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Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya After the Arab Spring

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Abstract

This article analyzes the political transitions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya after the Arab Spring. While they share similarities regarding the overthrow of their long-lasting regimes, each country followed different trajectories. Early in the process, Tunisia underwent a smooth transformation, while Egypt witnessed intense polarization following the electoral success of the Muslim Brotherhood—and authoritarianism with the military coup two years later. Different from those two, Libya came to the brink of failure with a civil war, and the country still suffers from rampant violence. The article contends that Tunisia's success in the transition toward democracy lies in its relative homogeneity, consensus-building, and civil-military relations. The focus of the article is on the initial transitions. Tunisia's process appears to have stalled, and future study will be required to understand how such states can consolidate their democratic transitions.

Before the Arab Spring, regimes maintained longevity through repression and intimidation. Leaders also stymied change by creating the perception that people would be worse off if their regimes were overthrown.[1] In 2010, the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor, not only caused widespread protests in Tunisia, it also triggered political and social upheaval in the region. In general, the protests revealed people's outrage against widespread poverty, corruption, clientelism, and repression that dominated the Arab world, as well as their demands for change, irrespective of cultural backgrounds, tribal affiliations, or clan allegiances.[2]

[1] As'ad Abu Khalil, "The Longevity of Arab Regimes: Causes of Oppression," in *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 49.

[2] Noureddine Jebnoun, "Introduction: Rethinking the Paradigm of "Durable" and "Stable" Authoritarianism in the Middle East," in *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 9

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In North Africa, Morocco remained relatively stable due to the popularity of the monarchy. As such, the protesters demanded neither the overthrow of King Mohammed VI nor the abolition of the monarchy. Instead, they requested constitutional reforms that had been previously discussed by political parties and the media. The regime could provide stability with the adoption of a liberal constitution and political, economic, and social reforms.[3] While Algerians also took to the streets between 2011 and 2012, the protests did not become regime-threatening for two reasons: the relative economic prosperity during that period stemming largely from the rise of oil prices; and people's fear of instability due to Algeria's brutal civil war that took place between 1991 and 2002.[4]

Aside from Morocco and Algeria, North Africa during the Arab Spring witnessed instability with the overthrow of dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, dashing the initial optimism that the protests would achieve results similar to those of the 1989 revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe.[5] Tunisia did undergo a relatively smooth democratic transition with the election of the Ennahda Party in the 2011 elections and the party's decision to step down after concerns arose among secularists. Nonetheless, Tunisia was an exception. After Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown, Egyptians with a wide range of political opinions gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square, chanting slogans such as, "The people want to bring down the regime." After the Egyptian military declined to support President Hosni Mubarak, he handed his power to the army. Despite Mubarak's ouster and Egypt's first democratically organized election in 2012, the country spiraled back to authoritarianism with a coup orchestrated by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in 2013.

The Arab Spring protests took their most violent form in Libya. The threat of a descent into civil war and its possible spillover effects prompted NATO member states to conduct Operation Unified Protector, establishing a no-fly zone that enabled the rebels to defeat forces loyal to Muammar Qadhafi.[6] However, after the fall of the regime, no group was able to establish authority in the country due to deep-seated tribal conflicts. In the post-Qadhafi period, Libya has come to the brink of being a failed state characterized by political polarization, civil war, and extremist violence.

Taken together, Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya share similarities regarding the overthrow of entrenched dictators following the Arab Spring protests. However, in the post-revolutionary period, the three countries took on completely different trajectories: Tunisia's smooth transition, Egypt's return to authoritarianism, and Libya's sinking into civil war. This article compares the political transitions of the three states in the post-Arab Spring period by paying attention to political traditions, ideological dynamics, and state-society and civil-military relations. While Tunisia's

[3] James N. Sater, "Morocco's 'Arab' Spring," *Middle East Institute*, October 1, 2011, http://www.mei.edu/publications/moroccos-arab-spring; Mohsin Khan and Svetlana Milbert "Turmoil in The Arab World: How Has Morocco Fared?" *Atlantic Council*, January 25, 2013, http://www.Atlanticcouncil.Org/Blogs/Menasource/Turmoil-In-The-Arab-World-How-Has-Morocco-Fared.

[4] Youcef Bouandel, "Algerians Have Learned the Lesson of the Arab Spring," *Al Jazeera*, March 6, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/algerians-learned-lessons-arab-spring-190305111758425.html; Natasha Turak, "Algeria Was Silent during the Arab Spring. Now Its Streets Are Erupting in Protest," *CNBC*, March 12, 2019, https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/08/algeria-was-silent-during-arab-spring-now-its-erupting-in-protest.html.

[5] Gilbert Achcar and Nada Matta, "Gilbert Achcar on the Arab Upheaval—Facts and Fiction," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 1 (2016): 1.

[6] Alan J. Kuperman, "Obama's Libya Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2019-02-18/obamas-libya-debacle (accessed 23 August 2019).

transition can be seen as relatively successful, its consolidation of its gains appears to have stalled and will require further study.

TUNISIA'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

Tunisia's first president, Habib Bourguiba (served 1957–87), maintained his power through a single political party and state bureaucracy.[7] Bourguiba enacted secular reforms not only to prevent the intervention of religion into politics, but also to transform the entire Tunisian society.[8] Holding Islam responsible for cultural and economic backwardness, Bourguiba aimed at minimizing the role of religion in society. His concerns grew following the 1979 Iranian Revolution.[9] The regime's hostile attitude toward Islamists paved the way for a religious revival that created a permissive condition for Rached Ghannouchi's establishment of the Islamic Tendency Movement (later renamed Ennahda) in 1981.[10] This group and a number of opposition parties were banned under Bourguiba's rule.

Ben Ali, then the prime minister, overthrew Bourguiba through a "constitutional coup" in 1987. After assuming office, Ben Ali promised to enact democratic reforms and open the door for political pluralism. In line with his promise, he removed the ban on many opposition parties and released political prisoners.[11] Even though the Ennahda Party was not legalized, it participated in the 1989 parliamentary elections through independent candidates.[12] Yet, despite these cosmetic reforms, Ben Ali ruled the country through a tripartite alliance that encompassed the president, his family, and businessmen.[13] Under his regime, Tunisia became "an authoritarian police state, characterized by systematic human rights violations, a total lack of freedom of the press and freedom of association, and only the barest façade of political pluralism."[14] Ben Ali's police force was given extensive powers to monitor the population, both in public and private spheres. The number of security forces increased disproportionately, and torture became widespread.[15]

In addition to the suppression of dissent, corruption, and unemployment, the mismanagement of privatization intensified dissatisfaction with the regime.[16] Throughout the 1990s, many Ennahda members were arrested and imprisoned. Similarly to the Bourguiba period, this

[7] Noureddine Jebnoun, "Ben Ali's Tunisia: the Authoritarian Path of a Dystopian State," in *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 101.

[8] Lacin Idil Oztig, "A Governmentality Approach on the Transformative Role of Authoritarian Secularism," *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik* 2, no. 1 (2018): 93-4.

[9] Christopher Alexander, "Tunisia: The Best Bet," Wilson Center, August 26, 2015, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/tunisia-the-best-bet.

[10] Marion Boulby, "The Islamic Challenge: Tunisia Since Independence," *Third World Quarterly*, 10 (2), 1988, p. 590; see also Emma C. Murphy, *Economic and political change in Tunisia from Bourguiba to Ben Ali*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1999).

[11] Christopher Alexander, "Tunisia: The Best Bet," Wilson Center, August 26, 2015, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/tunisia-the-best-bet.

[12] Francesco Cavatorta and Rikke H. Haugbølle, "The End of Authoritarian Rule and the Mythology of Tunisia under Ben Ali," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 187.

[13] Jebnoun, "Introduction: Rethinking the Paradigm of "Durable" and "Stable" Authoritarianism," 14.

[14] Jebnoun, "Ben Ali's Tunisia: The Authoritarian Path of a Dystopian State," 101.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Cavatorta and Haugbølle, "The End of Authoritarian Rule and the Mythology of Tunisia under Ben Ali," 193.

repression sparked a religious revival. During the 2000s, Quranic associations grew in number, illustrating Islam's mobilizing role despite the crackdown.[17] Further, even though many Ennahda members were imprisoned, the group's leadership continued to mobilize its supporters in exile.[18]

After Bouazizi set himself alight in 2010, young people gathered in the streets to protest widespread corruption and repression, demanding regime change. Shortly thereafter, people from a wide range of the political spectrum—including Islamists, secularists, and civil-society organizations—joined the protests, which were primarily led by the labor-union left.[19] The exclusion of the military from the inner circle of the regime played an important role in the overthrow of Ben Ali. Like his predecessor, Ben Ali had subordinated the military by keeping it small and depriving it of economic rewards. Instead, he chose to maintain his rule by relying on the support of the police.[20] As a striking example of the sidelining of the military, the regime had only 35,000 troops, compared to more than 130,000 in the security forces.[21] In this context, the Arab Spring protests offered the military an opportunity to defy the regime. While the police killed a significant number of protesters, soldiers declined to use force.[22] After the military informed him that it would not stop the protests, Ben Ali escaped to Saudi Arabia.[23]

Before Ben Ali stepped down, he handed his power to Mohamed Ghannouchi, then the prime minister. But Ghannouchi submitted his resignation in response to widespread criticism of his rule. Even though the Ennahda Party did not play a significant role in the Arab Spring protests, before the 2011 elections, it was able to reach out to religious voters as well as conservatives and liberals through its network of grassroots organizations, as well as its political logic built around traditionalism and centrism.[24] As a consequence, it won more than 40 percent of the votes in the Constituent Assembly and formed a coalition government with two secularist parties (Congress for the Republic and Ettakatol).

Ennahda Party representatives and coalition partners debated intensely the role of religion, the substance of political and civil rights, and the role of women in the constitutional process. Islamists put pressure on Ennahda to take a firmer stance in these debates by organizing protests on university campuses, raising fears among secularists that the party would eventually curtail freedoms and impose religious values on citizens. In opposition to Ennahda, in 2012, former interim prime minister Beji Caid Essebsi united secular parties under Nidaa Tounes.[25]

Ennahda's rule was also overshadowed by rising violence and instability. In 2013, two opposition politicians were killed by extremists, triggering a mob to attack the US embassy and an American school. In addition, thousands of Tunisians went abroad to join jihadist

[17] Ibid.

[18] Hardin Lang, Mokhtar Awad, et al., "Tunisia's Struggle for Political Pluralism After Ennahda," *Center for American Progress*, April 4, 2014, https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Tunisia-report.pdf, 10.

[19] Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: University of California Press, 2016), 153.

[20] Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring," *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 133-4.

[21] Peter Schraeder and Hamadi Redissi, "Ben Ali's Fall," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 3 (2011): 6.

[22] Derek Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces & Society* 39, no. 1 (2012): 35.

[23] Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East," 35.

[24] Alexander, "Tunisia: The Best Bet"; Achcar, "The People Want," 221.

[25] Ibid.

organizations. While Ennahda was not responsible for these developments and declared Ansar al-Sharia, Tunisia's biggest Salafi extremist group, a terrorist organization, it was blamed by secularists for creating a political vacuum that played into the hands of Islamist militants.[26] Further, the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power in Egypt exacerbated fears among Tunisian secularists that Ennahda might bring Egyptian-style Islamism to Tunisia. Initially, Ennahda opted to remain in power despite a series of calls for its resignation, offering instead the broadening of the coalition. After the party's offer was refused by the opposition, Ennahda eventually agreed to step down. Yet, it continued to play a leading role in the constitutional process.[27]

In 2014, after the consensus reached by secularists and Islamists, the constitution was approved by the Constituent Assembly, becoming the first such document written in the Arab world without the influence of a dictator or external power. Nidaa Tounes won the 2014 parliamentary elections, and Essebsi became Tunisia's first democratically elected president. Between 2015 and 2018, Ennahda joined the grand coalition formed by Nidaa Tounes; the coalition persisted after Nidaa Tounes was divided into two factions, Tahya Tounes and Machrou Tounes.[28]

After the death of Essebsi, Tunisia's first democratically elected president, citizens went to the polls in 2019. Kais Saied, an expert on constitutional law, became president by winning 77 percent of the votes. Surveys suggest that most of his supporters were relatively young. Upon winning, Saied thanked "young people for turning a new page" in Tunisia's history and pledged to build "a new Tunisia."[29] He also emphasized his commitment to the democratization process by noting, "We will not backpedal on the rights we have gained in terms of our freedoms, in terms of women's rights."[30]

With the accommodations of the Ennahda Party, and the democratic and consensual character of the 2014 constitution, Tunisia moved in a positive direction toward democracy in the post-revolutionary period. Importantly, civil society, born out of the Arab Spring protests, acted independently of political authority and played a crucial role in the enaction of political reforms and the constitution-drafting process.[31] In the immediate aftermath of Ben Ali's fall, civil-society actors set the agenda for the transition period, even prompting the resignation of Mohamed Ghannouchi and some ministers in his cabinet. The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, consisting of a number of civil-society organizations, successfully managed the consensus between the secularists and the Islamists in the constitution-drafting process and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

[26] Monica Marks, "Tunisia's Ennahda: Rethinking Islamism in the Context of ISIS and the Egyptian Coup," Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at Brookings, August 2015, 7, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Tunisia_Marks-FINALE-5.pdf.

[27] Ibid, 9-11.

[28] Sharan Grewal and Shadi Hamid, "The Dark Side of Consensus in Tunisia: Lessons from 2015-2019," *Brookings Foreign Policy*, January 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-dark-side-of-consensus-in-tunisia-lessons-from-2015-2019/.

[29] "Tunisia Election: Kais Saied to Become President," *BBC News*, October 1, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-50032460.

[30] Caroline N. Perrot, "Kais Saied: Austere Upstart Poised to Be Tunisia's Next President," *Times of Israel*, October 14, 2019, https://www.timesofisrael.com/kais-saied-austere-upstart-poised-to-be-tunisias-next-president/.

[31] Hatem M'rad, "The Process of Institutional Transformation in Tunisia after The Revolution," in *Constitutionalism, Human Rights, and Islam after the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 77-9.

in 2015 for its contribution to pluralistic democracy.[32] New laws criminalizing violence against women and racial discrimination were put in place in 2017 and 2018, respectively.[33]

While before the revolution Tunisia was rated "not free" by the Freedom House index, its status changed to "partially free" in 2011 and "free" in 2014.[34] However, the democratization process that accelerated in the initial post-Arab spring period was not accompanied by an increase in popular welfare. After the revolution, unemployment and inflation rates increased.[35] Tourism, the backbone of the country's economy, declined, especially after the United Kingdom and other European countries advised their citizens not to visit the country following a 2015 beach attack that killed 39 people.[36] This economic deterioration created permissive conditions for the decrease of popular trust in democratic institutions. In a survey conducted by Afro Barometer in 2018, 51 percent of Tunisians stated their dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy.[37] In addition, the number of Tunisians that refused authoritarian alternatives to democratic mechanisms decreased. While in 2013, 71 percent of Tunisians backed democracy, only 46 percent of Tunisians stated their support in 2018.[38]

Notwithstanding the positive transition toward democracy in Tunisia during the initial post-Arab Spring period, the consolidation process is stalled as of this writing. Tunisia's economic downturn was accelerated by Covid-19. Against the backdrop of the mismanagement of the pandemic and economic downturn, political rivalry between Saied, Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi, and Parliament Speaker Rached Ghannouchi increased.[39] In 2021, the country went through its worst recession since 1956, with its sovereign debt more than 100 percent of GDP.[40] On July 25, 2021, amid high unemployment, demonstrations took place in the capital, prompting Saied to suspend the parliament and dismiss the prime minister.[41] The police used violence to curb the protests.[42] A few months later, the president abolished a body that monitored the constitutionality of laws.[43] In 2022, in an online meeting, parliamentarians voted against a bill that granted the president exceptional powers; Saied denounced the move as a "coup attempt" and a betrayal

[32] Rainer Grote and Tilmann J. Röder, "Prologue: Constitutional Debates in the Arab Spring," in *Constitutionalism, Human Rights, and Islam after the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 22-3.

[33] Sharan Grewal, "Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads," Policy Brief, *Brookings*, February 2019, 2, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FP_20190226_tunisia_grewal.pdf.

[34] "Data and Resources," Freedom House, 2019, https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world.

[35] Grewal, 'Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads,2.

[36] Harry Johnstone, "Can Tunisia Revive Its Tourist Industry?" *Financial Times*, August 3, 2018, https://www.ft.com/content/ce1f38b8-8f5c-11e8-9609-3d3b945e78cf.

[37] Youssef Meddeb, "Support for Democracy Dwindles in Tunisia amid Negative Perceptions of Economic Conditions," *Afro Barometer*, September 3, 2018, 2.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Tunisia: Freedom in the World 2022," Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia/freedom-world/2022.

[40] "Tunisia: President Announces Dissolution of Parliament," DW, March 30, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/tunisia-president-announces-dissolution-of-parliament/a-61310969.

[41] Julia Kempton, "Tunisia's Referendum: The End of the Last Hope of the Arab Spring," IR Insider, October 11, 2022, https://www.irinsider.org/home/low5znpuibm55hds0uwnluvlwopxoy.

[42] "Tunisia: Events of 2021," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/tunisia.

[43] Yousra Ounass, "Tunisia's President Abolishes Constitutional Monitoring Body," Anadolu Agency, September 23, 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/tunisias-president-abolishes-constitutional-monitoring-body/2372504.

of the nation.[44] He announced a curfew and an indefinite period of "extraordinary measures."[45] The president also dissolved the parliament and the Supreme Judicial Council, and he suspended the constitution.[46]

On July 25, 2022, a new constitution expanding the president's powers by removing checks from the legislative and judicial branches was accepted in a national referendum by 94 percent (turnout was 30 percent). Saied published the constitution in the *Official Journal of the Republic of Tunisia* without waiting for the declaration of the final results.[47] Immediately after the referendum, Saied said his next objective was to change the electoral system. Opposition parties and I Watch, a Tunisian civil society organization, filed lawsuits against the referendum results.[48] There is now a high level of mistrust between Tunisian civil society and the president, as Saied accuses civil-society actors of serving foreign interests. A draft law that was recently leaked to the public reveals political plans to further limit the power of civil society.[49] On September 15, 2022, Saied released a new electoral law significantly weakening political parties and removing quotas for female candidates and candidates under 35. It also makes it much more difficult for individuals to run for political office by preventing naturalized Tunisian citizens and anyone who has ever been charged with a legal violation from becoming a candidate.[50]

Tunisia's transition toward democracy succeeded with Ennahda's rise, its conciliatory approach to preventing the polarization of the country, and the flourishing of civil society in the initial post-Arab Spring period. However, Tunisian politics has witnessed democratic backsliding under Saied's leadership, threatening consolidation.

EGYPT'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

Hosni Mubarak assumed the Egyptian presidency after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat by radical Islamists in 1981. Mubarak ruled the country under an emergency law that prevented strikes, restricted freedom of the press, and curbed mobilization of the opposition.[51] Upon taking office, the president not only targeted radical Islamist organizations like Islamic Jihad, but also

[44] "Tunisia's President Dissolves Parliament, Extending Power Grab," Al Jazeera, March 30, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/30/tunisias-president-saied-dissolves-parliament.

[45] Julia Kempton, "Tunisia's Referendum: The End of the Last Hope of the Arab Spring," IR Insider, 11 October 2022, https://www.irinsider.org/home/low5znpuibm55hds0uwnluvlwopxoy.

[46] Shadi Hamid and Sharan Grewal, "Tunisia Is Sliding Back into Authoritarianism. Here's What the US Should Do," May 12, 2022, Brookings, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/05/12/tunisia-is-sliding-back-into-authoritarianism-heres-what-the-us-should-do/.

[47] "Tunisia in the Wake of the Referendum: A New Divisive Constitution," Arab Reform Initiative, August 23, 2022, https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/tunisia-in-the-wake-of-the-referendum-a-new-divisive-constitution/

[48] Fadil Aliriza, "What's Next for Tunisia after the Constitutional Referendum," August 2, 2022, Middle East Institute, https://www.mei.edu/publications/whats-next-tunisia-after-constitutional-referendum.

[49] "Tunisia: Looming Curbs on Civil Society Must Be Stopped: Draft Law Could Restore Ben Ali Restrictions," Human Rights Watch, March 11, 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/11/tunisia-looming-curbs-civil-society-must-be-stopped.

[50] Sarah Yerkes and Mohammad al-Mailam, "Tunisia's New Electoral Law Is Another Blow to Its Democratic Progress," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 11, 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/88127.

[51] Maria Paciello, "Egypt: Changes and Challenges of Political Transition," *MEDPRO Technical Report*, no. 4. 2011, 1-3, http://aei.pitt.edu/59189/1/MEDPRO_TR_No_4_Paciello_on_Egypt.pdf

the Muslim Brotherhood, created in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna.[52] In the 2000s, the eruption of the second Palestinian Intifada and the invasion of Iraq by the US-led international coalition strengthened the opposition, which demanded political liberalization. In response to these demands, Mubarak allowed for the first time a multi-candidate presidential election in 2005. Even though the National Democratic Party continued to control electoral politics through fraud, intimidation, and vote buying, Muslim Brotherhood candidates were permitted to campaign openly. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood gained 20 percent of the seats in the parliament.[53]

The Muslim Brotherhood's electoral success alarmed the regime, and it responded with a series of repressive measures. Local elections that were to be held in 2006 were postponed, and the state of emergency was extended for two years. Further, a series of amendments was introduced that restricted political freedom, empowered the president to dissolve the parliament without a referendum, and curtailed the Muslim Brotherhood's efforts to establish a party.[54] In addition, the regime sought to weaken the Brotherhood through the arrest of its leaders and the confiscation of its financial assets, which led the movement to keep a low political profile in order not to be eliminated from political life.[55] Nevertheless, despite tight surveillance, the Brotherhood was able to establish and strengthen its social network.[56] It became a religious political movement concerned with "the Islamisation of Egypt's political and cultural institutions and the promotion of sharia as the basis for legislation."[57]

Still, due to its fear of regime retribution, the Brotherhood did not support the call by Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, for a boycott of the 2010 parliamentary elections, and it refused to voice its opposition to the promotion of Mubarak's son, Gamal, as a potential president in 2011.[58] When the Arab Spring spread to Egypt, millions of people, alienated by political repression and neoliberal policies implemented in the 1990s, poured into the streets.[59] Amid these protests, Mubarak attempted to appease the protesters in a televised speech, informing viewers that he delegated some of his powers to the vice president. However,

[52] The Muslim Brotherhood expanded its support base especially after World War II. The British influence, widespread corruption and poverty all contributed to the Brotherhood's increasing popularity. The Brotherhood dropped violent methods in the 1970s and focused more on the provision of social services. For further information, see Gilbert Achcar, *Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Zachary Laub, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," Council on Foreign Relations, *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 15, 2019, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/egypts-muslim-brotherhood.

[53] Paciello, 'Egypt: Changes and Challenges of Political Transition'.

[54] Denis Sullivan, "Will Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Run in 2010?," *Carnegie Endowment*, May 5, 2009, https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/23057; Nathan Brown, Michelle Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments," *Carnegie Endowment*, March 23, 2007, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/egypt_constitution_webcommentary01.pdf.

[55] Daniela Pioppi, "Is There an Islamist Alternative in Egypt?," *IAI Working Papers*, February 2011, https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiwp1103.pdf, 3; Jennifer Wilmot, "A Commitment to Politics: The Trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood during Egypt's 2011–13 Political Opening," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2015): 383-4.

[56] The Muslim Brotherhood offered comfort to people who were alineated by the Mubarak regime's neoliberal policies. See Achcar, The People Want, 213.

[57] Gilbert Achcar, "The Muslim Brothers in Egypt's 'Orderly Transition,'" *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2011, https://mondediplo.com/2011/03/06muslimbrothers.

[58] Pioppi, "Is There an Islamist Alternative in Egypt?," 10-1.

[59] Maha Abdelrahman, "In Struggle, Divided We Stand," in *Egypt's Long Revolution: Protest Movements and Uprisings* (London: Routledge, 2014).

against the backdrop of expectations that he would resign, his announcement that he would remain in power until the next elections ignited further popular anger.

While during the protests in Tunisia the United States gave explicit support to the protesters only after the fall of the regime, it adopted an unequivocal position in Egypt. President Barack Obama called for an orderly transition, emphasizing support for democracy and universal rights in Egypt, even though Mubarak was a close ally.[60] The administration also recommended the Egyptian military not use violence against civilians.[61] Indeed, the sidelining of the military in the late years of Mubarak's rule was instrumental in the president's overthrow.[62] Following the refusal of the military to use force against the protesters, Mubarak stepped down on February 11, 2011.[63]

While before this the Muslim Brotherhood had participated in elections only through independent candidates, after Mubarak's ouster it established an official party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). The fragmented and weakened nature of other opposition forces played into the Brotherhood's hands.[64] In parliamentary elections held between November 2011 and January 2012, the FJP gained 235 seats by receiving 47.2 percent of the votes; the Salafist Al-Nour Party came in second with 24.3 percent.[65] In the 2012 presidential elections, Mohamed Morsi, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Ahmad Shafik (who served as prime minister under the Mubarak regime) won the first round. With 51 percent of the votes in the second round, Morsi became Egypt's first democratically elected president.

Following negotiations between Islamists and non-Islamists, the Constituent Assembly was established in June 2012. Nonetheless, in September, non-Islamists boycotted the assembly, accusing Morsi of dominating the writing of the constitution, following an Islamist agenda, and ignoring the rights of women, young people, and minorities.[66] In November 2012, Morsi issued decrees that granted himself and the upper chamber of parliament (in which Islamists held the majority) immunity for the constitution-drafting process and also prevented the courts from dissolving the assembly.[67] These moves angered the key players from the opposition; ElBaradei and

[60] Dan Robinson, "Obama Tells Mubarak that Transition 'Must Begin Now," *VOA News*, January 31, 2011, https://www.voanews.com/a/obama-tells-mubarak-that-transition-must-begin-now-115068399/134370.html; See also Haas, *The United States and the Arab Spring*.

[61] Jeremy Pressman, "Same Old Story? Obama and the Arab Uprisings," in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013): 223.

[62] From the 1990s onwards, Mubarak started to prioritize and privilege his internal security over the military which resulted in the shrinking of the military's budget. Mubarak's neoliberal reforms eroded the military's economic power. Mass privileges given to the new business elite by Gamal Mubarak (Hosni Mubarak's son) also contributed to the resentment of the military. See Stephen Gotowicki, *The Role of the Egyptian Military in Domestic Society* (Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office Publications, 1997); Bellin, 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East'.

[63] Michael Makara, "Coup-Proofing, Military Defection, and the Arab Spring," *Democracy and Society* 9, no. 4 (2013): 345.

[64] Achcar, The People Want, 214.

[65] Marwa Awad, "Egypt Army Gets Temporary Power to Arrest Civilians," *Reuters*, December 10, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-politics-army/egypt-army-gets-temporary-power-to-arrest-civilians-idUSBRE8B90RU20121210.

[66] Mohammad Tabaar, "Assessing (In)security after the Arab Spring: The Case of Egypt," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46, no. 4 (2013): 727; David Kirkpatrick, "Opponents of Egypt's Leader Call for Boycott of Charter Vote," *New York Times*, December 12, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/10/world/middleeast/egypt-mohamed-morsi-protests.html.

[67] "Egypt's President Grants Himself Far-Reaching Powers," *The Guardian*, November 22, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/22/egypt-president-far-reaching-powers; Max Fisher, "Egypt's Constitutional Crisis, Explained as a Simple Timeline," *Washington Post*, December 6, 2012.

supporters of the Mubarak regime demanded cancellation of the decrees.[68] ElBaradei accused Morsi of usurping "all state powers and [appointing] himself Egypt's new pharaoh."[69] Morsi eventually relented but did not change the date of the constitutional referendum, even though no consensus was reached in the assembly on important issues.[70] Further, to ensure stability during the constitutional referendum scheduled for December 2012, he gave the military temporary power to arrest civilians.[71] In the referendum, 63.8 percent supported the proposed constitution while 36.2 percent voted against.[72]

In the new constitution, Islamic law remained the main source of legislation, and al-Azhar, the highest authority of Sunni Islam, was given consultative powers on such legal matters. Even though the new constitution was approved by a majority, the low turnout of 33 percent reveals the lack of consensus.[73] A month later, Morsi declared a state of emergency to restore order.[74] The private media, mostly owned by supporters of the Mubarak regime, capitalized on the controversial character of the constitution-drafting process to further stigmatize Morsi.[75]

In addition to the constitution-drafting process, Egypt was further aggravated by economic and financial problems.[76] In April 2013, a campaign was launched to seek the removal of Morsi, and 15 million signatures were collected in a few months.[77] In July, mass protests shook the country, resulting in the resignation of four ministers. The protesters demanded Morsi's resignation, accusing him of prioritizing his interests over those of Egypt.[78] The military warned Morsi that the people's demands should be taken into consideration and gave him two days to end the crisis, underlining that if it went on, officers would impose their road map; Morsi ignored these warnings.[79] In response, the military suspended the constitution, overthrew the president, and called for early elections.[80] These actions stirred massive protests.[81] After nearly 1,000 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood were murdered by the security forces in August 2013 in an event known as

[68] Nicola Pratt and Dina Rezk, "Securitizing the Muslim Brotherhood: State violence and Authoritarianism in Egypt after the Arab Spring," *Security Dialogue* 50, no. 3 (2019), DOI: 10.1177/0967010619830043, 7.

[69] Peter Beaumont, "Mohamed Morsi Bars Court Challenges and Orders Hosni Mubarak Retrial," *The Guardian*, November 22, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/22/mohamed-morsi-mubarak-retrial-egypt.

[70] Pratt and Rezk, "Securitizing the Muslim Brotherhood," 7.

[71] Awad, "Egypt Army Gets Temporary Power to Arrest Civilians."

[72] "Egypt's Islamist Parties Win Elections to Parliament," *BBC News*, January 21, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16665748.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Lucia Ardovini, and Simon Mabon, "Egypt's Unbreakable Curse: Tracing the State of Exception from Mubarak to Al Sisi," *Mediterranean Politics* 25, no. 4 (2019): 456-75, DOI number: 10.1080/13629395.2019.1582170,14.

[75] Pratt and Rezk, "Securitizing the Muslim Brotherhood," 7.

[76] Fisher, "Egypt's Constitutional Crisis, Explained as a Simple Timeline."

[77] Pratt and Rezk, "Securitizing the Muslim Brotherhood," 8.

[78] "Egypt Protesters Storm Muslim Brotherhood Headquarters," *BBC News*, July 1, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23125387.

[79] "Egyptian Armed Forces Chief Sets Ultimatum," *Reuters*, July 1, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-protests-army-text/egyptian-armed-forces-chief-sets-ultimatum-idUSBRE96014420130701.

[80] "Egypt Army Chief Gen Abdul Fattah al-Sisi Statement," *BBC News*, July 4, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23175529.

[81] Yasmine Saleh and Tom Finn, "More than 200 Dead after Egypt Forces Crush Protest Camps," *Reuters*, August 14 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-protests/more-than-200-dead-after-egypt-forces-crush-protest-camps-idUSBRE97C09A20130814.

the Raba Massacre, the military decreed a state of emergency.[82] The Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organization and its political party banned. Critical media outlets were closed.[83]

The head of the Egyptian military, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, became president by receiving 96.1 percent of votes in the 2014 presidential elections, whose legitimacy was questioned by international observers.[84] The constitution approved that year by 98 percent of Egyptians granted extrajudicial powers to the president.[85] An antiterrorism law, also passed in 2014, adopted a very general definition of terrorism that included disruption of public order.[86] Sisi's rule has featured arbitrary arrests of many, including Muslim Brotherhood members and supporters. Deaths in police custody have increased.[87] Military courts have tried thousands of civilians; criminal courts have given death sentences to hundreds.[88] In 2017, a state of emergency was declared, and Egypt ranked third in the world in death sentences.[89] Authorities have defended the repressive measures as central to the fight against terrorism.

In the 2018 presidential elections, Sisi was reelected with 98 percent of the vote (turnout was 47 percent). Many opposition candidates withdrew before the elections due to harassment and intimidation.[90] That same year, the parliament passed laws increasing governmental powers to restrict freedom of speech and the media.[91] The 2019 NGO law strictly curbed the power of civil-society actors. Recent years have witnessed an escalation of mass trials, unfair proceedings, and executions.[92] The 2020 parliamentary elections were not conducted in a free and fair manner, as there were widespread complaints of fraud, vote buying, and interference by security apparatuses.[93] People who criticized the election process were intimidated and detained. Sisi finally suspended the state of emergency in 2021 after four years. However, authorities continue to rely on emergency courts to prosecute peaceful activists and dissidents; as of 2021, Egypt was the world's third-worst jailer of journalists.[94]

In this way, Egypt's transition was never fulfilled. Sisi came to power, Egypt quickly spiraled back to authoritarianism, and human rights violations increased. Currently, there is no meaningful political opposition in the country. Critiquing the government results in criminal prosecution and imprisonment. Civil liberties, including press freedom and freedom of assembly,

[82] Ardovini and Mabon 'Egypt's Unbreakable Curse, 15.

[83] "Freedom in the World 2022: Egypt," Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2022.

[84] Patrick Kingsley, "Abdel Fatah al-Sisi Won 96.1% of Vote in Egypt Presidential Election, Say Officials," *The Guardian*, June 3, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/03/abdel-fatah-al-sisi-presidential-election-vote-egypt.

[85] Ardovini and Mabon, "Egypt's Unbreakable Curse," 10.

[86] Ryan Suto, "Egypt's New Terrorism Law," *Atlantic Council*, December 12, 2014, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/egypt-s-new-terrorism-law.

[87] "Egypt's Political Prisoners," *Human Rights Watch*, March 6, 2015, https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/06/egypts-political-prisoners.

[88] "Egypt: Events of 2018," https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/egypt.

[89] Ibid.

[90] John Davison and Ahmed Tolba, "Egypt's Sisi Wins 97 Percent in Election with No Real Opposition," *Reuters*, April 2, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-election-result/egypts-sisi-wins-97-percent-in-election-with-no-real-opposition-idUSKCN1H916A.

[91] "Egypt: Events of 2018,"Human Rights Watch.

[92] "Egypt: Events of 2021," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/egypt.

[93] "Freedom in the World 2022: Egypt," Freedom House.

[94] Ibid.; "Number of Journalists behind Bars Reaches Global High," Committee to Protect Journalists, December 9, 2021, https://cpj.org/reports/2021/12/number-of-journalists-behind-bars-reaches-global-high/.

are severely limited. Security forces engage in rampant abuses. Corruption is prevalent in all levels of government. Transparency of government spending and operations is almost nonexistent.[95]

LIBYA'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

After rising to power through a nonviolent coup against King Idris in 1969, Muammar Qadhafi ruled Libya for decades with utmost oppression. He established an arbitrary political system with weak state institutions, abolished all political parties, and eliminated his opponents.[96] When Libya witnessed protests a few days after Mubarak's removal, Qadhafi showed no sign of backing down. He threatened to hunt down the protesters and promised to "fight on to the last drop of [his] blood."[97] He ignored the road map by the Arab League that called for a ceasefire, the protection of civilians, and a dialogue between the government and rebel forces. As the protests turned more violent, the United States warned that civil war could erupt if Qadhafi remained in power.[98]

Regime violence against civilians did prompt some defections from the military, but unlike in Tunisia and Egypt, the Libyan army (especially elite military units) stood on the side of Qadhafi.[99] As the massacre of civilians loomed, the United States, Britain, and France sought to intervene by invoking the responsibility to protect.[100] Despite the abstention of China and Russia, the UN Security Council authorized a no-fly zone and "all necessary measures to protect civilians in Libya."[101] In March 2011, NATO started to bomb the positions of the Libyan military and imposed a naval blockade to thwart the smuggling of weapons.[102] Turkey participated in the operation by sending navy ships and a submarine in support of the enforcement of an arms embargo in the Mediterranean Sea. Qatar also took part by sending air forces and hundreds of troops to support anti-regime elements.[103] A few months later, rebel forces captured Tripoli and killed Qadhafi.

The National Transitional Council (NTC), a loose political organization created by the protesters during the revolution, became a de facto government of Libya between 2011 and 2012.[104] Even though the NTC was criticized for allowing participation by supporters of the previous

[95] "Freedom in the World 2022: Egypt," Freedom House.

[96] Ibrahim Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 21.

[97] Kareem Fahim, and David Kirkpatrick, "Gaddafi's Grip on the Capital Tightens as Revolt Grows," *New York Times*, February 23, 2011 http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/23/world/africa/23libya.html?pagewanted=all.

[98] Maria Golovina, "U.S. Warns of Civil War in Libya Unless Gaddafi Goes," *Reuters*, March 1, 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-protests/u-s-warns-of-civil-war-in-libya-unless-gaddafi-goes-idUSTRE71G0A620110301.

[99] Mehran Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 98. See also Bill Taylor, *Military Responses to the Arab Uprisings and the Future of Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East: Analysis from Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[100] Horace Campbell, *Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya: Lessons for Africa in the Forging of the African Unity* (New York: Monthly Review, 2013), 18.

[101] UN Security Council Resolution 1973, March 17, 2011.

[102] Mark L. Haas, The United States and the Arab Spring: Threats and the Opportunities in a Revolutionary Era (New York, Routledge, 2018), 8.

[103] Ian Black, "Qatar Admits Sending Hundreds of Troops to Support Libya Rebels," *The Guardian*, October 26, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/26/qatar-troops-libya-rebels-support

[104] Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*, 153.

regime who switched sides during the revolution, it was considered a legitimate authority by the international community and given political support by the Arab League. In September 2011, it was granted a seat in the UN General Assembly.[105] To facilitate a peaceful transition, the NTC established the Fact-Finding and Reconciliation Commission and the Ministry for the Affairs of the Families of the Martyrs and Missing Persons.[106]

In popular elections held in July 2012, the General National Congress (GNC) came to power by gaining 200 seats in the parliament. That 38 percent of the registered voters boycotted the elections illustrates the lack of political consensus.[107] Indeed, tribal groups that favored a federal system protested the electoral success of the GNC.[108] The GNC seemed to take steps toward national reconciliation by taking into account the recommendations made by the United Nations and Libya's fact-finding commission during the drafting process of the transitional justice law. However, the law was never implemented.[109] After the militants put pressure on parliament to prevent former officials from seeking office, the Political Isolation Law was adopted in 2013.[110] Rather than engaging in national reconciliation, the GNC targeted the supporters of the old regime.[111]

Against the backdrop of a security vacuum in the aftermath of Qadhafi's overthrow, local governments relied on militias for the provision of security, resulting in the further weakening of the central authority. To bring the militias under state control, the Libyan Shield Forces were created in 2012. In addition, the Warrior Affairs Commission was established to persuade militias to disarm by offering them alternative job options after vocational training. However, these efforts failed to centralize and monopolize political authority.

Rather than being disbanded, revolutionary militias were divided into different factions and fought each other for territorial control, making worse the already chaotic situation. These militias also conducted terrorist campaigns against civilians. Towns and tribes witnessed polarization, being labeled either as regime loyalists or anti-Qadhafi revolutionaries.[112] Black Africans faced discrimination, accused of being pro-Qadhafi.[113] Military councils were created and functioned independently from the government.[114]

Facing an electoral loss in 2012, Islamists turned to radicalization and violence. Long suppressed under Qadhafi's rule, they capitalized on the political and security vacuum by establishing safe havens and training camps throughout the country.[115] Libya also witnessed the flow of Islamic militants who fled repression in Algeria, Tunisia, and Mali.[116] In 2012, Islamist militants

[105] Anas A. Buera, "Libya's Arab Spring: Revolution against a 42-Year Dictatorship," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization* (New York: Routledge, 2015),111.

[106] Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*, 23.

[107] Buera, "Libya's Arab Spring: Revolution against a 42-Year Dictatorship,"112.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Fraihat, Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring, 23.

[110] Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Bar, "Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War," *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, February 2015, https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Gartenstein-Ross-Barr-Dignity-and-Dawn-Libyas-Escalating-Civil-War-February2015.pdf.

[111] Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*, 24.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Campbell, *Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya*, 19.

[114] Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*, 27.

[115] Gartenstein-Ross and Bar, "Dignity and Dawn."

[116] Ibid.

stormed the US consulate in Benghazi and killed US Ambassador Chris Stevens; and, one year later, the French consulate in Tripoli was attacked by Islamists.[117] Due to the aggravating security environment, the United States and the United Kingdom withdrew some of their diplomatic staff.[118]

In May 2014, Khalifa Haftar, a former general and militia commander who fought against Qadhafi's forces in 2011, launched a terror campaign against Islamist militias called Operation Dignity. The Haftar-led Libyan National Army attacked Ansar al-Sharia, a Salafi militia based in Benghazi. These attacks prompted Islamists to establish an anti-Haftar alliance called Libya Dawn. Egypt and the United Arab Emirates gave air support to Haftar's forces.[119]

After the June 2014 elections, a new parliament (the House of Representatives) replaced the GNC and declared Abdullah al-Thinni caretaker prime minister. The deteriorating security situation led the new parliament to move from Tripoli to Tobruk. Disappointed again with the 2014 election results, Islamists pronounced the new parliament unconstitutional.[120] The militants, with the support of former GNC members, created their government in Tripoli and appointed Omar al-Hassi prime minister, triggering a civil war between the pro-government nationalist militia and the Islamist Libya Dawn forces.[121]

The Tobruk government supported Haftar and requested military support from Egypt.[122] Fearing that civil war might turn into a regional conflict, Egypt and the UAE gave military support to Tobruk. Emirati planes launched airstrikes against Operation Dawn forces.[123] To put an end to the civil war, in September 2014, the United Nations initiated peace talks between the fighting parties. A month later, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Tripoli. He urged the warring parties to stop the fighting and underlined the importance of a strong parliament and government in Libya.[124]

In October 2014, militants who pledged allegiance to ISIS established an autonomous province in the eastern part of Libya and created a sharia court as well as Islamic police.[125] The same year, ISIS captured Derna, after which the Tobruk government launched airstrikes against ISIS strongholds. After the killing of 21 Coptic Egyptians by ISIS, Egypt launched counterstrikes against ISIS-controlled positions in Derna.[126] In 2015, ISIS captured Sirte and established

[117] Karim Mezran and Jason Pack, "Libyan Stability at Risk," *Foreign Policy*, May 2, 2013, http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/05/02/libyan-stability-at-risk.

[118] "US and UK Withdraw Libya Diplomatic Staff," *Al Jazeera*, May 11, 2013, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/05/201351183324644424.html.

[119] Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*, 32.

[120] Chris Stephen, "War in Libya- the Guardian Briefing," *The Guardian*, August 29, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/29/-sp-briefing-war-in-libya.

[121] "World Report 2015: Libya," *Human Rights Watch*, 2015, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/libya.

[122] M. Daleh, "Dawn of Libya Forces Impose Control on Tripoli," *Al-Monitor*, August 25, 2014.

[123] David Kirkpatrick and Eric Schmitt, "Arab Nations Strike in Libya, Surprising U.S.," *New York Times*, August 25, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/26/world/africa/egypt-and-united-arab-emirates-said-to-have-secretly-carried-out-libya-airstrikes.html.

[124] "UN Chief Calls for Peace in Libya during Surprise Visit," *BBC News*, October 11, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29583614.

[125] "World Report 2015: Libya," Human Rights Watch.

[126] Gartenstein-Ross and Bar, "Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War."

governing units in Benghazi and Sabratha. ISIS pursued a strategy of increasing its territorial control and disrupting Libya's oil trade.[127]

After UN-brokered peace talks, the Libyan Political Agreement was signed in Morocco in 2015. Following this deal, the Tobruk and Tripoli governments were unified and formed the Government of National Accord (GNA), consisting of a Council of Ministers headed by the prime minister, based in Tripoli. The House of Representatives was designated as the legislative authority of the state during the transition period.[128] Fayez al-Sarraj was named prime minister of the GNA.

Like its predecessors, the GNA struggled for legitimacy across Libya. Khalifa al-Ghwell, former prime minister of the GNC government, orchestrated an unsuccessful coup against the GNA in 2016, prompting fighting between the militants in Tripoli. Haftar also refused to accept the legitimacy of the GNA. Abdullah al-Thinni, another former prime minister of the GNC, established a parallel government in the eastern city of al-Bayda.[129] At the request of the GNA, the US military, by cooperating with local fighters affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, defeated ISIS in Sirte in 2016. ISIS subsequently switched to guerrilla warfare and continued its suicide bombings.[130] In April 2019, Haftar's Libyan National Army attacked Tripoli under the cloak of kicking Islamist militants out of the country. Haftar was supported by Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and France.[131] Al-Serraj blamed Haftar for attempting a coup.[132] In July, the GNA stormed the Al-Jufra airbase used by Haftar's forces.[133] Against the backdrop of UN-mediated talks, the GNA and the Libyan National Army signed a ceasefire agreement in 2020.[134]

Following UN-facilitated talks, in 2021, the new interim authority, the Government of National Unity (GNU) replaced the GNA. The GNU was given a mandate to conduct parliamentary and presidential elections and implement the 2020 ceasefire agreement.[135] A presidential election was scheduled to take place on December 24, but it failed to materialize due to the absence of consensus on the context and framework.[136]

The evidence demonstrates the failure to transition to democracy, with political turmoil and violence dominating the post-Qadhafi era. During the civil war, Libya's criminal justice system and public services became dysfunctional. The country witnessed the proliferation of weapons,

[127] Giorgio Cafireo, "Is ISIS the Real Winner of Hifter's Tripoli Offensive?," *Middle East Institute*, May 30, 2019, https://www.mei.edu/publications/isis-real-winner-hifters-tripoli-offensive.

[128] "Libyan Political Agreement," UNSMIL, 2015, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/Libyan%20Political%20Agreement%20-%20ENG%20.pdf.

[129] Nicola Missaglia, "Main Political and Military Players in Libya Today," in *Foreign Actors in Libyan Crisis*, (Milano: Ledi Publishing, 2017), 62.

[130] Cafireo, "Is ISIS the Real Winner of Hifter's Tripoli Offensive?"

[131] "Khalifa Haftar: The Libyan general with big ambitions," *BBC News*, April 8, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27492354.

[132] "Libya Conflict: French Missiles Found on Pro-haftar Base," *BBC News*, July 10, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48935242.

[133] "Libyan Government Agrees to UN-backed Eid al-Adha Ceasefire," *Al Jazeera*, August 10, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/libyan-government-agrees-backed-eid-al-adha-ceasefire-190810064643901.html.

[134] "UN Salutes New Libya Ceasefire Agreement That Points to 'A Better, Safer, and More Peaceful Future'," UN News, October 23, 2020, https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1076012.

[135] "Libya: Events of 2021," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/libya.

[136] Omar Hammady, "What Went Wrong with Libya's Failed Elections," Foreign Policy, February 18, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/18/libya-elections-2021-postponed/.

extremist groups, and criminal networks.[137] Civilians fled via the Mediterranean Sea, resulting in more than a thousand deaths (though some of these were people fleeing other countries and transiting through Libya en route to Europe).[138] Even though the 2020 ceasefire agreement required the departure of all foreign fighters, thousands from Syria, Russia, Chad, and Sudan remained.[139] While the civil war officially ended, Libya is still marked by political and military violence, human rights violations, unlawful killings, disappearances, and arbitrary detentions.[140]

TRANSITIONS COMPARED

The Arab Spring caught the international community off guard. After some hesitation, US authorities adopted an unequivocal position by siding with the people. In addition to the withdrawal of international and regional support, domestic dynamics played an important role in the overthrow of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Ben Ali and Mubarak acquiesced to step down as their militaries refused to side with their regimes to prevent further radicalization.[141] Unlike the Tunisian and Egyptian cases, the Libyan military supported the regime during the protests, and Qadhafi refused to step down. This resulted in violent clashes between the military and rebel forces, which eventually led to a NATO operation and his ouster. In sum, after the Arab Spring, the three countries went through completely different trajectories: a successful transition in Tunisia, one that was short-circuited in Egypt, and a civil war in Libya.

In Tunisia, the overthrow of Ben Ali was followed by a relatively peaceful process. The Ennahda Party's conciliatory approach played an important role. Since the 1980s, Ennahda had collaborated with parties from a wide range of the political spectrum. In 2005, the party declared its commitment to multiparty democracy and progressive rights for women, and six years later, it cooperated with two secularist parties to form a coalition.[142] Ennahda's compromising attitude can also be seen in its withdrawal from office and its ending its insistence on the inclusion of sharia in the constitution, despite the discontent of its members and of Islamists, to prevent polarization.[143] It also accepted defeat in the 2014 parliamentary elections, a model for other political parties in the Arab world.[144]

Ennahda president Rached Ghannouchi acknowledged the role of Ennahda's lack of experience in the mismanagement of the government: "It is true that our development was very fast.…We organized ourselves in about 9 months.… We went to power without real preparation. We committed many mistakes and so we need to rest and contemplate about our experience."[145] Lotfi Zeitoun, a senior Ennahda leader, similarly pointed out, "We entered government without any experience. There was also our lack of knowledge of the mechanism of the Tunisian

[137] "Freedom in the World: Libya 2021," Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/country/libya/freedom-world/2021.

[138] "Libya: Events of 2018," Human Rights Watch, 2019, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/libya.

[139] "Libya: Events of 2021," Human Rights Watch.

[140] "Freedom in the World: Libya 2022," Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/country/libya/freedom-world/2022

[141] Achcar and Matta, "Gilbert Achcar on the Arab Upheaval," 5.

[142] Christopher. Alexander, "Tunisia's Islamists I: Ennahda Withdraws," *Wilson Center*, December 18, 2013, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/tunisias-islamists-i-ennahda-withdraw; Alexander, "Tunisia: The Best Bet."

[143] Lang, "Tunisia's Struggle for Political Pluralism After Ennahda," 15.

[144] Hasan El-Hasan, *Killing the Arab Spring* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2019), 54.

[145] Lang, "Tunisia's Struggle for Political Pluralism After Ennahda,"12.

administration."[146] Another senior Ennahda leader, Abdel Meguid al-Naggar, emphasized compromise in the constitution-drafting process: "There are a number of actions that we could have taken outside of consensus. We could have passed a constitution on our own. We could have passed the number of pieces of legislation on our own…but we chose to engage other parties."[147] Ennahda member of parliament Ferida Labidi echoed this in stating, "We had a constitution ready…but we decided not to push it through with our majority.…We did not try to force our will."[148] In addition to this spirit of compromise, the emergence of a strong civil society committed to democracy building laid the groundwork for a successful transition. Tunisia's homogenous population, which limited the eruption of sectarian or tribal conflicts, and the weakness of the military, which prevented it from playing a significant role in the political process, can be seen as factors.[149]

Why did Egypt fail to undergo such a smooth transition? Egypt and Tunisia share similarities in their republican systems, socioeconomic inequalities, the toppling of the dictators in a relatively short time, and the militaries' withdrawing support for the regimes.[150] The countries' divergent transitions are mainly linked to their ideological dynamics and civil-military relations.

Differing from Tunisia, Egypt is characterized by deep ideological divisions between secularists and Islamists, and it has a strong military tradition. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood's support for a political role for Islam stands in sharp contrast to the secularist isolation of religion from politics espoused by Ennahda. The Brotherhood's supreme guide, Mustafa Mashhur, has said, "We accept the concept of pluralism for the time being; however, when we will have Islamic rule we might then reject this concept or accept it."[151] In another speech, he explicitly announced the Brotherhood's intention to establish an Islamic state, a position also held by the Brotherhood's former leader and guide, Mamoun al-Hudeibi.[152] Mashhur also underlined that the Brotherhood was against Egypt's signing of the Universal Charter of Human Rights.[153] In its 2004 political platform, the Brotherhood declared, "Our mission is to implement a comprehensive reform to uphold God's law in secular as well as religious matters.…Our only hope, if we wish to achieve any type of progress, is to adhere to our religion, as we used to, and to apply the Sharia."[154]

Ennahda's moderate Islamism, coupled with its history of collaboration with political parties from a wide range of the political spectrum, created permissive conditions for its coalition building with the secular parties and its collaboration with them during the constitution-writing process. It also stopped insisting on the inclusion of sharia in the constitution. By contrast, the strict Islamist orientation of the Muslim Brotherhood prevented such cooperation.

[146] Ibid, 11.

[147] Ibid, 9.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Grewal, "Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads,"1.

[150] M.K. Al-Sayyid, "The Divergent Trajectories of Arab Dignity Revolts: Egypt and Tunisia," in *Re-envisaging West Asia: Looking Beyond the Arab Uprisings*, (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2016), 188–91.

[151] Magdi Khalil, "Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Political Power: Would Democracy Survive?," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2006): 48.

[152] Alaa A. Arafat, *The Mubarak Leadership and Future of Democracy in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 177; Khalil, "Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Political Power," 44-52.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid, 46.

Qatar's financial aid to the Brotherhood and Al Jazeera's support, coupled with the wide backing of the middle class, added to the assertiveness of the Brotherhood.[155] But Morsi's attempts to grant himself more power and the growing polarization of the country resulted in his loss of potential allies and opened the door for the 2013 coup.[156]

Another important difference between Tunisia and Egypt is the role of the military. Under Ben Ali, the military was rendered deliberately weak; in Egypt, however, the military is the most powerful institution. All Egyptian presidents except Morsi had military backgrounds. The power of the military increased under Mubarak, with former officers holding crucial positions in the government, bureaucracy, the media, and the private sector.[157] Indeed, oversight of the military was prevented by law. Even though the military lost its privileged status in the late years of Mubarak's rule, it did not drop its political aspirations. And from Mubarak's ouster until the November 2011 elections, the military was in charge of the country under a provisional constitution.[158]

In post-revolutionary Egypt, the Brotherhood could not turn its electoral success into political success to steer the democratization process, not only because of its tenacious attitude but also due to the military's political ambitions. From the beginning, the military opposed Morsi's efforts to reorient the country in a civilian direction.[159] Morsi's failure to reach a consensus with other political actors played into officers' hands. The polarization between Islamists and non-Islamists led the military to justify intervention under the guise of restoring public order.[160] In this way, the Muslim Brotherhood's ineptitude, Morsi's uncalculated political maneuvers, the power and aspirations of the military, and the absence of a vibrant civil society all contributed to the end of the democratic transition. It should also be noted that Egyptian society's relative homogeneity in religious, ethnic, and sectarian terms, and the strength of state institutions, prevented it from sinking into civil war.[161]

While Tunisia and Egypt had different transitions, the political institutions of the previous regimes remained intact. This stands in sharp contrast to Libya, where the state apparatuses of the Qadhafi era were dismantled due to the civil war.[162] During the Qadhafi era, all state institutions, including the military, were divided along tribal and religious lines. In addition to the regular army, there were multiple security forces established to protect Qadhafi and prevent the emergence of an internal threat to his authority.[163] Along with suppressing political and civil liberties, Qadhafi deliberately prevented the establishment of stable institutions.[164]

[155] Gilbert Achcar, *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 66.

[156] Gillian Kennedy, *From Independence to Revolution: Egypt's Islamists and the Contest for Power*, (London: Hurst Publishers, 2017), 184-6.

[157] Nathan Brown and Amr Hamzawy, "The Role of Egypt's Armed Forces: A Military Empire," Italian Institute for International Political Studies, September 24, 2020, https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/role-egypts-armed-forces-military-empire-27403

[158] Fisher, "Egypt's Constitutional Crisis."

[159] Wilmot, "A Commitment to Politics," 391.

[160] Ibid, 394.

[161] Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, 5.

[162] Achcar, *The People Want*,4.

[163] Lutterbeck, "Arab Uprisings, Armed Forces, and Civil-Military Relations," 39.

[164] Achcar, *Morbid Symptoms*, 25.

The weakness of state institutions led to the strengthening of tribal and familial ties, resulting in the fracture of Libyan society.[165] Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, Libya had "no system of political alliances, a network of economic associations, or national organizations of any kind."[166] Institutional dysfunction, the main characteristic of the Qadhafi era, continued in post-revolutionary Libya. While the military was deliberately weakened under Qadhafi's rule, NATO intervention led to its disintegration.[167] The weak state institutions, coupled with the lack of national identity, prevented the establishment of an effective political authority in post-revolutionary Libya and created a permissive environment for the civil war.

CONCLUSION

The pre-2011 Arab world was characterized by patrimonialism, poverty, inequality, and precarity.[168] The Arab Spring protests embodied the people's rage, disillusionment, and despair regarding pervasive economic and social problems and the stifling of people's demands through repression, intimidation, and sham elections by long-lasting regimes. Nonetheless, even with the disposal of the entrenched dictators, state-society relations have continued to be conflictual.[169]

In Tunisia and Egypt, Islamist parties, long suppressed under authoritarianism, came to power, but they lacked the political experience to manage their countries. Yet, Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood's decisions amid polarization played a critical role in the countries' divergent paths. While Ennahda's withdrawal from power ensured a smooth political transition, Morsi's insistence on granting himself more powers gave an opportunity for the military to take control of the country. While consensus politics thrived in Tunisia in its transitional period, Islamists and secularists in Egypt failed to find a common ground, which brought an end to the entire transitional process.[170]

Tunisia stands out as the most successful example of the post-Arab Spring period. Yet, Saied's power grab raises question marks with respect to the country's prospect of consolidating its democracy. While the country has entered into a period of uncertainty, it is early to assume that hopes have died. It is crucial to note that irrespective of its backsliding, democracy made major inroads in Tunisia, making it an outlier in the Arab world. Even though the country's prospects of returning to pluralistic democracy might look grim, in view of the Tunisia's strong secular tradition, vibrant civil society, and apolitical military, there is a chance that it could return to its revolutionary path.

Against the backdrop of weak state institutions and strong tribal identities, Libya descended into a civil war. In sharp contrast to Tunisia and Egypt, Islamists were defeated in Libya's 2012 elections. Islamists turned to militancy after this defeat. The political vacuum even led ISIS to establish an autonomous province in the country. The civil war that lasted from 2014 to 2020

[165] Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): 6.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, 97-8.

[168] Achcar, *Morbid Symptoms*, 25; Achcar, *The People Want*, 21; Achcar and Matta, "*Gilbert Achcar on the Arab Upheaval*," 2.

[169] Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*,1-7.

[170] Mohammad Affan, *Secularism Confronts Islamism Divergent Paths of Transitional Negotiations In* Egypt *And Tunisia* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 6.

brought the country to the brink of becoming a failed state. Even though the civil war ended with the 2020 ceasefire, Libya rests on a fragile peace with the serious risk that any incident could push the country back to chaos. Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, the democratization barely got off the ground.

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