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Explaining the Success of Tunisia's Democratic Transition

By

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To my loving parents

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Explaining the Success of Tunisia's Democratic Transition

Noura Raghdan Nader

Abstract

This thesis investigates the democratic transition in Tunisia and the reasons behind its success. It starts by examining the nature of democracy and the different factors that affect democratic transitions. The role of political economy, social cleavages and struggle, institutions, religion, and political agents in democratic transitions is contrasted among Arab states and thoroughly examined in Tunisia's case. This study showed how the circumstances became favorable for the Tunisian Uprising to occur in 2011 by presenting the history of Tunisia including the evolution of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and the economic liberalization the country had undergone, in addition to highlighting the role of social media. Moreover, Tunisia was the only country among the Arab Spring countries that experienced authoritarian breakdown and was also able to embark on a successful democratic transition. The process of this democratic transition is comprehensively explored by analyzing the role of the military, interim government, electoral politics, and the drafting of the new constitution. Tunisia's political actors and elites were committed to protect their new democratic principles, the constitution-making process was very inclusive and transparent, and the electoral reforms that were adopted gave a chance for other political parties to participate and compete in elections. The Arab spring was born in Tunisia and finally resulted in a successful democratic transition in the country.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Tunisia, Uprising, Democracy, Democratic Transitions, UGTT, Islam, Crony Capitalism, Electoral Politics, Ben Ali, Bourguiba, Islamist Movement, Constitution, Elections.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Situating the Thesis

Until the Arab uprisings of 2010, “Middle Eastern exceptionalism” was one of the most important explanations of the robustness and persistence of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. However, the Arab uprisings prompted a scholarly re-examination of the viability of this argument. The Arab spring has not only impacted Arab states, but also the scholarship on Arab politics. Despite recent stagnation in political developments in the Arab world, there is almost unanimous agreement that the region is undergoing major political changes. Most of the countries that were affected by the Arab uprisings are either experiencing civil wars (Syria, Libya and Yemen), military rule (Egypt), or regime resilience (Bahrain). With the exception of Tunisia, a democratic transition has not been seen in the post-Arab Spring states. Much of this debate has been centered around the instantaneous and primary causes of the Arab uprisings, their nature and diverse trajectories in Arab spring states, and the impact of these remarkable events on the future of Arab politics.

What is the Arab spring? Can we think of it as a singular process or multiple processes? Before turning to these debates and the implications of the Arab Spring, it is important to briefly discuss the process of state formation in the region.

Political boundaries in the Arab world emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman empire. The process of state formation in the Arab world differed greatly from that of the European one. Adham Saouli argues that “boundaries in the Arab world came *before*

states and constituted the social environments within which states could form, deform or develop" (2015, p.318). This process of state formation proved to be a challenge for Arab regimes and, in order to eliminate competition, these regimes dominated and monopolized tools of violence. During the 1950s, republics like Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Libya and Iraq witnessed a process of increasing domination by the army over political and social life. Royal families in monarchical regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, directly controlled coercion and in some cases even forced certain ideologies to overcome tribal and religious divisions as was the case with Wahabism in Saudi Arabia. The economic sphere was also dominated either by oil-rich monarchies, strategically located states, or populist republics (Saouli, 2015). The domination of social life by Arab regimes led to a narrow political participation, and an increased susceptibility to internal (civil wars, Arab spring) and external (invasions, wars) shocks. Despite the hegemony of Arab regimes over private and public spheres, contentions between nationalists, Islamists, religious and sectarian communities persisted.

For the most part, politics in the Arab world has been authoritarian and undemocratic. This is not unusual due to the colonial experience in the Arab world. According to Rex Brynen, Pete W. Moore, Bassel F. Salloukh and Marie-Joelle Zahar, "the decolonizations of the interwar and post-World War II years often resulted in authoritarian politics or produced the politics of fragility and internal violence- and in many cases a bit of both" (2012, p.4). In fact, the prevalence of authoritarianism in the Arab world was very similar to other developing countries and to Eastern Europe at the time. However, the "third wave of democratization" that started in Latin America in the 1970s and continued to Eastern Europe in the 1990s did not reach the Arab world

(Huntington, 1991). With the possible exception of Lebanon, authoritarianism persisted elsewhere in the region.

Scholars have provided different explanations in explaining the democratic deficit in the Middle East and academic literature covering Arab authoritarianism was in fact focused on analyzing and understanding regime stability and not on the actual politics in the region. Much of the explanation covering Arab authoritarianism has centered around: state rentiersim, Islamic laws and culture, the importance of tribal and ethnic relations, and gender suppression. The existing literature on Middle Eastern politics revolved around three categories: the essentialist, the contextualists, and the critical (Brynen et al, 2012). Essentialists regard culture to be highly resistant to change as it is deeply rooted in religion, history and social organization. Contextualists maintain that although culture is important, it is subject to change and variation. On the other hand, critics argue that political economy and institutional legacies are much more imperative than the analysis of political cultures (Brynen et al, 2012). Political Culture has always been the most popular theory used to explain authoritarian resilience in MENA region. Two important factors have been accused of impeding the democratization process in the Arab world. First, Islam as a religion was regarded inherently incompatible with democracy. Second, the Arab society has been characterized as tribal and patriarchal. Therefore, political parties and formal organizations and institutions can never lead to a political change. However, authoritarian persistence in the region was not due to Islam or to tribal and patriarchal networks. In fact, it was the result of certain social and economic policies that were applied systematically by authoritarian Arab regimes.

Arab regimes manipulated a number of formal institutional mechanisms such as elections, political parties and association laws, monarchical liberalization and hereditary succession to avoid political reforms that would have eventually led to the weakening of authoritarian regimes (Brynen et al, 2012). Also, Arab regimes organized and re-organized social pacts in order to control political life in their countries. "At the heart of these social pacts were neopatrimonial networks and strategies that sought to reward and sanction regime supporters and opponents, narrow the scope of civil society collective action, and disrupt opposition organization" (Brynen et al, 2012, p.289). Moreover, cultural and symbolic modes of production were monopolized and dominated by Arab regimes. As such, the Arab media's main agenda was to depoliticize and entertain the public through sports or cultural programs. Additionally, Arab regimes supported art, but only to shrewdly introduce them as means to undermine opposition and creative thinking (Brynen et al, 2012).

Arab regimes faced serious internal threats in the period between 1970 and 2010: Oman in the early 1970s; Syria in the late 1970s and early 1980s; Egypt in 1977 and the mid 1990s; Jordan in 1970-71, 1989, and 1996; Algeria in the 1990s; Saudi Arabia in 1979-80 and the mid 1990s, Iraq in 1991. Arab regimes relied on their militaries and security services to quell such uprisings (Gause, 2011). The scholarly community failed to predict these popular upheavals. This time, however, the violence, manipulation and domination deployed by Arab regimes against their citizens has failed to protect them from the demonstrations that swept the Arab world starting in December 2010. The world watched in awe as Arab citizens revolted against years of tyranny and authoritarianism. Scholars and journalists were quick to identify these uprisings as the

"Arab Spring" and associate them with democratization. Despite similar conditions leading to popular uprisings in the Arab world, the paths commenced by Arab spring states differed greatly. In some countries, authoritarian regimes collapsed, while others faced more protracted resistance. Although many post-Arab Spring states are experiencing civil wars and state fragmentation, Tunisia is widely seen as having the most successful democratic transition.

Today, the future of post-uprising Arab Spring states seems dark. For many, the Arab Spring has failed to democratize the region. Regional and international considerations that had apparently been marginalized at the beginning of the Arab uprisings, returned to the center of the Arab Spring. Moreover, while almost all the Arab citizens were receptive to the initial Arab protests, the majority of the Arab countries were able to avoid mass protests. Joshua Statcher argues that "The Arab uprisings' most visible product to date has been the militarization of politics and societies seen in an expansion of state violence against the citizenry, producing a qualitative change in state-society relations"(2015, p.260). The current landscape of the Arab world has led many observers to pronounce the death of the Arab Spring. However, the changes that started in 2011 are irreversible. Although the democratic transition in most post-uprising Arab Spring countries has been stalled, it does not mean that the region is currently undergoing a reversal wave. The Arab Spring and the success of the democratic transition in Tunisia have shown the significance of place, time and structural factors in explaining regime changes and prospects for democratic transitions in the region.

1.2 Research Questions

What then explains the success of the democratic transition in Tunisia compared to other post-uprising Arab states? After years of wondering why there are only a few democracies in Muslim countries and none in the Arab world, recent events have brought hope of a possible fourth wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991). The current perception of the Arab uprisings, with the exception of Tunisia, is that they were unsuccessful in bringing the long-awaited democratic transition in the region. But why was Tunisia successful? If the uprisings in the Arab world were caused by comparable reasons across the region, why were the trajectories of post-uprising Arab spring states divergent?

To answer these question, several topics need to be examined: What are the reasons behind the successful democratic transition in Tunisia? Were there any pre-requisites that enabled the democratic transition in Tunisia to move forward? If so, why did these same pre-requisites impact other Arab Spring states differently? Why did the Tunisian uprising, which led to the other uprisings, start in 2011 and not before? Is timing a decisive factor in the success of the Tunisian democratic transition?

A break from authoritarian rule does not necessarily mean that the transition towards democracy can be considered a successful one. In order to understand why Tunisia is considered an exception to other post-uprising Arab states, it is important to define what constitutes a successful democratic transition. This entails an examination of the process of state building in Tunisia to have a better understanding of the different societal and ideological cleavages that are still playing an important role in Tunisian

politics. Furthermore, a more thorough analysis of the geopolitical, economic and international factors should be applied to Tunisia.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis is a single case study in which the democratic transition from authoritarian rule in Tunisia is analyzed. The holistic factors particular to the Tunisian case will be examined to understand the reasons behind the successful democratic transition. Democratization theories will be used as a starting point and as a guideline for this research. Moreover, to fully understand this transition, the research will be based on the secondary literature relevant to the proposed study, plus desktop research in which journals and reports are used. After the material on democratic theory is examined and analyzed and the information about the Tunisian case is gathered, an attempt will be made to understand the “exceptionalism” of Tunisia in regard to its experience with democracy, as opposed to the experiences of the other Arab Spring states. Different aspects will be considered throughout the analysis including an understanding of the social and economic conditions at the time of the uprising, in addition to the role of social media. As such, this analysis will explain the reasons which led to the uprising transpiring in 2011 and not before; and will also show how some of these variables at the time facilitated, in turn, the later democratic transition in Tunisia.

One of the unavoidable paradoxes of academic literature covering post-authoritarian regime breakdowns and democratic transitions and consolidations is the considerable disagreement on how to define or measure democracy. Since democracy is

always a continuous variable, a consensual definition does not exist. Therefore, for this research Linz and Stephan's (1996) definition of democratic transitions will be adopted. In this thesis, Tunisia's political system will be evaluated against this definition to assess the democratic transition in the country.

1.4 Map of the Thesis

In the second chapter the theoretical framework is central. Theories on democratic transition are presented and discussed. Different factors and agents that played an important role in the democratic transition will be explored. Moreover, the chapter presents a brief overview of the uprisings in other Arab Spring states. The third chapter focuses on the Tunisian uprising. The particularities of the Tunisian state will be presented and analyzed. This chapter discusses why the Arab Spring started in Tunisia at that particular time. Thus, a historical, economic and political analysis of Tunisia is applied. The fourth chapter focuses on the process of democratic transition in Tunisia. The chapter focuses on the process of constitution-making and electoral reforms in Tunisia. The fifth and final chapter, explains the Tunisian puzzle: how come Tunisia is the only country in the Arab Spring states to witness a successful democratic transition. Moreover, it contemplates the future of the Arab Spring and its impact on the MENA region.

Chapter Two

The Factors Affecting Democratic Transitions

2.1 Introduction

In December 2010, massive and sustained public demonstrations demanding political freedom and regime change cascaded from Tunisia to Egypt, Yemen, Jordan and Bahrain. In turn, this inspired the citizens of Syria, Libya and Morocco to take to the streets to call for change. 2011 was an extraordinary year in the Arab world. Following the swift fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt and Qadhafi in Libya, many predicted that democratization has finally overcome "Middle East exceptionalism". Nonetheless, the impact of the Arab Spring came to be much more modest than what observers initially predicted. Of all the Arab Spring states today, the democratic transition in Tunisia is the most successful. According to Barbara Geddes (1999), there is a wide gap between authoritarian breakdown and the realization of an effective regime change or a successful democratic transition. It is one thing to remove an authoritarian leader and another to create a stable democracy. With the exception of Tunisia, the shared outcome of the Arab Spring was state collapse and sectarian, tribal, or ethnic wars.

This chapter examines the literature on democratic transitions in general, with a special focus on the uprisings of the Arab Spring states. It surveys the literature on uprisings and the factors that contribute to the success of democratic transitions. The literature review will be interpreted against the Tunisian case. It also discusses the different trajectories that resulted in various Arab Spring states. It concludes by

suggesting that Tunisia is endowed with certain conditions that are favorable to democratic transition.

2.2 Explaining Democratic Transitions

Guillermo O'Donnell (1992) differentiates between "transitions from authoritarian rule" and "democratic consolidation". The two distinct processes should be considered as two different transitions. While the first transition aspires to destabilize authoritarianism, the second transition involves an on-going process of introducing new democratic values and rules to the political sphere. This distinction is astute in order to understand democratic transitions more clearly in post-authoritarian countries.

Adam Przeworski (1991) identifies four main actors usually involved in the process of democratic transitions: hard-liners and soft liners of the regime, and the moderates and radicals of the opposition. O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter define transitions in the following way: "Transitions are delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return of some authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative" (1986, p.6).

The central theme in transitions is uncertainty. The rules of the political game are not clearly defined and political agents struggle to satisfy their interests. O'Donnell and Schmitter explain that transitions occur when a split occurs between hard-liners and soft-liners of a given regime. Democratic transition starts when authoritarian rulers attempt to modify their rules to secure more rights to different groups and individuals. As much as

it is important to understand the impact of the split between hard-liners and soft-liners on democratic transitions, it is equally imperative, if not more challenging, to understand why did the splits emerge when they did?. As Przeworski argues "the response to the question, 'Why did communism collapse?' is not the same as to 'Why did it collapse in the autumn of 1989?'" (1999, p.1).

The Arab spring raises similar questions. While it is crucial to understand why the Arab spring occurred, it is also important to explain as well why Tunisia was the first country to witness these uprisings in December 2010. Why wasn't a leading Arab country, like Egypt, the first to host these protests? Moreover, it is equally important to understand the timing of the Tunisia's authoritarian breakdown. Why did the Tunisian uprising take place in December 2010 and not before?

One concept of democratic transitions that is often overlooked is the very nature of transitions. A central argument that should be further inspected is that democratic transitions are neither linear nor rational. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) used the term "plasticity" to best describe democratic transitions. In other words, political actors have different choices that not only initiate and move transitions forward, but also contribute in constructing different institutions. However, political choices in democratic transitions definitely do not imply that the choices are randomly decided upon. In fact, the relative power of political actors is the key factor in deciding what form of institutional design is agreed on. Context is also essential in the study of democratic transitions. "Patterns of transition come in very different forms and, we need to look closely at the *contexts* of transitions" (Adeny & Taggart, 2015, p.334). Hence, in order to understand why the democratic transition in Tunisia was successful as opposed to

other Arab spring states, we cannot treat the Arab world as a singular homogeneous entity. Therefore, a contextual analysis of Tunisia's democratic transition will be applied in this work. This, in turn, means we need to consider and measure democracy in a way that is receptive to how it is understood and therefore what it means in different contexts. Moreover, relying solely on Polity and Freedom Houses indexes leads to a narrow set of indicators that are produced by political and ideological constructs (Adeny & Taggart, 2015, p.330).

One of the unavoidable paradoxes of academic literature covering post-authoritarian regime breakdowns and democratic transitions and consolidations is the considerable disagreement on how to define or measure democracy. Since democracy is always a continuous variable, a consensual definition does not exist. "What seems clear is that democracy is more of a plural term and we need to consider some very different patterns of how it functions and how it develops. We also need to be sensitive to an over-eager optimism about the necessary transition to democracy" (Adeny & Taggart, 2015, p.334).

How can we then measure the success of democratic transitions? What factors contribute to a smooth transition to democracy? Linz and Stephan (1996) apply a theoretical framework to describe and analyze democratic processes in South Europe, South America and post-communist Europe. These regions were carefully chosen for study since South Europe had already established a consolidated democracy, South America had entered an unconfirmed democracy and post-communist Europe was undergoing a transition towards democracy. Moreover, the authors present a new typology for political systems that goes beyond the dichotomous authoritarian and

democratic regimes. Instead, they classified regimes into five categories: authoritarianism, totalitarianism, post- totalitarianism, democracy and sultanism.

For this research Linz and Stephan's definition of democratic transitions will be adopted. According to the authors:

A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies de jure (1996, p.3)

Understanding democratic transitions also entails understanding the role of different factors affecting transitions. Why do established authoritarian countries decide to head for democratization? Are there any obstacles that render a successful democratic transition impossible? Is a bad economic outcome inevitable after a democratic transition?

The modernization thesis holds that economic development eventually leads to democracy. In other words, economic performance is a necessary contiguous dynamic that precedes transitions toward democracy. "Economic development is a sufficient, rather than a necessary, condition for democratic transitions. As long as the economy continues to grow, so does the prospect for a democratic transition" (Kugler & Feng 1999, p.140). Although high economic development can be used as an index for the democratization of nations, other dynamics can also produce the same result. The process of democratic transition can be materialized through a delicate balance of negotiations between an authoritarian regime and a democratic opposition. Hence,

different political agents are affected by the uncertainty of events. "Game theory is particularly useful in studying the impact on democratic transitions of uncertainty and incomplete information because it allows incomplete and/or imperfect information to condition the actors' choice affecting the resulting equilibria of the game" (Kugler & Feng, 1999, p.142). Therefore, a combination of political negotiations and high levels of economic performance can both lead to a democratic transition. Michael K. Miller (2012) finds that although economic development is favorable to democracy, it may also stabilize autocracies. Moreover, he argues that for the past 135 years, violence has been an essential component of democracy and democratic transitions. Miller defends a new theory linking democratic transitions, economic development and violent turnover. He regards that development does indeed strengthen autocratic regimes due to a low probability of violent leader removal. Nonetheless, if a violent leader removal has occurred in the recent past, greater development tends to lead to democratization.

This finding has an important implication for democratic transitions in the Arab world. According to Miller, "it is an intriguing paradox that democracy is inherently peaceful, but violence is not only compatible with democratization, it is an essential component of democratic development over the last 135 years" (2012, p.35). This indicates that although post-uprising Arab Spring states are currently experiencing high level of violence, democratic transition will eventually take place.

Fareed Zakaria argues that "although democracy has in many ways opened up African politics and brought people liberty, it has also produced a degree of chaos and instability that has actually made corruption and lawlessness worse in many countries" (2003, p.98). In fact, the aftermath of the Arab spring has left many yearning for the pre-

2010 Arab world. Nowadays, observers and Arabs are finding it increasingly hard to be optimistic regarding the future of democratic transition and consolidation in the region. Thus, it is important to identify whether democratic transitions necessarily produce bad economic outcomes. Does a democratic transition in a developing country lead to conflicts and chaos? Studies show that major democratic transitions have had positive effects on economic growth. Moreover, "it is more probable that democratization takes place after periods of low growth and not precede them" (Rodrik & Wacziarg, 2005, p.50). The claim that democratic transition negatively affects economic growth, suggests that some might use this as a poor excuse for not following up on promised political reforms.

2.3 The Role of Political Economy in Transitions

Jamie Allinson (2015) and Raymond Hinnebusch (2015) argue that political economy is an important factor when studying democratic transitions. Allinson points out that applying the political culture theory to explain the failure of democratic transitions is flawed. Putting too much emphasis on the Sultanistic character of the regimes or the role of religion in public life, rules out the political economy analysis of the respective social bases of the actors. "The transition approach thus misses the role of the working class, and the strong correlation between the strength of labour movements and the winning of the minimal democratic rights in the region" (Allinson, 2015, p.295). This requires a critique at the deeper level of the historical sociology of the working class agency. Allinson states that focusing on the "three clusters of powers"- the balance

of class forces, degree of state autonomy, and the geopolitical conjuncture- can explain the different transition trajectories. The independence of the working class in Tunisia is considered an important factor for the success of democratic reform. In analyzing the democratic transitions in the Arab world, the notion of 'class character' rarely appears in literature. On the other hand, "the word 'Islamist' appears 12 times in Alfred Stephan's article on Tunisia and 'secularism' seven: while 'trade union' features once and 'labour', 'worker' and 'Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail' (UGTT) not at all, despite the centrality of the organization to the fall of Ben Ali" (Allinson, 2015, p.297). Moreover, Allison adds that an explicit class-analysis for the Arab uprisings is necessary because cross-class ideologies and identities are prominent in most Arab states. In summary, the balance of class forces interacted with degrees of state economy and geopolitical interests differently in each Arab spring country. The state of Tunisia had a considerable distance from the ruling clan and a unidirectional association with foreign powers. Hence, the democratic transition in Tunisia was successful as opposed to the other Arab Spring states, like Egypt and Syria, where their economy was interlinked with the state and the ruling regimes.

Hinnebusch adopts a neo-Grainsic framework and examines how the political economy and the international context affect the democratization process in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). For Hinnebusch, neo-liberal policies adopted by autocratic regimes in the MENA region generated crony capitalism. Although these neo-liberal policies initially sparked the uprisings, they have failed to address class inequalities. According to Hinnebusch, the Western and regional intervention negatively affected the uprisings and deterred democratization. However, the situation in Tunisia

was different. “In this context, the least bad outcome was the ‘low intensity democracy’ that appeared possible in Tunisia where long-term Western cultural penetration may indeed have assisted democratic consolidation” (Hinnebusch, 2015, p.350). An inverse relationship between, the impact of external- global and regional- interferences and, with the likelihood of democratization exists. As an example, in Tunisia, where the relationship is balanced, “low-intensity democracy” resulted. However, where the relationship was most intense (Syria and Libya) the outcome was failed states (Hinnebusch, 2015).

2.4 The Role of Social Cleavages in Transitions

Philippe C. Schmitter (2012) and Vincent Durac (2015) point out that severe social cleavages are responsible for the failure of democratic transitions in the MENA region. While Schmitter agrees with Hinnebusch (2015) that causes such as political economy and international factors, affect the road to democratic transition, social cleavages remain the most important factor. Schmitter describes the process of democratization as an ambidextrous one and makes the distinction between real-existing democracies (RED) and ‘hybrid-regimes’. He states that patterns of internal social cleavage, imperatives of a capitalist system of production and distribution, and security threats and alliance constraints, affect the citizens’ acquisition of human rights and civic freedoms during democratic transitions. However, he insists that there are no pre-cursors for democratic transitions. Any country can become democratic, but for some, there will be varying degrees of difficulty.

Durac uses the social movement approach to study the different trajectories of the Arab uprisings. Initially, the youth-led movements were leaderless and non-ideological. However, as the protest movements spread, “they grew to encompass a diverse array of other movements and actors: political activists, opposition political parties, trade unions, lawyers, journalists and other professional groups, Islamist movements and parties, and, in some cases, regionally-based actors” (Durac, 2015, p.253). Durac argues that the diversity of these movements made the attainment of the main demands (regime change) possible; nonetheless, the perseverance of severe ideological differences within these movements, made the concurrence of the post-regime political order almost impossible. A striking feature in the Arab spring uprisings was the non-ideological and leaderless movements. Later, these youths were joined by organized political parties. After the fall of some Arab regimes, ideological differences between them increased which, in turn, greatly hindered the democratic transition process. As the two movements were busy negotiating terms of agreements amongst themselves, several political openings were missed. According to Durac, the democratic transition in Tunisia was possible only because a dialogue between the different opposition members- and an agreement about the shape of post-Ben Ali order- had already taken place almost a decade ago. By the time of the uprisings, the Tunisian opposition forces, unlike other Arab Spring states, had already reached a relative degree of consensus regarding the nature of post-Ben Ali Tunisia (Durac, 2015). Tunisia was the only country where an anti-regime movement was able to mobilize itself into a solidified entity after authoritarian breakdown. By contrast, the failure of anti-regime movements in other Arab-spring states to reach any form of agreement, led to their marginalization.

2.5 The Role of Social Struggle in Transitions

The Norwegian Nobel Committee chose to award the 2015 Nobel Prize to Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet for its contribution to a peaceful dialogue. The Quartet has comprised four key organizations in Tunisian civil society: the UGTT, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers. Tunisia's National Dialogue was portrayed as a heroic figure that was able to negotiate with Tunisia's Islamists without negatively affecting the newly established democratic institutions. While this award highlights the new commitment to democracy and social justice in Tunisia, it does not convey the reality of Tunisian politics. Joel Beinin (2015) criticizes the Norwegian Nobel Committee's award choice and suggests that the intense social struggle that took place in Tunisia was the real reason behind the successful democratic transition. The Noble Committee's 'constructed narrative' ignores the social struggle led by the UGTT which was able to break Tunisia's political deadlock and force Ennahda, an Islamist political party, to compromise (Beinin, 2015). The UGTT was portrayed as a mediator between secularists and Islamists. However, in reality, the UGTT, the largest civic organization in Tunisia, led massive protests in October 2013 that eventually forced Ennahda to join the Quartet.

The rise of violent extremists in Iraq and Syria and the coup against Egyptian president Morsi in July 2013, posed serious threats to the democratic transition in Tunisia. Moreover, the assassination of Mohamad Brahimi, an MP in the leftist front (Jebha Chaabia), on July 25, 2013 dramatically exacerbated the situation (Marks, 2015). Thousands took to the street calling for the immediate resignation of the government led

by Ennahda. For weeks Ennahda and Nida Tunis, an unelected leftist opposition, competed for political power. The critical period in Tunisia's democratic transition came to an end when Ennahda decided to step down from power. The parallel events witnessed in Egypt and the rise of extremists compelled Ennahda to voluntarily resign due to the effects of political diffusion in the area. "The coup in Egypt, paired with the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, severely constricted Ennahda's margin of strategic maneuver, rendering pursuit of lustration legislation politically impossible" (Marks, 2015, p.10). The Egyptian coup against Morsi forced Ennahda to realize that the rewards for speaking up in favor of ideological Islamist issues does not outweigh the political risks ahead.

2.6 The Role of Institutions in Transitions

Larry Diamond (2015), Sami Zubaida (2012) and Julia Strasheim and Hanne Fjelde (2012) focus on the role of institutions during transitions to democracy. According to the authors, strong and developed institutions can support democratic transition and manage differences in societies. Diamond analyzes the democratic deficit or the democratic failure in the last decade. He highlights the importance of institutions in democratic consolidation and uses the pace of democratic decay in South Africa as an example. According to Diamond, state structures with "neo-patrimonial" tendencies are "too often weak and porous- unable to secure order, protect rights, meet the most basic social needs... Democratic institutions such as parties and parliaments are often poorly developed" (Diamond, 2015, p.149-150). Diamond adds that states that lack democratic

institutions fail in managing the ethnic, religious and other identity cleavages. Countries with poorly developed democratic institutions, usually lack democratic checks and balances. Hence, leaders assume that they can hoard power and wealth for themselves and for their close network. Naturally, this will exacerbate economic inequalities and the abuse of power which negatively effects countries transitioning to democracy.

Zubaida agrees with Diamond and adds that more attention should be given to political history, and therefore to the post-independence regimes in the countries, in order to have a better understanding of the different post-uprisings outcomes. The central demands of the Arab Spring were not about religion, nationalism or the Arab-Israeli conflict, rather, people were calling for economic liberty, democracy and political freedom. Nonetheless, "lurking in the shadows of these events religious and tribal politics were never far away, and came to manifest themselves soon enough" (Zubaida, 2012, p.569). Zubaida argues that crony capitalism reinforced communal and religious identities which came to the fore when the regimes were replaced. By building effective institutions to support democracy, communal and religious identities will be well managed. Although strong institutions are needed, it is equally important that the governing body, managing these institutions, enjoys legitimacy and support from the international and local community.

The management of transitional governments, although adopted by the international community, is heavily criticized. "Local-ownership" of transitional regimes is important in order to ensure that sovereignty is vested within the local population (Strashein & Fjelde, 2012). The construction of institutions is a very delicate process during democratic transitions. It is a "process in which what is deemed desirable is

merged with what is deemed possible to build or regulate elements of a polity to build democratic governance" (Strasheim & Fjelde, 2012, p.339). Apart from strong institutions, Julia Strasheim and Hanne Fjelde propose that decentralization positively affects democratic transitions. They analyze 15 interim regimes between 1989 and 2006. Their study concludes that executive constraints and decentralization are closely intertwined with democratization. The authors argue that in post-conflict countries, policy makers should "aim at checking executive power in the center, but boost government authority outside the capital" (Strasheim & Fjelde, 2012, p.351). Thus, a strong state, with decentralized powers, diffuses political power and reduces the zero-sum character of the political competition during transition. Moreover, a strong executive power should be established in order to keep domestic elites tied to their initial commitments. According to the authors, executive constraints are positively associated with chances of post-conflict democratization. Furthermore, decentralization advances economic development and is central for democratic development.

2.7 The Role of Religion in Transitions

Conflicts over religion were not prominent in Europe during the 'third wave of democratization'. Thus, religion was under theorized in scholarly writing. However, Islam played a significant role in the Arab uprisings and thus, the relationship between religion and democracy should be examined. Alfred Stephan and Juan J. Linz (2013) and Fredric Volpi and Ewan Stein (2015), focus on the role of Islamist parties in the Arab spring uprisings. Volpi and Stein (2015) discuss the different trajectories of Islamists

during and after the Arab uprisings. They make the distinction between statist Islamist and non-statist Islamist, and focus on the nature and degree of transformation of state-society relations. Statist Islamism is defined as the "institutionalized participation in the politics of the nation state" by Islamist groups (Volpi & Stein, 2015, p.281). Statist Islamists are not revolutionaries and do not seek to overthrow existing social orders. Rather, their discourse can be seen as a challenge to the more secular establishment. Instead of challenging social hierarchies, they focus their attention on corruption, and the moral laxity and neglect of religion (Volpi & Stein, 2015). This variant of Islamist is seen in the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda in Tunis, Sahwa movement in Saudi and Islah in Yemen. "Non-statist Islamism is not so much "apolitical" as it is "infra-political" (Volpi & Stein, 2015, p.282). Non-statist Islamists seek to constitute an Islamic society, a trend most obvious in jihadism and Salafism, and tend to avoid formal political participation.

The choices that were made during the Arab uprisings by the statist Islamists reflect the different outcomes of the Arab spring. In the case of Tunisia, Ennahda participated in a coalition with leftists, negotiated with secularists and toned down Islamist ideological claims. "Statist Islamists in Tunisia have prioritized becoming an entrenched, mainstream party with a say in public and political life regardless of whether they are in opposition or in government" (Volpi & Stein, 2015, p.288). Volpi and Stein argue that when Islamist parties interact in a multiparty system, they contribute to the consolidation of democracy. However, the opposite results when these Islamist parties are excluded. According to the authors, the Arab Spring reshaped the dynamics of the

relationship between Islamists and the state, and between statist and non-statist Islamists, for better (Tunisia) and for worse (Egypt) (Volpi & Stein, 2015, p.276).

Stephan and Linz disagree. They focus instead on the relationship between democracy and religion, especially in the world's Muslim-majority countries. While they agree that the hegemony of religious forces in the Arab world was unprecedented and Islam played a central role in the Arab uprisings, they argue that the only way Islam and democracy can flourish is with a considerable degree of institutional differentiation between religion and state- which is the case in Tunisia. Therefore, religious authorities should not exert control over democratic officials and, in return, democrats should not control religion in the country. The key issue is that democracy can flourish in 'multiple forms' of democracy, and not necessarily through the strict separation between religion and state. More importantly, the concept of 'civil state' is becoming extremely prominent in Tunisia. In a civil state, religion respects that people are free to make their own laws. Both, Ghannouchi and Hamadi Jebali of Ennahda, spoke expansively of the political necessity of a 'civil-state'. Both have been vocal about respecting Tunisia's history as a progressive Arab country with women-friendly codes. Moreover, some influential Islamist advocates used "key koranic concepts of consensus, consultation, and justice to argue that democracy will be most effective and legitimate if it relates to the *specificities* of its citizens' histories in a particular state"(Linz & Stephan, 2013, p.18). Accordingly, the newly adopted Tunisian constitution was ratified without any reference to the word "sharia".

2.8 The Role of Political Agents and Elites in Transitions

Gerardo L. Munck (2015) highlights a factor that is often missed in democratic transition studies: political agents. Munck focuses on transitions and post-transition in Latin America. He states that democratization, if achieved, is not necessarily permanent and that electoral democracy should always be defended. Recent developments in post-Arab Spring states have showed that gains attained through democratic transitions should not be taken for granted. Achieving electoral democracy is not adequate during a transitional period. Studies have shown that as soon as elected officials assume office, the nature and value of democracy becomes a subject of contestation (Munck, 2015). He suggests that various political-ideological actors affect the course of democracy through their impact on the political institutions of decision-making and the social environment of politics. Consequently, the problem is not which type of democracy is adopted, but rather the political agents themselves whose support for democracy depends on their interests. This takes us back to the argument regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Can Islamist parties operate in democratic institutions and respect their democratic rules? Does participating in elections moderate their beliefs or will they attempt to change the rules of democracy once they assume office?

Similarly, Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz (2014), attempt to study transitions from a different perspective. They introduced a new data set that studied transitions in 280 countries from 1946 to 2010. The study aims to explore why autocratic breakdowns do not always lead to democratization, but rather to the establishment of new autocratic regimes. Democratization is more likely to happen after opposition election victories and not after popular uprisings (Geddes, Wright & Frantz,

2014). What factors lead to chaos or renewed autocracy after an authoritarian breakdown? Statistics show that the type of regime and the level of violence applied during transition affects the likelihood of democratization. For example, personalist dictatorships are less likely to democratize than dominant party regimes. The figures show that there is a "67 percent probability of democracy after the dominant party regimes (Tunisia and Egypt) and 50 percent after the personalist (Libya and Yemen), all else equal" (Geddes, Wright & Frantz, 2014, p.327). This investigation shows that democratization is more likely to follow a dominant-party regime and has higher prospects when the level of violence during the uprisings is moderate. In this study, Tunisia was coded as a dominant party regime and the level of violence, post authoritarian breakdown, was registered in the moderate category.

John Higley and Michael G. Burton (1989) give special attention to the role of elites in transitions. They also argue that democratic transitions and breakdowns can be best understood by focusing on the internal relations of national elites. National elites are defined as persons who are able to affect national political outcomes regularly and considerably (Higley & Burton, 1989). The authors recognize that many identity cleavages or forces affect the forms of political regimes. Nonetheless, they see the national elite acting as a filter for these forces. Consensual unity of national elites heavily impact regime stabilization. As long as national elites are unified, the regime remains stable. Consensually unified national elites, a rarity, produce stable regimes. However, divided national elites lead to unstable regimes that tend to oscillate between democratic and authoritarian rule (Higley & Burton, 1989). In Syria, the regime was only just able to survive because it had the support of the economic and political elites.

On the other hand, the national elites in Tunisia sided with the protestors and thus ensured a smooth democratic transition.

2.9 Change and Continuity

Adham Saouli (2015), Hinnebusch (2015) and Joshua Statcher (2015) shift the discussion away from “transitology” theory and focus instead on change and continuity in the Arab world in order to have a better understanding of the uprisings. The recent uprisings that took place in the Arab world further augmented the course of state disintegration, which is partly caused by the long-standing state-building process in the post-colonial era (Saouli, 2015). Colonial divisions gave rise to different political ideologies (Islamist, Nationalist, Baathist etc...), reflecting the socio-economic grievances of the time. However, since democratic institutions were non-existent, the military became the only avenue for political change. Transforming the military into an agent for political change had serious repercussions. However, apart from coups that swept the Arab world in the late 1960s, patterns of judicial, social and economic institutions were determined by monopolizing the means of violence. Hence, returning back to the process of state formation and understanding the genealogy of state structures is crucial to comprehend the interchangeable relation between coercive power and its counter resistance in the Arab world (Saouli, 2015). Saouli draws attention to ‘variables’ that constrain the democratization process. These variables include, but are not limited to, sectarian and ethnic identities, geopolitical rivalries and collective violence. The Arab uprisings in Iraq and Syria challenged the existing political order and

were an opening to renegotiate the political rules in the two countries. However, geopolitical locations, heterogeneous social compositions and coercive state-building in Syria and Iraq led to their disintegration (Saouli, 2015). Unlike other Arab Spring states, Tunisia, a homogenous society, was not susceptible to ethnic and sectarian mobilization and was not exposed to geopolitical intervention.

After an authoritarian breakdown, most transitologists tend to believe that after a certain period of ambiguity, democratization either moves forward, or a return to authoritarianism is expected. Nonetheless, with the exception of Tunisia, the trend in the Arab spring states is neither democratization, postponed transition, nor a return to authoritarianism (Statcher, 2015). Today, countries like Syria, Bahrain and Libya are undergoing a process of regime re-making. Statcher describes the past four years in the Arab world as a remaking of state-society relations. Political and militarized state violence deployed by elites after a break from authoritarian rule should be analyzed. The central frame for analyzing the Arab uprisings should be the elites who employ unprecedented levels of violence against their population to prevent them from establishing new orders (Statcher, 2015). Before the Arab uprisings, the region was not a stranger to the "soft-violence" practiced by autocratic regimes. Arab regimes were notorious, and to some extent, still are, for their secret service intelligence. However, regimes that explicitly give orders to kill their activists and citizens were uncommon. Then the Arab Spring happened. The uprisings ushered the most violent period in the history of the contemporary region (Statcher, 2015). The violence deployed by regimes on ordinary citizens hindered democratization, empowered radicals, and militarized the army. In Tunisia, the elites sided with the demonstrators and did not deploy state

militarized violence against those pushing for more freedoms, more social justice, and better economic prospects. Moreover, Tunisia's apolitical and relatively small army kept state violence to a minimum. Unlike Syria and Iraq, Tunisia's elites facilitated the democratic transition.

In order to explain the different trajectories that resulted after the Arab uprisings, the scale of mass mobilization and the capacity of opposition to split the regime, Hinnebusch (2015) presents two factors: anti-regime mobilization and variations in authoritarian resistance which provides context to post-uprising agency. Hinnebusch turns to two theoretical approaches to explain the Arab uprisings: modernization theory and Marxist theory. Moreover, Hinnebusch relies on Social Movement Theory and the transition paradigm to further understand the depth of the crisis in each Arab country. Hinnebusch states that the depth of the crisis in each country is relative to the degree of economic blockage and the imbalance between social and political incorporation. According to Hinnebusch, the transition in Tunisia was successful because anti-regime mobilization was high due to Tunisia's active and homogenous society, and authoritarian resistance was low due to the state's autonomous apparatus. In Tunisia, state institutions enjoyed relative autonomy of the authoritarian leader. Most importantly, it was not identified with a particular identity group. Consequently, the state apparatus allowed the removal of Ben Ali. Moreover, in the case of Tunisia, insider-outsider coalitions united in order to engineer a peaceful exit of the president. In Syria, for example, the unorganized mass protests could not bargain with the regime. Thus, they tended to make maximalist demands or resorted to violence which sharply reduced the likelihood for democratization. For Hinnebusch, where anti-regime mobilization

remains peaceful, moderates within the regime become more willing to push for reforms and/or withdraw their support from authoritarian hardliners. Additionally, the balance between bureaucratic capability and personal authority affects the resistance's capacity of authoritarian regimes. Thus, "where the bureaucratic capacity is high relative to the patrimonial authority, loyalty to the leader is low but its capacity to sustain state establishment is high" (Hinnebusch, 2015, p.214).

2.10 Arab Spring States

The Arab Spring did not generate similar results. For many reasons, post-uprising Arab Spring states underwent divergent trajectories. Consequently, democratic transition did not transpire in any of them except for Tunisia. The following section discusses the different pathways adopted by post-uprising Arab Spring states.

2.10.1 Egypt

On 25 January 2011, thousands of Egyptians poured into Tahrir Square, in central Cairo, denouncing the security forces and demanding the resignation of former president Hosni Mubarak. Several weeks later, and after 30 years in power, Mubarak stepped down on 11 February 2011. Immediately after, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), led by Field Marshal Mohamad Hussein Tantawi, the country's defense minister, took on the transitory rule of the country. From the start, SCAF's commitment to a real political change was unclear. In fact, the military played a very negative role in the Egyptian transition process. It made very little effort to discard the old system of power that continued to pervade all chief institutions. Moreover, the

constitution-reform process was plagued by ambiguities. The SCAF had appointed a committee to amend several articles within the constitution. Two weeks later, on 19 March 2011, 77 % of Egyptians approved the amendments. Nonetheless, the process of constitutional reform was imposed from above and it gave no space for public debates and feedback (Paciello, 2011). Furthermore, the SCAF was heavily involved in the electoral rules for Egypt's first elections. Although the parliamentary elections were conducted in a relatively fair manner, the electoral rules were in fact not agreed upon in an inclusive manner (Bellin, 2011). Therefore, this raised serious concerns regarding the legitimacy of the electoral process. In addition, the political players' commitment to democratic rule in Egypt is uncertain. In June 2012 Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohammad Morsi, won presidential elections. After Morsi's election, tensions started to escalate between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the secular opposition. Thousands of Egyptians took to the streets to protest the approval of a draft constitution that promoted the role of Islam and restricted freedom of speech in the assembly. Almost a year later, Morsi was ousted by the army amid mass demonstrations calling for his resignation. Taking into account the country's political and economic challenges, the chances for a swift and easy democratic transition in Egypt are not very high.

2.10.2 Bahrain

Amongst the other Gulf States, Bahrain was affected the most by the Arab Spring. On 14 February 2011, demonstrators went down to the Pearl Roundabout, in central Bahrain, to demand political freedom and social justice. The demonstrations were peaceful and organized. However, on the first day, one demonstrator was killed by Bahraini security forces. This exasperated the protestors furthermore and eighteen hours

later, four other protestors were killed. The clashes and the killing of the protestors was a dangerous development that signaled the beginning of a possible sectarian strife. The willingness of the Bahraini security forces to confront the protesters, fueled by the "otherness" of the protestors being mostly Shi'a in contrast to the Sunni royal family and military elite, constituted the main difference between the Bahraini uprising and that of Tunisia and Egypt (Bellin, 2011). The Peninsula Shield Force, mainly the Saudi military, entered Bahrain on 16 March 2011. The military cleared all the roundabouts from the protestors by force and the Bahraini security forces arrested most activists, including women. Within days, the Bahraini uprising was over and the monarchy was saved by the Saudi regime. Up to this date, the Bahraini regime has engaged in significant repression against any opposition. As long as Bahrain enjoys the support of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, the outcome of any uprising will inevitably be similar and a democratic transition will never transpire.

2.10.3 Syria

To this date, Syria remains the most tragic case of all Arab spring states. In March 2011, peaceful demonstrators erupted in Daraa governorate, located south of Damascus. Initially, the protestors were peacefully calling for political freedom. In a swift response, president Asad made a few concessions: the end of state-emergency law, the right of Kurds to claim Syrian citizenship and the promise of economic reforms. However, Syria continued to witness a continuous rise of non-violent protests in different Syrian regions. The Syrian security apparatus and army started responding with severe brutality and violence. Protestors were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and killed and many Syrians were persecuted by the Assad regime on account of their faith

(Sunni), or their real or perceived political opinion. Few defections from the military took place and the defectors organized themselves mainly under the Free Syrian Army. Nevertheless, the security apparatus, composed mainly of Alawites and a few Sunni elites, remained faithful to the president. As the crisis spiraled out of hand, insurgents and Muslim extremists took advantage of the power vacuum and announced the creation of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). To further complicate matters, regional and international countries and non-state actors military intervened in Syria. While some military interventions came to the aid of the Assad regime in order to fight terrorists and other non-armed opposition groups, other military operations intervened to fight the Assad regime and also the terrorist organizations. Ironically, president Assad won the presidential elections in 2014 while the country was, and still is, engulfed with civil and regional wars. For the time being, a quick resolution or a democratic transition in Syria is unforeseeable anytime in the near future.

2.10.4 Libya

Inspired by other Arab countries, Libyans revolted against their dictator Muammar Gaddafi in January 2011. Similar to Syria, protests initially started as non-violent but quickly escalated to armed clashes with the state's security forces. As clashes increased, Gaddafi's rage against the protesters mounted. In March 2011, Gaddafi threatened to attack the rebels in a televised speech. This required a quick response from the international community, and the NATO decided to intervene. The military intervention in Libya, which lasted around six months, came to be known as the "boots off the ground" operation. In the beginning, this operation was deemed successful as it was able to bring down an authoritarian regime with the lowest numbers of casualties

possible. In August 2011, Gaddafi was captured by the National Transitional Council forces, sodomized and killed on video. The National Transitional Council, established in February of 2011, announced Libya a liberated country in October of that year. However, the removal of Gaddafi did not guarantee a smooth transition in Libya. Rather, the Libyan state slid into civil war soon after. Although it witnessed relatively fair elections in 2012, Libya has been witnessing armed clashes between two self-proclaimed governments. Also, Libya has been struggling with the expansion of ISIS and the proliferation of weapons on its soil. Among other Arab spring states, perhaps Libya suffers the most from the lack of nationhood. Loyalty to the state is secondary to tribal and ethnic allegiances, which greatly affects the transition process. In early 2016, the UN had supported the creation of a unity government, however, to this date, it did not receive the needed support in Libya.

2.10.5 Yemen

Demonstrations in Arab spring states prompted the Yemeni uprising in early 2011. Quickly enough, protests evolved into armed clashes and in June 2011, President Ali Abdullah Saleh had to seek medical help in Saudi Arabia as he was injured from a rocket attack. Saleh's deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, assumed power and later formed a unity government. In February 2012, Hadi was officially inaugurated as president of Yemen after uncontested elections took place. Moreover, a national dialogue was initiated in Yemen in order to absorb the political polarization happening at that time. After much deliberations the national dialogue conference was able to agree on document that was considered the basis of the constitution. Furthermore, in early 2014, a presidential panel approved the federation of Yemen into six regions. Up until

that date, the transitional process in Yemen, although violent, was evolving. However, Yemen and Libya have a lot in common. Tribal and ethnic divisions in Yemen remain the biggest challenge for the central authority. In the summer of 2014, Houthi rebels who are Shi'a tribesmen of North Yemen managed to take over the capital of Yemen. However, president Hadi was able to flee south to Adan city. While Yemen was facing the Houthi rebels, ISIS carried out its biggest suicide bombing attack that targeted Shi'a mosques in March 2015. As the Houthi's advanced in Yemen, president Hadi was forced to flee Adan. This time, Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states intervened and launched air strikes against the Houthis. The Gulf coalition was able to retreat the advancement of the Houthi's and reinstate president Hadi back to Adan in May 2015. Due to armed clashes and turmoil in Yemen, democratic transition is seen secondary to security concerns.

The events of post-uprising Arab spring states challenge traditional transitology theories. The current political and social dynamics of these countries expose unusual patterns. Rather than a linear democratic transition process, post-uprising Arab countries are going through violent patterns of incessant change and continuity.

2.11 Conclusion

Democratic transitions are often complex and lengthy. Transitions to democracies start when a split between hard-liners and soft-liners within an authoritarian regime takes place. To further understand the process of democratic transitions, it is crucial to understand two things: Why did the split occur? And why did it occur at that

specific time? Economic grievances and desire for political freedom are two of the most important factors that can lead to an authoritarian breakdown. In addition, some scholars argue that economic development increases the prospects for democratization.

After an authoritarian breakdown takes place, political choices determine the type of institutional design that should be applied. Thus, the nature of transitions depends on the rational choices adopted by different political actors.

Five years after the uprisings, Tunisia has emerged as the only country with serious prospects for a democratic transition. It is a country with longstanding effective state structures and institutions. Tunisia, a homogenous country, did not experience identity divisions. It is a country where the majority of its population identify themselves as Arabs and adhere to the Sunni Muslim religion. The institutions in Tunisia proved to be the pillars of social order post-authoritarian breakdown. The strength of these institutions coupled with a strong sense of national identity meant that most citizens were committed to the transition process. Moreover, due to the social struggle and considerable autonomous strength of the labor movements, led by the UGTT, a constitutional settlement was achievable in Tunisia. Furthermore, Tunisia's small and ineffective military, its institutional differentiation between state and religion, and its geo-political insignificance helped in avoiding institutional paralysis that has affected other Arab spring states. In addition, post-uprising agencies' commitment towards negotiation and consensus-building ensured a smooth democratic transition. After understanding the factors affecting democratic transitions, the next chapter specifically explains the cause of the Tunisian Uprising and why it happened in 2011.

Chapter Three

The Factors Behind the Tunisian Uprising in 2011

3.1 Introduction

Egypt has often been seen as a regional pace-setter. The pan-Arabism of Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser was able to mobilize the entire Arab world, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. However, the rest of North Africa was never regarded as a medium of ideological and political change in the Arab world (Brynen, et al 2012). Nonetheless, this changed with the start of the Tunisian uprising. Tunisia's protests, and the exile of its dictator Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia, ignited a spark in the rest of the Arab world. Soon afterwards, the fire caught up and spread to several Arab countries. Tunisia gave birth to the Arab Spring. A small quiet country in North Africa changed the course of the Arab world for years to come and became a success story for post-uprising Arab Spring states. Much has been said about the causes of the Arab uprisings. The popular protests were largely centered around issues such as economic reforms, social justice, freedom and equality. Following the Arab uprisings, scholars have been engaged in debates about the resilience of authoritarianism in the Middle East, the causes of the Arab uprisings and its impact on regional and international politics. However, as noted earlier, it is one thing to understand what caused the Arab uprisings, and another to understand why the uprisings started in Tunisia at the end of 2010.

This chapter answers the puzzling question as to why the uprisings started in Tunisia in December 2010. It starts with a brief summary of the political history of

Tunisia. Economic liberalization policies are central in this chapter. The neo-liberal economic policies and reforms adopted under Ben Ali's rule will be presented and analyzed. Moreover, the repercussions of the Gafsa Mining Basin revolt that took place in 2008 under Ben Ali's rule will be assessed. In addition, the role of social media in the uprisings will be clarified. This chapter concludes that the causal link between the neo-liberal policies adopted in Tunisia and the uprising should not be undermined.

3.2 History of Tunisia

Unlike other Arab countries, Tunisia's struggle for independence from French colonial rule was relatively peaceful and systematic. For example, French colonial rule evicted thousands of aboriginal Algerians and destroyed social and political structures in Algeria. On the contrary, "defending French interests in Tunisia did not require extensive colonial settlement or other measures that destroyed Tunisia's traditional social and political order" (Alexander, 2010, p.34). This distinction helps us understand why it was civil servants, and not militia fighters, in Tunisia that led the process of nation building in the country (Alexander, 2010). In March 1956, Tunisia gained its independence from the French under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba and the Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD). Bourguiba and his government implemented extensive policies to secularize and modernize the country. The PSD party, mainly composed of unified national elites, emphasized the importance of national unity in Tunisia. Although this national unity proved to deter political gridlock in Tunisia that consumed most post-independence countries, it created ambiguity regarding its policies. Hence, bitter

rivalries between PSD party members and society at large were generated (Alexander, 2010).

Under Bourguiba, Tunisia's foreign policy was in favor of the West. Moreover, the ruling party members regarded themselves as agents for secular modernization and social development (Brynen, et al, 2012). Bourguiba and his government implemented extensive policies to secularize and modernize the country. The president abolished *habouslands*, usually held as an endowment to support private or public institutions, and *sharia'* courts, outlawed polygamy, granted women divorce rights, characterized marriage as a chosen contract that required the bride's consent and set a minimum age for marriage (Alexander, 2010). These actions intensified the opposition against him, which in turn led Bourguiba to declare himself president for life in 1975. Other than the PSD party, Bourguiba did not allow any other political party to participate in the government and little room was given to the development of the private sector. Despite the introduction of a multi-party system in Tunisia, the opposition against Bourguiba hardened and he was later ousted by a coup led by his Prime Minister Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in 1987 (Perkins, 2004).

Two individuals shaped the modern Tunisian state: Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Tunisia became a "state in the service of the party, party in the service of the president" (Perkins, 2004, p.130). In his first presidential year, Ben Ali launched wide range reforms and pardoned thousands of political thinkers. To celebrate his new leadership, Ben Ali renamed the PSD party the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD). He built a very centralized system that was less personalized than Bourguiba and was able to establish a coercive apparatus for the state. Moreover, Ben Ali chose to

assimilate the UGTT, the trade union and the Islamist Ennahda party in the political process. Ben Ali carefully engineered these reforms in a way that made it impossible for any candidate, beside himself, to win the presidency. Still, the economic policies under Ben Ali's rule remained liberal. The gross domestic product (GDP) grew around 5 percent per year between the 1990s and 2000s, the main recipients of these economic benefits were those close to Ben Ali's clan and the RCD party (Brynen, et al, 2012). The favoritism applied by Ben Ali towards his family and his small network of trustees generated a well connected group of crony capitalists that were becoming increasingly more powerful.

3.2.1 Islam Under Bourguiba and Ben Ali

Political Islam has existed for decades in Tunisia. Partly as a response to Bourguiba's secular state, a politicized Islamist movement emerged in the 1960s. In the beginning, the government was not threatened by the rise of these movements. At that time, there was little evidence suggesting that the Islamist movement in Tunis could re-emerge to play an important role in Tunisia's political scene. However, due to the change in the political climate in the late 1970s, Bourguiba was forced to turn to drastic measures. On 5 December 1980, the Tunisian police arrested two prominent members of the Tunisian Islamic movement: Salah Karkar and Ben 'Issa Dimni. For a week, Karkar and Dimni were tortured and forced to hand in crucial information about the movement. This incident proved to be essential for the Islamist movement in Tunisia. Afraid that the information attained might be misrepresented or misused by the Bourguiba regime, Ghannouchi suggested to formalize the Islamist movement. Of course this was resisted by most leaders in the Islamist movement. Ghannouchi was accused of collaborating

with the enemy (Regime) and with the Kufar (infidels). Nevertheless, on 6 June 1981, Ghannouchi announced the creation of *Harakat al-Itijah al-Islami* or the *Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique* (MTI) and declared that it wished to be formally recognized by the party and pledged its support for democracy (Murphy, 1999). The central figure of the MTI was Rachid al-Ghannouchi, a graduate of the Zaytouna *madrasa* in Tunis and later the University of Damascus (Murphy, 1999). In the late 1980s, MTI's leaders changed the party's name to Hizb Ennahda, the Renaissance Party, to abide by a law forbidding party names to contain religious references (Alexander, 2010). Five weeks later, Bourguiba's regime arrested and imprisoned Ghannouchi and other leaders of the MTI party. As soon as Ben Ali assumed office, Ghannouchi was granted amnesty on the one condition that the latter agrees publicly to distance himself from the political scene.

Both Bourguiba and Ben Ali had no tolerance for Islamist parties and as the state restricted religious expression, the Islamists directed their support towards social justice and resisting Western influence, rather than focusing on issues of personal faith. In the modern history of Tunisia, Islam has always been associated with political opposition. "Bourguiba's primary rival during the nationalist struggle and the early years after independence emphasized traditional Islamic and pan Arab values. In the early 1980s, Islamist organizations emerged again as the most powerful opposition to Bourguiba and then to Ben Ali" (Alexander, 2010, p.121).

3.2.2 The Evolution of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT)

The Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) was formally established in 1946, ten years before independence. The union attracted the majority of the Tunisian workers and provided strong commitments to social justice.

"For Bourguiba [*sic*], the union was regarded as an asset and thus, he provided the UGTT with skilled leadership and financial support. In return, the UGTT offered their support to Bourguiba and his political party. In 1956, the UGTT was able to secure almost two dozen seats in the National Assembly and four of its prominent leaders secured ministerial positions" (Alexander, 2010).

Consequently, the union grew more ambitious and started asking for a comprehensive social and economic reform. These actions greatly threatened Bourguiba's interests as he was not prepared to hand over his party to the union. Controlling the UGTT was of particular interest for Bourguiba. "One way of suppressing the radical ambitions of the union was to sustain its character as a national organization in constant dialogue with the party" (Murphy, 1999, p.53). For the following years, the UGTT's relations with Tunisia's authorities (Bourguiba and Ben Ali) oscillated between periods of relative peace and autonomy and periods of struggle and opposition. As an example, in 1987 the UGTT was severely persecuted and its leaders subjected to arbitrarily arrests and imprisonment. On the other hand, the union had pledged its support for the government and to Ben Ali policies in the 1990s. Nonetheless, the UGTT remained the largest and most effective influential group in Tunisia. "Having a legal right to challenge employers, including the state itself, provided political ground for the UGTT distinct from that of the party itself, radicalizing, politicizing and ultimately

professionalizing the union within a philosophical framework that accepted the legitimacy of conflict and confrontation" (Murphy, 1999, p.54).

3.2.3 The UGTT and Islamist Movement as Opposition

Bourguiba and Ben Ali retained tight control over the social and political scene in Tunisia. In fact, both presidents left limited political openings for formal political actors or parties or any effective and political mobilization for that matter. This exaggerated oppression explains the character of Tunisia's opposition from the late 1960s and onwards. Despite their ideological differences, the UGTT, the Islamist movement (later Ennahda) and other movements were compelled to work together on several occasions. For example, in June 2003, Tunisia's major opposition parties "Ennahda, Ettakatol, the Congress for the Republic, and the Progressive Democrats signed an agreement in France that stipulated that any future elected government would have to be founded on the sovereignty of the people as the sole source of legitimacy; that the state, while showing respect for the people's identity and its Arab-Muslim values, would guarantee the liberty of beliefs to all. Furthermore, the parties demanded the full equality of women and men" (Durac, 2015, p.253).

3.3 Economic Liberalization

Post colonial discourse heavily impacted the way Arab leaders chose to implement economic policies. Most Arab leaders decided to nationalize the private sector and enhance the growth of the public sector. These economic policies were not randomly chosen. On the contrary, these economic policies were adopted because

"newly independent regimes had to construct national economies while simultaneously under pressure to secure their political rule" (Brynen, et al, 2012, p.217). Surprisingly, these Arab regimes were able to sustain themselves until the 1970s. The region began experiencing rising economic difficulties due to oil price fluctuations. To cope with the economic crisis, most Arab countries had to adopt different economic policies.

Economic Development has been regarded as a precursor for democracy in traditional liberal thinking. Moreover, there is a strong belief that the advancement of democracy is greatly dependent on particular socioeconomic conditions. This idea has been institutionalized and articulated through a set of international policies, known as "neoliberalism" (Brynen et al, 2012). Neoliberalism argues that global economic integration paves the way towards political liberalization through: decreasing state intervention in the economy, privatizing state-owned property, lowering barriers to trade and ensuring the free flow of capital. "In other words, material interests translate into political outcomes, with economic decentralization pushing political decentralization. It is upon these assumptions that the neoliberal policy consensus of the 1980s and 1990s was built (Brynen, et al, 2012, p.214).

Since the early 1970s, the Arab world has been following the socio-economic prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) and the World Bank. The IMF annual reports on Tunisia, Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries showed significant improvement regarding the economic development and growth of these countries. The reports have heavily accentuated the following: improvement of macro-economic factors, market liberalization, development of local capital and the improvement of the banking sector (Corm, 2012). Thus, these reports

relied solely on aspects such as the budget deficit, the reforms of the central banks, the improvement of free trade and the reduction of the size of the public sector. Looking at these reforms, the Arab countries showed a great degree of optimism. According to the neo-liberal ideology, the performance of the Arab countries was very impressive.

3.3.1 The Bad Arab Growth Model

The reports of the IMF and similar institutions could not account for the actual problems facing the Arab world, however. The narrow variables adopted by the IMF could not measure the degeneration of living conditions in rural villages, the brain drain crisis that plagued the Arab world, low economic productivity and the proliferation of poor towns in the suburbs of Arab cities (Corm, 2012). What was really happening in terms of real the economy in Arab states? In spite of all the international reports, Arab economic growth and social performance had been regressing. Relying on the statistics of the International Labour Organization (ILO), George Corm (2012) developed eight strong indicators that can actually explain the underperformance of the Arab economies. The economies of the Arab countries are plagued by:

- (1) The lowest rate of active population to total population: Only 45% of the total Arab population are active.
- (2) The highest unemployment rate to active population: Unemployment rate in the Arab world is 10 %, and the unemployment rate amongst the youth appears as high as 25%.
- (3) Stagnation of real salaries and poverty indicators: Real salaries in MENA region have increased only modestly, and 22% of the Arab population earn less than 2 USD per day.

(4) High economic growth rate dependency on external variables: The economies of the Arab countries are highly dependent on oil prices, tourism, rainfall and migrants' remittances, etc...

(5) Emigration and brain drain are a major indicator of deficient growth: 54% of migrants do not want to return to their countries, which negatively affects productivity.

(6) The high concentration of investments in a few sectors hindering economic diversification: Investment was limited to oil and gas, tourism, banking and the financial sector.

(7) The very low level of research and development (R&D) and the absence of systems to support national innovation: Less than 0.5 % of GDP in most Arab countries goes to R&D.

(8) Deficiencies of external trade: The trade deficit of seven Arab countries was over 67 billion USD for the year 2009 only.

The neo-liberal model proved to be disastrous to the Arab world. Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank miserably failed to identify the real problems facing the Arab economies. Thus, the financial assistance granted to Arab countries partially contributed to the mounting corruption and marginalizing of the Arab youth. Ironically, it did not escape anyone that the same countries adopting these neo-liberal policies, that were supposed to foster democracy, were authoritarian countries. As an example, "Iraq in the 1980s and 1990s, Syria in the 1990s, and the UAE in the 2000s each selectively implemented privatization and investment reform with no political adjustment" (Brynen et al, 2012, p.225). Moreover, the selectivity in adopting liberalization policies generated neopatrimonial networks and crony capitalists that heavily benefited from these authoritarian regimes.

Up until 2010, there was a general belief amongst scholars and academics that the neo-liberal policies adopted further entrenched authoritarianism in Arab countries. However, the events of the Arab Spring proved that economic liberalization was indeed incompatible with authoritarianism.

3.3.2 Tunisia Under Neo-liberal Policies

The examination of the Tunisian Solidarity Bank (Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité - BTS) and the National Solidarity Funds (Fonds de Solidarité Nationale - FSN) is crucial to understanding the impact of the neo-liberal policies applied under Ben Ali's rule. The creation of the FSN in 1992 aimed to eradicate poverty by collecting forced contributions from all Tunisian citizens and businesses. According to Zamiti (1996), the contributions would then be redistributed to the construction of roads, infrastructure, schools, housings, as well as through new employment opportunities (as cited by Tsourapas, 2013). The FSN records were not included in the government budgetary control and its exact financial details remained a secret under Ben Ali's rule (Tsourapas, 2013). The BTS was created shortly after the FSN. The main objective of this institution was to take care of economically deprived people. The rationale behind the BTS was that the poor living standards of the Tunisians were equally important as the construction of infrastructure. Ben Ali's regime was trying to demonstrate its interest in social responsibility. For Hibou (2006), the BTS was "a bank without bailiffs or secretaries, or drivers, or files, or reference numbers. It was, at the same time, an instrument of economic security and social protection; it constituted, according to a Tunisian banker, a 'credit line with a social orientation'" (as cited by Tsourapas, 2013, p.29).

The FSN and BTS targeted the primary economic problems preoccupying Tunisian citizens. However, for Bedoui (1998), the institutions created sustained dependency ties: "the jobs available through the BTS and its subsidiary instruments to young graduates were either temporary or with wages much lower than the minimum wage" (as cited by Tsourapas, 2013, p.29). Thus, the unemployed youth who had to periodically return to BTS to check new openings, became heavily dependent on state structures (Tsourapas, 2013). Also, the FSN created similar modes of dependency. The FSN did not fund infrastructure construction, instead it privatized most state-owned enterprises and state-farms (Tsourapas, 2013). Moreover, both institutions were manipulated by the former Tunisian regime to promote its own interests. As the Tunisian youth became further disengaged from the RCD, the BTS and the FSN were utilized as agents for political recruitment. "The BTS was used by the regime not only to assure control over a significant of the society..., but to entice the youth into joining its party apparatus through promises of a better economic future" (Tsourapas, 2013, p.30). Furthermore, the FSN was incorporated in the president's personality and Ben Ali was regarded as the sole person responsible for all the due credit (Tsourapas, 2013).

The creation of the FSN and the BTS served to falsely represent Tunisia as an Arab example of an economically secure, capable state. During his rule Ben Ali had continuously expressed his desire for political and social reforms. But Ben Ali was not genuine. The FSN and BTS were created to serve as state surveillance apparatuses and to construct state dependency ties. Under Ben Ali, the narrative was that Tunisia be considered an exception to the MENA region. Of course, the IMF, the World Bank and the EU contributed to the narrative of Ben Ali and insisted that the economic

development in Tunisia was impressive. Tsourapas (2013) uses Gramscian and Foucauldian discourse to explain the impact of Ben Ali's economic policies on Tunisian society. The Tunisian state was both formative and destructive. In Foucauldian terms, Ben Ali enforced certain rules in order to control and normalize the population. As for the Gramscian perspective, the state was destructive, in the sense that, those who opted to stay out of the system were eventually excluded from any benefits. Tunisia was consistently portrayed as an economically stable and efficient model state in the MENA region. "The regime arguably exercised a form of power that is much closer to Gramsci's perception: its domination was based on narratives, and values, so ingrained in Tunisian society as to invalidate any attempt at dissent" (Tsourapas, 2013, p.32). International actors' support in consolidating the myth of the exceptional country, was an important aspect for the survival of the regime (Tsourapas, 2013). There are several approaches to explain why the international community was supportive of authoritarian regimes. One approach maintains that the Arab leaders were able to market themselves as defenders against Islamist movements and as allies to the Western powers. In Tunisia, Ben Ali shrewdly emphasized the threat of illegal immigration to the EU in case the West did not offer him support. Another approach points out that the neo-liberal model was the dominant discourse within the international community at that time (Tsourapas, 2013).

3.3.3 Crony Capitalism Under Ben Ali

In order to retain control, authoritarian leaders rely on a private trustworthy network of people. Authoritarian leaders use existing regulations and create new ones to benefit family members and those close to the regime. These networks are defined as

crony capitalists. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, crony capitalists in the Arab world grew fast and controlled liberalized markets and suppressed any form of competition. During Ben Ali's rule, twenty-two presidential decrees and seventy-three amendments related to the business sector in Tunisia were passed (Daragahi, 2014). More importantly, the cronies in Tunisia knew which sectors they needed to invest in, and stayed away from sectors that had heavy competition. By the end of 2010, Ben Ali's privileged insiders had captured over 20 % of all private sector profits in the country (The World Bank, 2014). Tunisia's openness to private sector development was a mirage. In fact, the country's economy was closed and most of the investments were captured by Ben Ali's crony capitalists. Tunisia's investment policies often served the personal interests of those close to the regime at the expense of providing fair opportunities to Tunisia's entrepreneurs who lacked political connections. Ben Ali and his close network subjugated industries, which were highly regulated, such as the telecoms and air-transport. Around 40% of Ben Ali's firms were subject to authorization by foreign direct investments (FDI) (Nucifora, Churchill, & Rijkers, 2015). Compared to non-crony firms, they had far higher profits and market share in industries in which operating rights and foreign direct investment were heavily regulated. However, in less regulated sectors they were less profitable than their non-crony competitors (The Economist, 2014). Accordingly, regulatory restrictions and politically connected firms were closely intertwined. After the departure of Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia, 214 businesses, and assets worth \$13 billion, including 550 properties and 48 boats and yachts, were confiscated from the president, his family and close associates (The Economist, 2014). This data is important from an aggregate economic view. Although the firms' profits account for less than 1% of all jobs, they made up 21.3% of all net

private-sector profits in Tunisia, equal to USD 233 million in 2010, corresponding to over 0.5 percent of GDP (Nucifora, et al 2015). Ben Ali's economic policies, consisting of state intervention and barriers to competition, generated a large number of opportunities for rent extraction by cronies that severely affected the performance of Tunisia's private sector.

3.4 The Cause of the Arab Spring

The past 100 years in the Arab world have been characterized by a problematic relationship with the West. Domestic and socio-economic factors were always secondary to the struggle with colonial powers. The Arab world has been resisting successive wars, invasions and occupations ever since the Ottomans. Thus, Arab leaders have always used the concept of the "enemy" to appeal to the masses. Before the Arab spring uprisings, almost all the demonstrations that took place in the Arab world were either to protest Western/Israeli action in the region, or to show support to the leader.

The events of the Arab Spring changed all that. One of the most remarkable features of the uprisings that swept the Arab world is the absence of any reference towards the Arab-Israeli conflict or the occupation of Palestine. Instead, the protestors were calling for social justice, welfare and freedom. Economic and social grievances, marginalization and feeling of relative deprivation were all key components behind the Arab uprising. "These masses who emerged in huge numbers to demonstrate together with other more well-to-do social strata of the population were first and foremost motivated by the need to improve their socio-economic situation and gain access to

decent employment opportunities" (Corm, 2012, p.355). Although human rights and political freedom were popular amongst the protesters, the real motivation was the need to improve their socio-economic conditions. In a recent study published by the Isam Fares Institute (2015), statistics show that few citizens in the Arab world regard equality of political rights as the most important aspect in democracy. Instead, most Arab citizens state that the primary feature of democracy is the provision of basic necessities for all. The neo-liberal policies adopted by some Arab regimes amplified feelings of relative deprivation between citizens and crony capitalists or regime elites. These policies created a tight network of politically privileged people that agitated the anger of the masses against their governments. In Tunisia, the Trabelsi clan's predatory economic practices even alienated the Tunisian bourgeoisie from the regime, contributing to its own downfall (Brynen et al, 2012). It has been noted that the two countries where popular uprisings first took place - Tunisia and Egypt - were the two Arab countries that had gone to the fullest in adopting the recommendations of the "Washington consensus" (Gause, 2012). Surprisingly, the groups who benefited most from these policies did not offer their support to the authoritarian regimes during the uprisings.

The impact of neoliberal economic reforms helps explain the timing of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the two countries most affected by these reforms. Nonetheless, several Arab countries who had experienced periods of economic crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s were able to avoid political turmoil. What was different in 2011? What caused this schism between elites and authoritarian rulers? And why did it not occur earlier? In order to understand this question, we need to examine two factors. The first, which is specific to the Tunisian case, is the events and the repercussions of

the Gafsa revolts in 2008. The second factor that needs to be analyzed is the role that social media played in the Arab uprisings.

3.4.1 The Gafsa Mining Basin Uprising

The Gafsa region in Tunisia was home to an uprising that included a series of strikes that lasted about six months in 2008. The uprising, which shook the area, located next to the Algerian border, represented the most important movement in Tunisia since the Bread Revolt of 1984 (Gobe, 2011). Unemployed university graduates, high school students, temporary workers and the families of the phosphate mines workers all participated in the 2008 uprising. The Gafsa region was marginalized in both economic and social aspects ever since 1980 when an armed opposition tried to bring an end to Bourguiba's rule.

The citizens of the Gafsa province had initially hoped that the reopening of the mines in the region would create new job opportunities. Nevertheless, as soon as the project was launched, they discovered that most of the jobs were going to be allocated to people with close connections to the government. Thus, demonstrations and sit-in rallies were organized throughout the area. The demonstrators demanded either to get hired, or to become permanent employees. Many citizens had felt left behind during the Tunisian development in the two years that had preceded the 2008 Gafsa events. As an example, compared to 2005, price of phosphate-derived products rose by 11%, and by 47%, compared to 2007. Furthermore, the prices had sky-rocketed to the extent that they were 125% higher in the first quarter of 2008 than they were in the first quarter of 2007. This had a huge impact on export benefits which rose from DT 858 million, in 2005, to DT

781 million in the first quarter of 2008. Nonetheless, the unemployment rate in the Gafsa province remained much higher than the national average unemployment rate of 14.1% (Gobe, 2011).

The state-owned Gasfa Phosphate Company (GPC) was the biggest employer in the region, in addition to several subcontracting companies. Amara Abbassi, the Secretary General of the Regional Union of the UGTT, and a deputy and member of the RCD's Central Committee, was the owner of several subcontracting companies under the supervision of the GPC (Gobe, 2011). This enabled Abbassi to provide the GPC with additional workers. The trigger of the uprisings came after the announcement of the hiring contest on 5 January 2008. The unemployed graduates considered the list of the people hired as a denial of justice since most of them were not from the Gafsa region. "Following the announcement of the result, the unemployed graduates hinted that the Regional Management of the UGTT, headed by Amara Abbassi, favored the recruitment of friends and direct relatives, on the basis of tribal and political affinities" (Gobe, 2011, p.7).

The position of the trade unions in regard to the protest movements was very cautious. It should be noted that only the local branches of UGTT of Redeyef area supported the demonstrators. The UGTT local branches in the towns of Moulares, M'dhila and Metlaoui did not partake in the protests (Gobe, 2011). Moreover, "at the national level, the federations, such as that of primary education, of secondary education and of health, or even of the postal system, did not take any position, nor did they publish any press releases, or organize any support action in order to expose the situation in the region (Gobe, 2011, p.8).

In the early days of the conflict, the police force did not intervene in the protests as Ben Ali was betting that the protests will soon lose their momentum. However, as the protests escalated and riots continued taking place in M'dhila town, Ben Ali's tolerance ran out. "Therefore, in early April, the authorities decided to put an end to all this by resorting to force, particularly *versus* the better organized protest movements, i.e. the negotiations' and the unemployed committees in Redeyef" (Gobe, 2011, p.12). The protests were faced with severe police and military repression. The police carried out raids, used tear gas bombs and arrested several activists. Violent encounters took place between the protestors and the police throughout the month of May. By June 2008, two protestors had been killed by the police. However, this time, Ben Ali decided to put an end to these events once and for all (Gobe, 2011). On 6 June 2011, the police opened fire at the demonstrators, thus killing a young man and wounding 21 others. Ben Ali issued orders for arbitrary arrests in the province and his forces attacked and arrested representatives of the movement. Ben Ali also made some concessions. He dismissed the governor of Gafsa and the Director General of the CPG. Moreover, Ben Ali pledged to invest a percentage of the income generated from the export of phosphate in the region and build infrastructure in the area and create new job opportunities (Gobe, 2011).

Six months later, Ben Ali was able to quell the Gafsa revolt. However, the events of the Gafsa revolt in 2008 proved that the hegemonic discourse that has been generated over the course of several years by Ben Ali and his regime was no longer viable. It showed that the people no longer believed that Tunisia was an exception and an economic miracle in the MENA region. Most importantly, the Gafsa 2008 riots

confirmed that the Tunisians were able to voice their dissent and express their opposition against the inequitable policies and practices of Ben Ali and his regime.

Charles Tilley and Sidney Tarrow (2007) explain social movements as "repeated public displays of worthiness unity, numbers and commitment by such means as wearing colors, marching in disciplined ranks, sporting badges that advertise the cause, displaying signs, chanting slogans and picketing public buildings" (as cited by Gobe, 2011, p.3). It is within this context that we can frame the Gafsa protest movements as a social movement. Nonetheless, this social movement failed to achieve its demands. The protest movements remained confined to the region and did not lead to a diffusion to other regions in Tunisia. Apart from the Parti Communiste des Ouvrier de Tunis or the Tunisian Workers' Communist Party (PCOT), the protest movement was not supported by any other political party (Gobe, 2011). Moreover, the protests were not covered by the media. Still photos and episodes of the movement were posted on the internet, yet received little circulation. "The only professional images that were broadcast were shot by Fahem Boukaddous, a member of the PCOT, for the opposition satellite television channel *Al-Hiwar Attounsi*" (Gobe, 2011, p.20).

3.4.2 The Role of Social Media

On 17 December 2010, Mohamed Bouaziz, a young street vendor, set himself on fire in front of the governor's office in the town of Sidi Bouzid. Bouaziz died in a hospital on January 4 2011, but his plight sparked nationwide protests. Even though the state-controlled media had ignored the calamity, the news had travelled fast through social media. Many Tunisians sympathized with Bouaziz's grievances as they realized

that they share similar injustices. "The realization hit home as people watched YouTube videos about the abusive state, read foreign news coverage of political corruption online, and shared jokes about their aging dictator over SMS. Communicating in ways that the state could not control, people also used digital media to arrive at strategies for action and a collective goal: the deposition of a despot" (Howard & Hussain, 2011, p.36). Videos of Ben Ali's wife's extravagant lifestyle started appearing online. Activists and bloggers started circulating images of a hospitalized Bouazizi and an online campaign was launched to gather support for the uprising in Sidi Bouzid. In turn, the regime cracked down on social media. "The government tried to ban Facebook, Twitter, and video sites such as DailyMotion and YouTube. Within a few days, however, people found a workaround as SMS networks became the organizing tool of choice" (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Hackers such as Anonymous and Telecomix came to the aid of activists by building new software to help them get around state firewalls. This time, Ben Ali's regime responded by jailing a group of activists in January 2011 (Howard & Hussain, 2011). By the time Ben Ali had fled Tunisia on January 11, campaigns against authoritarian regimes in other countries were growing. The success of the Tunisian story inspired Egypt, and a few days later Cairo was home to the largest protests the country had seen in decades.

A study published in the Project on Information Technology & Political Islam (PITPI) in 2011 analyzed the role of social media in the Arab Spring. The study reached three main findings. First, political debates in the Arab Spring were primarily shaped by social media. Second, a spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground. This is a crucial point. It suggests that online conversations

played a central role in the protests that toppled governments in Egypt and Tunisia. Third, social media helped in diffusing democratic ideas across international borders. Social media conveyed a cascade of messages regarding freedom, democracy and liberty in the MENA region.

3.5 Why Tunisia in 2011?

If the events of the Gafsa revolt in 2008 shook the Tunisian regime hegemonic discourse, the self-immolation of Bouzaiz demystified it. As noted earlier, the Tunisian uprising and the subsequent escape of Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia can be traced back to the neo-liberal policies adopted by the former Tunisian regime. Neo-liberal reforms adopted in Tunisia created an "insider-outsider" culture. Those who were close to the Tunisian regime captured the benefits and the privileges of neo-liberal policies. Thus, resulting inequalities and relative deprivation in the Tunisian society was a fundamental cause of the uprising. Nonetheless, economic grievances and political repression had long since existed in Tunisia. The recent Tunisian uprising was not the product of wealth redistribution and the growth of cronies. "The extent of state corruption was known long before 2011 and constituted the *règle du jeu* (rules of the game) in everyday social interactions. Popular revolts were linked to the breakdown of the hegemonic narrative that the regime had skillfully constructed" (Tsourapas, 2011). The Tunisian narrative, in which patterns of domination and repression nested, was broken the day Bouzaiz set himself alight. It was revealed that the state was increasingly unable to cater to

international pressures or to the growing demands of the unemployed youth (Tsourapas, 2011).

Tunisia's economic miracle was so embedded in the society's narrative that the timing of the uprising left most academics puzzled. The structural consequences of economic liberalization and neo-liberal reforms adopted in Tunisia explain the cause of the uprising and the subsequent ousting of Ben Ali, but not the timing. The timing of the uprising is explained by the self-immolation of Bouaziz. The death of Bouaziz stimulated the Tunisian society and by the time he died in a hospital, nationwide protests were taking place.

Unlike the Gafsa revolt in 2008, the Tunisian protests in 2011 enjoyed the support of two key components that proved to be crucial for its success: the UGTT and the social media. Due to internal politics, most of the local branches of the UGTT did not offer their support in 2008 revolt. Moreover, although Tunisians were familiar with social media before the Arab spring, it was not until the later years of 2009 and 2010 that social media became widely used. Therefore, the Gafsa revolt was not widely covered by different social media platforms and thus, could not reach a wide range of Tunisian citizens.

As an organization, the UGTT enjoys significant social clout in Tunisian society. It is almost impossible to find any other organization or political party that played a significant role in the Tunisian uprising similar to that of the UGTT. According to Achcar, "it was networks of UGTT activists that spread the uprising from the improvised interior to the main cities, and organized the strike wave that finally put paid to Ben

Ali's rule" (as cited by Allinson, 2011, p.302). In other words, it was the workers and the trade unions in Tunisia that contributed to the success of the uprisings in 2011. The Tunisians regarded the UGTT as a credible national actor in the Tunisian politics. Hence, the UGTT was able to mobilize mass protests against Ben Ali and his regime. Although, the top leaders at the organization were supportive of Ben Ali, the local branches of the UGTT applied constant pressure on the executive board. Two weeks into the uprisings, the UGTT succumbed to the pressures and announced its support of the protests (Bishara, 2014).

If social media platforms did not exist, would the Arab Spring still have occurred? This is not an easy question to answer. Democratic activists have long existed in the Arab world, but never before had any toppled an authoritarian leader (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Moreover, although the causes of the Tunisian uprising were directly related to the impact of neo-liberal policies, this does not invalidate the causal contribution of social media. For several years, dissent had been stirring, but traditional opposition never proved sufficient until social media began spreading in the region.

Social media has significantly altered the strategies of democratization processes. In Tunisia, social media played a central role in the uprising. It facilitated the evolvment of localized dissent into a structured movement with a collective consciousness (Howard & Hussain, 2011). The Tunisian uprising in 2011 could not have succeeded without social media, and would have otherwise shared the same fate of the Gafsa revolt of 2008. Furthermore, social protests in the Arab world have cascaded from one country to another, largely due to the role of social media. In each country, communities were able to organize themselves around their shared local grievances and

come up with strategies against authoritarian rulers due to the role of social media. The next chapter discusses the process of the democratic transition that followed the start of the uprising introduced above.

Chapter Four

The Process of Democratic Transition in Tunisia

4.1 Introduction

The uprisings that hit the Arab world in 2011 gave a significant impetus to a prolonged series of socio-political transformations in the region. From the collapse of authoritarian leaders and the resilience of oppressive regimes, to the rise of new political agents, and the realignment of political and economic elites, the Arab Spring incited powerful developments in the domestic environments of post-popular uprisings countries. Within the context of the Arab Spring, the term "successful transition" to democracy becomes too simplistic. In fact, the outcome of the Arab Spring has been much more modest than many had initially hoped. Apart from Tunisia, most Arab Spring states are currently experiencing political change, but democratic transitions have not occurred in any of them. Most Arab states witnessed protests in their central city squares where protesters were calling for political change and economic reform. Yet, despite similar grievances throughout the Arab world, different trajectories have resulted from authoritarian regime breakdown.

Early observers initially predicted that Egypt would be the first, amongst different Arab spring states, to experience a successful democratic transition (Goldberg, 2014). Indeed, Egypt enjoyed a far more open press environment, a strong and active civil society, more competitive elections and a higher turnover among ministers. As an example, "in 2010 the Tunisian prime minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, was the same one who had been appointed more than 10 years earlier by then-President Zine el-

Abidine Ben Ali. Atef Ebeid, who former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak had appointed as prime minister in 1999 (when Ghannouchi assumed his office) to replace Kamal Ganzouri, departed after a five-year term. Ahmad Nazif, Ebeid's successor, had only served seven years when he was replaced on Jan. 30, 2011. Egypt had had three prime ministers in the two decades during which Tunisia had none" (Golberg, 2014, p.39).

To understand why Tunisia's transition towards democracy differs greatly from other Arab Spring states, several aspects must be analyzed. This chapter discusses the process of democratic transition in Tunisia and focuses on the importance of electoral reforms and on the constitution drafting process. This chapter concludes that several factors contributed to the success of Tunisia's transition process, such as the professional role of the military, the choice of political actors, the social struggle of civil society and the inclusiveness of the constitution drafting process.

4.2 The Tunisian Military and the Uprising

Beginning on 12 January 2011, tens of thousands of Tunisians took to the street demanding the resignation of Ben Ali. Large protests filled the streets of Habib Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis and in front of vital governmental institutions. By mid-January, the seriousness of the situation became obvious to Ben Ali. On 12 January, President Ben Ali deployed the army and police to the streets. This was considered a significant development since the military usually played no role in policing the capital and safeguarding domestic security (Brooks, 2011). According to reports published by

Amnesty International, Ben Ali had also ordered the army to use force against the demonstrators while the police and security forces were already using live ammunition as well as non-lethal methods such as tear gas and rubber bullets (Brooks, 2011). However, the army refused to comply with Ben Ali's orders and withdrew its forces from the Tunisian capital, only returning them to the streets after Ben Ali's departure from the country (Brooks, 2011).

In order to explain why the military defected from Ben Ali's regime and refused to fire on the protestors, it is crucial to understand the history of the Tunisian military institution. The army in Tunisia has traditionally been weak militarily and politically. Tunisia's armed forces were established after independence. Bourguiba created the Tunisian armed forces on 30 June 1956, combining 850 men from the Beylical Guard, 1,500 from the French army, and 3,000 conscripts (Grewal, 2016). Bourguiba intentionally decided to keep the military small as he wanted to deprive the Tunisian military of the capacity of carrying out a military coup. Bourguiba's task was made even easier due to the fact that Tunisia's troops did not play any major role in Tunisia's nationalist movement (Grewal, 2016). Therefore, the Tunisian military did not have the legitimacy to claim their right to participate in governing post-independence Tunisia. Under Bourguiba, the Tunisian military was heavily marginalized and deprived of funding. Bourguiba pursued a series of measures to undermine the Tunisian military from assuming greater power. As an example, he prohibited military officers and soldiers from voting or participating in political parties. Moreover, he placed the Tunisian National Guard, a paramilitary force, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior as opposed to the Ministry of Defense (Grewal, 2016).

Similar to Bourguiba, Ben Ali had decided to keep the military at a distance from the regime. Furthermore, he opted to invest in internal security services and the police to act as the main coercive forces of the regime (Brooks, 2011). In addition, Ben Ali had actively sought to marginalize the military by limiting its access to resources. Moreover, the Tunisian military was not responsible for the security of the regime. Ben Ali had decided that regime security would fall under the responsibility of the ministry of interior. Ben Ali moved toward a system of more personalized rule over the military. As an example, after the retirement of General el-Kateb in 1991, he refused to appoint a new chief of staff of the armed forces, which left the army without a general to coordinate the army, navy, and air force. Instead, Ben Ali decided to take on this role himself (Grewal, 2016).

The civil-military relationship developed under Bourguiba and Ben Ali led to the development of an "ethos" in which the officers appeared to identify with the military institution itself, and not with a certain regime in particular (Brooks, 2011). "Ben Ali ruled through direct control and management of a small cohort of elites, who rotated in and out of government institutions and a clique of presidential advisors operating out of the palace" (Brooks, 2011, p.211). The conscious decision of the Tunisian military was deeply political as it created an opening for social and prestigious openings within Tunisian society. The military did not want to risk the integrity of its institution by violently repressing the protestors. Moreover, the military played an important role in reestablishing control under a new government in the days following Ben Ali's departure. Military officials supported the interim government led by Prime Minister Mohamad Ghannouchi, and participated in the arrest of key officials of Ben Ali's regime

(Brooks, 2011). The role of the military in the Tunisian uprising proved vital for later developments. If the Tunisian military had complied with Ben Ali's orders and responded to the protestors with aggression, Tunisia would have witnessed a much more violent and bloodier transition, if any. Had the protests been contained to rural villages, the situation might have ended differently, given the previous role of the military in the Gafsa revolt in 2008.

4.3 The Role of the Interim Government

After Ben Ali's departure, Mohamad Ghannouchi remained the Prime Minister of Tunisia. The Tunisian Supreme Court played an important part in the country's transition. On 15 January 2011, the Tunisian Supreme Court announced the incapacitation of Ben Ali and the appointment of Fouad Mebazaa, the speaker of the assembly, as interim president. Fouad Mebazaa was also a member of the RCD central committee since 1988. On 17 January 2011, Mohamad Ghannouchi announced the formation of a new cabinet that included members from the RCD party, and other opposition members. Thousands of Tunisians took to the streets to demand the dismissal of the RCD ministers from the government and the resignation of the prime minister. Ten days later, Mohamad Ghannouchi succumbed to the protestors and announced his resignation. However, his replacement was an even more central figure of the old regime. The new Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi had previously served in key ministerial positions under Bourguiba's rule and was the defense minister from 1969 to 1970. Moreover, Essebsi had served as foreign minister and was president of the

Chamber of Deputies from 1990 to 1991 under Ben Ali. In March 2011, the interior minister excluded the RCD from any official activity and the Tunisian court later dissolved the former ruling party. Ironically, the RCD was thus dissolved under Essebsi's government (Goldberg, 2014).

The interim government was immediately faced with a dilemma regarding the legality of the Tunisian constitution. Some called for the abrogation of the constitution as it was viewed to be too connected to the old regime, and some of its articles were considered to be tailor-made to serve the personal interests of the former president. (Driss, 2011). After brief deliberations, the interim government decided to accept the constitution in order to preserve the current power structures and it was decided that a new constitution will be drafted and adopted after the transition period (Driss, 2011).

Although the interim government included prominent members from the old regime, this did not derail the democratization process in Tunisia. On the contrary, these political actors played a prominent role in shaping the democratic outcome in Tunisia. Essebsi later noted that "it was his government's responsibility to ensure that the Tunisian revolution did not revolve into a fratricidal conflict nor deviate from what he called its virtuous path" (Goldberg, 2014, p. 40). Moreover, the interim government had decided to avoid a constitutional vacuum that could have crippled the Tunisian transitional phase. Consequently, Tunisia was able to prevent militias and armed insurgents from assuming power since it managed to avoid the dangerous repercussions of a power vacuum.

4.4 Electoral Politics

After the Arab Spring, competitive elections returned to several Arab countries. The ballot box "reemerged as a site for hard battles between political parties and groups possessing widely different visions of the emerging social and political orders" (Brynen et al, 2012, p.147). Although periodic elections took place under authoritarian regimes, political empowerment and freedom were never achieved. Instead, authoritarian regimes organized and controlled elections through various means in order to consolidate more power. In addition, authoritarian Arab regimes "used districting and malapportionment to shape elections in their favor. Electoral districts were designed to favor pro-regime candidates and to underrepresent opposition candidates" (Brynen et al, 2012, p.161).

The Arab Spring altered the process through which elections had been previously managed in most Arab countries. The importance of electoral reforms has resurfaced in political debates in post-Arab uprising countries. Since stable democracies are founded on strong socioeconomic and political contracts, citizens should be able to trust their public institutions and value the importance of civic engagement. Therefore, it is crucial that electoral systems in a country reflect the public's desires and its true choices of representatives. Most importantly, electoral systems define how a certain political system functions.

4.4.1 Elections Under Ben Ali

During the 1989 Tunisian parliamentary elections, and the first under Ben Ali's rule, the RCD party managed to win all of the parliamentary seats. In the next four parliamentary elections that took place in 1994, 1999, 2005 and 2009, the ruling party

was able to secure the vast majority of seats. The majoritarian electoral system was used during the first elections in 1989, and then the dual system was implemented in the following four elections (Al Assaad, 2015). Nonetheless, both electoral systems were designed to cater to Ben Ali's ruling party and therefore left no room for an effective opposition. According to Rony Al Assaad (2015), starting from the 1994 elections and onwards, Ben Ali granted 75% of the National Assembly seats to the party that attained a simple majority in the elections in each electoral constituency, and the remaining 25% seats, were granted "proportionally" to the other parties. In this way, Ben Ali managed to secure 75% of the assembly's seats to his party while the other 25% of the seats were distributed to other "loyal" opposition parties.

The introduction of a special kind of proportional representation electoral law helped Ben Ali absorb opposition activity within his regime. It conveyed a message that Ben Ali was supportive of democratic, civil and human rights principles. Yet, the reality was different as it allowed the regime to monopolize political representation. Ben Ali's actions further fueled the Tunisians' anger and resentment towards their regime.

4.4.2 Post-Ben Ali Electoral Reforms

Perhaps Essebsi's best decision was to encourage the human rights activist, Kamel Jendoubi, to preside over the Independent Higher Authority for the Elections (ISIE). This body was responsible to draft the new electoral law and manage the election process. Jendoubi and fellow commissioners opted for a new electoral system. The full List Proportional Representation (List-PR) system was chosen for the elections. The new law was regarded as revolutionary as it commenced new electoral reforms in the Arab world. The reforms included introducing a 50% quota of women candidates,

predetermining the order of the names on the list and alternating between female and male candidates, and stipulating an age principle of at least one candidate who is younger than thirty years old in each list (Brynen et al, 2012).

The new electoral system was created by the High Commission for the Fulfillment of Revolutionary Goals, Political Reform, and Democratic Transition. This body was created by Yadh Ben Achour, a respected jurist, and encompassed more than 150 members representing Tunisian society. Thus, the new electoral law was the result of profound political debates among different actors, which eventually led to national consensus.

On 23 October 2011, Tunisians elected 217 members of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) under the new electoral law. According to Al Assaad (2015), the new law required voters to cast their vote for their desired list in their respective electoral district. The electoral quotient (EQ) is then calculated by dividing the number of the overall valid votes casts (exclusive of cancelled and blank votes) by the total number of seats allocated in the electoral districts. Seats were then allocated to candidates who managed to reach the EQ. The remaining seats were distributed among the candidates of the list having the largest remainders, known as the simple quota.

Ennahda's leadership played an instrumental role in adopting the new electoral law. While the commission was debating different electoral laws, Ennahda opted to support the proportional representation (PR) system over the simple plurality Westminster-style first -past- the- post (FPTP) system. Some suggests that under the FPTP system, Ennahda were expected to win 90 % of the seats during the 2011 elections

(Marks, 2015). However, Rachid al-Ghannouchi insisted that it would be better to adopt the PR system as it would result in a coalition and a democracy-inhibiting landslide victory for his party (Marks, 2015). Therefore, Ennahda willingly decided to participate in the elections, knowing that it is most likely reducing its share of votes.

Therefore, the newly adopted electoral law was very inclusive and different political parties in Tunisia were given, for the first time, a real chance at competitive elections. Comparing the elections results of 2009 and that of 2011, helps us understand the consequences of the new electoral law. According to Al Assaad (2015), the vast majority of the seats in 2009 were won by one political party (RCD). On the other hand, more than 11 political parties were able to secure seats in the assembly with Ennahda winning a 37 percent plurality (90 seats out of 217) (Marks, 2015).

On 13 December 2011, Fouad Mebazaa was replaced by the human rights activist and Ben Ali opponent, Moncef Marzouki. Additionally, Essebsi had resigned on 24 December 2011 to make way for Ennahda party leader, Hamadi Jabali. After the 2011 elections, Ennahda entered into a coalition (Troika) with two secular leftist parties: the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties (Ettakatol), led by opposition politician Mustapha Ben Jafar, and the Congress for the Republic (CPR), led by Moncef Marzouki.

The 2011 Constituent Assembly elections in Tunisia fostered inclusiveness and dispersed power among different political parties. More importantly, the newly elected NCA was to be responsible for the constitution drafting process. Thus, the full inclusivity reflected was fundamental during a constitution making "moment".

Furthermore, the new electoral system encouraged coalition-building which is crucial during democratic transitions. Ennahda and two other secular parties were forced to enter a coalition and compromise their ideological differences, or risk being left out of the political process.

4.5 Drafting a New Constitution

After the election of the NCA, the expectation in Tunisia was that the constitution making process and adoption would take place within one year. In addition, the NCA was expected to establish the necessary legal framework for legislative and presidential elections, as well as other electoral frameworks. The one year timeframe was very ambitious from the start and the inability of the NCA to achieve any of its objectives saw the term of the assembly extend to two years. Most of the delays, especially at the end of the drafting process, were caused by political considerations and blockage. After considerable delay, the new constitution was published in the Tunisian Official Gazette on 10 February 2014.

Drafting a constitution is a very complicated procedure and is usually considered a turning point for countries undergoing democratic transitions. The drafting of a constitution mobilizes social, economic, political and security actors. Moreover, the constitution-making process in transitions is even more critical as it determines the democratic, or rather the undemocratic, path of countries undergoing transitions. The constitution lays the framework for the governing relations between different religious, social, ethnic and cultural communities across all regions within the same country. In

short, an inclusive constitution is a step forward to democratic transitions. Moreover, it establishes the new rules of the democratic game.

The drafting process in Tunisia started in early 2012. The NCA members, elected to draft the constitution, decided that it is better to draft a new constitution rather than use the 1959 constitution as a base. Suspicions about Ennahda ran high among secular and leftist segments of the Tunisian society. Ennahda engaged in debates over whether or not the word "sharia" should appear in the new constitution. This further provoked fear among secular Tunisians. "The drafting of a new constitution emerged as a battleground between, on the one hand, the proponents of the sanctity of personal liberties and freedoms and, on the other hand, Islamist parties and Salafi groups who sought to include in its text a set of basic religious stipulations that could pave the way for future censorship and discrimination (Salloukh, 2014, p.26). The first year of the NCA's mandate was characterized by a lot of turmoil. The Tunisian economy was heavily affected by the uprising and this generated a lot of discontent among Tunisians. By the summer of 2012, 170 foreign companies in Tunisia had closed (International Alert, 2013). Ennahda also replicated in some aspects the RCD's previous hegemonic practices and neo-liberal policies. Coastal areas continued to be favored economically at the expense of under- resourced rural areas (Salloukh, 2014).

The political landscape also saw important changes. Ennahda sought to expel RCD sympathizers from state institutions. "Ennahda -affiliated militias led campaigns to expel what they call RCD sympathizers from state institutions, the political sphere and the media, a process that should otherwise be led by the reconstituted state institutions" (Salloukh, 2014, p.26). The practices of Ennahda further alienated the opposition and

members of the "troika". Members of the Ettakatol and CPR parties were disappointed with their parties' alliances with Ennahda, and therefore, defected to join other parties. A newcomer to the Tunisian political scene, Al Nidaa Tunis, would eventually become a major player in Tunisian politics. The party's leader, Essebsi, brought together a wide range of diverse groups, mainly leftists, with one fundamental intension: to challenge the mounting power of Ennahda. More importantly, Tunisia was struggling with the incursion of extremist's armed groups arriving from neighboring countries like Algeria and Libya.

4.5.1 The Role of Civil Society Organizations

Of all civil society groups in Tunisia, one organization proved indispensable to the country's democratic transition: the UGTT. In order to diffuse the growing political crisis, the UGTT launched a series of national dialogues that brought together 22 associations and 50 parties to move the transition process forward. The UGTT wanted to apply pressure on Ennahda as it was seen to be jeopardizing the secular character of the state. Ennahdha, the CPR, and Al-Wafa (a party formed by CPR dissidents) decided to boycott the process and declined to negotiate with Nidaa Tunis. Nonetheless, the dialogue that started in late 2012 had partially succeeded in easing out political tensions.

On 6 February 2013, opposition figure of the leftist Jebha Chaabia coalition (Popular Front), Chokri Belaid, was assassinated by unknown assailants. Reacting to the assassination, Jebha Chaabia held Ennahda responsible for his death. Jebha Chaabia claimed that Ennahda has been too lenient with the new emerging Salafi groups. These claims increased after a leaked tape of a 2012 meeting showed Rachid Ghannouchi and a Salafi delegation discussing a plan to assume control of Tunisia (Salloukh, 2014).The

UGTT called for a general strike in the country while the NCA temporarily suspended its activities. Essebsi and other opposition figures called for the dissolution of the assembly. They argued that since the Assembly had over-reached its mandate it should therefore be considered illegal. The opposition was heavily lobbying for an apolitical government composed entirely of technocrats. Another assassination took place on 25 July 2013, targeting an Arab nationalist MP, Mohamad Brahmi. The second assassination halted Tunisia's democratic transition and, for a moment, many observers thought that the course of the transition will be changed forever. Massive protests engulfed the Tunisian capital and thousands of Tunisians marched to Bardo's square calling for the removal of the "troika".

The political crisis was inflamed and exploited by the political elites in Tunis, including the UGTT. While Ennahda and the UGTT contributed to the development of these tensions, it was Nidaa Tunis that capitalized on them the most (Marks, 2015). As an example, for several weeks, Ennahda and Nidaa Tunis rallied competing groups in the capital to prove their respective support base. However, the 2013 crisis presented the UGTT with a valuable opportunity to regain its status within Tunisian society. The UGTT was able to mediate the lingering national dialogue process along with three non-governmental groups. The UGTT presented itself as a neutral mediator that was able to negotiate a peaceful solution. "In August 2013, UGTT made the surprising decision to invite the Employer's Association, a group with which it had traditionally been at loggerheads, to form a 3 +1 mediation Quartet leading the Dialogue" (Marks, 2015, p.61).

Nidaa Tunisa and Ennahda were then offered by the Quartet an arrangement to resolve their crisis in September 2013. The arrangement called for the resignation of Ennahda and the "troika" from government within a 3 weeks' notice, while the Assembly would stay to complete the drafting of the constitution and prepare the next Tunisian elections. Although, the Quartet solution overlapped with Nidaa Tunis's political and ideological goals, the Quartet opposed Nidaa Tunis's demand to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Had the Quartet responded to Nidaa Tunis's full demands, Tunisia's transition would most likely be in tatters (Marks, 2015). On 26 January 2014, prime minister and Ennahda member Ali Laarayedh signed Tunisia's new constitution into law and on 28 January 2014, officially handed over power to a technocratic caretaker government headed by a new prime minister, Mehdi Jomaa. The democratic transition, although endangered, proceeded nevertheless.

The constitution-making process in Tunisia was mainly nationally driven. However various international actors, such as the United Nations and the European Union and non-governmental organization assisted the Tunisian government and offered their expertise. The NCA stressed its commitment to transparency and accessibility, however many members appeared reluctant to release key NCA documents to the public and allow civil society to play an important role in the process (Carter Center, 2011-2014). Nonetheless, other civil society organizations were able to voice their objections to several articles. As an example, after the release of the first draft of the constitution, civil society groups defending women's rights organized large protests to object to the NCA's article that spoke of "complementary roles of men and women inside the family". Instead it demanded that the NCA redraft the article and clearly state the concept of

equality between men and women (Carter Center, 2011-2014). Moreover, several other civil society organizations organized town hall meetings across the country, encouraging discussions between NCA members and Tunisian citizens (Carter Center, 2011-2014).

4.5.2 Political Diffusion

Most academics and observers claim that the Egyptian coup against president Morsi in the summer of 2013, had forced Ennahda to compromise its ideology. However, Ennahda had been ceding key compromises long before the Egyptian coup. From the first constitutional draft, Ennahda was pressured by international experts, the public and opposition members to soften its most controversial positions, such as the role of religion in state institutions and the system of governance in Tunisia. Ennahda had continued to retreat from most of these stances throughout the four successive constitutional drafts (Marks, 2015). Certainly, the final version of the constitution revealed the political and ideological compromises on Ennahda's part. For instance, although Ennahda was lobbying for a parliamentary system in Tunisia because it had previously won a 37% plurality, the constitution defined Tunisia as a parliamentary-presidential system in which the president acquired more powers than Ennahda members had wanted. Moreover, Tunisia is defined in the constitution as a civil rather than an Islamic state. Also, language that criminalized blasphemy was eliminated. Most of these compromises were worked out between fall 2012 and spring 2013, and were released to the public as a third draft in April 2013, several months prior to the coup in Egypt (Marks, 2015).

Still, Egypt's July 2013 coup influenced the transition in Tunisia. The Tunisian Tamarod (Rebellion) movement was in fact a copycat of its sister movement in Egypt.

The success of the Tamarod movement in Egypt in removing Morsi from power, intensified anger against the Tunisian "Troika" and the government and eventually lead to the outbreak of the Bardo protests. Moreover, these protests reminded the Ennahda party "just how unique and fragile its position as a free, democratically elected Islamist party really was" (Marks, 2015, p.29). More importantly, the Egyptian coup forced Ennahda leaders to accept negotiations with old-regime members. Ennahda did not want to further alienate opposition members and facilitate coalition building with other political parties which might have eventually lead to a coup against them. Many members of Ennahda strongly opposed negotiating with old-regime members and refused the idea of allowing Essebsi and other former regime officials to partake in the upcoming elections. Nonetheless, Ennahda's leadership was able to convince other members of the party to compromise their position which proved to be favorable to the Tunisian transition process. The coup against Morsi "reinforced and offered new justification for Ennahda's pragmatism, gradualism and support for long term-termist compromise-tendencies manifested in Ennahda's historical negotiations and internal evolution, as well as the key compromises it made after the 2011 elections" (Marks, 2015, p.49).

4.6 Tunisia's Second Elections

Tunisia held parliamentary and presidential elections in the fall of 2014. The elections were deemed largely free and fair by domestic and international observers. As a result of the elections, Tunisia saw a change in government from one led by Ennahda,

to one led by Nidaa Tounis. In a two-stage-run-off election, Beji Caid Essebsi was elected president of Tunis, thus replacing interim president and Ennahda-ally Marzouki. The turnout for the elections was unexpectedly highly, reaching over 60 percent of registered voters (Benstead, Lust, Dhafer & Wichmann, 2014). Perhaps the most important aspect in this election was the peaceful turnover of power through the ballot box. In fact, the truism of democratic transitions lies in the second election and not in the first. Nidaa Tunis emerged as the biggest bloc in the parliament, taking 85 out of 217 seats, while Ennahda was able to secure 69 seats (Greenfield, 2014).

For many, Essebsi's victory represents Tunisia's achievements and Nidaa Tunis' victory a defeat of Islamism. However, for many others, the results of the elections were problematic. Given that the 2010 uprising demanded an end to nepotism and corruption, Nidaa Tunis' success was considered a setback for the transition (Greenfield, 2014). However, the new political scene that emerged in Tunisia should not be decried as the end of the democratic transition or, even worse, the reversal of the youth-driven aims of the revolution. Moreover, the victory of Nidaa Tunis in the elections should not be interpreted as a defeat for Islamism. On the contrary, debates over political parties and ideological differences in the everyday lives of Tunisians is integral to democratic principles. Expressing frustration over certain aspects of democracy and debating the different forms of democracy, should be considered a vigorous indicator of the success of the Tunisian transition towards democracy.

4.7 Conclusion

The Arab Spring fundamentally changed political dynamics in Arab states. The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen removed their authoritarian leaders from power. However, regimes in Bahrain and Syria managed, though barely, to survive. Among the Arab Spring countries, Tunisia was the only country that experienced an authoritarian breakdown and was also able to embark on a successful democratic transition.

Apart from structural conditions that were favorable to the democratic transition, Tunisia's political actors and elites were committed to protect their new democratic principles. Ennahda's leadership demonstrated the extent to which it was willing to compromise its ideological beliefs in order to move the country forward. Ennahda showed a great adherence to democratic principles, especially as an Islamist party that ascended to power through the ballot box. Furthermore, although Tunisia's military was relatively small and detached from the political context, it played an important professional role. The Tunisian military decided to defy Ben Ali's orders and refused to fire at the protestors. Thus, it was able to ensure that the transition from authoritarian rule did not involve a bloodbath. Moreover, the constitution-making process was very inclusive and transparent. Throughout the process, Tunisians were involved and were able to voice their objections and give their feedback. Of course, various civil society groups were central in this process. Their contribution and constant lobbying towards a secular-oriented constitution eventually paid off. In addition, the UGTT's history of social struggle in Tunisia, enabled it to broker an agreement between Ennahda and Nidaa Tunis in the summer of 2013, and subsequently end the stalemate. Finally, the

electoral reforms that were adopted in Tunisia gave a chance for other political parties to participate and compete in elections. In turn, this enhanced the pluralism in Tunisia's democracy. The next chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the information presented and considering the implications and future of the Arab Spring.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summing Up the Argument

The self-immolation of Tunisian street vendor Mohamad Bouaziz triggered mass protests in Tunisia and consequently ended Ben Ali's twenty-three-years rule. The Tunisian uprising spilled over to other countries in the region, some of them nearby and some far away. The popular uprisings in the Arab world were expected to generate a new wave of democratization in the region. However, apart from Tunisia, post-uprising Arab states are either in civil war or are back to authoritarian rule.

After an introduction to the topic in Chapter One, Chapter Two examined democratic transitions. The role played by political economy, social cleavages, social struggle, institutions, religion, and political agents and elites in democratic transitions were all evaluated against the Tunisian case. It is important to understand the reason behind authoritarian regime breakdown in democratic transitions. Economic grievances and political freedom are two important factors that cause a schism between hard-liners and soft-liners. Once authoritarian breakdown occurs, the choices taken by different political actors affect the discourse of the transition. As such, Tunisia is the only country in the Arab world to date that has experienced a democratic transition. The strength of state institutions, the autonomy of the labor movements, its small and ineffective military, state and religion differentiation, and its geo-political insignificance, all these factors contributed to a democratic transition in Tunisia.

Chapter Three looked at the factors behind the Tunisian uprising and its occurrence in 2011. The economic liberalization of Tunisia and the role of social media were two focus points in this regard. The protesters' main concerns was improving their socio-economic conditions, more so than securing their human rights and political freedoms. The neoliberal policies adopted by the regime further alienated the citizens and even the Tunisian bourgeoisie from the crony capitalists and regime elites. As such, this later contributed to the downfall of the regime. In contrast to the Gafsa revolt in 2008, social media and the support of the UGTT contributed to the nationwide protests in 2011. These two factors help explain the timing of the Tunisian uprising and are the reasons why the 2011 uprising did not share the same fate of the 2008 Gafsa revolt.

Democratic transition in Tunisia was presented in Chapter Four. The role of the Tunisian military during and after the uprising and the role of the interim government was key in this process. Moreover, the electoral reforms and the drafting of the new constitution that culminated in the second elections guaranteed a smooth democratic transition. Tunisia's political actors, such as Ennahda's leadership, helped protect the new democratic principles and have avoided political deadlock through compromise. As such, the inclusive and transparent constitution-making process proved to be vital in ensuring a democratic transition. The consequent electoral reforms allowed several political parties to participate in elections, thus strengthening pluralism in the country. Tunisia's small military also helped the democratic transition process by defying regime orders and refusing to crush the protests.

Although most Arab Spring states are currently undergoing transitions or 'transformations' which might not necessarily lead to democracy, by Linz and Stephan's

(1996) four requirements for a full democratic transition discussed in Chapter Two, Tunisia seems to have achieved a successful democratic transition.

First, the Tunisian interim government agreed to accept the then-current constitution in order to conserve the political and institutional structures of the country. Moreover, the interim government decided to draft a new electoral law and embrace a system of proportional representation. The new electoral law enjoyed the support of almost all Tunisians as it was a break from Ben Ali's one party rule. It denied any single party a majority. Consequently, political parties with different ideological beliefs were forced to work together. Second, Tunisia's first elections, after the ouster of Ben Ali, were described as fair and free. According to a report published by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2011, there was a high degree of professionalism and dedication among the Tunisian polling station officials and staff. Moreover, civil society organizations were able, for the first time in Tunisia's history, to deploy monitors to observe the electoral process in the country. This contributed to the public confidence in the electoral process and added to it a measure of transparency and credibility. Third, the newly elected interim government had succeeded to draft a new constitution that was described as an inclusive document. According to a report published by the Carter Center (2011-2014), the Tunisian constitution, over the span of two years, significantly evolved from the first draft to the currently adopted constitution. It favored, in many instances, a relatively higher degree of protection for fundamental freedom and human rights. Although there has been a considerable delay with the constitution-drafting process (one year), the Tunisian experience can be enriching to other countries undergoing democratic transitions. Moreover, the constitution-making process in

Tunisia is a stark reminder that the process is as important as the end result. For instance, the strength of the Tunisian constitution drafting-process lies in the consensual work of the different political parties, who were forced to put their differences aside. Fourth, the newly adopted constitution offers a clear distinction between the executive, legislative and judiciary. According to a study published by the European Parliament (2014), Tunisia has "embraced a new constitutional paradigm that is based on a modern approach to human rights protection and institutional framework that treats the legislature, the Presidency, the Prime Minister and his or her Cabinet and the judiciary as the four corners of a fairly balanced structure" (p.16).

Tunisia is endowed with certain structural conditions that helped its democratic transitions. First, a rarity in the Arab world, Tunisia enjoys a strong sense of national unity. Tunisia is a homogenous state with a majority of Arabs and Sunni Muslims. Thus, major divisions over religious and linguistic cleavages do not exist. Therefore, Tunisia did not witness civil or sectarian wars after the fall of the former regime. Second, Tunisia enjoys high literacy levels and a relatively large middle class, in addition to effective civil society organizations. These factors are all conducive to countries that are undergoing democratic transition. The workers and the UGTT played a significant role in Tunisia's uprising. They were able to organize mass protest movements against Ben Ali and his regime and later they were able to mediate Tunisia's political deadlock. Third, Tunisia is blessed in institutional terms. After the fall of Ben Ali's regime, the state apparatus remained intact. Institutions such as the police and the military as well as the civil bureaucracy were able to provide law and order to the Tunisian citizens, and thus were able to preserve the power of the state. Moreover, the Tunisian state had a

considerable distance from Ben Ali's regime. Thus, certain organizations, such as the Tunisian military, cultivated an ethos distinct from Ben Ali's regime. Consequently, the military refused to comply with Ben Ali's orders and decided to side with the protestors. Hence, authoritarian breakdown in Tunisia was relatively peaceful and smooth. Fourth, decentralization in Tunisia proved to be very effective. The newly adopted constitution in Tunisia recognized decentralization as an important structural feature of the Tunisian state. Decentralization in democratic transitions positively affects regional development and solidarity. Moreover, it encourages participatory democracy and open governance which are vital to the success of democratic transitions. Fifth, Tunisia's civil society helped in shaping, supporting and sustaining democratic movements. Finally, Tunisia's political elite showed exceptional commitment to the values of democracy. The cooperation and negotiations between the two camps facilitated the maintenance of Tunisia's 'Twin Tolerations'.

5.2 Theoretical Implications of the Tunisian Uprising

The contrast between the Tunisian and other post-uprising Arab Spring states is central for a remarkable number of comparative analyses. The different outcomes generated after the Arab Spring makes such comparison inevitable: Tunisia produced a successful democratic transition, while the rest of the post-uprising Arab Spring states did not.

Tunisia's experience raises important theoretical implications regarding the democratic transition literature. Several explanations and arguments have been made in

order to explain Tunisia's "exceptionalism". First, it has been repeatedly emphasized that Tunisia has a small and a relatively homogenous population. However ideological polarization in Tunisia exists between the Islamists and the secularists. In fact, Tunisia has witnessed two political assassinations and several months of political deadlock due to the deep divisions between the two camps. Second, another common argument states that Tunisians, in general, are more educated than other Arab countries. Moreover, some claim that Tunisians are more prone to democratic attitudes since they are heavily influenced by the French colonial era. However, a study conducted by the Arab Barometer reveals that by 2013, the majority of the Tunisians no longer thought that democracy was appropriate for their country (Grewal, 2015). While these explanations are not totally correct, they do ring true partially.

The Tunisian experience and its successful democratic transition brings about two important theoretical implications regarding the literature on democratic transitions. First, the real answer to the puzzle of the Tunisian democratic transition lies in the limited capabilities of its state institutions. In Tunisia, the judiciary was unable and the military was unwilling to partner with the Tunisian opposition (Grewal, 2015). During the political crisis of the 2013 summer, the Tunisian opposition organized massive demonstrations demanding the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the ouster of Ennahda. However, at that time, the highest judicial body in Tunisia was the Court of Cassation, which did not have the jurisdiction to rule on the constitutionality of electoral laws (Grewal, 2015). Moreover, the Tunisian army has been historically marginalized ever since Bourguiba's rule. Thus, it had no enthusiasm or economic and institutional interests in overthrowing Ennahda. Therefore, the Tunisian opposition had no state

institutions to partner with. In Tunisia "the opposition realized after months of protests that there would be no judiciary or military to come to its aid. Ultimately, it realized that it had to back down on its demand for the dissolution of the constituent and instead negotiate with Ennahda on the way forward" (Grewal, 2015, p.45).

Second, the geo-political context regarding the Tunisian experience was favorable to the successful democratic transition in the country. Different regional and international actors, such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League, Russia, Iran and the US played a significant role in the events of the Arab Spring. Consequently, the democratization process in post-uprising Arab states was heavily affected by different competing, and sometimes similar, interests. In Tunisia, the situation was significantly different. The context for democratic transition was much higher than in other Arab Spring states. Compared to other Arab countries, relations between Tunisia and regional and international actors, especially Western powers, have always been less complex. Tunisia has always been regarded as a special case in the Arab world. It lacks vital resources such as oil, is distant from the Arab-Israeli conflict, and is not substantially threatened by Muslim radicals and other extremists. "Even the enthusiastic embrace of the Ben Ali regime, especially by the French but also by the Americans, was abandoned within days of the start of the demonstrations in December 2010. The security stakes were simply not large enough for Western powers to stand by the discredited dictator" (Springborg, 2011, p.7). Moreover, the democratization of Tunisia was not regarded as a potential threat to the interests of other Arab countries. Consequently, democratic transition in Tunisia was allowed to transpire due to the relatively small risks involved for all different actors.

5.3 Tunisia's Future Challenges

5.3.1 Terrorism

As a result of electoral returns in the fall of 2014, Tunisia witnessed a change of government from one led by the country's Islamist movement to one led by a different party composed of politicians united in their anti-Islamist stance. However, Tunisia has the doubtful distinction of being the country for the biggest number of foreign fighters in Syria supporting the Islamic State in the year 2014 (Berman, Nugent & Adala, 2015). Moreover, Tunisia witnessed three terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016. The absence of a strong central state in Tunisia in the past four years has led to the trans-national flow of weapons between differed militants across Tunisia's malleable borders with Algeria and Libya. Furthermore, countries undergoing democratic transitions are more prone to terrorist attacks as police and security forces are often in disarray. Also, new freedoms available in democratic transitions often provide opportunities for militants to organize.

A study published by the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution surveyed 1,157 Tunisians voters as they exited voting polls in 2014 (Berman, et al, 2015). Among the chief concerns of the Tunisians were issues related with security and terrorism. Despite the polarizing nature of public debates in Tunisia at that time, respondents were not highly concerned with the role of religion in Tunisian state. However, respondents also mentioned issues related to democratic principles and the protection of civil liberties at a high rate. Nonetheless, there are fears of a return to authoritarian strategies. Following the Sousse Attacks in June 2015, Tunisian Prime Minister Habib Essid, declared that the government would close down 80 mosques

controlled by Salafi preachers within days. Furthermore, Essid indicated that he will try to close down Hizb Al-Tahrir (Liberalization Party), a political party that advocates the establishment of a caliphate under Islamic Sharia law. Additionally, the government has promised to move against several religious associations and tighten laws on funding for associations. These measurements were roundly decried by Tunisian human rights activists and other civil society groups, who feared the return of a police state. Ennahda, fearing a crackdown, decided to side with the government and asked for a national dialogue in order to discuss recent developments.

Thus, terrorism or instability does not signal that Tunisia's democratic transition has been derailed. On the contrary, Tunisian citizens and their representatives are engaging in a dialogue regarding an essential tension that is intrinsic in all democracies. Debating the importance of balancing security concerns with issues of national security is a healthy indicator of Tunisia's democratic transition.

Tunisia's President and Prime Minister have blamed the recent attacks on foreign groups and funding. The current turmoil in Libya, has given Tunisia's militants an opening and allowed them to train themselves. However, violent extremism and terrorism is a Tunisian creation as much as it is a foreign problem. According to Rory McCarthy (2015), Jihadi violence has been a problem in Tunisia for many years, even before 2011. Armed militants responsible for the Sousse and Bardo attacks are all young Tunisian citizens and not foreigners. "Sousse itself is not just a tourist resort: It too has produced its share of radical extremists who were involved in attacks inside Tunisia and who have traveled abroad to fight in Iraq and Syria with Islamic State" (McCarthy, 2015, p.31). Therefore, in order to address Tunisia's security threat, the Tunisian

government should revisit the problem and offer new solutions. The Tunisian government should realize that terrorism is a Tunisian problem as much as it is a Libyan one. While border control from the Libyan side is important, it is equally important that Tunisians work on border control to prevent Tunisians from entering Libya in the first place. Moreover, since terrorism in Tunisia is largely homegrown, the Tunisian government needs to devise a plan in which the basic needs of under-resourced communities are met. This includes creating new employment opportunities and reassessing the educational strategies applied in public and private schools.

5.3.2 Economic Reforms

The recent terrorist attacks in Tunisia come on top of social and economic unrest. The tourism industry in Tunisia makes up to 15% of the country's economy (McCarthy, 2015). Consequently, terrorism could lead to a serious, long-term damage to the country's economy. Tunisia's economic problems are not a product of the uncertainty and lower investor confidence that resulted after the revolution. In fact, they are the result of poorly designed economic policies, which were in place under Ben Ali and are still effective to this day. Neo-liberal reforms were at the heart of the 2011 Tunisian revolution. Moreover, Tunisia appears to be trapped in the economic model that was designed decades ago. According to Antonio Nucifora and Eric Churchill (2014), "Tunisia's investment regime, for example, limits potential new investment to less than 50 percent of the Tunisian economy. Whether through public or private monopolies or oligopolies, dozens of sectors are either explicitly or de facto closed to any meaningful competition. The laundry list included telecoms, road and air transport, tobacco, fisheries, tourism, advertising etc..."(p26). While economists might describe Tunisia's

economic problems as structural, in fact, it is much deeper than that. The problem with the Tunisian economy is that it is based on a patronage network where only the privileged few are able to enjoy its benefits (Nuficora & Churchil, 2015). Tunisia's economic system and environment must change so that Tunisia's performance in the global economy can improve. This requires much deeper political negotiations and compromises amongst different political and economic elites than in the past.

5.3.3 The Future of the Arab Spring

Most would agree that the Arab spring was born in Tunisia, and died in Syria. By the time it became clear to observers that Egypt's democratic transition had gone wrong, the situation in post-uprising Arab Spring states was spiraling downwards. How is it possible that large peaceful movements around the Arab world have led to fierce civil wars, rise of extremists and the death of millions? Today, Egypt has resorted to a new military rule; Yemen, Syria and Libya have all collapsed into civil wars.

Some writers and intellectuals have declared the death of the Arab Spring, and concluded that it was a harsh winter all along (Spencer, 2015). According to many, the Arab Spring has all but reduced the region to terrorism and chaos. However, many are oblivious to the very nature of transitions. In fact, transitional processes are often interrupted with intervals of violence, terrorism and reversal waves. Transitions from authoritarian regime continue to be one of the most relevant puzzles in comparative politics (Munck, 1994).

Was there ever an Arab Spring? Marc Lynch (2016) argues that dismissing the Arab Spring and categorizing the uprisings as either a failure or a success, does not fully

capture how they have transformed every single dimension of the region's politics. The Arab Spring has vastly transformed regional international relations, regimes, states and even ideas. Perhaps then, the right terminology to use while discussing the Arab Spring is "transform" and not "transition". The word "transition", in academic literature, has always been interchangeably used with democracy. It cannot really capture the significant transformations that are at the heart of the Arab Spring.

It has been argued earlier that uprisings do not take place in vacuum, and that understanding the historical genealogy of power structures within a certain state is imperative. Therefore, it is important that the unique context and the different international, regional and local actors of the MENA region are taken into consideration. More importantly, the success or failure of the Arab Spring should not be compared to other uprisings and revolutions wholesale. On the contrary, the Arab Spring should be assessed against the 'changes' or the 'continuities' that have occurred in post-uprising Arab Spring states. The 2011 Arab uprisings were indeed inspired by the desire to change the political and socio-economic structures of the Arab world. However, given the resistance of authoritarian leaders against change, and the complexities of other factors in the region, violence was unavoidable. The current situation in Syria, Libya, Yemen and even Egypt makes the Arab Spring look like a failure but eventually it will one day succeed.

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