A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARAB SPRING:
CASE STUDIES OF TUNISIA AND EGYPT

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ABSTRACT

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Arab Spring is a political concept that spread widely in the media and academic art publications. This concept is used as an indication to a wide range of uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region during the past two years; which started in Tunisia and swept through Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria. However, when looking closely at what happened, we see that there is a misusage of the concept of Arab Spring in describing the uprising. In its current usage the concept does not have any

analytical value, but just a descriptive category and it is a European originated concept. Thus, this thesis will critically analyze the concept and its origin and its usefulness as an analytical tool to understand the uprising in the MENA region. The thesis questions the dominant view that the uprising is conducive to bring about democracy to the region.

When examining the uprising in the region, specifically Tunisia and Egypt, it is necessary to keep in mind the diversity of the countries in which each country has different dynamics and structures. This fact is the main reason for choosing these two countries as case studies. Socio-Economic, social and political factors that have existed in these countries before the uprising play a crucial role in determining the uprising and its consequences. So for example, Tunisia is slowly moving towards building a new system and it is relatively in a better shape than others, while Egypt is experiencing terrible conditions from the social division and violent cycle after the military coup and still in turmoil. So the question here is why? Why Tunisia and Egypt which share commonalities like language, religion, history of oppression and experienced same uprising have ended up differently?

ÖZ

ARAP BAHARI'NA ELEŞTİREL BİR BAKIŞ:
TUNUS VE MISIR ÖRNEKLERİ

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Son zamanlarda medyada ve akademik yazında geniş bir yer tutan siyasi bir kavram olan Arap Baharı Orta Doğu ve Afrika ülkelerinde ve ilk olarak Tunus'ta ortaya çıkarak Mısr, Libya, Bahrein Yemen ve Suriye'ye yayılan geniş yelpazeli bir başkaldırıyı ifade etmek için kullanılmaktadır. Olgulara dikkatli bir bakış bu başkaldırıyı ifade etmek için kullanılan Arap Baharı kavramının yanlış yönlendirici bir nitelikte kullanıldığı açıkça ortaya çıkmaktadır. Avrupa'da ortay çıkan bu kavramın analitik bir değerinin olmadığı vurgulanan bu tezde kavramın kökenleri ve Orta Doğu ve Kuzey

Afrika'da ki başkaldırılar eleştirel bir biçimde irdelenmektedir. Tez aynı zamanda Arap Baharı'nın bölgede demokrasiye yol açacağı biçimindeki genel yargıyı sorgulamaktadır.

Bölgedeki başkaldırının irdelenmesinde genellemelerden kaçınılarak Tunus ve Mısır gibi her ülkenin kendine özgü bir iç dinamiğinin olduğuna özellikle vurgu yapmak gereksinmesinin ışığında tezde bu iki ülke örnek ülkeolarak alınarak irdelenmiştir. İleri sürülen temel argüman her iki ülkede de başkaldırıdan önce var olan ekonomik, toplumsal ve siyasi etmenlerin başkaldırının yapısını ve doğurduğu sonuçları belirlemede önemli bir rol oynadığı biçimindedir. Bu bağlamda tezde Tunus'un yavaş da olsa yeni bir sisteme geçişte diğer ülkelere göre gdaha iyi bir durumda olduğu, Mısır'ın ise askeri bir darbenin ardından günümüzde korkunç karmaşıklıklar içinde olduğu, toplumsal bölünmeler ve çatışmalar zinciri içinde olduğu ortaya konmaktadır. Bu farklılıklardan hareketle tez dil, din, tarihi benzerliklerine rağmen bir başkaldırı ile yüzyüze gelen Tunus ve Mısır'ın neden farklı sonuçlarla karşılaştığı sorunsalı tezin ana temasını oluşturmaktadır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER: Arap Baharı, Sosyo-ekonomik koşullar, demokratikleşme, Ortadoğu, Kuzey Afrika, Başkaldırı

DEDICATION

To My Beloved Parents, Aisha, and Malak

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2011 the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was rocked by a wave of uprisings which at the time were understood as the most dramatic geo-political events since the end of the Cold War, eclipsing the importance of 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis (Foreign Affairs Committee 2011). These uprisings began with the self-immolation protest of a Tunisian street vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi, against the corrupt and inept government of Tunisia in December 2010; consequent street protests then revolutionary movements emerged throughout Tunisia then swept through Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria (Alhassen 2012; Fahim 2011; Friedman 2011). These movements collectively came to be dubbed the "Arab Spring", the "Arab Revolution" or the "Arab Awakening" (Souza and Lipietz 2011); the former was the most popular among the Western media during 2011 and it has become the conventional term to refer to the phenomenon (Manfreda 2011).

However, any critical analysis of this widespread, complex and multi-faceted phenomenon must acknowledge that this "Spring" as a whole has resulted in only tentative changes in the socio-political environment of the MENA, and it has degenerated into intractable civil wars and humanitarian crises in some instances, notably Syria. In the heady days of 2011 the "Arab Spring" seemed to many like a hopeful sign of entrenched dictatorships falling like dominos to make way for new democratic systems, but in fact the complex socioeconomic and political dynamics of each country have resulted in the "Arab Spring" being little more than an empty slogan that says nothing about the real causes of the uprising or reflect the real picture of what is happening within the MENA countries.

This thesis critically examines the concept of the Arab Spring in describing the recent uprisings. Exploring the modern history of the MENA region in regard to the socioeconomic and political aspects is crucial to assess the background of the uprisings. In other words, why did the uprising take place and why at this time? What were (are) the causes and outcomes? Is the concept of the Arab Spring right to describe what happened? Does the term capture the socioeconomics of the countries of the region?

What are the origins and roots of this concept? And why has it become so popular? Furthermore, have the uprisings brought about a substantive and lasting political change, as claimed by Beck and Hüser (2012)? Are they part of a democratic process as claimed by Chapman (2011) and Roy (2012)? Do Arab countries have the basic elements of democracy? Are the conventional Western models of democratization germane to the socioeconomic reality of the MENA states? All these questions will be dealt within this thesis.

Moreover, this thesis examines and approaches the recent uprisings and the Arab Spring from the perspective of the sociology of revolutions. Theoretically, it is very important to consider the recent uprisings in the light of the broader history and analysis of revolutions, because the Arab Spring was hailed as the most major political transformation in the international system since the end of the Cold War by the US (Foreign Affairs Committee 2011). Unlike 9/11, the Arab Spring is attributable to deep and widespread sociological causes (e.g. unemployment, corruption and rising food prices etc., as explored later) rather than sporadic or individual phenomena, thus it must be considered as a form of revolutionary history analogous to the 20th century movements deemed moribund in the 21st century by Fukayama (1992). This thesis considers a wide range of social scientific discussions (including theories and concepts as well as case study analysis) to approach the revolutionary history of the Arab Spring, with particular regard to theorists such as Davies (1962), Goldstone (2001) and Stone (1966).

After that, the thesis critically discusses the term and concept of Arab Spring, its history and its usefulness to describe the recent uprisings. It also considers the theoretical quandary of whether what happened was a revolt, a revolution or an uprising. Additionally, this thesis critically handles the question of democracy and the model of democratization, which became a popular slogan of the uprising but which may not be the reality of what the stakeholders in the movement were calling for; rather the discourse of democratization can be traced to Western elements' commentary on the Arab Spring, while the demands of protestors and revolutionaries were more mundane

goals such as employment, improved standards of living, reduced corruption and regime change – without specifying what existing regimes should be replaced with.

The main case studies considered in this thesis are Tunisia and Egypt, both of which experienced the uprising first and both of which witnessed different consequences due to different socioeconomic and political dynamics. Tunisia and Egypt will be put into focus to examine both terms the Arab Spring and the model of democratization, to see if these terms capture the socioeconomics and political dynamics of the two countries (and MENA as a whole).

Thus, following the analysis in this structure the primary question is going to be: to what extent do the term "Arab Spring" and the "democratization" model capture the socioeconomic and political dynamics of the recent uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt? The secondary research questions include: What is the history of term "Spring"? Is the term useful as an analytical tool to describe the recent uprisings? Is the Arab Spring a revolt, a revolution or an uprising? Plus, what is democracy? Is the model of democratization applicable to the region? What is the nature of socioeconomic structures in Tunisia and Egypt? How well do the political dynamics of these countries help establish democracy? Addressing all these questions will lead to a better understanding of the recent events in the MENA.

In the light of the questions raised above, the first chapter looks at different theories of revolution in order to assess their relevance for the analysis of the recent Arab uprising. This chapter includes definitions of revolution as well as the causes and outcomes of revolutions based on several major intellectuals and theorists who have contributed to understanding the study of revolution. The second chapter examines the Arab Spring in light of the historical sociology of revolution perspective, which will give an idea of whether it is a revolution, a revolt or an uprising. Also, analyzing the term "Spring" gives us an idea of how it might be misleading and analytically empty to describe the recent uprising.

A notable theoretical contribution is the observation of the causes and effects of the Arab Spring with particular regard to the socioeconomic and political structures of

Tunisia and Egypt, which leads to the conclusion that a false homogeneity was projected on the MENA by international media and policymakers based on the assumption that the dynamics and structure of the regional countries are basically the same, thus the blanket term "Arab Spring" can apply to all. The chapter shows that Tunisia is different from Egypt in its dynamics and structures, thus the idea of generalization is not valid and the term "Spring" is not a useful analytical tool to describe the uprising.

Lastly, the focus of the third chapter is to handle the question of democracy and the model of democratization in the region in light of the uprising. Going through the literature on democracy in the MENA region can offer a solid basis to my argument, which is essentially a critique of the claim that the establishment of democracy was a primary aim of the Arab Spring revolutionaries and the international community. A critical and close re-examination of the socioeconomics of the case studies of Tunisia and Egypt prove that the democratization model does not capture the dynamics and structure of these two countries. Thus, claiming that the uprisings aimed to produce democracy is a canard due to the lack of democratic elements and lack of a socioeconomic and political foundation upon which democracy could be built.

When we talk about the MENA region, this thesis argues that it is important to distinguish between the different countries in regard to their internal socioeconomic and political structures. It is not the aim of this study to present a comprehensive history of the MENA region, but it is important to understand the broad parameters upon which the analysis of this research is based.

In the *longue durée* of the MENA, it was traditionally ruled under Ottoman suzerainty (Pappé 2005: 15). Under this essentially laissez faire system of governance, the most important identification of "citizens" was according to religion – thus a Jew in Salonica had more commonality with a Jew in Baghdad than with the Greeks and Albanians with whom he lived, who would be classed as Orthodox Christians and Muslims, respectively (Mazower, 2004).

From the Balkan Wars in the 1900s nation states began to replace the Ottoman model, and after the First World War and the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire the whole of

the Middle East began to be restructured on the basis of nation states, thus the region was divided into different political entities with clear borders (Pappé 2005: 21). Over the course of the early to mid-20th century, each country formulated its own politics (under the supervision of the colonial/ mandate powers, particularly Britain and France) with a specific form of integration into the global economy; various formats of constitutional monarchies, tentative representative democracies, authoritarian bureaucracies and nationalist republics were tried in different areas, but the outlines of the MENA as we now recognize it were already entrenched by the 1970s (e.g. Nasserite models of military authoritarianism in Egypt and Libya, pseudo-democratic secular republics in Lebanon and Tunisia, and quasi-Islamic sheikhdoms in the Gulf. What has definitively not occurred is that the Arab states have become European-model peaceful nation states with socio-economic development, political freedom and basic human rights protections (Aissa 2012).

Having laid down this assessment, it is clear that the region is homogenous only in terms of what it is *not*; it is not a southern shore of Europe, or some form of confederation of European-style democratic nation states. Rather it is a motley array of numerous different forms of authoritarian regimes, and (for the most part) a moribund backwater in terms of socio-economic development since the mid-20th century. When examining the uprising in the region, it is necessary to keep in mind the diversity of its countries, each of which has its own different internal dynamics, and this is why each country that experienced the uprising reached different outcomes. So for example, Tunisia is slowly moving toward building a new system and it is in relatively better shape than the others, while Egypt has experienced a terrible backslide into a more repressive junta rule due to social division and violent cycles of conflict since the military coup; it is still in turmoil. Libya has disintegrated as a nation state, with independent revolutionary militias holding sway of the majority of the country (and the internationally recognized government having little practical power outside its own compounds in Tripoli). Yemen, the poorest country in the MENA, now has no functioning government and is subject to a jihad by Saudi Arabia (obviously with the blessing of the US) while Syria is in an intractable and brutal civil war. The obvious question that arises is why these different outcomes have emerged.

This thesis provides a comparative analysis of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings in order to highlight their different outcomes. This issue is approached through examining the socioeconomic structures and internal politics of each country, to consider how institutions and the economic and political status of the countries determine their outcomes from the Arab Spring.

Tunisia seems to be the most successful country in its transition process toward a new political life since the uprising. It has succeeded in staying less violent and more flexible in terms of political dialogues between different parties. As early as 2011 Tunisia managed to envision democratic elections, a representative parliamentary system with all major political factions (including secularists, socialists and Islamists etc.) and a flourishing civic life (Dickinson 2011). Tunisia is thus an interesting case study for this thesis as it provides a successful political and social model for the MENA region. Conversely, Egypt was ostensible better prepared for "democratization". It has a larger population and a quasi-organized democratic opposition (albeit technically proscribed in Egypt under the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood is one of the most sophisticated international political movements in the MENA), and it appeared to achieve a political revolution against the Mubarak regime, which had massive backing from the army and the US, but it degenerated into a more authoritarian and un-democratic system than before 2011 (Hnaid 2013).

In addition to comparing the case studies of Tunisia and Egypt, this study explains the diversified impacts and processes of uprisings in light of the falsely homogenized "Spring" and uncritically accepted pronouncements of processes of "democratization" projected by the media and Western governments on the phenomena.

The motivation behind the choice of this topic reflects the need to provide a critical evaluation of a recent social and political phenomenon in the MENA region. This phenomenon has been given much attention locally, regionally and internationally. It illustrates the story of political repression and economic stagnation in the region during the last century. Thus, it needs careful attention to study its causes and its outcomes regarding the social, political, and economic structures of the region. The importance of

sociology and the internal dynamics are the keys for any country to change or sustain its status. As in the case of the Arab Spring, these dynamics are what determine the change and its consequences.

CHAPTER 1: SOCIOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce the concepts of the sociology of the revolution and apply them to analysis of the Arab Spring. The theoretical approaches that will be captured in this chapter represent the lens used to set the focus on the uprisings that take place in the MENA region. Different theories of revolution are explained to examine if the criteria of the Arab Spring fit into any of the theories or not. Then, the thesis gives answers to two questions about revolution from different points of view:

- What is a revolution?

- Why does it take place?

This thesis considers whether the events that occurred in MENA from 2011 onwards can be considered to be revolutions, revolts or uprisings. Categorizing these events is highly important in order to avoid any vague description about the Arab Spring. More discussions are presented in this chapter based on modern analysts such as Collins (2001), who have built on the classical work of Weber concerning the legitimacy or illegitimacy of revolutions in changing governments. In addition to that, Marx's view on revolution will also be a point to focus on during discussing different sections in this chapter.

1.2 Theories of Revolution

Revolution has long been a subject of heated debate among scholars and political theorists. This thesis attempts to analyze the phenomena of the Arab Spring using perspectives drawn from the sociology of revolution. In this context, the theory of revolution comes first in the analysis of the events that take place in the MENA region. The researcher examined various theories of revolution and considered their applicability to the Arab Spring according to its causes and outcomes.

The definition of revolution has been changed as new events have emerged in modern world history; one of the definitions was derived from the social movement theory. According to Skocpol (1979: 4), the definition of great social revolutions is "rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures… accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below". Analysis of social movements has helped a lot in clarifying processes underlying revolutions, like mass mobilization, ideological conflicts and confrontation with authorities. In addition to that, some of the radical social movements, like the US civil rights movement, applied "major changes in the distribution of power" (Goldstone 2001: 142). These social movements can spark the flame of a revolution as collective actions or behavior might be linked to political change and institutional reconstructions (McAdam et al 2005: 1). What is crucial here is that, for a revolt or a revolution to be successful, major social movement by people go out to the street and demand change; and their demand of change must be achievable.

As Goldstone noted, there is a common set of core elements that, if applicable to an event, signal a revolutionary occurrence. These elements include: the willingness and effort to change the political regime, formal and informal mass mobilization, and change to be forced via non-institutionalized actions (demonstrations, protests and strikes etc.) Combining these elements together gives a broader and contemporary definition of revolution that makes it different from revolts, uprisings, coups and civil wars; this definition was summed up by Goldstone as "an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and non-institutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities" (Goldstone 2001: 142). Thus, an action of a revolution must be to transform power and its system from one group to another. Again, the fall of the old regime and system is a must: "This idea melds with another, that revolution is successful only where a movement overturns a regime" (Kroeber 1996: 22).

In general, revolutionary movements proclaim that they will diminish inequality, produce democracy, and make economic prosperity available (Weede and Muller 1997, quoted in Goldstone 2001). This claim is rarely realized. Revolutions might be successful in undermining the old government, but to establish a new government and

enable democracy and economic prosperity to flourish is a hard thing to do; rather state/governance reconstruction adds a further stumbling block to the conditions already preventing the former regime from making headway in these areas. Different kinds of revolutions are mainly understood in terms of their outcomes or actors. The great revolutions, like the French Revolution (1789), include transformation of economic and social structures plus political institutions. Another type of revolution is the political revolution, where changes happen only in the state institutions. Social revolutions are carried out by lower class revolts such as marginalized groups (e.g. ethnicities) in society (Skocpol 1979), whilst elite revolutions are held out by elites who have full control over mass mobilization; these revolutions are sometimes called "revolutions from above" (Trimberger 1978). Failed (or abortive) revolutions are those that fail to secure power; oppositional movements that are not planning to take power or they focus on a special group of the mass population are called rebellions, whether they involve violent or peaceful protests (Goldstone 2001: 143).

On the question of when the revolution is over, Stinchcombe offered the reasonable argument that a revolution is over when "the stability and survival of the institutions imposed by the new regime are no longer in doubt" (Stinchcombe 1999: 50-51). Additionally Jaroslav embraces that what caused the revolution must be finished and cleared and new issues have risen for a new phase after the revolution. Or as Kroeber argued that for a "useful definition of the word revolution, we need to know how much change needs to have occurred, or been attempted, to deserve the label" (Kroeber 1996: 23-24). So the final stage of a revolution is simply until the old regime falls.

Under revolutionary regimes, religious groups and ethnic minorities often suffer because they are used as scapegoats; if any counter-revolutionary elements or external interventions "threaten the revolutionary regime, any groups not bound by ethnic and religious solidarity to the new government become suspect in their loyalties and may be singled out for persecution" (Gurr 1994, quoted in Goldstone 2001: 169). This is precisely what happened in Egypt after the Brotherhood came to power after the 25 January Revolution, which will be discussed later in more detail. Skocpol observed that ideologically oriented leaders lay aside their chosen tasks, and the forms of regimes they

wanted, due to "rapidly-changing currents of revolution" (Skocpol 1979: 171); the clearest example of this would be the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), when the new regime was preoccupied with fighting internal counterrevolutionaries and international invasions rather than implementing the Leninist socio-economic reforms they had been developing for decades.

There are many theories on the causes of revolutions. One of the most ancient perspectives, that of Plato, is surprisingly materialistic: according to him, poverty produced revolutions (Plato 1951, quoted in Tanter and Midlarsky 1967: 269), when a critical mass of people perceived that the existing regime was not securing their material interests; he also proposed that "differences in economic interests led to functionalism in politics and contributed to the instability of the city-state" (Tanter and Midlarsky 1967: 269). Aristotle concurred in this analysis (Aristotle 1962 quoted in Tanter and Midlarsky 1967: 269), but de Tocqueville disagreed with this traditional understanding and stated that significant increases in economic independence, development and security could promote revolutions, clearly with the US in mind (de Tocqueville 1955, quoted in Tanter and Midlarsky 1967: 270).

James C. Davies (1962: 6-7) believed that a partial mixture of the approaches of Plato and de Tocqueville could provide a more inclusive explanation than either of the two considered alone; long-term increase in economic development followed by a sharp reversal might precede the outbreak of major revolution, and this increase is considered to be a single aspect of society's achievements. So, sparks of revolutions differ according to the beliefs of the rebels; poverty might be the spark or development in economy could be the one.

Davies (1962) introduced the "J-curve theory", which holds that "Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short sharp reversal. People then subjectively fear that ground gained with great effort will be quite lost; their mood becomes revolutionary" (Davies 1962: 6). Davies thus proposes that development itself is a cause of revolution if it stalls, whereby revolutionary situations are generated by long-term economic development and growth

(i.e. increasing standards of living) is followed by short-term economic stagnation or decline (Davies 1962: 17). Furthermore, governments presiding over sound socio-economic development generally grant citizens more rights, while in times of privation and discontent they generally become more authoritarian, which can either quell discontent by the implicit threat (or use) of state violence, or backfire and compound traditional revolutionary fervor.

Generally, people comply with government by a regime if they perceive that they have a stake in its continuation, whether existing or foreseeable advantage; if they perceive that they have nothing left to lose − like Mohammed Bouazizi − they tend to become increasingly outspoken, confrontational and violent against the regime. Thus the theory of Davies (1962) basically centers on the state of mind of the people who revolt; he specifically mentions that political stability and instability depend on the *mood* in a society. That is to say, either poor-dissatisfied people who lack goods, status and power are the ones who revolt, or satisfied rich who have good standards of living might carry out a revolution because of more ideological motivations (e.g. the revolutionaries of the English Civil War, such as Oliver Cromwell, essentially represented the prosperous yeoman bourgeoisie driven by Protestant religious fervor; more recently, most Russian revolutionary leaders from the 19th century *norodniks* onwards were from middle class professional backgrounds, such as Lenin's elder brother Aleksandr Ilyich Ulyanov). Stone (1966) contributed to Davies' theory of revolution and summed it up by stating that a successful revolution is "the work neither of the destitute nor of the well-satisfied, but of those whose actual situation is improving less rapidly than they expect" (Stone 1966: 171). All revolutions therefore are revolutions of expectation.

1.2.1   *What is Revolution?*

In this section of the chapter different definitions of revolution from different resources are examined and explained. The aim is to clarify the term "revolution" and then judge the events that happened in the MENA region with regard to these definitions. Toward a discussion of a useful definition of the word revolution, "we need to know how much change needs to have occurred, or been attempted, to deserve the label" (Kroeber 1996: 24). Starting from Stone (1966), revolution has been defined as "a change that is

effected by the use of violence, in government, and/or regime, and/or society" (Stone 1966: 159). In other words, revolution here is meant to describe the replacement of the old regime with a new one that comes to power through violent actions, like strikes or protests. He does not specify a specific type of change; it might be a change in rolling governments (e.g. the formation of a new cabinet or government), a change in the entire regime (e.g. the liquidation of the Ancien Régime in France, or more recently the Romanov dynasty and their bourgeois Duma), or any other revolutionary societal change (e.g. the assumption of de facto power in numerous historical Islamic states by slave castes, such as the Ghaznavids in the Sassanid Empire or the Mamlukes in Egypt). The sociologist Anthony Giddens modeled a definition of the term "revolution" after studying different theories based on three elements. In brief, he proposes that for any social movement to be named revolution it needs to: be a mass social movement; be a process that will lead to fundamental and systemic changes or reforms; and include the use or the threat of use of violence (Giddens 2006: 867).

If we test the Arab Spring according to these three elements, we see that a mass social movement occurred, but no fundamental or essential change arose because the rebels' main demand was to overthrow the dictatorial regimes, and not to implement any coherent social change; in addition, the general theme that accompanied the Arab Spring was a non-violent one, particularly in Tunisia; in Egypt elements of the military and hired mercenaries were involved in confrontations in Tahrir Square (Tziarras 2011).

On the same issue, Tocqueville (1955) engaged with the subject of revolution from a more empirical approach, and defined it as an overthrow of a legally formalized regime by a group of rebels, illegally or forcefully, so that they occupy roles in the structure of political authority. This overthrow should be combined with an intense political, economic and social change (Tanter and Midlarsky 1967: 265). Similarly, Gottschalk (1944: 4) gave a definition of revolution as a "popular movement whereby a significant change in the structure of a nation or a society is affected. Usually an overthrow of the existing government and the substitution of another come early in such a movement, and significant social and economic changes follow". We see here that for an event to be a revolution it should include the following elements: mass participation, change in the

ruling buddies, as well as changes in economy and society. As Nikki Keddie stated, revolutions are "movements with some mass involvement that take over the state and change its nature in some basic way" (Kroeber 1996: 24).

Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule (2012: 6) defined revolution as a way to discard "regimes that were too open and too closed, too modern and too anachronistic, too rational and too 'insane'". This definition implies that a revolution takes place where a regime is excessively out of touch with the ideology and aspirations of the general population. In contrast, Collins' (2001) view on revolution differs from the preceding definitions in that he sees revolutions as structural opportunities that displace the old regime and pave the way for new kinds of regimes to take its place. Also, he takes account of the possibility of including something that has been restored from the old regimes, so the new regime will not be something totally new that people are unfamiliar with. In other words, Collins states that revolutions are no longer seen as tools to bring political liberalization or economic equality; they are triggers for social and political changes. Farah (2012) similarly stated that revolutions are mainly based on political and social *modernization* in addition to religious form.

The restriction of revolution to social and political changes in modern definitions notably marginalizes two historical elements of revolutions: religion and economy. This reflects that these areas are no longer at the center of most state apparatus; the secularization of states (which has been a phenomenon of the MENA since the late Ottoman period) and the consolidation of economic power in the international banking system (away from national governments) means that although governments are still the target of revolutions, their actual power is within relatively limited social and political domains.

In terms of practical outcomes, Tanter and Midlarsky (1967: 267) stated that a successful revolution occurs "when, as a result of a challenge to the governmental elite, an insurgent is eventually able to occupy principal roles within the structure of the political authority"; that is to say, we can describe a revolution "successful" only when it results in achieving all the goals the rebels set for it, and they play a role in forming

the new political system that leads to social and economic reforms. To conclude, Revolutions signify drastic, fundamental changes in their full depth, duration, and complexity. As Lawrence Stone puts it, "All that matters is the degree to which the vision differs from the reality of the present" (Stone 1970: 25, quoted in Kroeber). Thus the revolution is a wall that should separate two realities, two life standards, and two political and economic structures.

1.2.2 *Why do Revolutions Take Place?*

This part of the chapter explains several causes of revolutions, mainly according to the theorists Davies (1962), Kroeber (1966), Goldstone (1991) and Gottschalk (1944). Naturally in the context of the Cold War, much research attention was given to this subject, resulting in numerous diverse rationales for why revolutions happen; few of these were ever given practical application in policy (Kroeber 1996).

The most obvious cause of revolution is that existing systems no longer guarantee the material existence of populations to the required standards of life. This view is generally attributed to Marxist analyses, but as mentioned previously it can be traced back to Plato. Since the large expansion of the human population since the 19th century, population increase has been identified as a major factor in revolutionary potential, with more pressure on increasingly scarce natural resources. According to Goldstone, "the classic state breakdowns of the early modern Europe… were caused by the incapacity of agrarian economies, and of their attendant social and political institutions, to cope with the pressures of sustained population increase" (Goldstone 1991: 349). On the same line of thinking, Kroeber suggests that "Great increase in population with long continuing decline in agriculture and with government inability to cope is what brings regimes to crises and sometimes into revolution" (Kroeber, 1996: 36). The picture here is about not coping with daily development and requirements for people's wants and needs.

Since the 19th century, with increasingly efficient modes of production, distribution and exchange, the classical Marxist critique has been that increased wages presuppose a rapid growth of productive capital, which creates rapid growth of wealth, luxury, social wants and social enjoyment. With disposable income and increased education

(necessary for industrial production), workers begin to appreciate social satisfaction and to resent what they perceive as the embezzlement of their productive labor by the bourgeoisie; thus they seek greater socio-economic advantages through existing political means, but if these fail to deliver (particularly in times of economic crisis) they will resort to revolutionary organization (Marx 1848, quoted in Davies 1962: 5).

This situation leads to a dissatisfied population with an unsatisfied state of mind, which results in revolution not only because of insufficient supplies of food or shelter, or means of liberty and democracy, but because people essentially want more capital. Davies (1962) supports this notion by saying that "It is the dissatisfied state of mind rather than the tangible provision of 'adequate' or 'inadequate' supplies of food, equality, or liberty which produces the revolution" (Davies 1962: 6). In most revolutions there is a combination of calls for higher expectations and more opportunities to satisfy basic needs, "which may range from merely physical (food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety from badly harm) to social (the affectional ties of family and friends) to the need for equal dignity and justice" (Davies 1962: 8). In my opinion, the classical view of Plato that poor people have revolutions to seek material security of life and property was extended to include the Enlightenment values of liberty and democracy from the 18th century onwards, to which a postmodern stratum has been added about "equal dignity and justice", reflecting the race-based revolutionary movements of the 20th century (e.g. the struggle for Indian independence, civil rights in the US and anti-apartheid in South Africa).

However, economic analyses of revolutionary causation generally presuppose such phenomena to be inevitable outcomes of natural (economic) processes; conversely, Gottschalk (1944) attached more weight to the active role of the governing regime. He identified the foremost cause of revolutions as "provocation", whereby citizens are desperate because of the bad services the government offers to them, thus they desire action to change the current situation. Examples of this include the American, French, and Russian Revolutions, which were essentially attributable to:

"land hunger; taxation; high fees for services rendered or for services not rendered; exclusion from certain kinds of prestige or from certain kinds of office; misgovernment; bad roads; commercial restrictions; corruption; military or diplomatic defeat; famine; high prices; low wages and unemployment" (Gottschalk 1944: 5).

Talking about the second cause of revolution, Gottschalk stated that the demand for change, which starts with provocation, should be combined with "solidified public opinion" to reach its goals (Gottschalk 1944: 5). If particular individuals or small groups are dissatisfied with the government's performance, this will not lead to a revolution unless there is awareness that there are other people who are dissatisfied as well, and they have the willingness to change and show their desire to unite together and stand against this government. In this case, provocation that is united with solidified public opinion will present two strong causes of revolution.

This means that revolution happens when people unite together, no matter what their positions or hierarchy in society are, against the ruling system; their unification gives them more strength to overthrow the ruling government. Still, these two factors are not enough for a revolution to be carried out; "hopefulness" of success (Gottschalk 1944: 5) is the third cause to be added to the preceding two causes of revolution. In order for people to be able to reform, they should have a hope that their revolution will be successful. This issue is also related to the state of mind mentioned by Davies (1962). People's mind plays a great role as an effective factor that brings change; if people are hopeful that their revolution is going to succeed, it is more likely to succeed because they will effectively put their best efforts into making it successful (whether because of optimistic hope or a sense of having nothing to lose).

In the above-mentioned perspectives, the core argument is that revolution is a legitimate right for people; citizens have the right to revolt against the regime degrades them; lack of democracy, reforms, food supplies, freedom and others are all reasons that lead people to revolt. In other words, the legitimate right of the citizens to revolt is when their governments violate the basic principles of existence. Although socio-economic

factors in modern revolutions are different from historical examples in many respects, the appropriateness of people revolting against a government is always justified based on classical liberal ideologues affirming that people sensibly tolerate momentary lapses and privations in times of war or unavoidable economic hardship, but continued abusive policies to the detriment of citizens justify replacing the offending government with a new regime. Weber differed from this classical liberal view, arguing that states are created for the purpose of warfare, therefore "revolution is a non-legitimate form of change, insofar as the source of legitimate power is the authority of military command in a community of fate organized for foreign war" (Collins 2001: 171); in practical terms, this argument essentially views the state itself as legitimate, rather than revolution.

In mainstream liberalism, John Locke (1689) declared the right of people to revolt in *Two Treatises of Government*. He proclaimed that all people have the right to life, liberty, and estate; people could carry out a revolution against their government when it acted against their interests, and replace this government with a new one that served the interests of citizens. Locke saw the revolution is the safeguard against any regime that does not support its people's interests. This was certainly the view of the Founding Fathers in the US, and the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) is essentially a treatise on the right of people to revolt against governments that fail to ensure life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ("estate" or "property" in the original formulations) for citizens.

To conclude this section, it is clear now that revolution take place for valid reasons such as the abuse of the governments and the dissatisfaction of the people. In most of the reviewed scholars, people have the right to revolt against the regime when they have a common reason.

1.3   Is the Arab Spring a Revolt or Revolution?

After explaining different theories of revolution, and the characteristics and causes of revolution, the thesis now examines whether these characteristics warrant the Arab Spring being considered a revolution or a mere revolt against dictatorial regimes. As explained previously, three fundamental elements comprise a revolution: mass social

movement, the existence of change or reform, and the use of violence. The first factor is applicable with the social movement in the Arabic world, as thousands if not millions of people participated and went to streets demanding change or the overthrow of the ruling dictators, but there is a widespread debate about whether this actually brought about social, political and economic changes or rather a mere changing of the guard, with the existing system of government remaining intact.

Although Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt stepped down (and they were not "overthrown" in the traditional sense of plebeian revolutionaries sweeping into the halls of power), the nature of the regimes in those countries has not markedly changed; the dictators left, but the dictatorships stayed. Therefore, the reforms that many protesters demanded are nowhere to be seen. Furthermore, it is important to note that the demands of the protesters were not really politicized; rather, they were focused on overthrowing the dictators and not their policies or regimes. This reflects the personality cults of leaders in totalitarian systems, particularly in MENA, where the focus of national adoration (and obedience) is focused on the President or King (with ubiquitous photos and statuary of the glorious leader); thus when people are against the government system, there is only the leader to be against. In practical terms, this means that the preoccupation of the Arab Spring movements with denigrating the offending dictators and (to a lesser extent) their regimes enabled the political system and social structures that entrench dictatorship to remain unaffected, most obviously the military establishment in Egypt, which has demonstrated that it can override the puny rights of democracy and remain the kingmaker (Tziarras 2011).

In regard to the third factor of revolution, which is the use of violence, in Tunisia the protests were massive but generally peaceful, while in Egypt the use of violence was more pronounced. The military became divided into supporters or opponents of the uprising, with Egyptian soldiers fighting each other. However, crucially the military high command generally remained cautiously supportive of the status quo, pending other orders from the US, which has bankrolled the Egyptian military establishment since the reforms of Sadat in the 1970s as part of its efforts to promote peace with Israel (Tziarras 2011).

Karl Deutsch (1964: 102-104) proposes that the degree of mass mobilization, the duration of a revolution, as well the number of people killed (both from the military and civilians) while the event is in action may be used to represent the characteristics of describing a revolution. Most of these uprisings in the MENA region went on relatively for a short period of time, with the notable exception of Syria, and the number of deaths (except in Syria) was insufficient to make the events revolutions (Tziarras 2011).

As mentioned previously, it is unanimously agreed that a true revolution must at least focus on political and social reforms (if not economic and religious/ideological); by this yardstick, the Arab Spring movements in Arab countries have not reached the stage of being a revolution, because they have (at best) brought about limited bribes (as in the Gulf countries), clumsy coalitions (as in Tunisia) or (counter-revolutionary) reactionary regimes and policies (as in Egypt). With no coherent revolutionary policies or demands, the Arab Spring slogans inevitably resulted in no political modernization or individual freedoms, but rather a momentary shake-up of the existing power systems.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed different theories of revolution and the broadly accepted criteria of what constitutes a revolution. For an event to be considered as a revolution, it should involve a mass social movement, a process that will lead to fundamental and systemic changes or reforms, and the use or the threat of use of violence. Taking these three points in account, the events that occurred in the MENA region cannot be described as revolutions because one or more of these criteria is absent in each case. In this thesis, the researcher aims to test the events through the lens of sociology of revolution. The first thing that comes up from analyzing each theory is that the Arab Spring is not a revolution.

What happened in Tunisia and Egypt was an application of traditional materialist rationales of revolution that can be traced to Plato and Aristotle; poverty breeds popular discontent. This was the case in Egypt when the poor from the countryside went to the streets and asked for the overthrow for Mubarak's 30 year-old regime (Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule 2012: 7). It is true that some changes took place in Egypt and Tunisia, but

these were essentially superficial, with the underlying systems of power and domination remaining intact (Tziarras 2011). Furthermore, the demands of the protesters were mainly asking for reforms, with only the more devoted elements focusing on removing dictators (particularly after the fall of Ben Ali, which was due to the farcical attempts of him and his family to abscond from the country with the national gold reserves). The protestors had little awareness of the necessity of changing the political system and political structures if real and lasting change was to be achieved.

The fact that the Arab Spring was a revolt rather than a revolution does not negate its importance as an essential change in the region, with on-going, serious implications. These events mark the beginning of new era in which a burgeoning sense of solidarity among people in the MENA may enhance their ability to object to the policies of their governments, causing some to view this as a preliminary to a real Spring that can effect real revolution in future (Tziarras 2011). Clearly regimes in the MENA will have to adapt to this new environment and devise more sophisticated methods of control similar to modern Western democracies, including avowals of the importance of individual rights and some measure of socio-economic security.

CHAPTER 2: THE ARAB SPRING

2.1 Introduction

The main focus of this chapter will be about identifying and exploring the Arab Spring phenomenon, tracing its history and conceptualization, including the origin of the term "Spring" and its usefulness in describing the movements that took place from December 2010. The discussion of this chapter starts by questioning what the term "Arab Spring" itself refers to, and why it became the preferred term, rather than "Arab Revolution", "Arab Awakening" or "Arab Uprisings". Exploration of the term "Spring" in the context of the Arab revolts since 2011 reveals that the term does not genuinely reflect the phenomena under consideration, particularly as it is based on ethno-national assumptions about the MENA region that do not exist in reality in MENA states. Furthermore, the term does not capture the socioeconomic and political structures of these countries, which is why the early "Spring" or multinational protests in 2010-2011 ultimately digressed into myriad different outcomes in each nation. For this reason, I have chosen Tunisia and Egypt to show how their structures are different and thus there is no commonality between them to justify the processes that happened in those countries being grouped together as the "Arab Spring".

2.2 What is the 'The Arab Spring'?

"The Arab Spring" refers to the social movements and popular uprisings that arose at the end of 2010 in Tunisia and which subsequently propagated throughout the MENA in the following years (Souza and Lipietz 2011). These uprisings and revolts stretched across the Maghreb and Middle East, figuratively and literally, to reach Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and some of the Gulf States. While Friedman (2011) and other apologists describe the Arab Spring as a political uprising that was carried out by mass populations demanding liberal democratic reform with Western democratic support, in reality the demands of the mass populations were not exclusively (or indeed mainly) related to liberal democratic reform, nor did the West intervene except where expedient to preserve its own geostrategic interests. Indeed, the most significant impact of the Arab

Spring in the West has been to force a reassessment of the (on-going) US policy of giving political, financial and diplomatic support to despotic dictatorships who guarantee stability in the MENA.

Thus, it is crucial to question any claim or a statement about the uprisings because of the politicized nature of their implications. With respect to mass participation, it comes from the realization of the protestors that they might be able to remove the dictators and their dictatorship regimes by going out to the streets and asking for change. From another perspective, Tariq Ramadan (2012) described these upheavals as an intellectual revolution rather than a political one, whereby peoples' awareness gave them hope that they could change and remove ruling regimes. It is thus a realization of the power of the people by people themselves rather than a real political change revolution. No doubt such ideas find easy acceptance among the dreaming spires of Oxford, but they bear little relation to the grinding lived reality of citizens of the MENA countries.

Friedman (2011) and Dodge (2012) stated that the protestors' aim was to generate meaningful political change for the better across the MENA region; these protestors desired to have democracy in their countries as well as good governance (Clark 2013: 46). Therefore, it was an awakening of the people to their miserable reality, which was not new, but this time with the novel realization of their power and hope to demand change. In this context, the events of the Arab Spring gave hope to millions of people that change is a possibility, but what happened after the series of uprisings in the Arab world did not meet their demands, as will be discussed more in the next chapter. As Guzansky and Heller (2012) noted, the uprisings that started from Tunisia represented a threat to all the ruling regimes in the MENA region, and that was increasingly true as the wave of uprisings moved to other countries and protestors were able to overthrow some long-established dictatorships, such as those of Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, Salih in Yemen, and Gadhafi in Libya (Guzansky and Heller 2012).

Al-Sayyad claimed that the uprisings came as a shock to everyone, including the Arab intellectuals who were part of the wider Arab cultural milieu, such as political émigrés in the West. The mass participation was the most shocking element rather than the

uprisings themselves; having suffered for decades under stagnant or declining standards of living, with rising unemployment and food prices and dictatorial regimes routinely violate fundamental human rights, what was different in 2010-2011 to make the general populations of the Arab world take to the streets in mass.

While social media (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) are generally proclaimed to have played a decisive role in creating feelings of solidarity and helping organize protests, in reality most of the populations of the Arab Spring countries are not regular internet users, and the most substantial changes were in response to street protests (Rosen, 2011). However, the role of social media in disseminating anti-regime propaganda (e.g. videos of police brutality) and organizing demonstrations should not be underestimated. The region was living in dangerous conditions socially, economically and politically, with increasing unemployment and deteriorating standards of living (e.g. the inflation of food prices following the 2008 financial crisis and other global and local factors), with the result that longstanding divisions in society, including ethnic and sectarian ones, shattered the macro-level social cohesion of the preceding two decades (Al-Sayyad 2013). Again, this division and social structure are not something new or unexpected given that the region is ruled with tyranny, and problems on all levels have been accumulating for decades. Thus, careful examination of the region's conditions can reveal the truth of the uprisings and their causes, and what effects countries' structures had have on their outcomes.

The spark of the Arab Spring was the desperate self-immolation of the vegetable seller Mohamed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010 in the small Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid (Souza and Lipietz 2011: 620), after a fight with a policewoman who forcefully seized his wheel and threw away his groceries; this public humiliation and aggressive action induced Mohamed go to the municipality building and set himself on fire (Henry 2011). Images and stories of Mohamed's desperate act spread across the entire Middle East, leading to a series of protests, demonstrations and upheavals. This incident was not new and not the first one that took place in Tunisia. There were other local protests over economic problems in Tunisia's poorer interior regions, but what was so special about Bouazizi that it was captured by cameras and was disseminated online (Beaumont 2011; Lim 2013: 922).

By the facility of technology and social networking, angry and desperate people (particularly younger people) took advantage of the Internet to share pictures and videos of the incident, finding fertile ground for deep resentment of ruling regimes in the MENA (not just in Tunisia). The accumulation of several decades of political repression and economic stagnation accompanied by lack of services and social inequality suddenly coagulated around this seminal incident, (the popularization and internationalization of the Bouazizi case). However, one cannot understand the Arab Spring without digging deeper into the underlying socioeconomic factors involved. This is where a real examination comes to be necessary and this is where the choice of Tunisia and Egypt comes to play a crucial role for case study analysis.

The story of Bouazizi went viral on social media; in response, what could have been a marginal news story (perhaps not reported in Tunisia itself) had to be picked up and handled by the mainstream/ traditional media, with the result that all TV channels, national and international, broadcast breaking news about the Bouazizi case. It was on the first page of almost all the newspapers; Facebook pages, groups, events and campaigns were created to support the case of Bouazizi against the Tunisian government. Online activists discussed and shared their stories and their problems, and then organized street protests; "social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring. A spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground" (Howard et al. 2011).

Egypt followed Tunisia and revolted against Mubarak's regime. People gathered in Tahrir ("Liberation") Square calling for justice and freedom (Ramadan 2011a). Inspired by the Tunisian case, particularly after Ben Ali fled Tunisia on the 14th of January 2011, many Egyptians started to feel that they could induce a similar change in the Mubarak regime. While Mubarak always maintained a solid core of support among many Egyptians, the millions of protestors in Tahrir Square obviously demanded justice, freedom, democracy and a civil state, which they felt was not likely to occur under Mubarak; whether the majority actually wished to replace the military junta system of which Mubarak was the figurehead prior to the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia is another issue. As the protests went on, they became more focused on anti-corruption and

to stop violations of human rights and dignity (Murra 2012). Ultimately the protestors appeared to succeed in overthrowing Mubarak, but in reality the military establishment maintained de facto control over Egypt. The important lesson is that the uprisings were "created as a result of horrible situations that made people suffer like high rate of unemployment, poverty, inflation, and other economic failure" that came to have a more idealistic/ revolutionary flavor in terms of slogans, but which in fact never fundamentally challenged the underlying system of power (Owen 2012: 376).

The upheavals that took place after the desperate act of Bouazizi were dubbed the Arab Uprising, the Arab Revolutions and the Arab Awakening (implying that the Arabs were sleeping prior to the act of Bouazizi, reflecting an old orientalist stereotype of the lazy and fatalistic Arab), but ultimately Arab Spring was the term that stuck (Ramadan 2011b). The following section argues that "Arab Spring" in analytical terms is a misnomer for the uprisings that took place in the MENA region.

2.3   The Concept of "Spring" in Political History

At the outset, it should be noted that "Arab Spring" was propagated mainly by Western media, and it reflects European political concepts; this is the fundamental problem of the term when applied to the MENA (Alhassen 2012, Susser 2012, Zimmer 2011). For Western analysts the concept of a political "spring" has a long pedigree, tying in with notions that can be traced back to Enlightenment ideas of human progress that fed into 19th century ideologies such as materialism (e.g. socialism in Marxist economics and Darwinism in biology). The term "spring" was used to describe upheavals in Europe such as the European revolutions of 1848 (dubbed the "Springtime of the Peoples" or "Spring of Nations", translations of the German *Völkerfrühling* and French *Printemps des peuples*). Clearly "spring" is associated with hope and refers to "optimistic periods of political transformation" (Zimmer 2011: 4). Similarly, in his 1917 work on *The Soul of the Russian Revolution*, Moissaye Joseph described the second half of 1904 (i.e. the 1904 Revolution, which induced the Tsar to institute a Duma and some limited reforms, most of which were later repealed) as the "spring" of a new liberal era. Furthermore, in 1968, Czechoslovakia enjoyed a brief period of democratic reform called the "Prague Spring". This was also a short-lived hope for the people to have a political

transformation which ended up with a Soviet invasion. Furthermore, "along with the Prague spring of 1968, there has been a Polish spring of 1956 (and again in 1982), and even a Seoul spring in South Korea in 1979" (Zimmer 2011: 5). We see here that the term has no unity in its description of events and uprisings. In fact, the only common features of the term could be the short-lived hope that people share as they demand liberation and change.

The term was also used to refer to the turmoil in Eastern Europe in 1989 when Communist regimes began to fall under pressure from mass popular protests in a domino effect (Manfreda 2011). The fall of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe was in fact not only because of popular protests but because of a long series of crises within the Communist bloc and a lack of will within the moribund Soviet Union to maintain its traditional political hegemony. The term "spring" thus does not capture these crises, which are more about the death of an old system than the birth of a new one.

Ironically, the first widespread use of the term "Spring" to describe politics in the Arab world was when the Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad came to power in July 2000. As a young and well-educated President educated in the West, people thought and hoped that he would reform the regime and bring change to the country, which produced "temporary talk of 'Damascus Spring'" (Owen 2006: 93); obviously in reality the totalitarian Assad regime continued the policies of Bashar's father, of a permanent state of war with Israel being invoked as eternal justification for a lack of democratic freedoms. George Packer, in his article entitled "Dreaming of Democracy" published in the *New York Times Magazine* in 2003 used the term "spring" to describe the US invasion of Iraq, which he felt would sow the seeds of democracy in the Middle East (Packer 2003: 5); he was indeed "dreaming"! As an Iraqi who witnessed the invasion and its consequences, I see no democracy and no "spring", instead what I see is only killing and destruction that continues over a decade after the intervention.

So far, all of the writers and scholars who labeled different events as "springs" were from non-Arab origins; the first Arab writer to use the term "Arab Spring" was the

Egyptian Saad Elddin Ibrahim in February 2005, when he described social events in Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq (Middle East Voices 2011). Similarly, numerous media commentators used the term "Arab Spring" to refer to the flowering of Arabic democracy movements in 2005 that lasted for a short period of time in the Middle East. Protests, demonstrations, unrest and other changes began to take place in the Arab world, especially in Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq after the US invasion; these movements were called "Arab Spring of 2005" (Keating 2011; Krauthammer 2005; Lynch 2011). When we closely analyze these events, we see that there were some attempts by the governments of these countries to reduce the pressure on their regimes by appeasing their unsatisfied, desperate people with elections and allowing opposition parties some limited role in political life, as well as some reforms regarding economic and social status. However, these attempts failed to meet people's demands, and in fact they were later repealed in most cases.

Referring to the events of January 2011, Marc Lynch posted an article entitled "Obama's Arab Spring" which talked about the protests in different Arab states and how the public media played an essential role in covering them. The next usage of the term was in an editorial post in the Christian Science Monitor about the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia. Additionally, Mohammed El-Baradei, an Egyptian opposition leader, in an interview on January 25, 2011, stated that the current events at that time were the first signs of an "Arab Spring" in the region (Keating 2011).

Having looked at the history of "spring", we see that all events and protests from the European Spring of Nations in 1848 to the Prague Spring in 1968 and the Arab Spring in 2011 have the common theme of popular mobilization against oppressive regimes. However, as far as the results were concerned, most of these events merely represented wishful thinking for change, and any practical outcomes were merely symbolic and generally short-lived. Furthermore, the term "spring" literally and metaphorically means a season of renewal, a time of refreshing and flourishing, which we do not see in any of the cases considered. Therefore, it is an empty rhetorical flourish and an analytically barren concept to apply to such events. Many authors, intellectuals and activists are also uncomfortable with the term "Spring" in describing the upheavals in the Arab world, as

this word reminds them of the "Prague Spring" and how it brought brief and ephemeral democratic freedom that did not last long, and which was crushed by Soviet tanks (Keating 2011).

2.4 Examination of the Usefulness of The "Arab Spring" Concept in Understanding the Recent Uprising

As we have noticed, the concept of "Spring" has been used before in different parts of the world referring to different kinds of revolts, but in fact it was a European-originated concept that might generate hatred of the term itself among people in the MENA region whose freedom has generally been withheld by Western powers (colonial regimes of the postcolonial "international community"). The connotation of the abortive "Prague Spring" also suggests that the Western media cynically anticipated that no lasting change would arise from the popular movements in the MENA. Thus the Arab upheavals should be named by social scientists in terms of the context of the MENA region and its history, and the name should have something to do with Arabs themselves; they should not simply file the MENA upheavals under the same heading as political events in European contexts. It is better to call the events revolutions, revolts, or upheavals etc. rather than depending exclusively on the term the "Arab Spring".

A similar point of view was presented by Provost Alhassen, a fellow in American Studies and Ethnicity, when she defined the Arab Spring as an empty term which was not descriptive enough to capture what happened in the countries or in the region; she also observed that "it is seasonally inaccurate" (the major events in Tunisia and Egypt occurred over December 2010 to February 2011, in winter), thus it must be deployed as a metaphorical device indicating "time of renewal" (Alhassen 2012: 3).

There are many reasons to reject the concept of the "Arab Spring", including that it was not primarily used by the people who organized, led and participated in the movements, or indeed by its opponents within the MENA, rather it was part of a taxonomy devised by Western writers and media commentators. Given that is it fundamentally a Western projection onto a MENA context, Alhassen (2012) asked where this insubstantial but ubiquitous phrase originated.

Alhassen considered this as misleading because it did not give a great appreciation to the people who carried out the revolts and stood against their autocratic and unjust regimes. Furthermore, she visited the MENA region and surveyed many people asking "what do you call the movement in your country and in the region?" The results included many answers, but the dominant one was *thawra*, meaning "revolution" in Arabic. Another popular name by voters was *Thawrat al Karama* (the "Revolution of Dignity") (Alhassen 2012: 10). Dignity was the absolute right people were demanding, an umbrella under which their grievances such as unemployment, inflation, corruption and human rights abuses could be clustered; they felt humiliated during the ruling of the oppressive regimes, and felt that the time had come to stop this humiliation and live as respectable human beings in nations that protected them. Another selected name was *Intifada* (uprising), which has been used to define a series of revolts in the Arab world, most obviously the Palestinian resistance (Guzansky and Heller 2012: 11).

In conclusion, the term "Arab Spring" does not reflect the experience of the people who participated in the related phenomena, nor does it refer to a fundamental political transformation. It is an empty term that refers only to the hope of people in change without deeply analyzing the socio-economic conditions that induce their behavior. Additionally, the term has no unity in terms of referring to specific characteristics, because the protest movements took different forms and reached different outcomes in different countries.

The following chapter presents the second part of the critical analysis of the "Arab Spring" in which I argue that the term does not capture the socioeconomic and political structures of countries in the MENA. Thus, it is an umbrella term used to describe the uprising of the region as a whole, without taking into consideration the different countries and their societies such as the case studies chosen for this research, Tunisia and Egypt.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIOECONOMICS AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

This chapter discusses the causes that led to the mass uprisings in the MENA region commonly labeled as the "Arab Spring". I argue here that the term "Arab Spring" is an umbrella term used to describe the 2011 mass uprisings in a region that is widespread geographically and widely differentiated structurally. Not all Arab countries witnessed revolts, and those that did cannot all be lumped together under a single category, although some common features clearly listed. Therefore, a detailed and careful analysis needs to be applied to one or two countries in order to show how different structures have generated different forms of struggles and generated different outcomes from these movements, which refutes the value of "Arab Spring" as an analytical tool. My two case studies are Tunisia and Egypt, which are discussed in terms of their internal structures (the role of socioeconomics and political factors) in causing the so-called "Arab Spring".

In the first section about the causes of the Arab Spring, I examine the role of socioeconomic and political factors in the revolt countries. These uprisings occurred for traceable reasons; people had fatigue from suffering due to lack of services, dissatisfactory standards of living, political repression and economic stagnation. These were some of the internal, underlying problems that led people to revolt; also, there were external causes like worldwide economic recession that exacerbated the underlying tensions (Clark 2013: 46).

The two case studies selected for examination are particularly illustrative of 2011 in the MENA as a whole. Tunisia was the first country that witnessed the revolt, and also its "Spring" was so near to the ideology of a successful revolution as it brought substantive changes to the existing regime. Egypt followed Tunisia and revolted against a long-standing dictatorship, but the matter was different as the actions took a different path from Tunisia. This is explored with reference to the role of the socioeconomic and political structures of both countries.

This chapter explores the case studies in their own right and draws the discussion back to the underlying concept of this work, that the "Arab Spring" is not useful as an analytical tool in describing the uprisings in the MENA; in fact it does not capture the real picture of the socioeconomics and political structures of Tunisia and Egypt. This chapter begins by highlighting the general themes of popular grievances in the region and then move on to analyze the specific triggers of the "Spring" with reference to the socioeconomic structures of Tunisia and Egypt.

3.1 Causes of the Arab Spring

The wave of social protests that swept through the Arab world during 2011, toppling some long-standing regimes and seriously destabilizing others, was the consequence of decades of oppressive and authoritarian political systems, failed economic policies, and socially alienated and disaffected populations, mainly the youth (Aissa 2012). It was evident that the youth were the main contributor to these protests, and the spark of the protests was the self-immolation of a Tunisian young man. The oppressed young Arab in the Arab Spring narrative, Bouazizi was first presented as an "unemployed college graduate", which emphasized the feelings of humiliation, loss of social status and perceived injustice of the frustrated unemployed youth of the MENA (Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule 2012: 7). In this regard, the mainstream narrative is useful in that Bouazizi does represent the typical citizen of the MENA countries who was disenfranchised – by political oppression attributable to a regime and to economic realities largely beyond the regime's control – and who could not patiently endure the "humiliation" of not being part of the neoliberal dream of the aspirational capitalist-democratic lifestyle.

In this section, I will be looking at the internal dynamics which consist of the socioeconomics and political structures that I believe are the backbone of the uprisings. First, I will identify the major overall situation in the MENA region in the post-colonial period such as political repression and economic stagnation; second, I will look at my case studies Tunisia and Egypt to see how internal dynamics play a significant role in causing and affecting the so far outcomes of the uprisings.

When looking at the modern history of the Arab world, we see that the era of independence or the post-colonial era was shaped by a huge expansion in the power and scope of the state apparatus. This is because these states and countries (or rather the ruling cliques) needed to maintain security after the departure of the colonial powers. At the same time, the need to establish control over the new national territory and to promote large programs of economic development and social welfare were evident. As a result, the state accrued immense power over the public to a degree unparalleled by most colonial governments; armies and police forces ballooned in size and authority.

This was bolstered by the underlying Arab-Israeli Conflict (since 1947), which eternally justifies the suspension of democracy in the Arab world; in Syria the Assad regime has invoked a state of emergency (due to its war with Israel) for decades to justify the denial of democratic freedoms, while in Egypt the military establishment has been seen as the only guarantor of the fragile peace Sadat made with Israel – thus democracy is proscribed in Syria because it is at war with Israel, and in Egypt because it is not. This eternal justification is periodically given a fillip by events such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War and latterly the War on Terror (Owen 2006: 23). This scenario – essentially a diplomatic and military deadlock of utility to corrupt oligarchies in the MENA – has justified state brutality over citizens and also the full control over all aspects of life, including educational and religious establishments, in an attempt to appropriate their ideas and practices to serve regime purposes (Owen 2006: 29). Unlike in the development of modern nation states in Europe, the states of the MENA were not chosen or preferred by their inhabitants, rather states were devised and projected over their citizens at the expense of the freedoms they should theoretically enjoy in democratic nations.

As the power of the state continued to shape the Arab countries in all their aspects, difficult socioeconomic circumstances like increased poverty, rising food prices and high unemployment have taken place and affected daily life. On the political side, increasing (or rather intermittently brutal) repression such as human rights violations and political authoritarianism are used as tools of suppression to ensure obedience in the face of underdevelopment, similar to the conditions of Europe in 1848 (Jason 2013:

169). Across the region, three main problems seem to dominate the scene and caused the so called "Arab Spring": bad economic performance, absence of social equality and justice, and political repression with restricted freedom. As Jamoul argued:

> "Economic and political factors are always the two main factors that bring revolutions. Unemployment and inflation in the Arab region are also a major source of economic insecurity and for destabilization of any political system… Even when most states arrived a very high level of democracy and political rights, the Arab region still suffers from bad political systems based on corruption, state of emergency laws, the lack of free elections and freedom of speech" (Jamoul 2012: 7).

Traditionally dictatorships have brought some level of material benefit to their cowed and submissive populations, but the MENA continues in its empty cycle of dictatorship, with periodic successions doing nothing to alleviate the eternally declining socio-economic life of the people; only in the MENA could murderous dictators like Nasser and Saddam Hussein be considered by many citizens to be semi-legendary providers of plenty in a mythical past.

In regard to economic performance, the states in the MENA region have been going through different stages, at different times and at different rates. The first stage was the increased power of the state and the centralized economy, where the leading planning system was based on "rapid industrialization, tight control over foreign capital and a huge extension of public ownership" (Owen 2006: 115). Examples of this model were mainly witnessed in Soviet-leaning regimes during the Cold War; for example, Soviet engineers installed the turbines for Nasser's flagship project, the Aswan High Dam, after the US withdrew support. Prior to his rapprochement with the West in 2003, Gadhafi essentially followed the same model in the bizarre fiefdom that Libya became under his leadership. Sustained US efforts to contain Communism during the Cold War ultimately led to partial liberalization of all economies throughout the MENA by the 2000s, with the possible exception of Syria due to its state of war (Owen 2006: 115).

Economic liberalization (i.e. privatization of national assets) was heralded as the harbinger of peace and prosperity by the international community (i.e. the West), but it actually effected growth in unemployment in the MENA, averaging 20% across the region and reaching 30% in Libya in 2011. Other consequences such as poverty, widening inequality, rising food prices and increasingly visible evidence of corruption and the enrichment of elites emerged (Foreign Affairs Committee 2012). Furthermore, in countries like Tunisia and Egypt, a widespread sense of bad economic conditions was crucial in the events in which most people experienced a decline in living standards due to the international food crisis, falling real wages, high inflation and rising unemployment amounting to the "economic devastation" of the MENA (Behr and Aaltola 2011: 3). According to Jason, "unemployment constitutes a major source of socioeconomic insecurity and with a proven capacity for the destabilization of any political system" (Jason 2013: 169). This indicates the importance of this factor, if regimes fail to address long-term structural unemployment they will inevitably face a major problem under particularly acute economic conditions (e.g. hyperinflation or food shortages, which were instrumental in numerous historical revolutions such as the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917).

Other factors that contributed to poor economic performance were the structural adjustment policies that were imposed on countries of the region. In the age of globalization, the world economy has formed itself to link all national economies in one global market. In the absence of the Soviet alternative for "developing countries" (a euphemism for what used to be called the "third world" or "colonies"), Western countries and institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have had carte blanche since the 1980s to weaken national economies in the MENA and elsewhere in the world by imposing unsuccessful economic models and policies that enrich multinational corporations and their enablers (the corrupt elites) while impoverishing the mass of people. With weak national economy, shaky infrastructures, and openness to global economy with unjust policies, this has worsened the economic situation in the Arab Spring-affected countries, which suffered even more due to the 2008 economic crisis (Aissa 2012: 2). As, Dodge puts it, "Mubarak and Ben Ali were partially successful in delivering economic growth, opening their economies to foreign

direct investment and multi-national companies, However, the positive results of such policies were not felt across society" (Dodge 2012: 65). The economic reality of the MENA countries essentially indicates that the rich were getting richer while the poor were getting poorer.

Ironically, economic privation and unemployment made people more reliant on the state. People's lives in the MENA are shaped by the state, and the state apparatus increased. Whatever opportunities or options existed did so at the sufferance of the state, which also managed various relationships between different groups in society (Owen 2006: 30). As a result, the state accrued to itself domination of society, with no role for the society itself (i.e. civil society such as a free press, independent organizations etc.).

The underlying intellectual bankruptcy of the MENA regimes (most of which were essentially intact from the 1980s onwards, albeit with different personnel in some cases) and their failure to solve the myriad socio-economic problems was exacerbated by the dramatic population increase; the population of MENA doubled from 1980 to 2011, thus at the time of the Arab Spring 60% of the population were under 25 years old (Foreign Affairs Committee 2012). On the most elementary economic level, more people means more consumption, and this means more opportunities are required. If these opportunities for living are not provided by the state, then people will inevitably suffer from more competition for less resources and thus increased disaffection with the status quo.

The problem of unemployment and a lack of economic opportunities is particularly acute with more educated populations, who invest in their education (whether directly or by not working during the duration of their studies) and thus expect a return on that investment, and who have greater socio-economic aspirations. Thus "the existence of a large lower middle class that has no way of advancing their ambition has played an important role in Tunisia and Egypt. This explains why Tunisia, a country with one of the lowest poverty rates in the region, was the first to take to the streets" (Behr and Aaltola 2011: 5). This "important role" includes organizing and coordinating protests by the masses of people – the classical educated intelligentsia leading and giving direction

to mass popular discontent in Leninist theory. This is where Davies' J-carve theory comes into play, which affirms that people revolt when they are not satisfied with their lives. When people do not see any improvements, or in some cases they are losing what they have already gained, they revolt: this is what happened in Tunisia and Egypt.

Based on this economic analysis, it could be said that political repression, rather than being the fundamental cause of the Arab Spring, was in fact a final straw:

> "The lack of basic freedoms was another important impetus for protesters to take to the streets. Furthermore, police violence and the abuse of public authority have also been a routine part of daily life, and corruption has been endemic at every level of society" (Behr and Aaltola 2011: 3).

As far as the state control is concerned, the police and the army, along with many intelligence groups, have participated in abusing the public, particularly any forms of political opposition, with secret tribunals and torture dungeons for political prisoners throughout the MENA (Owen 2006: 30). Monitoring people's lives to ensure their submission to the state and its rules in part made states large prison camps. Given the structure of the state, with one-authoritarian party rule, the President is the most important actor in the state, which is why the protests increasingly honed in on the theme of "regime" (i.e. presidential) change rather than meaningful structural change (i.e. true revolution), as explained previously.

Due to historical cultural assumptions and political expediency, the ruler of the MENA state is generally the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and party chairman where parties exist (i.e. not in the GCC). Key government decisions are usually issued in the name of the heroic leader in light of his vision of the public interest; in reality, loyal bureaucracies conduct most of the daily operation of government and leaders' main concern is to ensure that no one else within the system accumulates sufficient power to challenge their authority (Owen 2006: 32).

These comfortable structures of oppression were long accepted in the MENA as the norm, but increasing economic privation, increasing oppression and increasing exposure

to the outside world via the media or travel generated anger toward the authoritarian rulers who denied freedom of expression and limited opportunities for participation in civil and political life under the questionable legitimacy of long-standing "emergency laws", particularly Egypt. Despite being the most populous Arab nation, and traditionally the intellectual leader of the Arab world as a whole, Egypt by the 2000s had a weak or absent justice system, and a repressive and extensive security state apparatus responsible for many human rights abuses, including torture and killings (Foreign Affairs Committee 2012). Fundamentally, the stability of any human society is tied to the degree to which political and human rights are guaranteed by the system. In fact, the Arab world is suffering from bad political systems that are shaped by corruption, emergency laws, and elections that are anything but free and fair (Jason 2013: 169). As Behr and Aaltola (2011) observed contemporaneously:

> "The popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia have been triggered by a combination of deteriorating living standards and growing inequality (an economic deficit), a lack of political freedoms and public accountability (a political deficit), and the alienation of the demographically dominant age cohorts from the political order (a dignity deficit)" (Behr and Aaltola 2011: 2).

Therefore, the combination of all these factors prepared the region for a political earthquake manifest in the movements known as the "Arab Spring". All these problems had accumulated throughout the passing years and they were a lived reality and a dangerous alert to any society about the likelihood of impending instability and revolution.

During the 1980s and 1990s dictatorships were ousted on other continents and in other regions around the world, including Eastern Europe, South America and East Asia. The world saw change in many totalitarian states, a transition to more democratic regimes, economic growth, and technological advances; only the MENA was mothballed in its Cold War-era security malaise (Guzansky and Heller 2012: 12). Globalization and integration to the world economy brought about a dramatic change to the Arab world in

terms of technology, the internet and satellite stations (Khondker 2011: 675). Also, the social networks "brought to middle class the knowledge that there are other ways to live, and that they deserve more freedom, more democracy, more human rights, progress for women, employment, and release from the grip of tyrants" (Guzansky and Heller 2012: 12). Even though these developments took place in the Arab world as some political openness and freedom were taking place, and they vary from country to country, they still did not meet people's expectations and needs.

Having discussed the structure of the state in the MENA region and the causes of the Arab Spring in general, before going into greater detail regarding the case studies of Tunisia and Egypt, it should be noted that these two countries and their on-going progress are of fundamental importance in MENA post-2011:

> "The overthrow of autocratic governments in Egypt and Tunisia has radically changed the course of Middle Eastern politics. Emboldened by the peaceful mass protests that brought Ben Ali and Mubarak to their knees; young protesters have taken to the streets in many Arab capitals, demanding a better life and a more accountable government" (Behr and Aaltola 2011: 3).

Thus, a new political and economic reality in the Middle East is born. Whether this new reality will be as expected by the people or not is a crucial question, which ultimately pertains to whether toppling dictators means toppling the regime, or at least inducing substantive change to address the original grievances. These questions are explored in the following sections concerning Tunisia and Egypt and their socioeconomic and political structures that caused the uprisings and affected their outcomes.

The underlying criteria considered for the case studies are the economic, social, political and military factors. These criteria reveal the role of socioeconomic and political structures of Tunisia and will show why the uprising took place and what outcomes they generated.

3.2 Case Study: Tunisia

A common Arabic expression for someone who is desperately angry is "Shall I burn myself?!" This is exactly what Mohamed Bouazizi did when he felt humiliated and powerless at the hands of the Tunisian state. As mentioned previously, his main significance is as a representative of the disenfranchised youth of MENA who took to the streets (and in some cases to arms) during the Arab Spring. Aged 26, he was working as a fruit vendor with a small cart to feed his stepfather, mother and five siblings (Fahmi 2011). Accounts vary, but apparently he was unable to bribe the police when they harassed him about his cart, whereupon a female police officer publicly humiliated him and seized or destroyed his wares. When the mayor subsequently refused to see him, he set himself on fire outside the municipal offices on 17th December, 2010, igniting the widespread international anger and protest that spread throughout the MENA. He died of his injuries some weeks later (Fahmi 2011).

It is not the purpose of this thesis to present a comprehensive history of the case studied, but it should be noted from the outset that the Tunisian case is affected by the particular direction it took post-independence. Unlike Algeria, which remained a major French interest through to the 1980s, Tunisia and Libya ultimately emerged from the Second World War as traditional monarchies of the historical Ottoman type (i.e. local potentates ceremonially presiding over relatively peaceful and unimaginative governance systems; a similar model persists in Morocco to the present).

However, the Tunisian elites educated in the West (mainly France), led by Habib Bourguiba, ushered in a revolutionary system of governance, social organization and education that obliterated the traditional Ottoman-Islamic North African character of the country and replaced it with a militantly secular, culturally French republic (paradoxically while proclaiming its proud anticolonial identity). A key part of this organization was the cadres of middle class civil servants and personnel who effected the transformation of Tunisia; mainly left-leaning liberal democrats and socialists, they were to drive the great modern economic, cultural and political transformation of Tunisia (Hopwood 1992). Having explained this consideration, it can be seen below

how this middle class is the key to understanding the Tunisian manifestation of the Arab Spring.

3.2.1 The Economic Factor

As it is mentioned in the section above, the formation of the state in the post-colonial era took a specific shape in the MENA. The expansion of the state's power and its iron grip over political, economic and social life generated many implications. State-dominated economies were a major consideration in this.

Unlike most of the MENA countries, Tunisia is resource poor; its natural economic resources are limited to agricultural production and tourism. The lack of ready money from oil revenue enjoyed by other MENA states made the government particularly ambitious in its "state-driven economic strategies" in the 1960s and 1970s, which ultimately generated "only modest economic results" and was "proving fiscally unsustainable" (Paciello 2011: 2).

Tunisia, as with all former French colonies in North Africa, has experienced a major impact from French cultural and intellectual movements, and this largely explains why socialism found fertile ground in the country among the Francophone native elite. In 1969 the system of socialist economic management was introduced, with state subsidies for food, the adoption of modern agricultural methods and tentative attempts to foster a native manufacturing industry; when this did not produce dividends, the government was forced to micromanage the economy, resulting in reduced food subsidies and raised prices of basic necessities for the population. Having created economic dependence on the state then removed state provision, riots and disturbances ensued in Tunisia in 1984, ushering in international assistance (including IMF loans) and wholesale economic liberalization (Owen 2006: 115-116).

Having bought their own survival at the expense of the nation by seeking assistance from the IMF and World Bank, from 1986 onwards the Tunisian regime piled up vast deficits, with successive rises in domestic and international debt, resulting in devaluation of the currency and consequent inflation. The necessary structural reforms were dutifully made in submission to the IMF and World Bank, including "a series of

market-oriented reforms with the objective of limiting the state's intervention in the economy, promoting private sector growth and integrating their economies into the world market" (Paciello 2011: 3).

Selling the economy to multinational corporations weakened the economy and generated unemployment, as explained in the paragraph below. On the political level, structural adjustment policies increased the political intervention in the market and the relation between the state and the business men and private entrepreneurs developed in such a way that corruption flourished (Lapeyre 2004 and Saasa 1996). Tunisian unemployment was actually relatively low compared to some regional countries at 14 percent, mostly among young people, but rural areas had rates of over 30 percent (Fahmi 2011). The central government was powerless to give attention to such places and to unemployed young men even if it wanted to due to its commitment to neoliberal economics, leaving the impoverished citizens at the mercy of corrupt local elites and police personnel (themselves victims of structural poverty); one English teacher in Bouazizi's town remarked that it was like living under a colonial police state (Fahmi 2011). These unemployed and oppressed people thus became a ready army of soldiers for the Arab Spring movements; it is likely that the humiliation/ideological aspect was more instrumental in motivating protests against the government in the Tunisian case, and the personally emotive nature of Bouazizi's case (Hassan 2011). This is due to two factors: the Tunisian population is generally more educated (with proportionally more graduates and postgraduates) and it is more economically successful than other countries in MENA, particularly when one considers its poverty of natural resources:

> "Despite capital flight and extensive evidence of high-level corruption, Ben Ali's government managed the economy more effectively than its peers in neighboring countries and built up a manufacturing base surpassing that of Algeria, a country with three times Tunisia's population. The country is gradually meeting International Monetary Fund (IMF) guidelines to reduce reliance on import duties, cut taxes on businesses, and increase consumption taxes" (Henry 2011: 12).

3.2.2   The Social Factor

The state was particularly dominant in Tunisian society, with the power to control people's lives and make sure the public obeyed the rules. It is not an exaggeration if we say that a civil society was absent, and the people had no say in politics and no real role in governance. Opposition was subject to police brutality and not given any rights, and citizens had no feelings of belonging to the state they lived in, or that the government secured their rights (Fahmi 2011).

At the same time, Hassan (2011) argues that the Tunisian uprising was not a mass revolution, but rather a middle class one mainly led by civil servants, trade unions and socialist leaders educated to be the secular, modernizing caste from the time of Bourguiba (President from 1957-1987). As in comparable post-colonial states such as Pakistan, the civil service was designed to ensure continuity and entrench the power of the state and its elites. The cadres of educated bureaucrats were supposed to propagate and ensure the power of the ruling elite in Tunisia, including Ben Ali and his oligarchy, but increasingly limited opportunities for the educated middle class (including the children of such professionals) and increasingly rampant violations of basic human rights such as the Bouazizi case to revolt against the corrupt elite when the opportunity arose (in classical Marxist analysis, this represents the typical frustrated bourgeoisie overthrowing a moribund feudal caste). As Hassan (2011) observed, the Tunisian "Revolution" of 2010-2011 was essentially an internal revolt in which opposition parties (mainly in exile in London and Paris) and civil society organizations were supporting players. Therefore, when the state blocked the opportunities of this aspirant middle class, robbed of their promised future since the 1980s, they seized the opportunity to rise up against the state.

However, when it comes to the Tunisian civil society, it is important to note that the number of organizations increased under both Bourguiba and Ben Ali as part of the general program of social reform (i.e. Westernization or "development"). These organizations include thousands of voluntary associations and national organizations that cover a wide range of activities, starting from human rights, women's activities as well as artistic and cultural activities. Nevertheless, their role never extended to

questioning the authority or beneficence of the regime. The following passage describes them prior to the Arab Spring:

> "Prohibited by law from engaging in political activity and must be registered with the Ministry of Interior. Public meetings of NGOs require prior approval from the ministry. In recent years, human rights activists and defenders – together with their families – have been subject to repeated harassment, intimidation and detention" (Rishmawi and Morris 2007: 22).

Therefore, with the development of these NGOs' activities and their expansion, the strategy of Tunisian authoritarian regime was to destroy those that it could not control, while transforming those it could control into instruments of wider social control; this is a common technique of all totalitarian regimes (Rishmawi and Morris 2007), and it was a policy followed in Tunisia from Bourguiba's ascent to power. He harnessed the development of these structures among the aspirant middle class by creating organizations and associations under his control, such as the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) and other social associations for students, women, peasants, doctors, lawyers, journalists and others (Hopwood 1992). All were created by the regime or brought under state control, with new leaders installed by the state (Owen 2006: 28). The number of such groups rose quickly during the Ben Ali years, from 1,776 in 1987, the year he seized power, to some 9,350 by 2009. Only a dozen or so of these organizations operated independently in sensitive areas like human rights and civil liberties. A law in the early 1990s made it more difficult for an association to obtain a license without government support. Even legally registered associations had to watch their step, and limit their work to government-approved specializations, which included "women's issues, sports, science, culture and the arts, charity, social aid, development, and friendship" (Henry 2011: 16).

Thus "civil society" in Tunisia cannot be considered as an independent phenomenon of the democratic European type, rather it was an agency of state propagation, enthusiastically supportive of its leader. This was apparent in the 2009 elections, when

some 8,500 associations demonstrated their public support for Ben Ali in the press, with sycophantic proclamations of his beneficent rule. Many of these associations were alleged to be government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) set up by the regime to promote the image of pluralism, but actually intended to spread government propaganda (Henry 2011: 17). Similarly, professional associations, particularly those of journalists, lawyers, judges and students, were also subjected to intensive restrictions such as banning, harsh regulations and systematic restriction to their freedom and activities as well as a close monitoring by the police (Paciello 2011: 7). In summary, despite having the outward form of a functional civil society able to serve social functions ancillary to the state, the structure of these groups and organizations was in fact built by the state and worked under the supervision of the state to support the state.

Despite its role as an instrument of state power, the Tunisian civil society at least had the deceptive form of a civil society, indicating that there was tacit acknowledgement in Tunisian society of the positive role of such groups, and this in itself means that Tunisia outperformed other MENA states where a plethora of ostensibly non-political civil society organizations is unimaginable (Henry 2011: 30). Tunisia also enjoys the reputation of being among the most progressive countries in the MENA with regard to women, which was a particular obsession of Bourguiba himself (Hopwood 1992). Islam was identified as the key obstacle to Tunisian women's modernization, thus campaigns against veiling and the promotion of secular education for girls were enacted. Women were encouraged to participate in public life and won 33.6 percent of the seats in the 2010 municipal elections. This was accelerated after the toppling of Ben Ali's regime, and the new transitional regime's electoral law required that women comprised at least half of the candidates in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in 2011; this was supported by Islamists such as Rashid al-Ghannoushi, eager to avoid the perception that they wished to suppress women's rights (Henry 2011).

From the inception of the protests in Tunisia women played an active role that would be unimaginable in comparable Arab countries where traditional gender expectations remain prevalent; indeed, the policewoman who incited the Arab Spring domino effect

by humiliating Bouazizi would not have humiliated him so much – or been able to do so – had it been a country with less vociferous promotion of women's rights (Paciello 2011).

3.2.3   The Political Factor

The political structure of the Republic of Tunisia can ultimately be traced to its principal architect, President Bourguiba, and his *Socialist Destourian Party*, established in 1934 to fight for independence from France. This party has dominated Tunisian politics since independence and served to consolidate the rule of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. The party was renamed the *Constitutional Democratic Rally* (RCD) in 1988, with the arrival of Ben Ali to power, and its membership numbered over two million, which is almost one-quarter of Tunisian society. Under Ben Ali there was technically a multi-party system in Tunisia, but in reality the ruling party was so dominant that opposition parties were little more than props used by the regime to qualify for democratic status (Ottaway 2013). The party had tightened its grip over the country and overrode any notion of constitutional restraint, as evident in the 2009 reelection of Ben Ali, which required that the Party amend that article in the Constitution, similar to removing the minimum age qualification in Syria that enabled the succession of Bashar al-Assad (Henry 2011).

Tunisian elections, such as they were, were mostly controlled by the state, with no independent organizations allowed to supervise. At the same time, the ruling party allowed only a few token opposition parties to participate, not to have an equal opportunity, but instead to make the image of the elections as democratic and just. Naturally the RCD always won such elections by huge majorities (Henry 2011). The main real opposition parties were *Ennahda* (the Islamist "Renaissance" party) and the Tunisian General Union of Labor (UGTT), both repressed by the regime from the early 1990s. The strategy of the regime in dealing with the opposition was through the "forced exile of the movement's leaders, the imprisonment of thousands, and the torture and assassination of its supporters" (Henry 2011: 6). Thus in terms of the political factor, Tunisia was essentially a one-party state, but it nevertheless had underground opposition movements with educated and widespread support, despite the threat of exile or

imprisonment. This brief political history of oppression and corruption politics of one ruling class is an indication of why people revolt and demand change.

Corruption was widespread throughout the Tunisian economy under Ben Ali in the form of an informal system designed to concentrate wealth in the hands of the ruling family and its allies. This informal structure was so highly centralized and protected from public view. While the ruling oligarchy was notoriously corrupt, the security, police and civil service personnel were also drawn into corruption (related to the underlying economic factors discussed previously), although the latter were noted to be relatively effective according to polls conducted or financed by the World Bank (Henry 2011).

In terms of freedom of speech and press, the state was controlling and monitoring the media, journals, and other online publications. It allowed some token alternate viewpoints for the sake of polishing the image of the state and how it protected the freedom of the press. Genuine freedom of speech against the regime (e.g. by human rights activists) was brutally suppressed and faced many restrictions such as blocked websites and banned publications. Many journalists were imprisoned, particularly if they drew attention to the widespread and systematic corruption and embezzlement by the ruling clique. For example, Slim Boukhdhir, a blogger who the regime had previously interned due to his investigative reporting on corruption "was stopped on the street, forced into a car by five men in plain clothes, driven off, beaten up, and stripped of his possessions shortly after he gave an interview about rampant corruption in the presidential family" (Henry 2011: 22). This is one of innumerable instances of the brutality of the state to any opposition, not only the political parties but also independent activists, which was increasingly enshrined in law prior to the Arab Spring:

> "In June 2010, an amendment to the penal code was rushed through parliament to criminalize the actions of any persons who shall, directly or indirectly, have contacts with foreign institution or organization in order to encourage them to affect the vital interests of Tunisia and its economic security" (Henry 2011: 25).

This law gave the state the authority to crack down on any activity by human rights activists and any other Tunisian organization that worked to show the real image of the state. The penalty could be up to 25 years in jail, and any complaints or reports revealing the human rights situation in the country was now considered to constitute treason.

With this strong grip of the state over the political freedom of organizations, many protests started to take place in response. However, these politically motivated protests proved no more durable than economic ones, which were generally smaller in scope, localized and ephemeral. For instance, in 2008 the city of Gafsa witnessed a labor protest against the state which "triggered by a local mining company's allegedly unfair recruitment policy, which soon spread. Workers and young activists participated in spontaneous demonstrations and riots against unemployment and inflation" (Ottaway and Hamzawy 2011: 5). As a result, the government responded with excessive violence and was able to contain the protest and put an end to it by deploying the army in the city (Brooks 2013: 206).

Politically, a 2005 mass protest against the state's policy of limiting the freedom of expression was crushed by force. After that, minor incidents of political protest took place in Tunisia that consisted of individual actions by a few opposition figures and activists defending political freedoms and civil liberties (Ottaway and Hamzawy 2011). However, economic and political grievances had been simmering for years, particularly during the 2000s, and the Bouazizi incident enabled a kind of synergy of the nation between the economic and political grievances of the general population; in the face of the increasingly vast and widespread anti-government demonstrations "tear gas, mass arrests and indiscriminate live fire" proved incapable of putting down the revolt (Henry 2011: 39).

By the end of the Ben Ali era, Tunisia's ruling oligarchy was universally perceived as a mafia in the eyes of the opposition and the general population (Henry 2011). Indeed, during the 2000s it became increasingly apparent that Tunisia was merely a personal fiefdom for this super-rich corrupt elite, particularly Ben Ali's own family (Brooks 2013: 211). With the expansion of social media and the role of online journals, the

public became more aware of this and the nature of their state, and thus people started to act with determination against the regime when a feasible opportunity (with implicit solidarity) arose during 2010-2011. With the collapse of the Ben Ali regime, civil society along with opposition parties organized their effort to start a new era: "In October 2011, Tunisia held its first free elections in over 30 years; a broad-based government has been formed; and the new Constituent Assembly is drafting a new constitution based on democratic values and human rights" (Clark 2013: 46).

3.2.4   The Military Structure

The fourth factor in this analysis of the root causes of the "Arab Spring" is the role of the military. The post-colonial era in the MENA region was known for its military regimes. As the state power started to increase, the main tool for the state to control its territories was through the military. At the same time, the military was a great and essential crutch for presidents in the region, who were generally the commander-in-chief. Thus, this feature of the state structure was given much attention and many resources to maintain and strengthen its existence. In this context, "Armies have developed their own institutional structure which means that their technological, educational or administrative resources are not simply available to the rest of society" (Owen 2006: 178). In this way, the relationship between the society and the military developed to be antagonistic: "Typically, an army will want to maintain maximum control over its own internal affairs while the civilians will try to prevent the military from seeking political allies beyond the cabinet" (Owen 2006: 179).

Given the general structure of the state in the post-colonial period, the Tunisian state was a bit different in terms of the military-civil-political matrix of power. This structure goes back to the Bourguiba, when he took power in 1956 as the first President after independence. At that time, unlike other states such as Egypt, the Tunisian military was a negligible phenomenon. Unlike most of his peers in MENA, Bourguiba was not swept to power by the military, and indeed he attempted to limit the role of the military and keep it away from politics. For example, he "prohibited the officer corps the right of political association, preventing them from playing a role in the regime's dominant

political party, thereby denying them access to an important institution of elite politics in Tunisia" (Brooks 2013: 209).

From that time on, the military was kept small, both in size and in resources. Also, the military was kept away from engaging with civil daily life. The police under the Interior Ministry was responsible for security and maintaining civil order, and the army was glad to be relieved of the burden assumed by other Arab armies of protecting the nation:

> "Although in 1978 and 1984, the army answered the government's call to restore order following civil disturbances, the generals resented being told to assume police functions and were happy to have their men return to barracks as soon as the crises had passed" (Barany 2011: 31).

This fact meant that the military was excluded from daily security roles, which absolved them of the notorious crimes associated with the oppressive security apparatus (Brooks 2013: 208). This formula continued under Ben Ali from 1987, but this time with increasingly numerous and powerful security forces, which essentially made Tunisia a police state. Ben Ali's approach to managing the military involved marginalizing the role of military's leaders in state institutions and any opportunities for personal enrichment or influence in political life. In fact, "President Ben Ali in one of his first moves after coming to power, decimated the military and ensured that unlike the Egyptian armed forces it had no stake in the system he built" (Dorsey 2011: 475).

Another important point in the structure of Tunisian military is that it did not maintain substantial commercial economic enterprises, unlike in Egypt. This fact kept the military away from corruption and from control over public businesses. The operational responsibilities of the military were limited; the military played a role in infrastructure development, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance (Brooks 2013). As a matter of fact, Tunisia's army was relatively unique in the MENA in that it:

> "had never even attempted a coup, had never taken part in making political decisions, had never been a "nation-building" instrument, and had never

joined in economic-development schemes. Ben Ali kept it a small and modestly funded force focused on border defense" (Barany 2011: 31).

Concerning the stand of the military in the uprising in late 2010, the Tunisian military and its general commander, General Ammar, stated that "the army will protect the revolution" (Brooks 2013: 216). Without this stand, events in Tunisia would have taken a different way, probably similar to what Egypt has gone through since its uprising. This is considered to be a key factor in the success of the Tunisian revolution in 2011. Ben Ali failed to harness the army to his cause, considering it a negligible force in Tunisian affairs and banking on the inability of the general public to rise against his oppressive security apparatus en masse. Due to its ostracism from the ruling oligarchy, the Tunisian military:

> "ranked among the Arab world's most professional forces. With its comparatively disadvantaged status and its officers' disdain for the notorious corruption of the presidential clique, the military had no special stake in the regime's survival and no strong reason to shoot fellow Tunisians on the regime's behalf" (Barany 2011: 31).

As Brooks mentioned, "The refusal of the Tunisian military to participate in repressing the protests initiated the end of the regime and ushered in a period of change that amounts to the most far reaching of the Arab 'revolutions' of 2011 to date" (Brooks 2013: 207). Therefore, the stand of the military in the uprising was generated from its unique structure as a truly independent factor essentially serving "the state" in the traditional sense (i.e. the people) rather than as hired mercenaries with a stake in maintaining the status quo.

3.3 Case Study: Egypt

Egypt was the second country to witness the mass uprising after Tunisia. Egyptians were encouraged by the example of the Tunisian people, particularly after Ben Ali fled (or was perceived to be toppled by the protests). The demonstrations started in Tahrir Square on 25th January 2011, and Mubarak ultimately stepped down on 11th February

(Clark 2013). People from all over Egypt protested not only in Cairo but also in the rural areas all around Egypt. After the Tunisian example, the slogan of "The people want the collapse of the regime" became popular; this implicitly meant Mubarak himself, although Mubarak always maintained a dedicated core of popular support, particularly among inhabitants of the Delta region where he came from. By this time the "Arab Spring" brand was already firmly entrenched in the media, and the public image in the media and in the streets was very bright and hopeful about coming change. However, a more detailed assessment and analysis of the socioeconomic structures in the country reveals the real causes of the uprising and the limited chances for substantive change in Egypt as a result of the revolt.

3.3.1 The Economic Factor

Unlike Tunisia and other states in the MENA region, Egypt has a long history of being relatively prosperous and attempts at semi-modernization by its rulers, from the 19th century reforms of its Ottoman (actually Albanian) Pashas to its British client kings in the early 20th century. Egypt was always a vibrant intellectual hub of the Arab world; for example, it was the nucleus for Islamic modernists (such as Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Rida'a) in the early 20th century, Communists and Arab nationalists mid-century, and political leaders of all ideological factions throughout the MENA generally studied in Egypt. However, in terms of practical achievement it was essentially moribund, with little to show on the ground for its dynamic intellectualism. This was largely related to its geostrategic importance as a buffer zone for the Suez Canal, mainly owned by Britain and France and supervised by Britain from 1882. Its importance to global (especially British) trade meant that Egypt was required to be a peaceful and stable backwater.

This all changed when Nasser seized power during the 1950s. It is not the purpose of this study to explain the historical background of Nasser's rise to power, suffice it to say that between the 1952 Revolution against the puppet monarchy and assuming the Presidency in 1956, Nasser underwent a political conversion from mass consultation and party politics (e.g. the initial revolution was supported by the Communist Party, the Muslim Brotherhood and others) toward authoritarian dictatorship by the military on

behalf of the nation. To avoid the bungling of the inefficient democratic parties, Nasser arrogated to the state (i.e. the military) executive authority in economic planning and major infrastructural development, a policy most spectacularly expressed in the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, but also evident on the village level in sweeping agricultural reforms tantamount to land nationalization (Owen 2006: 37).

While the US adopted a wait-and-see approach with Nasser's anticolonial antics in Suez during the 1960s, which inspired Arab nationalism throughout the MENA, he became increasingly unreliable loose cannon for US policymakers during the 1960s and 1970s with his ambitious nationalization policies and state subsidies. When these came to be only modestly successful in economic terms, increasing affiliation with the Soviet Union (which was hungry for allies in the US-dominated MENA), the patron of planned economies everywhere, seemed a distinct possibility, thus his death in 1970 was a relief for the US, which was quick to support the economic liberalization of his successor Sadat, and the peace he made with Israel. During this formative period of modern Egypt a halo of glory was established around Nasser and the military (i.e. the state) as guardians of the nation, including its economy (Owen 2006; Paciello 2011).

As in Tunisia, the liberalization policy of Sadat was couched in rhetoric about "increasing the efficiency of the Egyptian public sector, revitalizing the private sector and encouraging foreign investment" (Owen 2006: 115). But the problem was that weak local private sector and the fragile infrastructure of Egypt's economy couldn't resist the global market which eventually led to more advantages to the international corporations. While the closed economy and strong control of the state under Nasser was not profitable, it at least accorded some degree of security over the national economy whereas the new subsidy cuts, increased prices, and rapacious taxation system caused widespread protest and anger, particularly in 1977 (Ottaway 2010). With an increasing deficit, high levels of debt and inflation, Egypt inevitably sold out to the World Bank and the IMF in 1991. Since then, Egypt has pursued "a series of market-oriented reforms with the objective of limiting the state's intervention in the economy, promoting private sector growth and integrating their economies into the world market" (Paciello 2011: 3).

The binding packages of structural adjustment policies have weakened the local economy and also generated long-term unemployment. One economic effect of this is the impingement of the economic situation on politics in the form of corruption: "structural adjustment policies have increased the political influence of business interests also encouraged strategic alliances between public officials and private entrepreneurs, many of which can be accused of fostering corrupt practices" (Lapeyre 2004 and Saasa 1996).

This historical economic process has been on-going since Sadat, continuing unabated under Mubarak, who also arose from the military like his predecessors. Mubarak did not change the structure of the economy and thus the problems have continued. National unemployment has declined while employment opportunities, particularly for graduates, have worsened because the jobs opportunities provided by the informal economy are:

> "Underpaid, unregulated and provide no social protection. The reasons for these negative labor market trends are primarily attributable to the failures of the governments' economic policies and their inability to generate a sustainable and job-creating growth" (Paciello 2011: 3).

In 2008, the average unemployment rate among young people (between 17 and 35) exceeded 17 percent in Egypt according to the International Labor Organization. As Ottaay (2010: 56) insightfully observed, in Egypt as in other Arab states "high food prices, poor housing, and a lack of jobs constantly threaten to ignite social explosions and angry protests". In fact such protests had already taken place late 2008 when the Egyptian urban poor and workers protested against the high prices of food, especially bread (historically subsidized as *khubz baladi* - "national bread" - under Nasserite policies). This was a premonition of 2011 in that young people fuelled the protests with the help of social media to mobilize; this is why Mubarak already identified the internet and social media as a new threat his predecessors had not faced (Rosen 2011).

As Korotayev and Zinkina (2011: 147) noted, the "common notion is that 40% of Egyptians live below $2 a day income". At the same time, Jason (2013: 169) asserts that "Egypt had one of the fastest growths of the world food prices, and that, definitely, had

influences on the destabilization of Egyptian sociopolitical system". Given these economic fundamentals (almost half of the population living below a unanimously accepted poverty line and sharp inflation in food prices), it is clear that the Egyptian public were under intense economic pressure threatening their food security (and thus survival) in 2010-2011, reducing their stake in the moribund and indifferent (i.e. laissez-faire/ neoliberal) Mubarak government (Jason 2013). This critical economic scenario and voices of the youth (including social media) seemed to form the backbone of what came to be known as the Arab Spring (Bayat 2013: 589).

3.3.2 *The Social Factor*

As explained previously, in Tunisia the extensive role of the state in people's lives was based on its ideological role as the bringer of modernity and development, to which it harnessed civil society. In Egypt, since Nasser the state has been synonymous with the military establishment; thus in Egypt the role of the state is underpinned by public acknowledgement of the quasi-sacred role of the army in protecting the nation and people. The conflation of state and army in Egypt is the fundamental difference between it and its society and Tunisia.

Consequently, where the Tunisian state provided cover for the embezzlements of the Ben Ali clique, in Egypt the army is involved in dominating sources of wealth and people's lives. Having dispensed of the ineffectual political parties and factions under Nasser, the Egyptian state's policy of banning trade unions and associations or strictly regulating them was intensified under the neoliberal agenda (Owen 2006: 28); thus no freedom of social organizations of any kind was allowed except for those in support of the state, such as the Liberation Rally, the National Union and the Arab Socialist Union (Owen 2006).

Certain societal aspects of Egypt (e.g. its high literacy rate and modern education) prevented the total suppression of popular organization and the existence of some form of civil society; even political opposition parties have been intermittently allowed or covertly tolerated over the decades. Furthermore, since the 19th century (and indeed throughout history) Egypt has been the intellectual nucleus of the Arab world, as

mentioned previously; thus "the early access to education and development of newspapers created an intelligentsia which helped spur development of civil society" (Rishmawi and Morris 2007: 6). Women also have an advanced role in Egyptian society relative to other states in the MENA, which spurs the development of representative civil society groups, and women's groups along with labor unions have demonstrated greater readiness to confront the state (albeit with limited success) than conventional political opposition groups (Rishmawi and Morris 2007: 10); thus they were already primed to galvanize the Arab Spring movement while the Muslim Brotherhood leadership were still conducting their theoretical seminars in other countries in the MENA.

The growing role of civil society organizations during the 2000s was despite the enactment of a state of emergency since 1981 (the assassination of Sadat), which allowed the indefinite suspension of certain democratic freedoms outlined in the Egyptian Constitution:

> "The authorities in Egypt have used a series of alternative methods to control the activities of such organizations. These include the selective repression of opposition groups; the adoption of strict regulations which effectively allow the government to prohibit the founding of new organizations; the transfer of public funds only to those organizations which follow government directives; and the systematic restriction of the freedom of assembly and the right to hold public gatherings" (Paciello 2011: 7).

Furthermore, in 2002, an Associations Law was introduced to increase restrictions on NGOs' activities and fund-raising, compelling all of Egypt's 16,000 organizations to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This Ministry was responsible to ensure that all organizations' activities did not oppose the regime (Rishmawi and Morris 2007).

3.3.3   The Political Factor

As explained previously, many MENA states during the 1950s and 1960s came to be ruled by military dictatorships (Rishmawi and Morris 2007); Egypt was the beacon of this system, and Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser was the icon of Arab anti-colonialism for decades. After dispending with the baggage of democracy, he enlarged the army (then a defense issue due to his intention to nationalize and maintain the Suez Canal and the Arab-Israeli situation) and re-equipped it with more sophisticated weapons. These developments increased state power in the country and justified any action by the state toward the society as the security of the latter was the rationale for all actions by the former; this has been the justification for de facto rule by the military establishment in Egypt since 1952 (Owen 2006: 24).

Emergency laws were instrumental in entrenching the power of the military establishment in Egyptian politics. For example, after the Six Days War in 1967, Nasser enacted Emergency Law Number 162 of 1968 was issued; the essence of this law limited the freedom of citizens and gave greater powers to the police, suspended certain constitutional rights in the name of security, allowed the state to detain individuals and censor and close newspapers more easily, and allowed authorities to try civilians in front of military and security courts under certain circumstances (Jason 2013: 169-170).

Under Mubarak's rule, prisons were filled with opposition members, human rights were arbitrary abused and freedom was restricted to the maximum. According to the UN Development Program report in 2004, a description of governance crisis in Egypt and other states was as follows:

> "Central to the problem of freedom and governance is the fact that at the political level, decision-making has remained in the hands of a minority focused on serving its own interests. The vast majority of people are excluded and thus left to impoverishment and marginalization. Present day regimes have not achieved fundamental reform from within which would correct their course and enhance hopes for a better future" (Rishmawi and Morris 2007: 24).

From the late 1990s and during the 2000s the Egyptian government redoubled its efforts; the US War on Terror after 2001 provided cover for authoritarian regimes throughout the MENA to curtail democratic freedoms and abuse human rights with impunity (Ottaway 2010: 56). This gradually drew a line under the on-going protests since the late 1990s, mainly due to economic issues.

Fraudulent "elections" made a mockery of the concept of democracy in Egypt, and its on-going political and economic stagnation became a laughing stock (Ottaway 2010: 63). In 2005, Egypt elected a new parliament with limited participation of political parties. The result was that the Muslim Brotherhood, the most organized and one of the oldest political factions in the MENA, became the main opposition group in the Egyptian Parliament (Ottaway 2010: 56). They thus became a locus for general opposition to the regime, receiving wide support. Alternative opposition groups like the secular parties and the Salafist Islamic parties had negligible representation in Parliament. However, this Parliament did nothing to improve conditions in Egypt in terms of the economic situation, freedom and poverty. In 2006 there was a total of 222 labor strikes, sit-ins, and demonstrations, rising to 580 in 2007 (Ottaway and Hamzawy 2011: 2). These economic protests began to voice political issues, with slogans questioning the legitimacy of the government, which was not a noted feature of protests in the 1990s. Workers and unemployed people formed the majority of participants in these protests.

In 2008 protests again increased, with the mass participation of workers, political bloggers, independent journalists and university professors. Increasingly diverse political factions began to join this burgeoning opposition current, including the Nasserist Karama Party, the Wasat Party, the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), April 6 Youth movement and others. Moreover, the expansion of these protests to the big cities like Cairo led to some clashes with the police. Slogans and demands were economic and political oriented. The economic demands were higher wages and improved public services (e.g. health and education), while the political demands were the elimination of government corruption, an end to police torture and arbitrary detainment, and the creation of a fair judiciary system. The Egyptian government was in

a tough situation. Even though it tried to respond to these demands with some reforms and minor changes, they all failed to satisfy the angry public. The government increasingly resorted to calling in the army to end protests by force and cow protestors into submission (Ottaway and Hamzawy 2011: 3).

Political life continued to worsen prior to the fall of Hosni Mubarak, which was evident when in 2010 a constitutional amendment was made to enable his son Gamal Mubarak to succeed him. If Egyptians were prepared to be patient with their octogenarian President, they were not prepared to endure rule by another Mubarak for the coming decades and this blatant nepotism provoked a large voting boycott in the 2010 election and at the same time many opposition members withdrew from the Parliament (Ottaway 2010). With the total breakdown of all pretensions to being a modern democratic state, "taking to the streets thus became the only viable alternative" for the Egyptian public (Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule 2012: 7). General angry protests in Egypt were given a fillip by the ousting of Ben Ali, which transformed another demonstration in Tahrir Square into a potential revolution.

3.3.4 The Military Factor

The final factor in our analysis is the military structure, which unlike in the case of Tunisia has been entwined with all of the preceding factors, due to the amalgam of state and military establishment in Egypt from 1952. The Egyptian army itself comprises a major organization in the MENA, with its own "technological, educational and administrative resources" (Owen 2006: 178). This has made the army the biggest most powerful institution in Egypt, given the fact that it is the authority itself, deploying presidents from among its ranks at will (Yousef 2012: 3).

Contrary to Tunisian military and its structure, Egyptian army under Gamal Abdul Nasser and after the 1967 defeat against Israel, was "enlarged, re-equipped with more sophisticated Russian weapons, given better-educated recruits and, in general, turned into a more professional organization" (Owen 2006: 181). Increased military spending was at the expense of social welfare, and partly undermined the Nasserite socio-economic program, as explained previously. The enlargement of the military was

accompanied by a corresponding increase in its power, especially with respect to its dominance in politics: "Nasser initially had deeply entrenched the military into political life, establishing scores of officer-politicians that dominated the various institutions of the state" (Yousef 2012: 47). Military officers were given privileges and high ranking position in the state, which enabled them to be close to the decision-making process.

Sadat ostensibly sought to "keep the military out of politics. At the same time, he separated the military command structure in an attempt to manipulate the institution and prevent it from gaining too much power" (Yousef 2012: 47). In addition to this, he reduced the size of the army in the cabinet from 66% in 1967 to 22% in 1972. He also reduced the number of military personal in government in order not make them intervene in politics (Yousef 2012). Sadat himself remained the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian armed forces and he never displayed any intention of ceding his executive powers to a democratically elected president; rather this process was probably a maneuver by Sadat to prevent potential rivals from assuming too much power (a major concern of dictators in MENA, as mentioned previously), and with one emergency decree Sadat could have suspended the Parliamentary arrangements and brought in the troops. When Sadat himself was killed, Mubarak did not see any utility in these democratic gestures, thus he rebuilt the army with more privileges and powers (Owen 2006: 183).

Mubarak transformed Egypt into a big business complex for the interests of his neoliberal international patrons and the local military establishment, who profited from control of Egypt's lucrative resources – mainly the Suez Canal, natural gas and the local market). He personally enriched himself to a much greater degree than any of his predecessors, and "developed the military to a point where it played a significant role in the nation's economy and entangled it so deeply with the institution of the state that gave it so much power" (Yousef 2012: 61). Under his rule, the military industry was expanded and cemented. In fact, "the Egyptian military acquired valuable real estate and numerous industries. By one estimate, the military commands up to 40% of the Egyptian economy" (Nepstad 2013: 343). This by itself has made the military an empire of money and power, with Egyptian serfs building a pyramid of vast wealth for the military

establishment and their affiliates. Running water management, electricity generation, and reclamation and other public utilities and public works are all monopolies of the military. By 2000, the military's Administration of National Service Products was running sixteen factories, employing 75,000 workers, with half of the output directed towards the domestic market in the shape of automobiles, televisions, videos, electric fans, agricultural machines, cables and ovens, assembled under licenses from abroad, sometimes as part of joint ventures with local private capital firms (Owen 2006: 184).

By making the army indispensable to the Egyptian economy, and making himself indispensible to the army, Mubarak sought to preside over an insurmountable economic and political complex backed up (in the last resort) by unassailable military force, which made him a valuable ally for the international community due to the stability he brought for Israel and gave him the trump card in any stand-off with the Egyptian public. He was able to implement a kind of planned economy whereby private firms could pay a commission for the state (i.e. army) to facilitate their operations.

However, despite establishing a stranglehold over all aspects of life in Egypt by means of the economic preeminence of the military, Mubarak did not consider that if a critical mass of people perceived that they had no stake in this pyramid, they might not be cowed by the implicit threat of violent suppression incurred by opposition to his reign. Furthermore, many NGOs campaigned against the role of the military in social, economic and political life.

With the accumulation of intensive corruption and other factors that led to the uprising of 2011, the true examination of the military loyalty to Mubarak was created. As the protests developed and increased in size and demands, Mubarak's response was to call on the military to crack down the protests. The military refused to side with Mubarak this time, and instead they protected people from his police (Nepstad 2013). Mubarak subsequently tried to make some reforms and promises but they all failed to appease the determination of the protesters. He then responded with extensive violence by his loyal police and security forces, but the military stood against that and declared that:

"rising violence and disorder would only hurt the military's legitimacy and influence. Thus, on February 10, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed control of the country and, the next day, persuaded a reluctant Mubarak to resign and head for internal exile" (Barany 2011: 32).

Mubarak overplayed his hand, and he overestimated his value to the military establishment. Furthermore, some analysts have observed that the military establishment was apprehensive about the potential wholesale privatization promised by Gamal Mubarak if he succeeded his father, which would undermine the "business holdings" of the military (Nepstad 2013: 342).

When the military perceived that Mubarak was no longer of utility as a focus of national unity, they discarded him and allowed the people to experience their "Spring", appearing as the champion of the people and the defender of the sacred legacy of Nasser. Mubarak, although implicitly responsible for all of the economic and political crimes committed by the military under his premiership, was scapegoated by the SCAF. The military establishment washed its hands of the systematic offenses committed during the preceding three decades, while those same hands continued to firmly grasp control of the economic gains made during those years and the ultimate resort of force if the situation escalated beyond a change of personnel:

"The military has served as the guardian of the regime for decades, with the uprising, it has shifted to serve as the guardian of the state and took control. Then they moved to act as guardian of their own material interests, seeking to maintain their position of privilege in the Egyptian state" (Yousef 2012: 79).

In the aftermath of Mubarak's departure from power, the military was quick to establish that it was in control. It declared that it would, prior to elections, adopt a declaration of basic principles that would govern the drafting of a constitution. The declaration would be designed to ensure that Egypt's next elected leader will have no choice but to keep the military's interests in mind:

"Elections would enable the military to return to its barracks but retain its grip on national security, including the right to intervene in politics to protect national unity and the secular character of the state; maintain its direct, unsupervised relationship with the United States; be shielded against civilian oversight and scrutiny of its budget; and keep control of its economic empire. In effect, the military would continue to enjoy the privileged status it had under Mubarak" (Dorsey 2011: 475).

This quote shows and uncovers the real agendas of the military and reveals how potential threats to the military establishment posed by the position of the ailing Hosni Mubarak and his privatizing son were skillfully avoided by astutely exploiting the popular unrest in Tahrir Square. Regardless of the fact that millions of people were holding vigils in Tahrir Square and other places in Egypt, the military changed the head of the regime while maintaining the underlying power structure. Like a cat playing with a mouse between its paws, the military allowed the Muslim Brotherhood President Mursi to imagine he presided over a new dawn in Egypt, then again saved the nation in the military coup of 3rd July, 2013, which established Sisi as the new leader. This coup marked the beginning of a new chapter of oppression, with the military killing people opponents in the streets.

Having explained the role of the military in Egypt, it can be seen that it is the fundamentally important factor in our analysis of politics in the country and how the Arab Spring developed there. As the shadow of the government and the sponsor of the regime, the military plays a significant role in all Egyptian affairs. Social alienation and economic stagnation as well as political repression are all tools and means for the military regime to ensure its dominance and secure its interests. Therefore, the structure of the military played a significant role in *exploiting* (though not causing) the Arab Spring uprising and it certainly determined its outcomes over the short and long term.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the factors of the "Arab Spring" within the context of the structure of the states in the MENA region, using Tunisia and Egypt as case studies. The

overall causes were the absence of political freedom, the absence of economic prosperity and the absence of human rights. Also, in terms of the socioeconomic structures and political factors, both Tunisia and Egypt have different components that affected the aftermath of the uprising, as well as common issues such as human rights abuses, lack of freedom, corruption and economic mismanagement (Murphy 2012). These components and cases causes were built up over decades of repression by the authoritarian regimes of these states.

People did not stay calm and silent until a certain melting point in 2010; rather they were actively participating in civil society organizations, even though these organizations were largely under state control. Furthermore, protests were taking place on streets even though they were violently crushed by police forces and people got punished as a result. Thus, the 2011 uprisings or revolutions were in fact the later episodes in a long serious of protests and upheavals. This is where the importance of a sociological analysis of revolution comes to play a significant role. With this analysis, the real causes reveal themselves and thus a better understanding of the uprisings is achieved.

After discussing the causes of the uprisings, now it is time to look at what suggested outcomes could take place after the "Arab Spring". According to Aissa (2012), the Arab Spring altered the political mechanisms of the MENA and gave more power to the people against their governments, promoting concepts of non-violent resistance and citizen movements; however, the states used violence against the non-violent protestors in Tunisia and Egypt, and in other countries.

Cordesman (2011) cited the difficulties and short-term problems that the Arab Spring countries were facing in the transformation process, which he argued could kill any political and economic reforms. As democracy can offer no security and stability in the region, he expected initial chaos and problems or factors for unrest, concerning longstanding grievances like income distribution, poverty line, perceptions of social equity, employment and job quality, education, role of women, services and utilities, and state sectors and employment. Thus, managing the expectations of the Arab Spring

was the major challenge facing embedded power structures and systems of control. Unless these factors are managed well in the new reality after the uprising, there will be no development. The study of these factors in Tunisia and Egypt was particularly valuable in this thesis:

> "Any analysis of the causes that led to the outbreak of protests in early 2011 should combine a study of those underlining socio-economic problems facing each country with an understanding of the closed political context from which they emerged" (Paciello 2011: 4).

Therefore, given the exhaustive explanation of the structural differences between countries in the region presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that it is analytically incorrect to label these uprisings as a single movement called the "Arab Spring".

The findings of analyzing these factors in Tunisia and Egypt revealed the following points. First, the structure of the state is almost similar in terms of the formation of the state in the post-colonial period. Both countries experienced an expansion of the state apparatus and tightly controlled lifestyle. This common feature shaped these countries with respect to social, economic and political structure. However, they did have some differences in these structures from their inception and as time went by. Second, in regard to the economic factor, Tunisia and Egypt both had extensive state control of the economy and their economic systems went through different stages starting from the closed centralized economy to a more open economy then to integration to the world economy, and they ended up going through crises and the consequences of structural adjustment policies.

However, Tunisia was in a better shape than Egypt due to different policies and different state interests. For example Tunisian unemployment rate was 14% while Egypt's was 17%. Ben Ali's government managed the economy more effectively than other countries due to a relatively stable political life during his rule (as presented previously). Egypt was going through a political crisis and unstable sphere due to the fluctuation in its politics from president to another. Thus, Tunisia was in relatively in a better shape to

sustain its economy than Egypt in the period after the uprising. Third, with respect to the social factor, both countries have a strong civil society that includes thousands of organizations in different fields. Women, human rights, freedom of expression, plus labor unions organizations were actively engaging with issues concerned their society. However, these organizations were put under harsh regulations and excessive restrictions, and sometimes were subject to bans and their members were imprisoned. Tunisian civil society was undoubtedly more dynamic and more progressive with respect to professional organization and tentative concern about socio-economic issues, which ultimately enabled the disenfranchised middle class to form a nucleus of disenchantment and opposition to the Ben Ali regime.

The Tunisian political structure is different from the Egyptian one in some aspects. First, Tunisian political structure was built by Bourguiba, a civilian president, even though he has ruled with an iron fist. The Egyptian political structure on the other hand was built by General Nasser, who was a military general and who came to resent civilian tinkering in the governance of the nation. Second, Tunisian politics was relatively stable compared to Egypt, while Egypt has a long history of emergency law which makes political life much more difficult. Thus, Tunisian politics and bureaucracy is relatively effective and is ranked favorably among other states in the region.

The final and decisive factor is the role of the military. This factor is very crucial in maintaining the structure of the state as well as the survival of the state in peaceful and warfare times. The structure of Tunisian military is fundamentally different from the Egyptian one. It was kept away from politics during all the period since independence, and it did not engage in any social or economic activities in the country. It was kept small and was mainly concerned with humanitarian activities (e.g. disaster relief). The Egyptian military on the other hand played a significant and all-pervading role in all aspects of Egyptian life. It was the shadow of the authority and all three presidents were military generals. Also, it was engaging in economic activities as it owns 40% of the Egyptian economy, which makes it an empire of money and a self-interested institution that lived on the expense of the welfare of society. Furthermore, it was enlarged and

very well supplied with modern weapons that were used to put down any protests in the country.

With these different structures, both militaries were compelled to take a position when the public protests in both countries reached a critical mass. The Tunisian military was not interested in keeping Ben Ali in power or implementing his orders to crack down on the protesters; it was essentially a professional force fulfilling its role, thus it simply refused to participate in any action before and after the uprising. The Egyptian military however managed to preserve its aura as the hero of the nation, defending the people from the dictator Mubarak and guiding a peaceful transition, then saving the nation again when the Muslim Brotherhood was relieved of power. Its vast economic holdings remain intact and its fundamental role in controlling Egyptian politics is enhanced.

Therefore, we see that Tunisian uprising ended up peacefully and now the transition is well managed by different civilian factions within the society, with no element of military control. In Egypt things have turned out very different, with the ultimate resumption of military authority under Sisi, presiding over the vast business empire of the military establishment while ruthlessly clamping down on any forms of opposition as a collective punishment to remind Egyptians never to question the status quo again. Egypt is essentially governed by a committee of military commanders, and there was never any real possibility of a genuinely effective civilian, democratically elected President reforming the power system in the country (Friedman, 2011).

Based on to these findings of the analysis of different structures within the state of Tunisia and Egypt, it can be said that the Arab Spring was generated by these factors as well as being affected by them. A relatively successful transition in Tunisia toward a new political regime was possible due to its structure. The military is the most important factor in the making the transition possible: "No institution matters more to a state's survival than its military, and no revolution within a state can succeed without the support or at least the acquiescence of its armed forces" (Barany 2011: 28). This is indeed the case in both Tunisia and Egypt, with their different outcomes. If we ask

whether a single "Arab Spring" occurred in both Tunisia and Egypt, the answer is a definitive no.

To sum up this chapter, I have discussed the socioeconomic factors and political structures in Tunisia and Egypt and found that the general theme of these factors was similar, while details as shown above vary. These differences reflect that the MENA region is not a homogenous entity. Therefore, the "Arab Spring" is an analytically incorrect concept to describe the uprisings in the region, as different countries have different socioeconomic and political structures. It is in fact an umbrella term used to over-simplify a complex and multifaceted region.

CHAPTER 4: THE ARAB SPRING AND DEMOCRACY

4.1 Introduction

Arguments about democracy and democratization in the Arab world and the MENA region have been a subject of debate among scholars. The recent importance of the subject lies in the uprising that the MENA region is going through, which seems to be viewed as a democratic wave. In the light of this critical moment in the history of the region, this chapter analyzes the notions of "democracy" and the "process of democratization" heralded by some in the region. This can offer a solid base for my critique of the US model of democratization and how well it captures the structure and dynamics of my case studies (Tunisia and Egypt). This chapter is separated into three sections dealing with the subject of democracy.

The following section discusses the concepts of "democracy" and "democratization". At the same time, arguments of compatibility between democracy and the culture of the region are addressed. Religion and history are the main issues that have created the political culture in the region. The third section puts the US model of democratization under investigation in order to see its usefulness to the region as well as whether the model captures the socioeconomic and political dynamics of the recent uprisings in the region generally and Tunisia and Egypt particularly. The fourth section is dedicated to the so-called "Arab Spring" as a democratic wave that marks a transitional period from authoritarianism to democracy.

4.2 The MENA and Democracy

Due to the moribund and essentially undemocratic nature of the regimes in the MENA countries, literature on democratization in the Arab world was scarce and theoretical prior to the Arab Spring. The predominant view has been the concept of the exceptionalism of the Arab and Islamic world; this lazy stereotype has been common since the orientalist writers of the 19th century and their justifications for liberating the Arabs and Muslims from their oppressive local elites and bestowing upon them the gift of Western freedom and capitalism (Abdelkader 2013). One of the most fundamentally

novel aspects of the Arab Spring was that it went far to disprove this assumption. In fact as Khalidi argued that, the perception of the West toward Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners was always erroneous, based on perceptions of terrorists, radicals and their veiled companions trying to impose harsh religious laws and the corrupt, brutal despots who were the only option for control of such undesirables. Indeed, he observed that the West was taught "not to see the real Arab world: the unions, those with a commitment to the rule of law, the tech-young people, the feminists, the artists and intellectuals, those with a reasonable knowledge of Western culture and values, the ordinary people who simply want decent opportunities and a voice in how they are governed" (Khalidi 2011: 3).

In fact, this is not a region that is uniquely unsuited to democracy, or that relishes oriental despotism; rather it is a region where debates on how to limit the power of rulers led to sustained constitutional effervescence in Tunisia and Egypt in the late 1870s and to the establishment of a Constitution in the Ottoman Empire in 1876. At that time, the empire included not only today's Turkey but most of the Arab world (Khalidi 2011).

The most influential critique of orientalist assumptions remains Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which attacked traditional Middle Eastern scholarship for its overemphasis on the cultural differences between the Middle East and the West. Said (from a Palestinian Christian background) rejected the notion that the people of the Middle East were essentially static and underdeveloped. He argues that the Middle East is not exceptional. It has its uniqueness and distinctive cultural characteristics, just like all regions, peoples and cultures of the world (Said 2003).

This point indicates the historical trend of rivalry between the West and East as well as how the West has undermined the region culturally, economically and politically to the extent that they can say what fits and what is not in regard to the exclusion of this region from democratic literature. The recent uprising proved that the notion of exceptionalism wrong and is no longer valid, as protesters called for democracy at great risk to their own lives.

Before starting to address the points of the argument, I shall define democracy and explain its essence. In this regard, democracy is a response to the needs of individuals and societies for a better way of life. Also, it is a "process and not an end", and it "is a type of political system in which power alternates through regular, competitive elections and citizen enjoy basic rights" (Moghadam 2013: 394). On the same line, "Democracy is premised on the principles of freedom of choice, expression, and association, equal citizenship and inclusion of all… it is also premised on free and fair elections, separation of powers, accountability, and transparency" (Toscano et al. 2012: 11). Thus it is a package of all of these elements, and if only one or two exist we do not necessarily end up with democracy.

The democratic practice can vary from time to time and from place to place according to norms of the society and its choices. Thus "there is no perfect model of democracy" (Toscano et al. 2012: 11). Each society and each culture will have a different model of democracy that fits its own culture and values. In other words, democracy is the rule of the people, thus the people will form, according to their culture and tradition, the model they want. Thus in the MENA region we should expect a different model of democracy from those in the West; even within European tradition, there are fundamental differences in the expressions of democracy found in the Swiss, French and British models. However, as Goldsmith observed, more and more nations are adopting the Western model with same values and norms:

> "Democratization is an irregular process of replacing authoritarian regime with rule-bound competitive system… it is not a universal historical sequence ending in the same types of political system, but more national states are adopting the western models" (Goldsmith 2007: 87).

To collaborate on this, the author is implicitly trying to set the western model of democracy which will be discussed later in this chapter as a role model at least on the ground. However, deep analysis of the nature of the region will show that democracy can be in various ways not necessarily a copy paste of the western one.

This represents an ironic turn of events. In the postcolonial era the peoples of MENA chose (or were compelled) to support militaristic dictatorships that purported to defend their freedom from colonial powers, whereas in the current phase of globalization the same nations aim to ape Western models of democracy instead of developing their own solutions to the socio-economic and political problems they face, despite the fundamental contradiction that their own dictatorships are generally given financial, military and diplomatic support by the very Western powers whence their democratic models emanate. However, in terms of the elementary level of power dynamics and relations between human beings in a society, there are some common mechanisms that must occur for the realization of democracy.

For a country to democratize, there are different stages that have to take place. First, liberalization, which means the authoritarian regimes ease their iron fist on their societies and start to soften their policies. Second, when an authoritarian regime collapses, a transitional period takes place during which outcomes are determined on whether the society is heading to democracy or not. Some factors facilitate the establishment of democracy as Moghadam would argue, such as economic development, level of education, a strong middle class and a vibrant civil society (Moghadam 2013: 395). However, these factors don't indicate the country to be democratic. General framework of democracy like institutions or elections doesn't capture the concept of democracy even though some Arab countries listed by the Freedom House as democracies because "democracy is generally conceived of as 'electoral democracy'" (Merkel 2004: 33). This shows that even if a MENA country is recognized by Western institutions like Freedom House as a democracy, this does not in fact mean that it is truly democratic.

Literature of democracy proclaims that democracy is a unique product of the West as the argument of Arab and Middle Eastern world exception indicates. The American political scientist Huntington warned more generally of "fundamental civilizational divides" in his *Clash of Civilizations* hypothesis. He argues that the culture of the West uniquely consists of Christian religious values, pluralism, individualism, and the rule of law. Such components he argues are lacking in the Arab Muslim communities, and thus

democracy is not a universal value, rather it is a Western value (Huntington, quoted in Diamond 2013).

From another point of view, contrary to Huntington's view, Roberto argues that democracy has become a universal aspiration for people of the region. However, one must not forget that it is the result of "a long and difficult process of rule-setting and power limitation" (Toscano et al. 2012: 13). As a matter of fact, "democracy was not a norm; Europe did not have Athenian democracy 2000 or 200 years ago" (Ibrahim 2013: 14). Therefore, democratic values are not exclusive to the West and democracy like any other system can be learned with practice. Furthermore, Professor Zguri (2012) challenges the notion that the West is the only source of democracy and that Arab and Muslim societies lack democratic culture in the first place. However, if this conception is true, "there would be no democracies in Europe"; Zguri stated that "Democracy is something people learn with time" (Zguri 2012: 432). Additionally, the historic religious tolerance in Europe was not the fruit of liberalism and the Enlightenment, rather "It was the product of grudging truces in savage wars of religion, from the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648" (Roy 2012: 6). Thus, the Arab and Muslim world is as amenable (or inhospitable) to democracy as any other nations and regions, according to the circumstances.

Other arguments have questioned whether democracy could travel beyond the West and whether it is in the West's interests to have these other countries governed by democracy (Diamond 2013). Clearly true "democratization" in the Arab world could endanger Western interests in the region. As expressed by General el-Sisi, developing democracy as what countries want can cause danger to the interests of the U.S.; thus the US will not allow that (ElSisi 2006). He added that the fragile peace between Israel and Arab states such as Egypt and Jordan could be at risk too if masses were giving the chances to choose their representatives, or it could threaten American security partnerships in the war on terrorism. If this has anything to show or stress, it is a domination and colonial point of view. This also shows that the East is still at the mercy of the West, and that the West can dictate what fits and what does not in the region.

4.3   The US Model of Democracy

This section traces the history of attempts to democratize the MENA region in general, and Tunisia and Egypt in particular. The US model of democratization was the main attempt and was one of the factors that marked an obstacle to real democratic transformation. This section addresses some questions in regard to democratizing the MENA region, such as why it is still trembling in its political transformations and what model the US wants to impose. Does this model capture the socioeconomic and political dynamics of countries of the region? Finally, is this model for the welfare of the region? Answering these questions explores the true intentions of the West toward the region and helps to understand the fluctuating fortunes of the transitional process in the MENA.

From the 1950s onward there were concerted efforts to export the Western model of democracy into the developing world as part of the US policy of containing Communism. This Western model of political democracy and liberal economics was branded as the progressive and modern path for developing countries; the US As "embraced 'modernity' as a paradigm to frame analysis of policy questions and provide an alternative to the Marxist model provided by the Soviet Union" (Anderson 2006: 192). Thus it is clear that regardless of its practical implications for developing countries, the Western model exported to the developing world was framed to suit the geostrategic interests of the Western countries. Examination of the countries and communities of the MENA indicates showed that there were fundamental differences in the culture and nature of these countries to Western culture, and thus they were not a good ground for Western democracy to flourish (Cammack 1994: 353). Western countries have compelled the developing world to "modernize", leading to:

> "the promotion of a model of democratization and of democracy which founded upon elite leadership, conscious efforts to limit the expectations and demand of the masses, and fostering of political cultures in which modern and traditional elements were judiciously blended" (Cammack 1994: 359).

In this way, for democracy to work there are two provisos: that the elite should rule and make decisions; and they should be responsive to the demands of citizens (the non-elite). Additionally, for this to work, the culture of the region should transform to suit this model of Western democracy, or the region should adopt the culture of the West and be alienated from its own culture.

Some countries like Tunisia and Egypt during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were living under total authoritarian militaristic regimes, and economic and political conditions were in crisis. To spearhead the transformation process of the MENA, the US and institutions affiliated to its strategic objectives (i.e. the IMF and World Bank) "gave" (i.e. lent) financial aid to countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and others on condition that national assets were thrown open to international (mainly Western) investment. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Arab world was under the structural adjustment policies that purported to liberate the economy from the state, but which in fact delivered national assets to foreign firms while failing to deliver any significant development (Trabelsi 2013). In fact, "the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the Arab economies led directly to large scale civil unrest" (MacQueen 2009: 174); in the face of widespread hostility to regimes because of the impact of these policies, increasing repression was used by regimes against their citizens.

This exposes one of the oldest divergences between theory and practice in the US approach to the region; while purporting to spread democracy and liberal economics, the US has routinely demonstrated that the former is dispensable as long as the latter is guaranteed, as expressed in its support of innumerable totalitarian dictatorships worldwide, such as Pinochet in Chile, Suharto in Indonesia or Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia, respectively (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004.

The US supported these regimes and against their societies for the sake of its interests. Modern commentators observe that "The model of totalitarian governance in the Arab world was suited Western powers, which they see as a shield against radical Islamism" (Trabelsi 2013: 253). However, the historical objective of US support for dictatorships in the Muslims world was historically twofold: to guarantee the stability of trade for

corporations, and to prevent the emergence of Communist or other anti-US regimes. In pursuit of this objective, the US granted extensive diplomatic and military support to overtly Islamic regimes for over half a century, such as the autocracies of the GCC. However, albeit Islam has always been germane to US interests under the auspices of absolute monarchies, as manifest in political democracy Islamism was an unknown quantity for US policy as of 2011. Regardless of the practical threat posed to US interests by Islamist groups (actually zero judging by the way the US-backed Egyptian military was able to dispose of the fledgling Muslim Brotherhood democracy in Egypt), Islamism has certainly replaced Communism as the new rallying cry to justify US policies in the MENA, including its unconditional support for regimes with atrocious human rights records (Sorenson 2011: 26).

In fact, these authoritarian regimes became astute in sustaining their position and surviving the economic liberalization process by adopting a strategy of "guided plurality, controlled elections, and selective repression" (Brumberg 2002: 56) in order to challenge any democratization; as long as they displayed their utility to the US project they could rely on unconditional support, while occasionally being cajoled with US rhetoric about democratization.

On a deeper level, modern democratization under the US since the 1950s is merely an extension of the Anglo-French colonial "civilizing mission", whereby a pseudo-democratic humanitarian political mission provides cover for the rapacious expropriation of the wealth of poor countries, euphemistically called "developing" (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004). This model of neo-imperialist, "democracy promotion has been an important U.S. policy in the Arab Middle East for two decades, and hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on it. During most of that time only minor changes have taken place in most of the Arab countries" (Barnes 2013: 55). The reason is that the Western aid was going to some NGOs that have done nothing to support change in the region, because the US supported nominal reform (enough to provide a fig leaf of respectability to its imperialist project), not the overthrow of useful allies who provided stability and obedience (MacQueen 2009).

However, the ideological aspects of the democratization mission were given a fillip after 9/11, when "democracy promotion came as a necessary solution to the urgent security problems" (Berman 2007: 29). In practical terms, this meant the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, partly on the flimsy pretext of bringing democracy (the authoritarian regimes of both countries, the Taliban and the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, had been key allies of the US prior to 2001 and 1990, respectively). While democracy promotion is argued by some to be a national security priority to the US as part of its anti-terrorism strategy (Snider and Faris 2011), it is in fact obvious that US support for dictatorships in the MENA increased after 9/11, including extensive collaboration in torture programs and illegal renditions (abductions). In fact, US policy since 9/11 has further polarized the societies in the MENA into the US and its client regimes are on one side, and societies on the other.

A substantive example of this is Egypt, whose dependence on US aid by the 2000s cost the US taxpayer more than $2 billion per year (Snider and Faris 2011). Obviously this money does not go to Egyptian human rights organizations; rather it fuels the military economic complex described previously, the backbone of the regime and the main obstacle to democracy in Egypt. In return for this aid, Egypt provides unconditional and complete support for US objectives and operations (including anti-terrorism), and provides a big market for US products, while providing legitimacy for Israeli actions (particularly in Gaza, historically considered to fall under the auspices of Egypt in international Arabism), securing access to the Suez Canal and giving use of its airspace for US military operations (Hamid 2011: 27).

Evidences show that democratization is a key word for US imperialism, and it certainly has not promoted democracy for the citizens of the MENA. As USAID itself acknowledges, "The impact of our democracy and governance activities in Egypt has been limited and unnoticeable in indexes describing the country democratic environment" (Barnes 2013: 62). Furthermore, Freedom House has shown very little improvement on the basic necessities of democracy in Egypt regarding political and civil liberties (Barnes 2013). Thus, there is no effect of Western aid on democracy (Desai 2012: 2). In fact what democracy aid has done is to represent the superiority of

the US model of liberal democracy in maintaining the national interests of the US at the expense of subject colonial peoples (Snider and Faris 2011).

In concluding this section, we have seen that the US model of democratization and "the expansion of democracy in the world, works as a strategic factor in strengthening international security particularly for the West" (Aliboni and Guazzone 2004: 87). While the overriding objective of this model is to serve the interests of the West, a side-effect of this is to entrench and support the autocratic regimes of the region (MacQueen 2009; Santini and Hassan 2012). The regimes have demonstrated their utility to the US by holding down their people with an iron fist and subverting their nations into tools of US imperialism (Santini and Hassan 2012).

As a matter of fact, the US is the fundamental guarantor of autocratic regimes and their perpetuation in power, with extensive financial, military, political and diplomatic support, preventing the emergence of democracy for the people of the region: "Democratization was defensive and managed, it was not meant to lead to democracy but rather to prevent its emergence" (Hamid 2011: 20). Many prominent Arab intellectuals have observed that neither the US nor the regimes in the MENA desire democracy in the region, rather both are invested in preventing it (Ramadan 2011a). An illustrative index of this is that prior to 2011, no Arab country could be claimed to be democratic "despite 20 years of democracy promotion by the US" (Barnes 2013: 55). This shows that the US model of democratization does not capture the socioeconomic and political structure of countries of the region, which are the real elements of any change. Instead, the model only deals with US interests and its local autocratic allies. This is why the model has no impacts on establishing democracy in these countries.

4.4 The Arab Spring and Democracy

Regarding the question of democracy and whether the Arab Spring can help democracy flourish in the region, again many writers and scholars have debated this issue back and forth. In the initial period following the outbreak of the Arab Spring (e.g. 2011-2013), many observers felt that it marked a sea change in international affairs, and the first major global trend since the end of the Cold War: "the Arab Spring represents the most

important set of political-economic transition since the end of communism in Europe" (Desai 2012: 32). Even within the Arab world there was a kind of blind optimism attached to the events, with the hope that it was more than just a "democratic blooming", rather a revolutionary demand for recognizing their right to human dignity (Alhassen 2012). In the face of worsening "corruption, torture, injustice, inequality and no freedom. Someone had to stand up and say 'enough is enough'" (Amin 2013: 1). It seemed to many to be a new dawn after years of repression and brutality by regimes stretching beyond living memory; the Arabs had made the first and crucial step toward freedom and democracy.

In reality, despite the courage of people throughout the MENA who risked their lives by going out to the streets to demand the fall of their dictators and freedom for their countries, they comprised no tangible power compared to the regimes in their countries. It was recognized contemporaneously by more astute observers that there would not be any substantive change as long as the old *regimes* remained in power, despite any cosmetic alterations to the individual dictators forming their figureheads (Friedman, 2011). Even the orientalist assumptions were partly borne out in their critique of the Arab world (and the Arabs) as being unfit for democracy. Howard pessimistically argued that Arab societies lack basic elements of democracy, and thus democracy is unlikely to be applied. These elements are: economic development, civil society, a middle class, institutions, social mobilization, political culture, and proximity to a role model of democracy (Howard 2012).

Nevertheless, Tunisia and Egypt had some kind of civil society, middle class and institutions, and the Arab Spring displayed the desire of people for freedom and democracy, and it could be seen as some kind of preliminary signal that the region may be heading for some kind of transition from authoritarianism to democracy (Muasher and Wilkens 2012). In this perspective, the "Spring" event merely marks the start of a democratic transition in the Arab world in which the aims are social justice, rights of the people and collective economic development (Trabelsi 2013).

To test whether the Arab Spring will ultimately contribute to establish democracy in the MENA we must establish what a transition is and apply its criteria to the uprisings.

A "transition" is the interval between one political regime and another. 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 to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, quoted in Mainwaring 1989: 6).

This definition highlights the process and the expected upcoming development. A transition process may or may not lead to democracy, and it may or may not lead to stability. Another definition states that "democratic transition is a political process known by a progressive movement from a governance system to another capable of achieving the main democratic principles" (Trabelsi 2013: 254). Employing these definitions will help assist and analyze the Arab Spring uprisings as a transitional point from one system to another.

My case here in regard to the Arab world and the recent uprisings lies in one way or another under this category of transition. This uprising called for the fall of the authoritarian regimes in countries like Tunisia and Egypt and successfully marked the beginning of transitional processes. As the history of transition and democratization shows, there are some criteria of transition that define the process. Firstly, a transition does not occur over night, and does not always end with similar results (Aydinli 2013). As the definition indicates, there are some possibilities that can take place as a result of this process. The history of European democracy proves that transition takes a long time, as the West needed a century and half to see the result of a long and violent transition (Berman 2007). Moreover, revolution takes time, and freedom has a price (Ramadan 2011b).

Secondly, the transition process is usually associated with violence and chaos, and the "history of democracies has been filled with turmoil, conflict, and even violence" (Berman 2007: 30). Also, it faces challenges and enemies (Aydinli 2013). The French and American revolutions showed that extreme violence is often necessary to change

political regimes. Old regimes naturally resist any demand for change (if this threatens their fundamental power) and fight back. This will cause violent conflicts and even civil war within society. Challenges to the process of transition can be economic conditions and competition between different revolutionary factions over the power of the new system. Thirdly, the transition toward democracy is filled with uncertainty (Stepan and Linz 2013; Hamid 2011). This is also clear in the above mentioned definition, in which the future of the transitional process can lead to stability of democracy, or it can lead to the return of authoritarianism, or it can break out a full scale revolution.

Having stated these criteria, it is time to employ them on the Arab Spring to examine whether they fit to the category of transition. In regard to the first criterion, it is now four years since the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, and it remains unclear where these two countries are heading. Moreover, even before the uprising, people had called for change through small-scale protests and through some writings and media publications.

Concerning the second criterion, Tunisia and Egypt have experienced some violent incidents during the uprisings and the period that followed. Egypt however, has witnessed a massacre under the military clampdown following Sisi's coup d'états against the elected President. This is in less a counterrevolution than a reassertion of the implicit power of the military; there was no true revolution, thus there was no true counterrevolution, rather a reassertion of the underlying regime's power. The case of Tunisia was less violent that Egypt and it has managed to undergo a relatively peaceful transition to the present, but it remains to be seen what will ultimately emerge from the hot pot of socialism, nationalism, secularism and Islamism (subject to neoliberal economic tenets) that is the Tunisian political scene.

Challenges and enemies on the other hand are what transition has to face in the short run. The economic conditions are the backbone of every political development. As the uprisings were fueled with bad economic conditions, better economic conditions can be expected to fuel the stability of a new political system. Thus, economic wellbeing can be a barrier to democracy, or even if democracy takes place, the economic status will not change fast and will not solve the problems of the society in the short term, and thus

disappointment will take place (Sorenson 2011). It is the economy and growth that the Arab Spring countries have to deal with in order to move toward democracy. The other challenge is the competition between different revolutionary fractions over the power of the new system. Egypt is a good example, and itself faces a serious and complex situation.

The violent clashes between opponents and supporters of President Morsi produced deaths and injuries. Also, the increasing turmoil and confusion and competition between Islamists and secularists, ever at each other's throats, and the shadowy but decisive role of the armed forces along with direct and indirect foreign involvement have all combined to block the attempts of the Arab Spring movement to promote democracy and stability (Ramadan 2013). Tunisia has serious competition between Islamists and secularists, but with more civilian means through elections and campaigns, which in fact entrenches divisions in society based on religious and national orientations.

The third criterion is the uncertainty of the future of a transition, which is also the case in the Arab Spring countries. Four long years of uprisings and violence and chaos have not resulted in any clear vision. Egypt is ruled by a more authoritarian military junta and protests are brutally crushed in different cities. The economy is still crumbling, under an unstable political process. Tunisia is no different, even though it is less violent but analysts are still afraid that things may get worse. Thus, nothing is guaranteed and everything seems to be uncertain. All in all, what is going on in the region is a normal process of transition that is long, violent and uncertain. In this way, many countries in the world are put under the category between authoritarianism and democracy, which is a transitional process (Democratization 2013).

As shown above, the transitional process is hard and can bring clashes and conflicts into countries. However, if countries managed the obstacles and the chaos with patience and awareness of the risks then they can soften this risky, difficult process. There are some recommended steps to follow in order to avoid worsening conditions. The first step is to have a "security belt" in the transitional period. This means managing the chaotic situation with authoritarian means, which can be seen as a necessary and temporary

limitation of democracy. The second step is to have negotiation and bargaining process between the different fractions of the political elite, including the old regime elite (Democratization 2013).

The third step is to find a balance between democratic values and religious (or ideological) values. There *should not* be a mix between religion and politics (ending in theocracy) if a democracy is to result. Islamic parties and movements should not rigidly stick to their ideological agendas and they should be flexible in the compromising and negotiation process, while secular movements should acknowledge people's historical and cultural legacy, with all beliefs being respected. Civil society and civil modern state must have this kind of balance between religion and politics, with the good examples of Turkey and Malaysia embracing democracy and religion in a modern state style. However, 'the biggest challenge for Arab countries is balancing between politics and religion. If Arab countries overcome this issue, political transition cannot be but beneficial for installing democracy" (Trabelsi 2013: 262).

Using these recommended steps and applying them on my cases (Tunisia and Egypt) will give a clear picture of the transitional process in the two countries. Starting with the first step of having a security belt, the military forces in Egypt had an inflated role compared to a conventional state, but it did not safeguard protesters and did not create a safe atmosphere for change to take place. Instead, it used its power and guns to hound opposition to the old regime; thus the transitional process of Egypt is still in chaos, if not a permanent return to authoritarian rule. On the other hand, Tunisian military forces were not involved in the political transition. They secured the protesters and kept securing the state from any internal conflict. Thus Tunisia compares favorably with Egypt in this regard.

The second step in which the new political transitional process should not exclude any side. Egypt after the fall of Mubarak witnessed a very tense situation between Islamic parties, secular old regime parties and the military. This tension resulted in the overthrow of the elected Islamic majority government and the subsequent exclusion and banning the Muslim Brotherhood from any participation in the political process. In that

way, Egypt failed at least in the short run from achieving a soft less violent transition. However, Tunisian political parties have all participated in a coalition government where no one was excluded. This is why it has come further than Egypt in its transition toward democracy.

The last step for a good transition is to find a balance between religious values and democratic values. This step is hard to find in Egypt due to different Islamic parties, each with different interpretations of Islam and visions of political Islamism in regard to the compatibility between Islam and democracy. Plus, Islamic parties in Egypt have an ideological background which ordinary people and the youth often fear. In Tunisia, Islamic parties have come to agree more with the Turkish model of democracy, which keeps religion away from politics.

All in all, according to the transitional criteria, Tunisia is far closer than Egypt in its transition to democracy. Tunisia has a history of democratic norms, such as in 2012 it received a score of 3 out of 7 for political rights in the Freedom House scale (Stepan and Linz 2013). Also, in Tunisia secularism means a civil state rather than an antireligious one. Furthermore, in Tunisia they believe that democracy is not just acceptable but also necessary and this facilitates the bargaining process between Islamists and secular liberals. Also they do not fear each other's agendas since Tunisia has domestic peace. In addition to that, Tunisia has a more advanced political society than Egypt, which is helpful in the transition process because "Civil society can play a role in the destruction of the authoritarian regimes but constructing democracy political society is needed" (Stepan and Linz 2013: 23). Moreover, the challenge for the future in MENA as a whole is to find "a good balance between Islamic religious values and democratic values. And Tunisia is well placed to develop this model" (Masmoudi 2011: 5).

CHAPTER 5: CHAPTER 5
Concluding Remarks

The objective of this thesis is approaching the Arab Spring phenomenon from a historical sociology of revolutions perspective in order to clarify whether it can be seen as a revolution. Additionally, this thesis examined the validity and the usefulness of the terms "Arab Spring" and the "democratization" model in describing the recent uprising in the MENA region. It was found that the "Arab Spring" is not a revolution, and by taking two case studies Tunisia and Egypt and observing their socioeconomic and political dynamics it was concluded that generalization about the region is not possible, thus both terms describing the recent uprising are not analytically useful:

> "The Arab activists, young and old women and men called for regime change and reform, due to the freedom deficit and social, economic, and political miserable conditions. They called for dignity, freedom, political equality and social justice" (Toscano et al. 2012: 5).

In fact, these uprisings were not ideologically or politically oriented as much as they were for freedom and democracy and a better way to be governed. With the Arab Spring, the concept of Arab exceptionalism is no longer a valid one in describing the Arabs as illiberal and antidemocratic. Arabs like others are subject to democracy and their religion and culture in fact can be used to support that (Pace and Cavatorta 2012); indeed, it has been described as a universal aspiration, that "everybody wants a democratic civil state that fully respects human rights and Islamic values and culture' (Masmoudi 2011: 5). People want democracy and along with it economic progress. According to the PEW charitable trust survey, the majority of Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan see democracy as the best form of government. This indicates the attitude of the people toward democracy in which it will support its establishment (Sorenson 2011: 27). Therefore, the uprising is not based on religious or ideological concerns, as some claim, rather it is based on universal values like freedom, social justice, human rights and dignity (Masmoudi 2011: 6).

At first, hope is at a high level in the change that will take place as a result of the uprisings and the transitional process to democracy is getting on track. This hope receded as division took place within the different factions of the people. Counterrevolution was also initiated by the deep state and the old regime institutions such as the military, which seemed to gain victories in the short run. Nonetheless, the long run "will prove that change is irreversible" as was the case in 1848 (Toscano et al. 2012: 1). In fact, and as the history of democracy shows that the transition to establish democratic institutions takes years (Pace and Cavatorta 2012); thus, as it takes time, it also needs determination, because the deep state and the old institutions will fight back, as they had the largest stake in the old regimes (Sorenson 2011).

There are some emerging realities since the uprisings, such as people becoming less fearful to oppose dictatorship and demanding their rights. People have chosen to change and they have to know that the road to democracy is long and difficult, so they should be patient because "getting rid of an authoritarian regime is one thing; creating a stable democratic one is something else" (Berman 2007: 31).

Based on the transition and its criteria, there will be chaos and violence along the long course of a transition. Also, no certain future is guaranteed and each transition ends differently. Furthermore, the study of democratic transition identifies two important factors, one is to the political institutions and the other of which is the political culture, concerned with the political elite and the people, respectively. The political institution refers to the regime, while the political culture refers to the society and its values. So, if the uprisings successfully remove the old regime and bring about a new one, then it is the responsibility of the political culture to build new institutions that support the establishment of democracy (Tessler 2002: 338).

Moreover, the ideal model of a democratic West is not inherently more attractive than other alternatives, as the West prioritizes its own interests over its values. This is evident in its longstanding support for dictators and the unlimited support it gives Israel, against the interests of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the MENA, to say nothing of the Palestinians in particular (Toscano et al. 2012). According to public surveys in Muslim

countries, people show the desire for democracy as a system governed with respect to the rule of law, however what they have in mind can be different from the models of the US or Europe. Each culture has its values and norms, and thus democracy in the Middle East can be different from the Western one. Professor Zunes, a professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of San Francisco, noted that:

> "Democracy in the MENA region will not come through foreign intervention, sanctimonious statements from Washington, voluntary reforms from above or arm struggle by a self-elected vanguard. It will only come through the strategic application of nonviolence action by the people of the Middle East themselves" (Zunes 2011: 9).

The US model of democratization in the Middle East was calibrated to serve US interests, foremost among which was maintaining order and preventing the spread of regimes not ideologically germane to US geostrategic interests (i.e. Communism or non-docile Islamism) and promoting the economic control of developing countries by institutions of financial domination such as the IMF and World Bank, enabling the wholesale expropriation of national assets in the developing world by predominantly Western corporate interests. If this could be achieved within the framework of democracy then the US would have no major objection to democratic forms, such as elected parliaments and leaders etc.; however, in reality it proved much easier to achieve these goals under authoritarian dictatorships with little or no democratic freedoms, with the results that now "the US message of democracy is often rejected together with the messenger" (Sorenson 2011: 42).

The US rejected the results of democratic elections in Algeria in the 1990s and the Gaza Strip in 2006 to show that Islamist democracy was unacceptable. From another point of view, democracy in the MENA region is fundamentally antithetical to US interests, because democratic governments that genuinely reflect public opinion would result in a raft of policies against US interests, as a 2008 Brookings Institution poll indicated (Sorenson 2011).

Furthermore, the US did not support any genuine democratic movements in the Arab World (including during the Arab Spring) in their efforts to institute fundamentally new political systems, and indigenous democratic movements have generally been brutally suppressed with US aid and support (whether overtly or implicitly) (Goldsmith 2007: 55), therefore the US model of democracy did not capture the socioeconomic and political structure of countries of the region, rather it reflected US socioeconomic and political interests (Hamid 2011: 27).

Last but not least, the Arab world is in a transitional process from authoritarianism to democracy. This transition has brought hope as well as fear to the societies (Trabelsi 2013). Big challenges are ahead in the current transition or juncture. The "Spring" was not a cohesive, pan-Arab movement, rather it represented the simultaneous disenchantment of the masses with their eternally frozen democratic progress and stagnant or declining standards of living, and the outcomes in each case remain unclear. However, even though more repressive and anti-democratic outcomes seem inevitable in some cases, over the long term the events of 2010-2011 marked a fundamental turning point (Toscano et al. 2012: 15), setting the region on course for the ultimate realization of eventual democracy (Ibrahim 2013: 14).

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