another interpretation could of course be that, at the time of his ousting and with the inevitable ensuing depositions or arrests of the

[163] *Ibidem*, 198.
[164] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 41.

remainder of his cabinet and of his family members, the army remained the only institution with which he had once had an affinity, had the means to prevent widespread violence, and was arguably thus the most rational choice for his transfer of power; as such, it seems more than natural that upon Mubarak stepping down from power, the SCAF would attempt anything in its power to maintain such leverage.

The first sign of danger –in terms of Democracy- was the very appointment of the SCAF as Mubarak's successor and the lack of real contestation regarding this choice. In fact, the then applicable Constitution called for the Speaker of Parliament to act as interim President in case the President [was] unable to perform his duties[165].

Nevertheless and as Hafez Ghanem argues:

> The military [was] the most respected institution in the country, with a 67 percent approval rating, while parliament (especially after the rigged 2010 elections) was considered corrupt and illegitimate. Thus Egyptians were happy to SCAF take responsibility for leading the transition[166].

The SCAF's first undertaking was that of dissolving Egypt's Parliament and suspending the Constitution. The Council also added that it would exercise power for 6 months or until elections could be carried out, furthermore complementing this by stating that it would appoint a committee to suggest alterations to the Constitution and that the citizens would consequently vote these alterations[167]. In the following days, the SCAF attempted to reassure Egyptians that it was not attempting to hold on to power by asserting that the army would not present a candidate for Presidential elections[168].

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[165] Hafez Ghanem, "Egypt's difficult transition: Options for the International Community", in *The Arab Spring Five Years Later*, ed. Hafez Ghanem (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2016): 18.
[166] *Ibidem*.
[167] "Egypt's military dissolves Parliament, suspends constitution", *CNN*, February 13, 2011, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/02/13/egypt.revolution/index.html.
[168] "Egypt army says won't field presidential candidate", *Reuters*, February 17, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-military/egypt-army-says-wont-field-presidential-candidate-idUSTRE71G41U20110217.

On March 20th the constitutional referendum that would institute changes such as limiting presidential terms to 6 years and obliging the president to choose a deputy within 30 days of election, was passed and backed by 70% of voters[169]. This was a very important milestone as it provided a limit to the duration of the president's holding of power, and as such protected Egypt from the possibility of usurpations of authority.

Although in March the Military had originally pledged to hold the presidential elections by September, "the Generals issued a new timetable that postponed the election until after the parliamentary election (starting on November 28 and lasting until late January 2012)", which would be followed by the election of a constituent assembly and the drafting of a new resolution[170]. This postponing of the elections was most likely a tactical decision by the SCAF, as the logical sequence of events would have been for the Constitution to have been drafted first and only then for parliamentarian elections to be held.

As Hafez Ghanem states:

> After the dissolution of Mubarak's National Democratic Party [which happened in early April as a response to continued protests to eliminate any signs of the previous regime], the Brotherhood was the only organized group left in the country and therefore would win in any early election. They pushed for elections to take place before a constitution is written. The nationalist-liberal and the Nasserist/leftist parties wanted time to prepare and organize their bases. Therefore they argued for agreement on a new constitution before elections (…) The SCAF sided with the Brotherhood, and started preparing for elections before the constitution[171].

It thus came at no surprise when, in January 2012's final results of the parliamentary elections, the *Muslim Brotherhood* had received 47% of the votes, its *FJP* thus winning 235 out of 498 seats in the People's Assembly[172].

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[169] "Egypt referendum strongly backs constitution changes", *BBC*, March 20, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12801125.
[170] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 213.
[171] Hafez Ghanem, "Egypt's Difficult Transition: Why the International Community Must Stay Economically Engaged", working paper no 66, Global Economy and Development, (Washington DC: Brooking Institution, 2014), 15-16, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Arab-EconPaper1Hafez-v3_MR.pdf.
[172] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 213.

At the end of February it was announced that the Presidential elections would be held at the end of May and if need-be, a second round would be held in mid June. This second round was indeed required but, hours before it should be held (on June 17th), the SCAF "attempted a military 'soft-coup' [issuing a declaration/charter] that subverted and delayed democratic transitions under the guise of 'protecting' Democracy from resurgent Islamist parties that had polled well in elections"[173]. Its amendment to the Constitution gave the SCAF, among others, "sweeping political powers; complete control over its own affairs (…) immediate assumption of legislative authority; and the further authority to define and limit the executive authority of the president as well as to oversee the writing of Egypt's new constitution"[174]. This constituted a total seizing of power by the SCAF and thus fresh protests on the streets demanding an end to the military rule were quick to arise. Despite a political ban forbidding candidacy of the previous regime's senior officials for a period of 10 years, the SCAF-predisposed Egypt's Constitutional Court ruled as legitimate Mubarak's former prime-minister General Ahmad Shafiq's candidacy for the presidential elections[175].

Mohamed Morsi who, had these gone forward as planned was expected to win the second round of the elections, took advantage of this move by the SCAF to "regain lost ground, reaching out to former rivals/ losing candidates to create an anti-Shafiq coalition (…) [furthermore he also] strove to garner support form the youth who had been the backbone in Tahrir Square and the streets during the uprising"[176]. Despite support from the 'April 6' movement and a large portion of Egyptians who saw Morsi as the only alternative to a SCAF victory, Morsi only narrowly managed to beat General Shafiq in the presidential runoff, thus

[173] *Ibidem*, 217.
[174] *Ibidem*.
[175] *Ibidem*.
[176] *Ibidem*, 218.

demonstrating the divided nature of Egypt's society. Having received 52% of the votes[177] Morsi was sworn in on June 30th[178].

When Morsi's team was announced in August 2012 its composition was very different to what had been stipulated, with a predominance of *FJP* members, a minimal presence of Christian and female members, no appointment of women, Christians or youth representatives as vice-presidents and, most importantly, no inclusion of members "of the revolutionary youth groups that were catalysts for and played prominent roles in the Tahrir Square uprisings, or members of any political parties other than the *FJP* and the Salafist al-Nour Party"[179], all this in spite of earlier promises of plurality.

Post-elections, the 'tug of war' between Morsi and the SCAF continued but finally in August, Morsi managed to gain the upper hand. By "praising the military, he referred to a new generation of military leadership and emphasized their role as one of protectors of the nation rather than rulers of the government" [180], and as a result the 76 year-old General Tantawi was replaced by the 58 year-old General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi as defence minister. Morsi then went on to annul the declaration/charter that the SCAF had issued hours before the Presidential elections[181].

Morsi now had re-established his legitimate power, but this legitimacy would prove to be short lived. On November 22nd he issued a declaration 'immunizing' any and all of his decrees from being challenged and prohibiting the dissolution of the constituent assembly that was drafting the new Constitution. He also "sacked the chief prosecutor and ordered the

[177] *Ibidem*, 218-219.
[178] "New president: Egypt turns page to new era", *CNN*, June 30, 2012, https://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/30/world/africa/egypt-morsi/index.html.
[179] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 220.
[180] *Ibidem*, 219-220.
[181] *Ibidem*, 220.

retrial of people accused of attacking protesters when ex-President Mubarak held office"[182]. This clear usurpation of power, now by Morsi himself, led to both internal and external protests and to 'anti-Morsi movement' formations. Instead of catering for these dissatisfactions with concessions, Morsi further tightened his grip on power. The protests lasted for 7 months until June 30th 2013 (1 year after Morsi took office) and amidst a political stalemate, millions of Egyptians demanded for Morsi to step down. Having waited for a positive resolution and faced with Morsi's refusal, the army gave him and the opposition a 48-hour ultimatum to end the stalemate[183]. The army's justification was that "the security of the country was in great danger" and if no resolution was reached it "[would] be obliged by its patriotic and historic responsibilities (...) to announce a road map for the future and the steps for overseeing its implementation, with participation of all patriotic and sincere parties and movements"[184]. Morsi was overthrown on July 3rd and the ensuing protests and efforts by his supporters to have him reinstated were to no avail.

In January 2014, Egypt's new Constitution was approved by 98.2% of voters, even though turnout was very low at 38.6%[185].

In March 2014 General al-Sisi, who had since August 2012 simultaneously held the positions of Defence Minister and head of the armed forces and was at the time *de-facto* head of the country, resigned from the military and declared his intentions to run for president in the

[182] "Egypt's President Morsi assumes sweeping powers", *CNN*, November 22, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20451208.
[183] Gregg Calstrom, "Egyptian army issues 48-hour ultimatum", *Al Jazeera*, July 1, 2012, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/07/201371231726346358.html.
[184] *Ibidem*.
[185] "Egypt constitution approved by 98.1 percent", *Al Jazeera*, January 24, 2014, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/01/egypt-constitution-approved-981-percent-201411816326470532.html.

May 2014 elections[186]. The results were a landslide victory for al-Sisi[187], sworn-in as president on June 8th[188] and thus officially closing, even if negatively, Egypt's transition.

This negative outcome of Egypt's transition was dictated primarily by the nature and anti-democratic ambitions of the main people and institutions involved.

[186] Patrick Kingsley, "Abdel Fatah al-Sisi resigns from Egypt military to run for presidency", *The Guardian*, March 26, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/26/sisi-resigns-egypt-military-run-for-presidency.
[187] Patrick Kingsley, "Abdel Fatah al-Sisi sweeps to victory in Egyptian presidential election", *The Guardian*, May 29, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/29/abdel-fatah-al-sisi-sweeps-victory-egyptian-election.
[188] Yousuf Basil, "Egypt's new President vows to 'correct the mistakes of the past'", CNN, June 9, 2014, https://edition.cnn.com/2014/06/08/world/africa/egypt-presidential-election/index.html.

## Chapter 3

## Why did Tunisia 'work out' and Egypt not? What lessons can be learnt?

At the very beginning the unfolding of the 'Arab Spring' seemed promising, with both countries being labelled as 'poster countries' for a much-speculated possible *fourth wave* of democratization[189]. Nevertheless and after the initial euphoria of what looked like a double success story, as both nations had jumped over the first hurdle in the path towards a full-fledged Democracy, which authors such as Larry Diamond state as being the existence of "a system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections"[190], by 2014 Egypt –unlike Tunisia, who kept on the democratic path and even managed to adopt a new Constitution- had broken Democracy's value system by forcibly ousting its first freely-elected President[191]. The year of 2014 thus marked the end of Tunisia and Egypt's 'common path'.

Why did Democracy 'work out' in Tunisia and not in Egypt? What were the underlying elements that resulted in an arguably successful democratic transition in Tunisia and a *reverse-wave* in Egypt?

These are the main questions this chapter attempts to answer.

[189] William J. Dobson, "Is this the Fourth Wave of Democracy?", *The Washington Post*, March 22, 2001, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/post/is-this-the-fourth-wave-of-democracy/2011/03/22/ABKBatDB_blog.html?utm_term=.82365b27cad9.
[190] Larry Diamond, "What is Democracy?", (Lecture, Hilla University for Humanistic Studies, Hilla, Iraq, January 21, 2004), https://diamond-democracy.stanford.edu/speaking/lectures/what-democracy.
[191] "The Arab spring: made in Tunisia, broken in Egypt", editorial, *The Guardian*, January 16, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/16/leader-2-arab-spring-tunisia-egypt.

### 3.1 Key events and decisions of the interim period: how protests were controlled, what concessions were made and how elections were organized

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the decisions and action plans undertaken during the interim period were very distinct in Tunisia and Egypt, with the former undergoing a relatively smooth, compromise-laden and 'traditional' transition and the latter a substantially more troubled, 'extreme' and unorthodox path.

Tunisia's process was by no means completely peaceful and linear, with several 'hiccups' and disagreements, but all in all there was a common wish from both society's and the political realm to do what was best for the country and as such there was a strong effort to listen to and as much as possible take into consideration protesters demands. Protests were controlled as much as possible through a path of dialogue and comprehension, with sporadic outbursts of violence being responded to when necessary and in a robust way, with the acquiescence of the political partners.

Essebsi's legalization of *Ennahda* was a major event of the interim period, as it constituted a clear sign of embracing the full plurality of parties regardless of their religious, political or social orientations, a key requirement for nations to be seen as democratic.

Besides the continued openness to concessions from the part of *Ennahda* throughout the entire transitional process, another fundamental stakeholder –especially in the final stage of Tunisia's elaboration of a Constitution- was the 'Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet' and more particularly the Worker's Union. "The UGTT was an effective mobilizer, particularly because it served as a platform for such a wide variety of voices and opinions, bringing them together in service of a common goal"[192]. This 'united effort' from all sectors of Tunisian society and political spectrum ensured that the Constituent Assembly managed to eventually

[192] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 198.

–after several other hiccups- adopt a new Constitution on January 26th, 2014 and successful parliamentarian elections were held in October 2014, thus ending in an arguably successful manner Tunisia's democratic transition.

Egypt's interim period was decisively a more turbulent endeavour; throughout that time there was neither a clear dialogue between the governing powers and the population, nor one with the opposition parties regarding concessions and compromises to be reached. The reason for this was the very tissue of Egypt's post Arab-Spring scenario: the unorthodox gripping to power, first by the SCAF and subsequently by President Mohamed Morsi.

The sole presence of the military (SCAF) as a post-revolutionary player sufficed for the question "[a]re the old guard and entrenched elites (…) as well as Islamists ready for the transition to democracy?"[193] to be raised. These queries and fears were well justified, as throughout the interim period the military would prove to be a clear impediment and hampered a successful democratic transition. "The increasingly aggressive role of the SCAF during the months after the revolution tempered the initial euphoria of reformers (…) [c]elebration of the Arab Spring in Egypt was tempered by fear that it might be hijacked by remnants of the Mubarak regime's institutions"[194]. There was deep and widespread fear that the revolution would result in the substitution of an authoritarian regime for a military one, since the military "controlled as much as 30 to 40 percent of Egypt's economy and was for years autonomous with little or no governmental oversight or accountability"[195]. The military's power and influence was enrooted in all sectors of Egypt's society giving it the ability, if so it decided, to easily take advantage of the situation and cement its position as unquestionable leaders and drivers of the fate of post-Mubarak Egypt.

[193] *Ibidem*, 212.
[194] *Ibidem*.
[195] *Ibidem*.

Conflicts between the military and other participants and actors attempting to lay-down and influence Egypt's post-revolutionary reality, was a transversal occurrence of the 'aftershock' period.

When, after Morsi's overthrow, in mid-August sit-ins by his supporters were staged at the Rabaa Al-Adawiya Mosque and in Nahda Square demanding his reinstitution in power as the legitimately elected leader, these protests were cut-short by security forces who stormed in both locations and killed dozens of people. This episode resulted in national and international outcry and "evidenced what many suspected was a looming reality: Egypt's return to military led-authoritarianism[196]. General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi actions as interim leader further moved towards the implementation of a new authoritarian and liberty-less state. Meetings of more than 10 people were banned and no political opinions were to be voiced in public, with the punishment for law-breakers being imprisonment or even death by execution[197].

Al-Sisi's unsurprising, landslide victory in a second, post-constitutional review presidential election held in May 2014, ended Egypt's democratic transition with a clear regression.
While in Tunisia's case throughout the entire interim period we experienced dialogue between all of the political and societal stake-holders with concessions being made -even if many times these paradoxically resulted in the reduction or even a complete loss of power by the democratically elected parties- in the name of a successful democratic transition and for the sake of Tunisia's stability and future, a contrasting reality emerged in Egypt.

The vindications and demands of Egypt's population were rarely met with concessions, and even more strikingly was the fact that these protests were leveraged in turn both by the acting leader and by the opposition as a means of either tightening the grip or having a justification

[196] *Ibidem*, 228-229.
[197] *Ibidem*, 230.

to overthrow the ruler. A tug of war for power by both the SCAF and Mohamed Morsi taunted Egypt's democratic process and led to what could arguably have been a successful and lasting political transition if egos, selfishness and inconsiderate actions had been left at bay, ending-up in a breakdown.

### 3.2 Role of the stakeholders: government, religion, political parties and the military

As we have seen, the route undertaken by the elected *Ennahda* and the *Muslim Brotherhood*'s offspring *FJP* parties in Tunisia and Egypt respectively, was very distinct. As discussed in Chapter I, Islam was a fundamental common denominator as both parties had an Islamic nature; nonetheless the path taken and the degree in which the precepts of Islam were adopted in the countries new post-revolutionary reality differed.

The drafting of a new Constitution was the fundamental test for the designated cabinets as this cornerstone text would not only decide the political, social and economic direction of the respective country but also, and most importantly, it would also decide the degree of submission to Islam to be adopted from there on.

In Tunisia, Caid Essebsi's technocratic 'caretaker government' understood that its task was solely that of keeping the country 'on its feet and working' through the transitory phase that would take post-revolutionary Tunisia towards, firstly and most importantly, the election of a constituent assembly in charge of drafting a new Constitution and then to both Parliamentary and Presidential elections. This understanding was also extended to the general populace who was thus appeased by the government's composition and finite timeline. The legalization of previously banned parties was another crucial action taken by the cabinet, as it was a clear omen that elections to be held would be free and fair in nature.

Religion and its role in post-revolutionary Tunisia was a central and pivotal issue as it would not only shape the Constitution but would thereafter outline and govern all aspects of the country's future. Although Tunisia was undoubtedly an Islamic country and this reality had to be safeguarded, nonetheless it was the degree of commitment to Islam and its precepts that would be the key balance to be drawn. Despite Islam being of transversal importance in Tunisia, it was also true that as Islam wasn't one of the 'bastions' of the revolution, Tunisian's weren't extremely concerned on it's role in the post-revolutionary state and "cared more about a new government, its political institutions and democratization"[198]. In a survey conducted in 2012, a year after the revolution, only 26% of Tunisians believed that Islam should have a major role in government policies [199]. This reality gave the Constituent Assembly's most voted party *Ennahda* -and the consequent coalition- the ability to embark on a less conformist Islamic path.

This direction undertaken by *Ennahda* can be connected to the character and thinking of its leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, to 'realpolitik' and to the Islamic traditions of the party itself. "Ghannouchi's years in exile provided him with the space to see and reflect, to refine his understanding of secularism and democracy, to study their diverse potential applications in the Arab world and Tunisia in particular, and finally to return home in 2011 with a sense of the direction the country needed to go"[200].

From the very beginning *Ennahda* portrayed and positioned itself and its Islamic heritage in a very moderate manner. Despite being historically rooted in the *Muslim Brotherhood*, *Ennahda* was quick to distance itself from this 'umbrella institution' and decided to undertake its own separate route. As Alison Pargeter contends:

[198] *Ibidem*, 189.
[199] *Ibidem*.
[200] *Ibidem*, 189-190.

> [*Ennahda*] was born out of the same reformist Islamist tradition as the Brotherhood, sharing a broad ideological platform with the movement as well as many of its spiritual references, it always guarded its independence. (…) [*Ennahda*] was never constrained, therefore, by the Brotherhood's heavy sense of tradition or duty to the global movement's core ideological principles. [*Ennahda*] had also freed itself from the Brotherhood's obsession with loyalty and obedience, enabling Ghannouchi not only to develop his ideas independently of the movement, but also to become a personality in his own right. Thus, while [*Ennahda*] certainly has strong links to the Brotherhood, it has always forged its own distinct path[201].

This religious reality would prove fundamental to the unfolding of events during Tunisia's democratic consolidation attempt.

When in September 2011 *Ennahda* unveiled its political programme, it was immediately understood that while acknowledging Tunisia's Islamic heritage and the need to respect and safeguard it, it was also 'forward-thinking' and liberal-minded. As Pargeter explains, it vouched to:

> [establish] a democratic system founded on the basis of 'freedoms, dignity, the supremacy of the Constitution, rule of law and all standards of good governance'; implementing an economic and social plan aimed at 'providing jobs for all Tunisian men and women, offering all the amenities of a dignified life, achieving balanced regional development and promoting investment in all economic sectors'; and building a 'modern, balanced society, steeped in solidarity and rooted in its identity as well as contemporary culture'[202].

Furthermore and on a religious level, within *Ennahda's* programme "[a]lthough it listed Islam as 'a supreme point of reference' and stipulated its desire to affirm Tunisia's Arabic and Islamic identity, there were few overt references to Islam or the identity of the state in the document"[203] and on points where there were references to the importance of Islam in certain aspects of daily life, these were imbedded amongst more liberal and 'humanitarian' assertions. During the campaign leading up to the Constituent Assembly elections, not only did Ghannouchi make it clear that he had no intentions of implementing Sharia, but his

[201] Alison Pargeter, *Return to the Shadows: The Muslim Brotherhood and An-Nahda Since the Arab Spring* (London: Saqi Books, 2016), chap. 6, Kindle.
[202] *Ibidem*.
[203] *Ibidem*.

daughter Soumaya went on to state that "[*Ennahda* did] not believe in a theocracy that imposes a lifestyle or thoughts or ways of life on people; [but that it did believe] in the right of every Tunisian woman and man to make their choice"[204]. This was a very important strategy as by doing so neither did *Ennahda* have to commit to following more orthodox Islamic stances, nor did it 'turn its back' on Tunisia's religious heritage.

The above stance, and despite the compromises that had to be made by *Ennahda* throughout the Constituent Assembly's drafting process, 'set the tone' for the drafting of Tunisia's 2014 Constitution.

The text, born after a long and tumultuous process, contemplated an *avant-garde* role for religion, but one regardful of differing factions and feelings within society. The reality of Tunisia meant that despite the moderate and liberal general stance of *Ennahda*, there existed also a more orthodox –Salafist based- part of society, which naturally pushed for greater adherence to Islam. A need for compromise and conciliation between differing interest-groups led to the wording of articles such as number 6[205], which "attempted to appease two very different segments of society: a religious cadre that saw the government as the protector *of* religion, and a staunchly secular contingent that viewed the government as the protector *from* religion"[206].

The nature and 'non-amendability' of article 2[207] and the inclusion of article 18[208] was another safeguard to the civil and citizens'-based nature of Tunisia's Democracy, and confined the role the military to that of securing the state's borders and its inhabitant's protection, withdrawing from this institution any and all political power.

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[204] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 190.
[205] Please see Annex A.
[206] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 197.
[207] Please see Annex A.
[208] *Ibidem*.

Tunisia's military, unlike Egypt's and as was witnessed during the revolutionary process, had always distanced itself from politics and greatly respected the existent civil/military separation. The inclusion of these articles as safeguarding measures to prevent future military takeovers undoubtedly stemmed from a valid fear that if these 'checks and balances' weren't clearly stipulated and 'cast in stone', actions and events such as those which occurred in Egypt could also take place in Tunisia.

As John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll note:

> [T]he consensus that emerged [with Tunisia's Constitution] was a testament to Tunisia's democratic transition (…) the restructuring of the political process in a way that honoured the institutions of democracy and did not allow one group or individual to dominate the process[209].

The plan of action undertaken by the designated cabinet and the political direction given by *Ennahda* were focused at designing and building a free, plural, democratic and accountable political edifice where the ultimate deciding voice was that of the people. The military's professionalism and notion of its 'place' within the new Tunisia was key to the arguable success of the process.

In Egypt's case, and as we have seen, the army -whether legally or illegally- had a major role throughout the revolutionary process. From the onset this institution 'took the reins of command' and in all ways possible attempted to maximize its power and leverage the entire transitional course.

Initially the role of the *Muslim Brotherhood* was one of acting as opposition and 'containment' to the unchallenged increase in power of the Military. Having been practically the only -even if banned- opposition group during the Mubarak era, the *Muslim Brotherhood* had an upper hand in post-revolutionary Egypt. Its charity works and the deep-rooted, encompassing and quantifiable nature of its actions and institutions –schools, health clinics,

[209] John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring*, 198.

food banks, etc.- also gave it a wide base of support mainly amongst poor Egyptians[210]. The *Muslim Brotherhood* was ideologically arguably a hard-line Islamist party, which rejected modernism, believed that Sharia should be the unchallenged 'source of law' and opposed Christian Copts holding the posts of president or prime minister. The *Muslim Brotherhood*'s platform issued in 2007 argued that "the state plays a fundamental role in enforcing sharia and in building the Islamic character of individuals and society [and that f]or this reason, a non-Muslim could not hold any of the most senior posts"[211]. This being said, soon after the January 25th revolution that deposed Mubarak the party understood that it needed to moderate its tone as a means of attempting to take advantage of both its popular base of support and the possible 'catch-all' effect that a more moderate and encompassing version might have. The creation of the *FJP* soon thereafter was the selected platform, which vouched that if chosen through free and fair elections, women and Copts could take up leading political posts[212]; furthermore the Sheikh of al-Azhar University – Egypt's key centre of Sunni thought- issued in June 2011 a statement which:

> [d]rawing on Islamic principles and doctrine, it expressed support for a democratic state based on a constitution approved by the citizenry[,] [i]t called for a separation of powers, protection of civil and political rights, equality for women and Copts, and a freely elected parliament with unrestricted authority to draft and adopt laws[213].

This consequential movement of the *FJP* away from one end of the political spectrum and towards the center was an attempt "to find common ground with liberal and secular actors"[214]. Such strategy proved fruitful, with the party winning 47% of the votes in the parliamentarian elections.

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[210] Alison Pargeter, *Return to the Shadows: The Muslim Brotherhood and An-Nahda Since the Arab Spring* (London: Saqi Books, 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.
[211] Bruce K. Rutheford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising", 48.
[212] *Ibidem*.
[213] *Ibidem*.
[214] *Ibidem*.

Mohamed Morsi's presidential campaign proved to bear a new shift in the political spectrum of the party, as a means of mobilizing the more conservative base of the *Brotherhood*'s supporters and other conservative parties (especially the *al-Nour*) from which he hoped to win those 'hard-line Islamist' votes that had landed elsewhere in the parliamentarian elections[215]. While this shift proved a winning approach, as Morsi went on to win both the first –and eventually- the second round of the Presidential elections, this volatility and malleability of the *FJP*'s stances and ideas raised worries on the true adherence to moderation of the *Brotherhood*. As Alison Pargeter maintains, the reality that surfaced with Morsi's victory in the Presidential elections was that:

> The Brotherhood, it seemed, was finally meeting its own destiny. Prior to taking up the presidency, Morsi had proclaimed that the Brotherhood would reconquer Egypt Islamically, and would build 'the Islamic State in Egypt on the same principle of the first Islamic state that was established in Al-Medina'[,] [while] it seems to have been carried away by the euphoria of the moment[,] [it was] clear that, amid the heady elation, the Brotherhood believed in its own rhetoric, and thought itself to be unstoppable[216].

It thus seemed that the rhetoric of the *FJP* was an 'electoral bluff card' played with success in the parliamentarian elections but rapidly withdrawn thereafter. As Pargeter goes on to add:

> [W]hile the Brotherhood might have won the trust of a significant body of the electorate, there were whole swathes of Egyptian society that, if not openly hostile, were deeply suspicious of it before it had even started[.] Although the Brotherhood could be sure of its own core support base, many Egyptians had voted for it because it was an untested power that represented an untainted moral force (…) In addition, those opposition figures who had thrown their weight behind Morsi in this second round had done so on a promise that he would move beyond the Brotherhood and be a president for all Egyptians. The Brotherhood thus came to rule with one hand already tied behind its back[217].

The lack of a post-electoral agenda and the 'thirst for power' that overwhelmed Morsi once he had fairly reached the Presidential post and the consequential decision of the SCAF to 'in

[215] *Ibidem*, 49.
[216] Alison Pargeter, *Return to the Shadows: The Muslim Brotherhood and An-Nahda Since the Arab Spring*, chap. 2, Kindle.
[217] *Ibidem*.

name of the well-being of Egypt' overthrow Morsi in June 2013, put 'once and for all' any – even if by then, very feeble- hopes of a successful democratic transition to rest.

In Asaf Bayat's words:

> In Egypt, President Mubarak's downfall opened the way for a new parliament, president, and constitution. But the institutions and the power base of the Mubarak regime, even though challenged, remained mostly immune; in fact, they harboured the forces of counterrevolution that ultimately took power from President Mohamed Morsi in a military coup on June 3, 2013[218].

It was the unclear nature of the elected party's agenda, the overpowering role and strength of the military institutions throughout the entire process and the generalized desire for power, the individual action of the actors involved and lack of 'team-work', the absence of dialogue and nurturing of democratic institution-building between the different parts of Egypt's society, that dictated the negative outcome of Egypt's transition.

The constitutional drafting process in Egypt was by no means a linear task, as it suffered from the same changes of political, religious and institutional agendas that affected the overall democratic process. While an initial Constitution had been introduced by the Morsi headed cabinet in December 2012, the hard Islamic nature of its wording and overall objectives meant that after Morsi's overthrow a new Constituent Assembly was appointed by the SCAF to alter the articles that proved most controversial.

The Constitution adopted in 2014, comparatively to that of Tunisia, fell short of expectations. It did not prove to be a 'ground-breaking' document, but it nevertheless did introduce several articles that made it a somewhat liberal and progressive text. It safeguards the separation and balance of powers, limits the power of the President and, by placing sovereignty and ultimate power with the people as well as safeguarding the principles of equality, justice and freedom of political and social association –despite some boundaries-,

[218] Asaf Bayat, *Revolution Without Revolutionaries*: *Making sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 12.

seems to theoretically follow the precepts of a liberal and plural state. While Article 1[219] does state the Republican nature of Egypt's state and the adherence to the rule of law, Article 2[220], and unlike what occurred in Tunisia, underpins Sharia as the law of the state. Nevertheless, the fact that the Constitution goes on to include several articles that are conflicting of Sharia Law makes one wonder if the inclusion of a reference to Sharia wasn't but an attempt at appeasing the more orthodox wing of society, and the inclusion thereafter of articles such as number 11[221], a means of 'cancelling out' its effectiveness. Alike in Tunisia, Article 200[222] attempts to moderate the Military's power, but the lack of any comment on 'impartiality' or separation of the military from political life means that several loopholes are present, which can easily be used in the future to -once more- usurp power.

All in all, despite the tumultuous Egyptian post-revolutionary timeline and the apparent 'lagging behind' of its Constitution in comparison with Tunisia's, and notwithstanding the undemocratic events that led to its ultimate correction and adoption, the final text approved in January 2014 can be argued to have been a successful outcome to the entire process.

### 3.3 The role and impact of the international community in the "Springs": bystander or active participant?

Rather than speaking of the role of the international community in the Tunisia and Egypt "Springs", one should speak of the lack thereof. Both countries are 'anomalies' in the region as they lack the presence of a fundamental element, *black gold* –although Tunisia derived some modest income from its hydrocarbon reserves. This factor would suffice in itself to justify why these countries seemingly deserved less attention and preoccupation from the international community. Furthermore, the fact that -unlike what occurred in Libya and

[219] Please see Annex B.
[220] *Ibidem*.
[221] *Ibidem*.
[222] *Ibidem*.

Syria- the uprisings did not degenerate into full-fledged civil wars, where civilian lives where at grave risk from governmental actions and the use of illicit weapons, moreover justifies the absence of an active role from the international community. While in both cases protests and acts of military and police aggression quickly turned viral as a result of social media diffusion and more often than not were met with great international outcry and criticisms, unlike in the other aforementioned cases 'words did not have to pass to actions'.

Despite these more direct and apparent motives for a lack of role of the International Community in both Egypt and Tunisia's cases, there were additional underlying reasons.

Firstly, there was a clear notion of non-interference in the self-determination of the people that had decided to demand the ousting of their rulers; one of the pillars of Democracy and liberal world order is the notion that 'power stands with the people' and thus, when people decide that no reform suffices to change the status quo, they have a right –if not even a duty- to revolt against and overthrow the standing ruler. At the same time, and resultantly, violence and repression from the governing bodies is not to be tolerated. It thus came as no surprise when individual countries and institutions such as the European Union (EU), in the case of Tunisia, were quick to "express [their] support and recognition to the Tunisian people and their democratic aspirations (…) [while urging] all parties to show restraint and remain calm in order to avoid further casualties and violence"[223] and in the case of Egypt, called upon "Egyptian authorities to respect and to protect the right of Egyptian citizens to manifest their political aspirations"[224]. The fact that Tunisia and Egypt's former colonizing-powers -France and the United Kingdom respectively- attempted to keep as much as possible away from any interference in the revolutions seems abnormal but has a strong justification, as French

[223] "In quotes: Reaction to Tunisian crisis", *BBC*, January 15, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12197681.
[224] "Egypt's allies warn government must respect democratic rights or face revolt", *The Telegraph*, January 26, 2011, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8283531/Egypts-allies-warn-government-must-respect-democratic-rights-or-face-revolt.html.

President Nicolas Sarkozy argued when speaking of Tunisia that "[a] former colonial power should never 'make judgments' on the internal workings of countries that once made up its empire"[225]. Non-interference, in order not to be seen as a patronizing or neo-colonialist power, was thus a key imperative.

Secondly, and arguably most importantly, the stance maintained by certain countries such as the United States and France was one of initially defending the legitimacy of the ruler in power. This was greatly due to the 'fear of the unknown', in so much as it seemed better to maintain a known dictator in power than vouch for his removal and live in uncertainty of who and what will follow. Relations between those dictators and the international community had taken decades to build and consolidate and the risk of jeopardizing it in the name of the unknown was too high. As such and while theoretically supporters of liberal Democracy and democratization processes, those countries preferred to maintain the good-standing relations with a known and loyal trade-partner. This notion was clearly described by an EU official when stating that France's 'agnosticism' regarding the Tunisian protests went "along the lines of 'better the dictator you know than the dictator you don't'"[226]. While throughout most recent decades United States (US) Presidents, namely George W. Bush whose Presidency proved more concerned and proactive in such matters, had indeed condemned Human Rights violations and repressions in these countries and attempted to promote some degree of liberalization, the US's Foreign Policy regarding the Arab Springs, and even preceding, was very much patent to the above ideas. As Elliott Abrams describes in his book *Realism and Democracy: US Foreign Policy after the Arab Spring*, "American policy toward democracy in the Arab states has wavered over the decades from uninterested

[225] Angelique Chrisafis, "Sarkozy admits France made mistakes over Tunisia", *The Guardian*, January 24, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/24/nicolas-sarkozy-tunisia-protests.
[226] Ian Traynor and Kim Willsher, "Tunisian protests have caught Nicolas Sarkozy off guard, say opposition", *The Guardian*, January 17, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/17/tunisian-protests-sarkozy-off-guard.

and sceptical (usually) to supportive (occasionally), but even when it has been supportive, it has often been ineffective"[227]. This wavering has much to do with changes in the US's presidencies and the adoption of more or less proactive and interventive foreign policies.

Since the George W. Bush years, the lack of promotion of Democracy has had mainly a twofold reasoning: firstly there exists "fear that political openings will lead to Islamist takeovers that would change friendly countries and allies into enemies" and secondly, there has been deep-felt pessimism on the likelihood that Democracy will 'take-root' in these countries as "[p]olitical openings are thought very unlikely to produce democracy, and the fear is that instead their result would be Islamist rule or sheer chaos"[228]. Moreover, the failed attempt at implementing Democracy in Iraq further demonstrated some of the main underlying difficulties of attempting to transpose western style Democracy to such different realities as those existent in the MENA region.

In Egypt's case:

> "[c]onsiderable pressure was put on the Mubarak regime in 2004–2006 for some movement toward a more open political system. It began to work (…) [and in] 2005 the constitution was changed to provide for direct election of the president [instead of the previous parliamentary election for this post]"[229].

What seemed like a small step towards democratization was in fact a very important one as it established a principle of plural and fair elections, which as we have seen –and despite the overall failure- was transported to and adopted during the Arab Spring.

In the case of Tunisia, the US wasn't a traditional ally and thus didn't have such an influence as say France or the EU. The country had however a very important function in the region as a stabilizing nation, and as such Americans were very cautious to voice and try to force change in order not to endanger this delicate function. Thus, while the American

[227] Elliott Abrams, *Realism and Democracy: US Foreign Policy after the Arab Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 155.
[228] *Ibidem*, 155-156.
[229] *Ibidem*, 160.

administration did several times criticize Human Rights violations and "expressed concerns about the poor state of democratization on the one hand, [it also] praised Tunisia for its role in 'stabilizing the region and combating terror"[230].

All in all, American Foreign Policy in the region has been one of attempting to maintain the delicate balance between safeguarding political stability while at the same time attempting to promote some degree of openness towards greater freedoms and Human Rights.

Thirdly, Tunisia and Egypt can be labelled as 'rentier states' of respectively the EU and the US. Initially through the EU's 'Association Agreement' and later the 'European Neighbourhood Policy's, EU-Tunisia Action Plan', the EU allocated large amounts of aid to Tunisia to help economic development, and in exchange laid down seventy-nine concrete measures within six areas of cooperation: "political dialogue and reforms, economic and social reforms, trade, market and regulatory reforms, cooperation on justice and home affairs, transport, energy, information society, the environment and science and technology, [together with] people-to-people contacts"[231], possibly inspired by Robert Dahl's 'six requirements for democratization'. Even though in theory the provision of aid would be exchanged for the country committing itself to pursue Democracy through the development of necessary institutions, what occurred in practice was that the partnership became a mere "exchange of commercial, financial and strategic interests"[232] and the 'democratization' part of the initial formula was dropped. The European Neighbourhood partnership demonstrated that the EU's main concern was fomenting a good relationship with Tunisia and economically aiding its development, well in line with Seymour Martin Lipset's rhetoric that economic development inevitably leads to democratization, but what ended up happening

[230] *Ibidem*, 167.
[231] *EU policies in Tunisia before and after the revolution* (Brussels: EU Parliament's Directorate General for External Policies, 2016), 12.
[232] *Ibidem*, 23.

was that Tunisia 'lived-off' the EU's rent without having had to offer anything concrete in return.

US economic aid (USAID) to Egypt had been a reality since the 1990's under President Bill Clinton[233] and the country has had a key role as a US ally in the Middle East, with its geostrategic location being seen as fundamental for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Despite having initiated all Arab-Israeli wars until the 1980's, following the Camp David Accords Egypt was the first state to recognize Israel and it has since played a key role in the UN for consensus to be reached on issues regarding peace and stability in the region[234]. Its priority access to the Suez Canal and its potential as opposition to Islamic Radicalism were other key factors that made the US have a great interest in ensuring excellent relations with such a crucial ally[235]. Thus, "[a]lthough US governments were interested in promoting democracy in Egypt, American-Egyptian relations mainly depended on the USA's economic and security interests, which [made] it necessary to have close ties with the region's autocratic regimes"[236]. While democratization and greater liberalization should have been a by-product of the US's economic assistance to Egypt,

"[d]espite $800 million in foreign aid delivered by USAID throughout the 1990s and 2000s for decentralization projects in Egypt, the program failed to change the deep-rooted centralized political system in Egypt that [constrained] any kind of political liberalization in the country"[237] and as such "the assistance and aid delivered by USAID to Egypt since the 1970s [and up to the Arab Spring] failed to reform the Egyptian authoritarian regime in which the president [had] an overwhelming authority in all levels of political, economic and

[233] Müge Aknur and Erkan Okalan, "The Limited Impact of the USA on Political Liberalization in Egypt during the Mubarak Era", *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 53.
[234] *Ibidem*.
[235] *Ibidem*.
[236] *Ibidem*.
[237] *Ibidem*.

social life"[238]. Despite its theoretical aims, what occurred in practice was that "[i]n general, the government exploited USAID funds for its own use to enhance its authoritarian rule and continue Egypt's corrupted political system"[239].

Both cases here discussed demonstrate how the importance of Tunisia and Egypt, respectively for the EU and the US, was sufficient to justify the continuing provisions of 'loaded' economic aid, despite the fact that democratization and liberalization conditions demanded in return were never fulfilled nor enforced.

### 3.4 Why by 2014 Tunisia was seen as a success story while Egypt had reverted the democratic route? What lessons can be learnt?

The arguable success of Tunisia's democratic transition and Egypt's reversal can be linked to several factors, some more intrinsic to the history of the states and others linked to processes and decisions taken during the course of the uprisings.

Firstly, Tunisia's history and tradition as a progressive and liberal state in the MENA region meant that the steps undertaken throughout the transition, the attempts at consensus, and the proactive role of civil institutions and civil society weren't sudden successes but were in fact the result of a prolonged process.

As we have seen, Habib Bourguiba was a progressive leader who had developed a 'non-conformist' view on what Tunisia's future should entail. Despite the fact that both himself and his actions were heavily criticized by conservative Tunisian's, and despite through his policies (mainly religious, educational and linguistic) virtually transforming Tunisia into a secular state uprooted from its Islamic traditions and heritages, it cannot be denied that the positive transformations in Tunisian society (urbanization, education, female emancipation

[238] *Ibidem*, 58.
[239] *Ibidem*.

and empowerment) resultant from Bourguiba's vision and actions greatly overruled the negatives and have had everlasting effects in shaping which is present-day Tunisia. While we believe that the presence of moderate-Islamism as the backbone of MENA societies is essential, we must acknowledge that it was greatly due to this experiment with secularism and with an approximation to western standards that Tunisia lay down the foundations for its Arab-Spring success-story.

Secondly, the character and attitude of *Ennahda* -in contrast to that of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood's *FJP*- was another major ingredient for Tunisia's success. As has been analysed in Chapter II, the realities in both countries and the vindications of protesters in the eve of the uprisings were very similar.

In Tunisia, when realizing that preserving power was proving to be more detrimental than beneficial to the democratic process, *Ennahda* placed all electoral legitimacy aside and in an act of rational superiority, stepped down from power.

In Egypt on the other hand, usurpation of power was quick to re-occur, first with the SCAF and then with Morsi, demonstrating how despite the aims and vindications that had resulted in Mubarak's ousting, no lessons had seemingly been learnt and 'thirst' for power and complete control continued to be placed high above notions of fair-elections, political plurality and basic civil liberties.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly was the role of the Military. While in Tunisia, and throughout its most-recent history, the military never had a part in the country's politics – with the exception of a 'surgical' intervention on the 14$^{th}$ of January 2011 that forced Ben Ali's ousting- the same cannot be said of Egypt where the "vast Egyptian army [had]

hovered close to the throne of every president since Nasser"[240] and was deeply enrooted in all sectors of society.

As this deep society's connection to, trust and even dependence on the military meant that this institution could use this leverage as a 'trump card' and knew that no one could really overrule its power, its involvement became very evident in all stages of the transition, as eloquently described by *The Guardian*:

> "where [in Tunisia] Ennahda moved with caution and regard for consensus, the [Egyptian] Brotherhood drafted a constitution that many revolutionaries rejected (…) [as such and f]earing theocracy, some appealed to the military, whose head, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, duly ordered the arrest of the first freely elected president, and killed the revolution"[241].

The willingness of post-revolution elites to abide by, and respect democratic practices, is a fundamental source of differentiation between the aftermaths in both countries.

The temptation of falling back to familiar old habits, in one's 'comfort-zone', is an ever-present reality, undoubtedly more appealing than pursuing an unknown and untrodden path towards a new and 'unknown' objective. It takes a strong, focused and resilient firmness of purpose from all agents involved to ensure that the goal and aim of Democracy is maintained and respected, despite the many concessions to be made and difficulties that may be found along the way, until its full realization.

In the introductory chapter we stated that when structures of the old regime are deeply enrooted in society, have vast influence and power and are not open to abdicate pretentions to rule, either a country is robust enough to be able to prevent that these imperil attempts at democratization, or most likely than not no successful transition will occur. The Egyptian military's 'thirst for power' in conjunction with the institutional and oppositional vacuum

[240] "The Arab spring: made in Tunisia, broken in Egypt", editorial, *The Guardian*, January 16, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/16/leader-2-arab-spring-tunisia-egypt.
[241] *Ibidem*.

existent in the country, allowed them to enact their aspirations in an unchallenged manner and to recover its decade-long position as the de-facto ruling institution in the country.

## Conclusion

History shows that 'revisionist' factions too easily fill any power vacuums, while a successful transition to post-authoritarian regimes can only occur when a conglomerate of socio-political actors defend, and aim for, a positive conclusion to the democratisation process.

Egypt suffered from its traditional anti-West, post-Nasser past and the lack of an active role by – barely existent - grass-roots actors such as political movements and trade unions and from the abnormally paramount role of the Army in all levels of the national life, together with a lack of institutional flexibility partially resulting from the Muslim Brotherhood's *FJP* positions.

This, together with the lack of a clear vision and forward-looking mind-set from the ruling class, and of institutions whose ultimate goal should be to serve the population and satisfy their demands and aspirations, eventually condemned Egypt's transition into Democracy.

Tunisia's outcome on the other hand demonstrates that it was the conjunction of a western-minded 'tradition', allied to the rectitude, open-mindedness and cooperative attitude demonstrated by civil society and the politicians –an example of which was *Ennahda*'s detachment from 'orthodox' precepts, allowing Tunisia to follow a moderate Islamic path in the entire transitional process- lead to an unique 'alliance' between strong willed representatives of labour and professional corporations, and forward-looking political party leaderships in the post-revolutionary unrolling of events which, together with the foundations laid by a history of liberal tendencies, ultimately shaped its (provisional) success.

These contrasting results seem to validate our previously stipulated principle that moderate Islamism and Democracy may indeed be compatible, providing that a set of conditions such

as a historical background, a generalized willingness to cooperate and a 'plan of action' drawn-up and undertaken by the various, compromise-ready 'stakeholders' are met, eventually leading to a positive result of a country's transition.

Furthermore, the adoption of an Ottoman-inspired 'Millet System' as a tool to accommodate intrinsic sectorial aspirations within a given 'Democracy-candidate' country, might possibly facilitate attaining the final objective.

It is however unclear whether other MENA countries, often closed to 'liberal-Islamic' tendencies, will be able to follow a democratization path in the very near future, as the absence of a set of preconditions may imply that considerably stronger –externally driven?- impulses must be present in them in order to maximize the probability of a successful transition.

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## Annexes

### Annex A – Articles 2, 6 and 18 of Tunisia's Constitution of 2014[242]

**Title One: General Principles**

**Article 2**
Tunisia is a civil state based on citizenship, the will of the people, and the supremacy of law. This article might not be amended.

**Article 6**
The state is the guardian of religion. It guarantees freedom of conscience and belief, the free exercise of religious practices and the neutrality of mosques and places of worship from all partisan instrumentalisation.
The state undertakes to disseminate the values of moderation and tolerance and the protection of the sacred, and the prohibition of all violations thereof. It undertakes equally to prohibit and fight against calls for Takfir [excommunication] and the incitement of violence and hatred.

**Article 18**
The national army is a republican army. It is an armed military force based on discipline that is composed and structurally organized in accordance with the law and charged with responsibility to defend the nation, its independence and its territorial integrity. It is required to remain completely impartial. The national army supports the civil authorities in accordance with the provisions set out in law.

[242] "Tunisia's Constitution of 2014", Constitute Project, accessed July 27, 2019, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014.pdf.

## Annex B - Articles 1, 2, 11 and 200 of Egypt's Constitution of 2014[243]

### Chapter One: The State

**Article 1: Nature of the Republic**
The Arab Republic of Egypt is a sovereign state, united and indivisible, where nothing is dispensable, and its system is democratic republic based on citizenship and the rule of law. Egypt is part of the Arab nation and enhances its integration and unity. It is part of the Muslim world, belongs to the African continent, is proud of its Asian dimension, and contributes to building human civilization.

**Article 2: Islam, Principles of Islamic Sharia**
Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic is its official language. The principles of Islamic Sharia are the principle source of legislation.

### Chapter Two: Basic Components of Society
***Section One: Social Components***

**Article 11: The place of women, motherhood and childhood**
The state commits to achieving equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. The state commits to taking the necessary measures to ensure appropriate representation of women in the houses of parliament, in the manner specified by law. It grants women the right to hold public posts and high management posts in the state, and to appointment in judicial bodies and entities without discrimination.
The state commits to the protection of women against all forms of violence, and ensures women empowerment to reconcile the duties of a woman toward her family and her work requirements.
The state ensures care and protection and care for motherhood and childhood, and for breadwinning, and elderly women, and women most in need.

***Section Eight: The Armed Forces and the Police Force***
**Subsection One: The Armed Forces**

**Article 200: Mandate**
The armed forces belong to the people. Their duty is to protect the country, and preserve its security and territories. The state is exclusively mandated to establish armed forces. No individual, entity, organization or group is allowed to create military or para-military structures, groups or organizations.
The armed forces have a Supreme Council as regulated by law.

[243] "Egypt's Constitution of 2014", Constitute Project, accessed July 29, 2019, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Egypt_2014.pdf.