



Going Political: Labor, Institutions and Democratic Unrest in North Africa

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GOING POLITICAL?: LABOR, INSTITUTIONS, AND DEMOCRATIC UNREST IN NORTH AFRICA

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED
BY
ASHLEY ANDERSON
TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE SUBJECT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Going Political: Labor, Institutions and Democratic Unrest in North Africa

Abstract

Since the industrial revolution first united workers and politics, union activism has been a key driver of not only economic progress but also of political change. Where unions have engaged in significant political mobilization, their activism has been critical to the success of anti-authoritarian protests — as cases like South Africa, Poland, South Korea, Brazil and most recently, Tunisia, attest. Where they have remained on the sidelines, however, anti-regime opposition has often been weaker and less successful.

What explains variation in labor movements' decisions to engage in politically-motivated protest within authoritarian regimes? Drawing upon evidence from the Middle East/North Africa, my dissertation attempts to explain this puzzling heterogeneity from an institutional perspective. Challenging the assumption that labor opposition is contingent upon the material benefits offered to trade unions, I highlight the impact that authoritarian institutions, particularly those which structure popular representation and contestation in the regime, have on union decisions to express political demands. I argue that differences in unions' political mobilization stem from variation in autocrats' methods of labor incorporation. Where autocrats incorporate labor into representative institutions, coalition building between unions and established parties undermine political activism by coopting the interests of union elites and diminishing vertical accountability between union leaders and the rank- and-file. Conversely, where unions were alienated from formal institutions, the development of "outsider alliances" between union elites, marginalized parties, and rank-and-file members facilitate political mobilization by radicalizing labor agendas and promoting internal democracy within union structures.

To make the case, I engage in a comparative analysis of labor protest in Tunisia and Morocco since the inauguration of neoliberal reforms in the 1970s. Using original data on labor protest drawn from English, Arabic and French news sources, I show that despite facing common economic crises and organizational constraints, unions in these two regimes have adopted dramatically different modes of mobilization — from militant political opposition in Tunisia to limited economic protest in Morocco. In the empirical chapters of the dissertation, I trace this divergence to differences in unions' incorporation within workplace and political institutions, using novel data on legislative and union elections as evidence. Finally, drawing upon archival research and over 100 interviews conducted with labor militants, I supplement these empirical data with case study evidence, which illustrates the way in which formal institutions channel labor demands away from the street, making it less likely for unions to engage in militancy and politically oppose the regime.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
CDT	Democratic Confederation of Labor (<i>Confédération Démocratique du Travail</i>)
CGT	General Confederation of Labor (<i>Confédération Générale du Travail</i>)
CGTT	General Confederation of Tunisian Workers (<i>Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens</i>)
CNI	National Union Congress (<i>Congrès National Ittihadi</i>)
FDT	Democratic Federation of Labor (<i>Fédération Démocratique du Travail</i>)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OADP	Organization of Popular Democratic Action (<i>Organisation de l'Action Démocratique Populaire</i>)
ODT	Democratic Organization of Labor (<i>Organisation Démocratique du Travail</i>)
ONCF	National Office of Moroccan Railways (<i>Office National des Chemins de Fer du Maroc</i>)
PADS	Party of the Socialist Democratic Avant Garde (<i>Parti de l'Avant Garde Démocratique Socialiste</i>)
PI	Istiqlal Party (<i>Parti de l'Istiqlal</i>)
PJD	Justice and Development Party (<i>Parti du Justice et du Développement</i>)
PND	Neo-Destour Party (<i>Parti Neo-Destour</i>)
PPS	Party of Progress and Socialism (<i>Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme</i>)
PSD	Socialist Destour Party (<i>Parti Socialiste Destour</i>)
RCD	Constitutional Democratic Rally (<i>Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique</i>)
SAP	Structural adjustment plan
UD-CGT	Departmental Union of the General Confederation of Labor (<i>Union Départementale du Confédération Générale du Travail</i>)
UGAT	General Union of Tunisian Farmers (<i>Union Générale des Agriculteurs Tunisiens</i>)
UGSCM	General Union of Confederated Moroccan Syndicates (<i>Union Générale des Syndicats du Maroc</i>)
UGTM	General Union of Moroccan Workers (<i>Union Générale des Travailleurs Marocaines</i>)
UGTT	General Union of Tunisian Labor (<i>Union Générale Tunisien du Travail</i>)
UMT	Moroccan Union of Labor (<i>Union Marocaine du Travail</i>)
UNTM	National Union of Moroccan Workers (<i>Union Nationale des Travailleurs Marocaines</i>)
UNFP	National Union of Popular Forces (<i>Union Nationale des Forces Populaires</i>)
USFP	Socialist Union of Popular Forces (<i>Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires</i>)
USTT	
UNTT	National Union of Tunisian Workers (<i>Union National des Travailleurs Tunisiens</i>)

UTAC	Tunisian Union of Artisanry and Commerce (<i>Union Tunisienne de l'Artisanat et du Commerce</i>)
UTICA	Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce, and Artisanry (<i>Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce, et de l'Artisanat</i>)
UTT	Tunisian Union of Labor (<i>Union Tunisien du Travail</i>)

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PART I: FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“Let the workers organize. Let the toilers assemble. Let their crystallized voice proclaim their injustices and demand their privileges”

- John L. Lewis

By most accounts, the beginning of 2011 was a watershed moment in the history of Tunisian labor politics. That year, against a backdrop of widespread unemployment, the autocratic government of President Zine Abedine Ben Ali found itself under intense pressure from economic demonstrations led by a coalition of students, lawyers, and workers in the nation’s interior. To make matters worse, facing pressure from its local and regional branches, the nation’s largest labor confederation, the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) abandoned its initial reluctance to join the demonstrations and issued a statement of solidarity with the protesters, effectively ending its long-held policy of collaboration with the government. Over the course of early January, union offices played a kingmaker role in expanding the scope and reach of the protest movement, as organized local strikes spread quickly from rural cities in the interior to major urban centers like Sousse, Sfax, and Tunis. By January 14th, when the UGTT issued a two-hour, general strike against the regime, what began as a series of local labor protests against poor economic conditions had transformed into a national movement opposing authoritarian rule, with workers across the country brandishing protest banners with the slogan, “Ben Ali Out!”. Later that day, after nearly a month of mass unrest and civil disobedience, labor opposition culminated in a surprising victory as Ben Ali’s departure and transfer of power marked the end of nearly 60 years of dictatorial rule.

Months later in Morocco, the national labor movement faced a strikingly similar situation. As in Tunisia, Moroccan workers confronted a serious set of economic challenges — following a decade of neoliberal reforms and public sector cuts, unemployment had reached an all time high,

inflation was steadily rising, and the minimum wage had remained stagnant for nearly three years. Yet despite substantial grievances, labor protest in Morocco remained relatively mild. Although the nation's five major labor unions united in a call for a joint demonstration in favor of higher wages on International Labour Day, by May 1st a mere 15,000 workers appeared in Casablanca's main square, with only two unions — the *Union Marocain du Travail* (UMT) and the *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (CDT)— explicitly supporting wage demands. Moreover, in stark contrast to Tunisia, the goals of labor demonstrations remained almost exclusively economic. Indeed, despite being joined by members of the February 20th movement, who advocated demands for radical constitutional reforms, most union leaders made it a point to distinguish their protest aims as expressly apolitical. In the words of one union activist: “We are marching because we want to push for a social agenda that has nothing to do with the political agenda of the February 20th movement” (*Reuters* 2011).

These contrasting vignettes pose a significant puzzle for the field of contentious politics: despite facing similar social and economic challenges, trajectories of labor opposition within these circumstances was varied. While the Tunisian labor movement successfully translated economic demands into a political movement for regime change and democracy, Moroccan workers ineffectually lobbied for limited economic concessions. Indeed, these anecdotes are indicative of broader pattern dissemblance between Tunisian and Moroccan unions — while the UGTT is consistently viewed as one of the most militant and politically combative labor federations in the Middle East, Moroccan unions are routinely described as weak, moderate, and “*khubziste*”, reflecting their narrow focus on issues of economic concern (Menouni 1979; Benhilal 1984; Catusse 2001). Ultimately, such divergent patterns of labor protest represent a paradox which begs the following question: “Why, in authoritarian regimes, do some unions choose to engage in politically motivated protests while others do not?”

Astounded by the role that labor mobilization played in crippling authoritarian regimes in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia during the Third Wave, scholars have researched and wrote

much about unions' political behavior in authoritarian regimes. However, these studies provide very limited accounts of labor mobilization which focus primarily on unions' contribution to anti-regime opposition in single cases, thus obscuring important cross-national variation. Further, much of the work on unions' political behavior has been regionally bounded to areas where labor mobilization was coincident with significant democratic transition, leaving labor behavior in more durable autocratic regimes relatively understudied and variation in the modes of labor protest underspecified.

In view of these deficiencies, the main goal of this dissertation is to explain the origins, development and consequences of variation in labor protest in one of the most obstinately autocratic regions of the world — North Africa. As the opening vignette suggests, the central question of this study is why Tunisian unions routinely engage in politicized and militant protest behavior while their Moroccan counterparts pursue limited economic agendas through moderate methods like negotiation and reform. What are the historical circumstances and political processes that produce such divergence? Further, how does this difference in protest aims and strategies affect processes of policy implementation and, more specifically, processes of political change? Finally, how does the Tunisia-Morocco comparison deepen our understanding of state-labor relations in authoritarian regimes, and of labor politics more broadly?

Although studies of contentious politics often overlook variation in labor's political protest behavior within authoritarian regimes, studying patterns of divergence in unions' political mobilization has considerable theoretical and practical importance. To begin, studying political protest among unions under authoritarian rule offers a theoretical advantage over current literature which suffers from an overwhelming bias towards investigations of union behavior in advanced democracies. While such studies offer important insights into the interests and activities of labor organizations, ultimately, they fail to capture the specific nature of challenges that unions must confront within authoritarian contexts. For example, while reasonable protections for political opponents may be uncritically assumed in democracies, the various restrictions placed on the free

exercise of dissent in authoritarian settings makes such opposition more costly, shifting unions' decision calculus in unique ways. In particular, the choice between launching oppositional protest and acquiescing to state control appears much more contingent in an authoritarian context. While oppositional protest may risk the arrest of union leaders, the loss of political favor, and state repression, compromise under state control can lead to the emasculation of the labor movement and the loss of potential gains in wages and workers' rights (Collier and Collier 1979). These tensions, often absent in democracies, complicate unions' decisions to engage in political protest and can dramatically affect patterns of labor opposition in authoritarian regimes. Therefore, a detailed examination of unions' political involvement under non-democratic rule is necessary to gain a better understanding of political labor mobilization and unions' protest patterns.

Additionally, whether lauded as the “key to labor revitalization”¹ or criticized as a gross abandonment of unions' primary function as a representative of workers' interests, unions' political mobilization has significant practical consequences. As one of the largest and most well-organized components of civil society, unions can critically impact governance decisions and regime stability. As evidenced by numerous cases from Brazil to South Africa, labor unions have been among the most powerful actors in contemporary regimes, and consequently, their political behaviors and alliances have had substantial impacts on regime outcomes. Particularly, in authoritarian contexts, “unions may serve... as campaigners to promote democracy within society, challenging authoritarian regimes and providing a mechanism for voicing a range of social concerns where formal political structures are moribund semi-functional” (Wood and Brewster 2007, 6). While this study does not assume that political engagement among unions is *necessarily* pro-democratic, it is clear that such mobilization is impactful and that the political behavior of unions can have significant consequences for regime survival. Thus, in light of the importance of unions, particularly in non-democracies, a theory that accounts for cross-country variation in unions' protest behavior is of paramount

¹ See Turner and Hurd 2001, Frege and Kelly 2003, and Suzuki 2012 for echoes of this sentiment.

significance, as it may aid scholars in identifying new sources of opposition within these politically closed regimes.

While scant research has been devoted to exploring variation in labor's political mobilization in non-democracies, several explanations have been offered to account for why unions might challenge authoritarian regimes. In general, these explanations converge on their emphasis on material incentives (or the lack thereof) in driving labor militancy— to the extent that we witness divergence in labor's engagement in political protest, we should expect these patterns to reflect variation in their wages or organizational rights, as only those unions who fail to benefit economically under the current system should be inclined to challenge their authoritarian benefactors.

Yet while it is undoubtedly true that declining material incentives provide an impetus for labor to engage in political opposition, the historical record is replete with cases where decreasing wages and high unemployment produced no change in labor mobilization or resulted in increased militancy without commensurate demands for changes in government policies or political leadership. In the Middle East in particular, patterns of labor mobilization display remarkable variation despite near universal declines in labor benefits following the introduction of neoliberal reforms. Indeed, a close examination of the conditions that characterize employment and labor organization in Tunisia and Morocco reveal that the two share more similarities than differences — workers in both economies face dismal employment prospects, low wages, and similar levels of associational and bargaining rights, yet unions in Tunisia are more prone to challenge authoritarian rule than their counterparts in Morocco. Therefore, materialist theories can only provide part of the labor mobilization story; ultimately, to fully account for cross-national patterns of divergence in political labor protest alternative explanations must be pursued.

Given this deficiency, this study offers one such explanation, which emphasizes the role that institutions, and particularly those that shape labor's coalitions within political actors and its

relationship with the state, play in influencing union decisions to engage in political opposition. As a starting point for analysis, I begin with the assertion that labor mobilization is an instrumental act — following in the tradition of early theories, I argue that union protest occurs when large numbers of workers in the same union (including union elites and rank-and-file members) share a set of common grievances and when members believe that the benefits to be gained from militancy will outweigh the costs and risks of joining the protest effort. Yet in a departure from extant work, I argue that these calculations are not exclusively determined by material interests, rather institutions play a crucial role in shaping workers' perceptions of their grievances and conditioning their predictions about the risks/costs of opposition. Particularly with regards to political protest, where the possibility of direct conflict with the regime means expected benefits are weighed against even higher costs and risks as well as perceived regime alternatives (Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006), the structure of current institutions may critically impact union decision-making, influencing both the way in which organized labor perceives its interests and the most efficacious means to address them. Thus, in line with a recent body of work emphasizing the *political* roots of labor behavior, I highlight how the political strategies adopted by authoritarian elites offer different institutional opportunities to organized labor, thereby shaping its willingness and capacity engage in oppositional militancy.

In developing this argument, I connect institutional legacies, political coalitions, and unions' internal organization to their ultimate modes of labor mobilization. At the foundation of my argument is the assertion that authoritarian's strategies for containing labor opposition critically affects unions' institutional environment, which, in turn, profoundly shapes the nature of their engagement with the authoritarian regime. In particular, I highlight how policies of labor incorporation or exclusion employed by dictators offer different channels for demand-making among unions, thereby impacting labor's preferences and capacities for future political mobilization. In conditions of exclusion, unions are denied access to formal institutions for representing their interests and are expected to develop as political outsiders, necessitating the use of non-institutional

avenues, such as “street mobilization” to levy their demands. By contrast, under inclusive regimes, labor is provided channels for interest articulation in the formal political system, helping them to develop political coalitions and work within formal institutions to satisfy their demands.

Once formed, these institutions shape the level of uncertainty that organized labor faces, and, consequently, union’s willingness and ability to mobilize for political opposition. A significant line of scholarship has shown that formal institutions can serve as important channels for governments to provide material benefits and social protections to workers, thereby reducing the likelihood of labor opposition. Yet even when institutions are defunct or cannot provide an adequate supply of benefits to all workers, they may still reduce labor’s uncertainty in two important ways which diminish union incentives to engage in political mobilization. First, formal institutions serve an informational purpose for organized labor— by participating in institutions unions can probe government intentions, levy their own demands, and exert (at least minimal) influence over the policy-making process. Although these institutions may not provide perfect information about the impact that planned policies will have on future welfare, by providing forums through which union members can learn about government’s plans, these structures facilitate negotiation between labor and the state, reducing the need for unions to engage in militant opposition to pursue labor demands. Second, the repeated interactions between unions and political elites that occur within institutions create coalitions within formal politics that reduce unions’ appetite for political militancy. Here, the development of coalitions between union and partisan elites is critical. To the extent that unions are linked to regime friendly parties, we should expect these linkages to create bonds between labor and the state, thus reducing union willingness to challenge the status quo. Yet even when unions are linked to tolerated opposition parties, we should expect partisan elites to constrain labor behavior — though they may promote the politicization of union demands, ultimately they will push organized labor to pursue these demands in a non-revolutionary manner, so as to preserve partisans’ chances of accessing political power in the future.

Yet institutions do not only critically impact unions' relationships with other political actors, they also influence the coalitions of interests that develop within the union itself. Indeed, labor's external alliances, conditioned by its institutional incorporation, produce patterned differences in unions' internal organization which, in turn, shapes their capacity to mobilize. In particular, where unions develop alliances with political parties, allowing union elites to rely on these partisan linkages to acquire selective benefits and shore up their own positions at the expense of the rank-and-file, these leaders will be more reluctant to join with less privileged workers in mobilizing for militant opposition. Although marginalized workers may come to see their interests in opposition to the current regime and express their grievances in wider socio-political terms, ultimately union elites face no incentives to articulate such broad political messages and will work to restrain activism at the lower levels to protect their own security. Thus, institutions serve to diminish union's capacity for political mobilization, creating divisions within the labor movement which impede the formation of a unified worker front against the regime.

By contrast, militant, politicized worker movements become more likely when the absence of institutional channels for dissent and negotiation generate high levels of insecurity for a broad range of labor interests. As Lipset highlighted years ago, radicalization and militancy emerge as a result of worker's heightened grievances given their alienation from the formal political process (Lipset 1983). As institutional outsiders, unions come to see their interests as distinct from, and in many cases, in opposition to the interests of the regime, leading organized labor to project a more radical vision of labor politics and forge alliances with other oppositional actors. Moreover, absent institutional means to promote its own welfare above others, union elites must rely on the support of their constituents to secure their positions and well-being. As a result, excluded unions are expected to develop more inclusive and democratic structures of internal organization, which link rank-and-file members to labor elites. This, in turn, helps to facilitate political mobilization by radicalizing labor agendas and enhancing solidarity within the labor movement.

These arguments are confirmed by the Tunisian and Moroccan experience. In Tunisia, authoritarian exclusion and the subsequent lack of institutional channels to express demands produced militant and politicized unions. In the post-independence era, early political challenges and the desire for an alliance between the state and Tunisian capitalists, led then-president Bourguiba to pursue twin strategies of repression and exclusion to contain both labor and political opposition. Though repressive periods were occasionally punctuated by brief attempts at conciliation — resulting in a “checkered alliance” between labor and the state — government attempts throughout the 60s and 70s to depoliticize labor by reducing the UGTT's presence in both the state and party bureaucracy alienated workers from the state, creating a new class of union members with little exposure to resolving labor demands through institutional channels and, consequently, a more radical and antagonistic approach to labor opposition. This was particularly evident at the elite level of union bureaucracy; forced from positions of privilege within the state and party apparatus, union leaders became increasingly militant, joining with rank-and-file workers in their actions against the state. Further, the closure of institutional channels to political opponents drove excluded groups to seek refuge within union structures, forging an alliance between workers and oppositional groups. As a result, the Tunisian labor movement came to project a radical, politicized vision of labor politics, both in its demands and strategies for mobilization.

Even following the ouster of Bourguiba, and the inauguration of a program of political “*changement*” under Ben Ali, organized labor continued to exist as an institutional outsider. After a brief period of liberalization in which labor opposition was temporarily pacified, Ben Ali intensified the exclusionary practices of his predecessor, banning all union candidates for legislative office and systematically removing union leaders from the central organs of the dominant party (*Rassemblement Constitutionnelle Démocratique*, RCD). Though some attempts were made to co-opt union hierarchy, ultimately these efforts were ad-hoc and limited, failing to produce a true “union elite” beholden to regime interests. Moreover, limited inclusion of opposition elites was complemented by harsh

repression of excluded groups, reinforcing ties between labor and opposition movements. Ultimately, these political practices reinforced the norm of militant mobilization within the labor movement, particularly within the lower bodies of the union and the rank-and-file. Although in specific instances rivalry between co-opted union elites and less privileged workers have scuppered efforts at political mobilization, more frequently militancy at the lower levels of union organization has been met with approval by union leaders, increasing the impact of political protests and making labor politics a highly confrontational process. As a result, the UGTT has emerged as the premier oppositional force in Tunisia and contributed significantly to the nation's continuing process of political liberalization.

The trajectory of labor politics in Morocco offers a contrasting narrative. As in Tunisia, post-independence competition for political power led King Mohammed V to adopt control strategies meant to minimize oppositional threats posed by the dominant party (Istiqlal) and its at times union affiliate (UMT) to consolidate his position as the chief political force in Morocco. Yet in contrast to Bourguiba, Mohammed the V selected an inclusionary, pluralistic strategy that sought to divide opposition elites while simultaneously incorporating them as political clients of the state. Throughout the early 1960s, King Mohammed and his hereditary successor Prince Hassan II, formally established Morocco as a “democratic, constitutional monarchy”, holding multiple rounds of competitive elections and establishing a bicameral Parliament in which opposition elites, professional associations, and trade unions could participate. With respect to both organized labor and the political opposition, monarchs upheld the principle of pluralistic competition, often intervening in cases of intra-union/party dissent to encourage the development of rival associations. While it cannot be overstated that these measures were explicitly designed not to produce a true democratic system in Morocco but rather as a means to maintain monarchical control, ultimately these tactics served to create a more open political environment, in which unions and opposition elites had access to institutional avenues for contestation.

Taken together, these dual strategies of inclusion and pluralism created opportunities for autocratic monarchs to link labor to the state, reducing its appetite and capacity for political militancy. On the one hand, the creation of mechanisms through which union members could designate labor representatives to serve in parliament created a cadre of union elites whose status (both financial and symbolic) came to depend upon state beneficence, thus lowering the likelihood that these groups would support calls for dramatic changes in the status quo. On the other, the existence of competitive elections at the municipal and national levels incentivized parties to form organic links with unions for political support. This, in turn, further divided union elites from their labor constituents — as union leaders could rely on partisan partners to bolster their financial positions and win prestigious political appointments, they had no need to adhere to the demands of popular masses or the rank-and-file which increasingly resorted to wildcat mobilization.

Indeed, it was only during periods of significant repression marked by the near exclusion of opposition parties from effective legislative competition in the late 1980s - early 1990s that union demands appeared even remotely political. During this period, partisan elites leveraged linkages with labor organizations to complement their own oppositional campaigns with strike activity, which took on an implicit political character. However this moment of labor opposition was ultimately short-lived; by the end of the decade labor unions once again returned to their typical pattern of divisive apolitical mobilization.

Indeed, as King Mohammed V acceded to power in the late 1990s, on the heels of the institution of a political policy of “*alternance*” which further incorporated opposition elites by giving them key political appointments in the executive government, the political militancy of the past became no more than a distant memory for organized labor. Despite multiple demands for opposition among popular movements and the rank-and-file, union leadership, induced into formal policies through increased opportunities for institutional participation, has preferred to pursue its interests through political maneuvering and negotiation. Although such strategies have been largely

ineffective at producing general benefits for the working-class, union elites have been successful at securing selective benefits for certain classes of workers, and in strengthening union presence in the major representative and consultative bodies of the state. Thus, labor politics in Morocco has been characterized by an increasing depoliticization of organized labor and a growing distance between unions and the working class.

Methods of Investigation: Analyses, Comparisons, and Process Tracing

In evaluating the theoretical claims made above, I rely on both quantitative and qualitative evidence combining statistical analysis of event-count data with case studies and interviews. However, the design of the study is explicitly not mixed-method; rather following the lessons of King and Powell, I place emphasis on using multiple sources of evidence instead of multiple methods. Thus, quantitative and qualitative analyses are both meant to serve a common purpose: to combine description and inference to derive an explanation for unions' political mobilization under the constraints of authoritarian rule. Variants of evidence used in this study then, are complementary — where quantitative evidence proves inadequate to elucidate a particular phenomenon qualitative evidence is used and vice-versa.

Quantitative evidence

The quantitative analyses presented in this dissertation are based upon an original dataset created for the purposes of this analysis, the Labor Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa Database (MENALC). A search for information on labor protest activities quickly revealed that extant data sources, collected by government agencies or previous scholarly efforts, suffered from several limitations that made them inadequate for the aims of this study. Widely publicized data from the International Labor Organization (ILO), for example, facilitate cross-country comparisons but provide only the number of strikes, strike participants, and hours lost, making them insufficiently

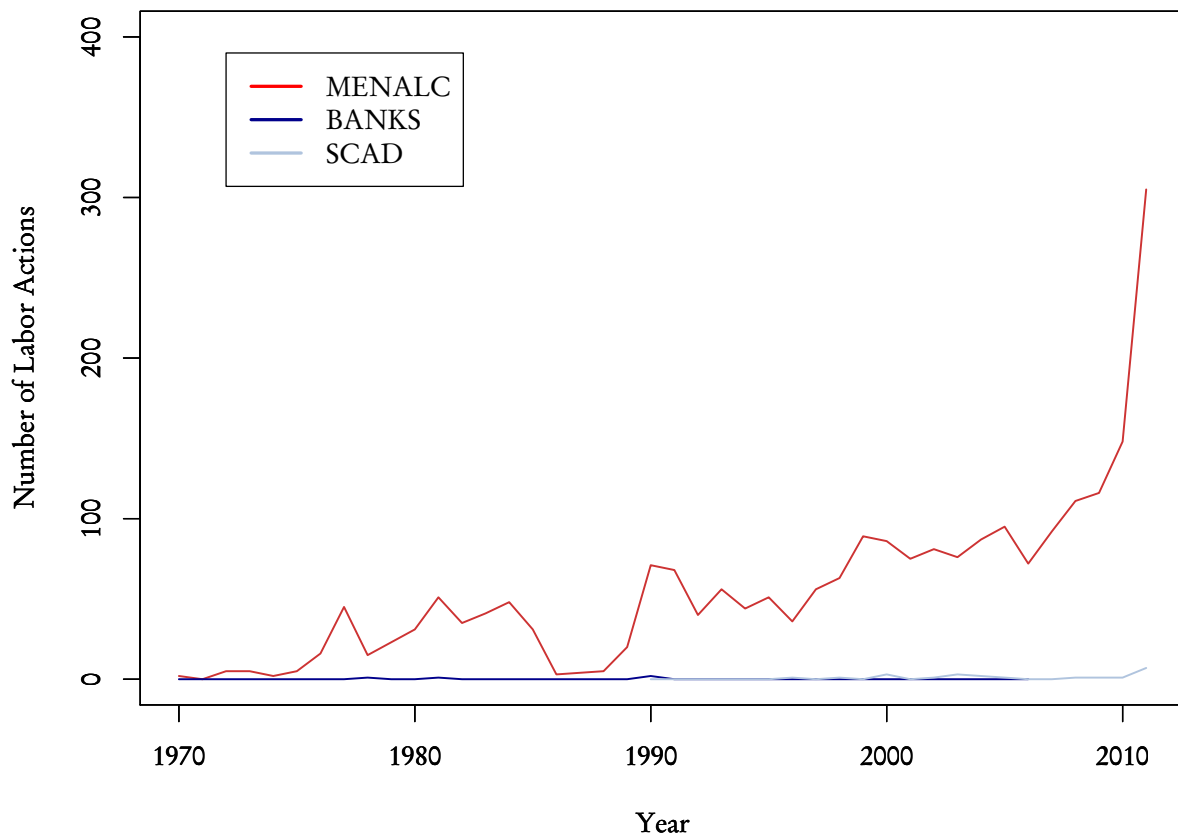
detailed to identify and study political protests as a separate analytical phenomenon². Additionally, previous scholarly data collection efforts include events from a limited number of sources³, resulting in an underestimation of protest, particularly in areas outside the developed West (Nam 2006). Thus, guided by recent research methods pioneered by Ron Francisco (Francisco 2006), the MENALC dataset contains event-based data on labor protest activity, drawn from a variety of international and regional news sources. Covering thirteen countries in the Middle East and North Africa, this dataset catalogs information on over 3,000 acts of labor protest that took place between 1970 and 2011. In addition to typical features of protest like duration and aggregate attendance figures, this dataset also contains specialized information on each protest action, allowing for the analysis of events on several dimensions: type of event (strike, sit-in, hunger strike etc), participants, targets, and most important, nature of demands made. Additionally, drawing from 184 international and regional sources, as well as seven local sources in Arabic and French⁴, MENALC is the most extensive database on labor protest in the Middle East to date. Significantly, unlike previous data collection efforts, it captures micro-data on protests that have typically gone unnoticed by the international press and thus remain absent from the main cross-national datasets covering the Middle East such as Banks' *Cross National Time Series* data and the *Social Conflict Analysis Database* (Figure 1.1). Appendix A provides a detailed description of the coding procedures and main sources of evidence used to compile the MENALC dataset.

² Nonetheless data from the ILO will be used in this study as a comparison point for the data collected, and to fill in gaps in the data caused by inadequate press coverage (to be discussed in more detail later).

³ The two most popular datasets covering labor protest in the MENA region, for example, Banks' Cross National Time Series (CNTS) and the Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD), make use of only one and two sources respectively — the *New York Times*, the *Associated Press* and *Agence France Presse* wire services.

⁴ The specific local sources used to extract protest events were, for Morocco, *Al-'Alam* (French: *L'Opinion*), *Al-Ittihad Al-Ichdiraki* (French: *Libération*), and *L'Economiste*. For Tunisia, the sources used were *Le Temps*, *Echaab*, and when available *Al-Badil*. Specific information on source materials, including coverage dates is available in Appendix A.

FIGURE 1.1: Comparison between labor protests collected in MENALC, CNTS, and SCAD



SOURCE: MENALC Database, Banks 2011, Saleyhan et al. 2013

The panel structure of the MENALC data enables both a cross-national and temporal analysis of labor protest in Tunisia and Morocco over a period of 41 years. However, despite the analytical benefits that detailed protest-event data provides, it is important to note that the MENALC data set does suffer from some biases. Like all data generated from media sources, the MENALC data are sensitive to biases endemic to the press, including under-reporting of small events, imprecise information, and, particularly in authoritarian countries, censorship. To ward against these biases, this author has made efforts to diversify the sources — both local and international — that comprise these data. In addition to government-run news sources, I also draw

upon opposition dailies and when available union press reports. However the data do contain a number of “missing” entries, particularly with regards to event duration and participation figures⁵, and in some periods contain missing entries for a series of months or years⁶. For this reason, at times, figures from the MENALC database are supplemented by statistics collected by national Labor Ministries or the ILO. Yet whenever possible, the most detailed data available from MENALC is used to assess differences in protest behavior.

Qualitative evidence

The main qualitative method used in this dissertation is a comparative case study. While case studies have been criticized for their lack of generalizability and inadequacy for hypothesis testing (Dogan and Pélassy 1990, 121), their use in this study is ideal because explaining the origins and development of specific protest behaviors requires nuanced process tracing, which is attainable only with a case study method. By investigating qualitative cases, I can track the evolution of historical, and possibly path-dependent factors which constrain union decision-making and gain specific insights into the processes which undergird union mobilization by tracing the emergence of behaviors through sequences of events. As with my quantitative analysis, the purpose of using a case study method is both *inferential* and *descriptive* — through this method I intend to uncover “whether and how a variable mattered to the outcome [rather] than how much it mattered” (George and Bennet 2005, 25).

As highlighted in the chapter’s introduction, the account of labor protest developed in this study builds upon a comparison of Tunisia and Morocco. Indeed, in the vast literature on North

⁵ For nearly 37% of cases, coders could not identify an accurate end date for protest. In these cases protests are coded as lasting one day in accordance with the coding procedures identified in the MENALC. Additionally, the vast majority of protests (83%) required some type of estimation on the number of participants. For these reasons, I calculate measures of labor militancy with event counts rather than the standard “working days lost” and, at times, supplement my data with figures available with national Labor Ministries or the ILO.

⁶ For example, both *Echaab* and *Libération* were subject to various years of government censorship that effectively inhibited my ability to record an accurate number of strikes. For these years, noted by an asterisk in all charts, I supplement findings from the MENALC data with general strike trends available from the ILO.

Africa, Tunisia and Morocco often team up as the most comparable pair — both share similar historical and cultural legacies and early labor developments are also common between the two. Historically, both countries experienced a significant period of French colonialism, ending in relatively brief struggles for independence that terminated on March 20 and March 2, 1956, respectively. Additionally, following independence, both countries established authoritarian regimes (albeit of different varieties) which mixed repression and material inducements to quiet opposition and eliminate potential competitors. Lastly, in the 1970's both countries experienced a significant financial downturn which led to efforts to reduce state expenditures through neoliberal reforms as well as the adoption of IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programs. Ultimately, the adoption of these reforms marked a crucial turning point in state-labor relations in both countries — forced to limit public sector budgets, autocrats in both countries had to retreat from their *étatist* roles in labor markets, leading to significant declines in wages and employment for the working class.

Labor movements in the two countries also share remarkably similar origins. In both countries, the native union movement emerged as a breakaway from the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), giving both unions a common leftist ideological orientation as well as nearly identical bureaucratic structures. Further, both union movements played a critical role in the Tunisian and Moroccan anti-colonial movements, imbuing both unions with a nationalist character and significant political legitimacy at the time of independence. Finally, more recently, both labor movements have faced significant organizational challenges which simultaneously foster opposition and complicate mobilization efforts. As previously mentioned, economic crises and reforms enacted in the 1970s and 80s have impacted labor particularly hard — in the face of declining budgets, workers have seen marked decreases in their purchasing power and employment prospects in the past two decades. While this has surely provided an impetus for militancy, it has simultaneously frustrated union efforts to organize to this end. Indeed, as a result of structural adjustment both Tunisian and Moroccan unions witnessed cutbacks in key sectors of union organization and a subsequent decline

in union membership. I argue that these twin developments make Tunisia and Morocco ideal comparanda for a study on labor politics under authoritarianism, underscoring the importance of an institutional rather than organizational or economic explanation for divergence in protest patterns.

Yet the cases compared in this study are not merely two countries. Although Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 are primarily framed as macro-level comparisons between Tunisia and Morocco, the latter three delve into subnational comparisons of Tunisian and Moroccan unions that highlight within-case variation at the federation and regional levels. Thus, the empirical examination is expanded to six cases permitting a closer analysis of the micro-level mechanisms that link political coalitions and internal democracy to modes of labor mobilizations in my macro-level country cases.

The comparative case study presented herein is based on information collected through field research conducted in Tunisia and Morocco over the course of three years (2012 - 2015), with the longest visit lasting ten months from August 2013 to May 2014. While in the field I searched for information on labor protest from a variety of sources including (1) published and unpublished secondary sources on the origins and development of the labor movement, (2) local press articles covering labor protest events and broader mobilization efforts (3) labor, economic, and legislative data gathered from government ministries, NGOs, and private associations, (4) participatory observations in union activities that ranged from small commission meetings to labor protests in the streets and (5) unstructured and semi-structured interviews conducted with over 100 workers, union leaders, labor activists, public officials, opposition party figures, civil society organization leaders, journalists and academics. As the interviews form the bulk of the empirical evidence garnered during fieldwork, I elaborate further on the methodology governing the collection of interview data below.

Interviews

To complement the evidence collected from quantitative data and secondary source material, I conducted numerous interviews with labor activists, civil society leaders, public officials and academics in Tunisia and Morocco. Interviews were conducted in two stages, involving different

methodologies and serving different analytical aims. In the first round of interviews, undertaken during preliminary research trips in 2012 and 2014, I conducted unstructured interviews with select labor unionists and academics to ascertain more detailed information about strike activity and union organization than contained in secondary sources. Interviewees were selected on a non-random basis and were principally selected based on their rank in the union organization or their knowledge of labor politics in the respective countries. These interviews, structured much more as informal conversations rather than formal inquiries, served a primarily *inductive* purpose for my research—in talking with activists and academics I hoped to nuance my understanding of labor politics in Tunisia and Morocco as well as clarify my research question and develop potential theoretical explanations for divergent labor mobilization in my central cases.

A second round of interviews, conducted primarily during my ten-month field trip (August 2013 to May 2014), were used to evaluate the explanatory power of my hypotheses against alternatives and elucidate causal mechanisms, thus serving a primarily *deductive* purpose. These interviews followed a semi-structured format, comprising open-ended questions structured around a set of consistent themes. Interviews were conducted in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, depending on the interviewee's language preference, and lasted, on average, an hour. As in the previous round of interviews, initial interviewees were selected on a non-random basis although significant efforts were made to vary the sample of subjects. Further interview subjects were selected via a “snowballing method” (i.e. based on the recommendations of previous interviewees). Some subjects were interviewed multiple times over the course of the field research, while others met with me only once during the research period. Detailed information about interview logistics and interviewee profiles appears in Appendix B.

Outline of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, this dissertation is organized into five main chapters. Chapter 2 begins with an elaboration of the central puzzle of my research—why are Tunisian unions militant and

politicized while Moroccan unions are apolitical and moderate. Here, I provide empirical evidence of the divergence between Tunisian and Moroccan protest patterns and examine explanations for this variation based on extant literature on labor politics within authoritarian regimes. I review two major classes of arguments — one focusing on organizational features and the other on material benefits — and evaluate their utility for understanding the Tunisia/Morocco comparison using comparative data on the organizational structure of Tunisian and Moroccan unions as well data on working conditions in both countries. Finding these explanations wanting, this chapter continues to offer an institutional explanation of labor protest, which highlights the role that authoritarian legacies, political coalitions and internal union dynamics have played in shaping union preferences, capacities, and strategies for political militancy.

In Chapter 3, I spell out the initial conditions of my theory, discussing how authoritarian strategies of labor control differed in Tunisia and Morocco in order to establish an understanding of how institutional structures shaped unions' development in both cases. It discusses how the adoption of exclusionary or inclusionary policies offered different institutional opportunities for labor to interact with the state, providing divergent possibilities and limitations for labor opposition under authoritarianism. In particular, the discussion highlights how state institutions (or the lack thereof) offered different coalitional possibilities for labor — both with other political actors and within the labor movement — and how these coalitions affected unions internal development and, consequently, their interests and abilities to launch political protest.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 form the main empirical chapters of the project and analyze, in greater detail, the trajectories of Tunisian and Moroccan labor politics over a 41-year period from 1970-2011. Tracking unions' engagement in political mobilization during three main periods, I show in each how institutional linkages acted as constraints on labor behavior, critically affecting unions' perceptions of their grievances and their ultimate decisions about how to redress these grievances

most effectively. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes by synthesizing the insights gained from my central cases, and anticipating directions for future research.

Chapter 2

LABOR PROTEST IN NORTH AFRICA: EXPLANATIONS, PREDICTIONS, AND REALITIES

“The law forced workers in opposition to the state... the syndicalist doctrine of autonomy, the insistence that the labor movement must develop outside of the state, create its own institutions to reinforce it, can be understood in light of its experience”

-F.F. Ridley

This chapter begins the investigation of variant labor mobilization in Tunisia and Morocco by placing this puzzle in a broader theoretical context. In developing an answer to the question of why unions are politicized and militant in Tunisia but apolitical and moderate in Morocco, I review the literature on union opposition in authoritarian regimes and examine the validity of extant theories with empirical data from these two central cases, as well as evidence from the broader Middle East. The discussion is meant to serve two purposes: first, by reviewing current explanations of labor opposition, I seek to familiarize new scholars of labor politics to the broader literature on labor protest and contextualize my own work in the field. Second, in employing empirical data to evaluate these theories, I intend to highlight some of the deficiencies with extant explanations with the aim of paving the way for my own theory of labor politics in North Africa. In so doing, I emphasize the importance of adopting an institutional approach, which centers on the institutions that structure labor's relationship with the state, as well as other political actors, to more fully account for divergent protest patterns in authoritarian countries.

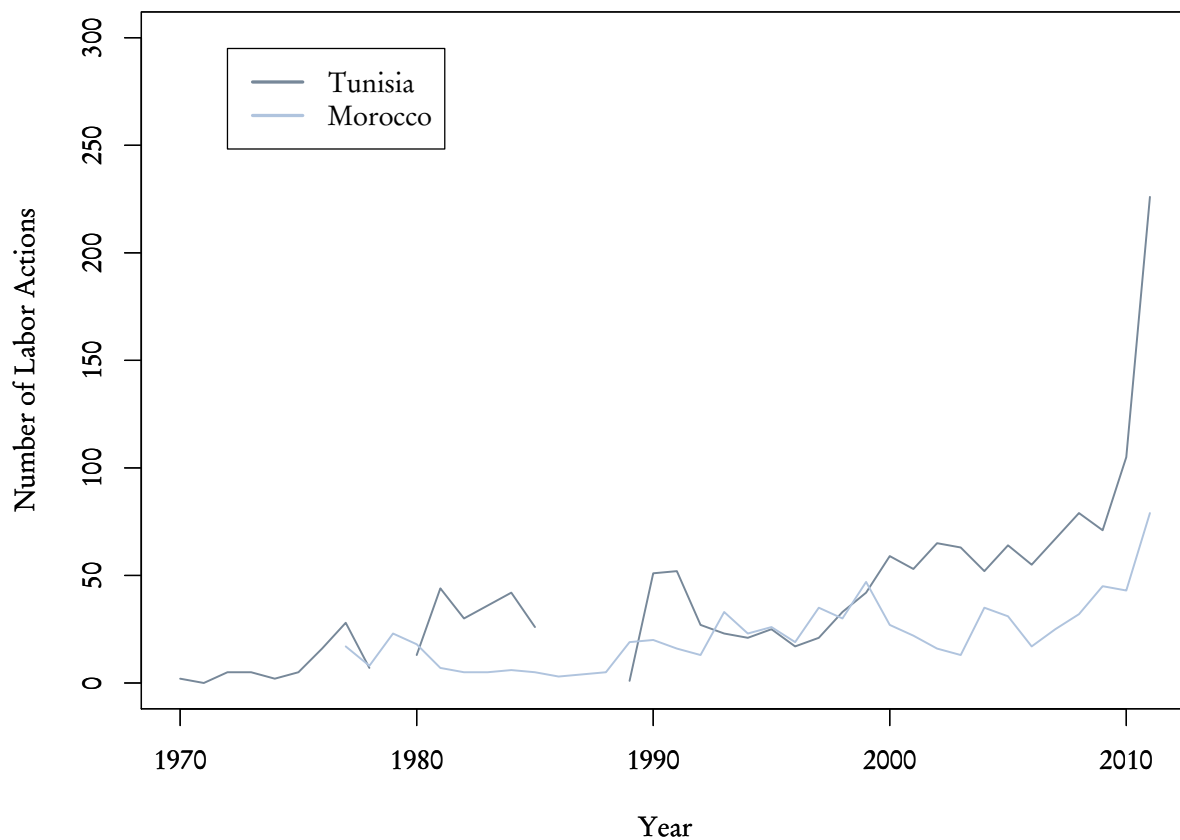
The central argument of this chapter is that an examination of the institutions that govern labor and political participation are necessary for understanding union mobilization. At its core, protest is a means through which organized labor seeks representation and influence in the political

system. Concomitantly, the specific configuration of institutions through which labor can express its interests critically shape unions' modes of mobilization and interest articulation. Although organizational and economic-structural analyses help to elucidate unions' interests and capacities for protest action, ultimately the decision to protest is manifest within a set of constraints and opportunities offered by the broader institutional context. This chapter argues that unions that are incorporated into formal institutions are more likely to adopt moderate strategies of opposition, as these institutions provide greater opportunities for labor to express its interests and develop coalitions with influential political partners who can secure limited concessions. By contrast, unions alienated from formal institutions are more likely to pursue radical mobilization strategies to advance their demands.

Political Protest & Labor Militancy: Clarifying the Terrain

Before proceeding with a review of the literature, it is first necessary to define the terms under investigation, and particularly to clarify what is meant by labor protest and labor militancy in the context of this study. Labor protest is understood as collective action taken by unions or groups of union members to oppose policies at the level of the shop floor, industry, or in the polity as a whole. These collective actions can take multiple forms, ranging from peaceful demonstrations like strikes and boycotts to more disruptive actions such as violent confrontations or riots. Labor militancy, then refers to the frequency and magnitude of such protests which disrupt production or governance, operationalized in this study as the number of protest actions held by labor affiliates in any given year. Comparing this data in Tunisia and Morocco, a pattern of divergence emerges. Based on strict event counts, Moroccan unions, on average, participate in only half as many protests as those in Tunisia, and most recently have engaged in just over a third of the protest actions of their Tunisian counterparts (Figure 2.1). Additionally, measures of striker intensity — measured as the number of employees who participate in strikes per 1,000 workers — further reflects the heightened militancy of Tunisian unions. Indeed, over the period 1998-2008, strike participation in Tunisia

FIGURE 2.1: Protest events (aggregate) Tunisia and Morocco, 1970-2011

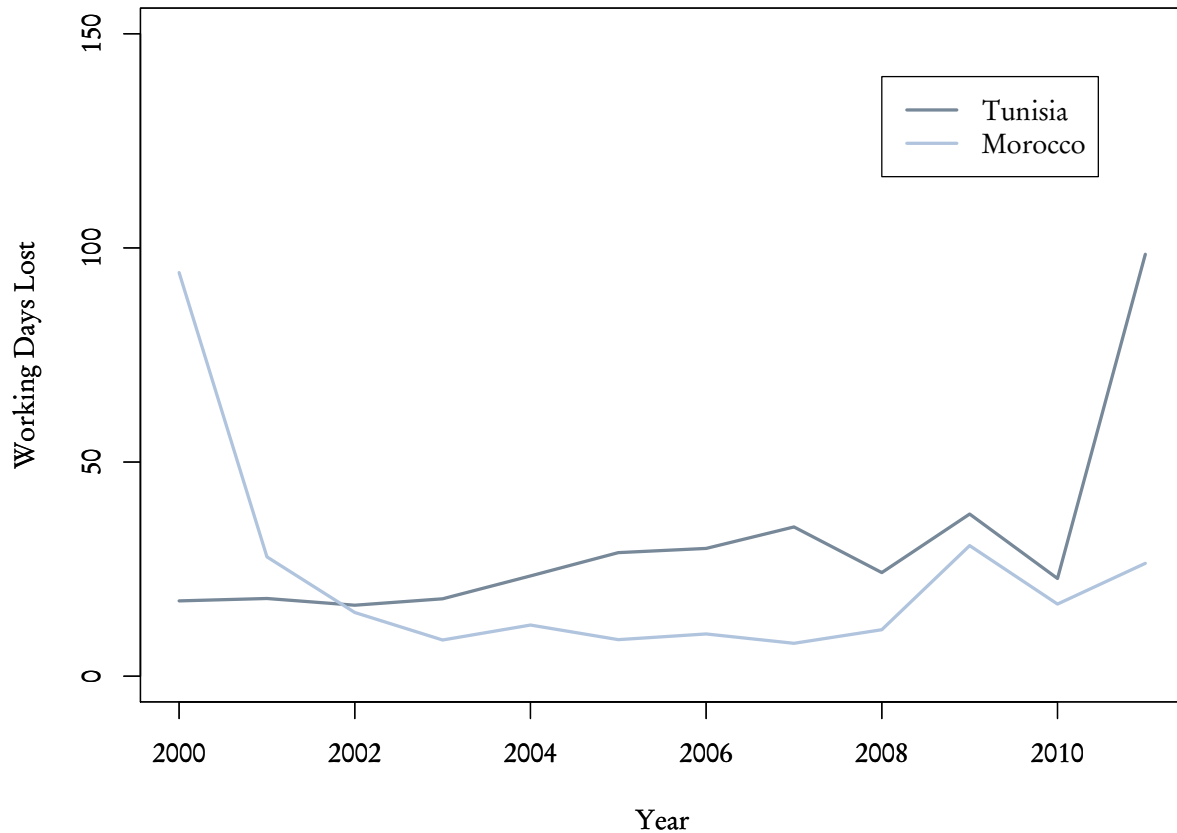


SOURCE: MENALC Database

averaged 20 workers per 1,000, placing Tunisia among the ranks of countries such as Brazil and South Africa which are known for the severity of their labor opposition (Figure 2.2). Moreover, these data largely corroborate available statistics on labor militancy from the ILO, which shows a widening gap in the number of strikes held in Tunisia and Morocco over the 2000-2011 period (Figure 2.3).

In addition to varying in intensity, labor mobilization can also vary in the types of demands — whether economic, social or political — that are advanced during protest events. For the purposes of this study, a specific distinction is made between economically motivated protest and *political* protests which I define in line with Lambert, Waterman, and others as collective action that

FIGURE 2.3: Workdays lost due to strikes (aggregate) in Tunisia and Morocco



SOURCE: International Labor Office, ILOSTAT Database 2012, author calculations

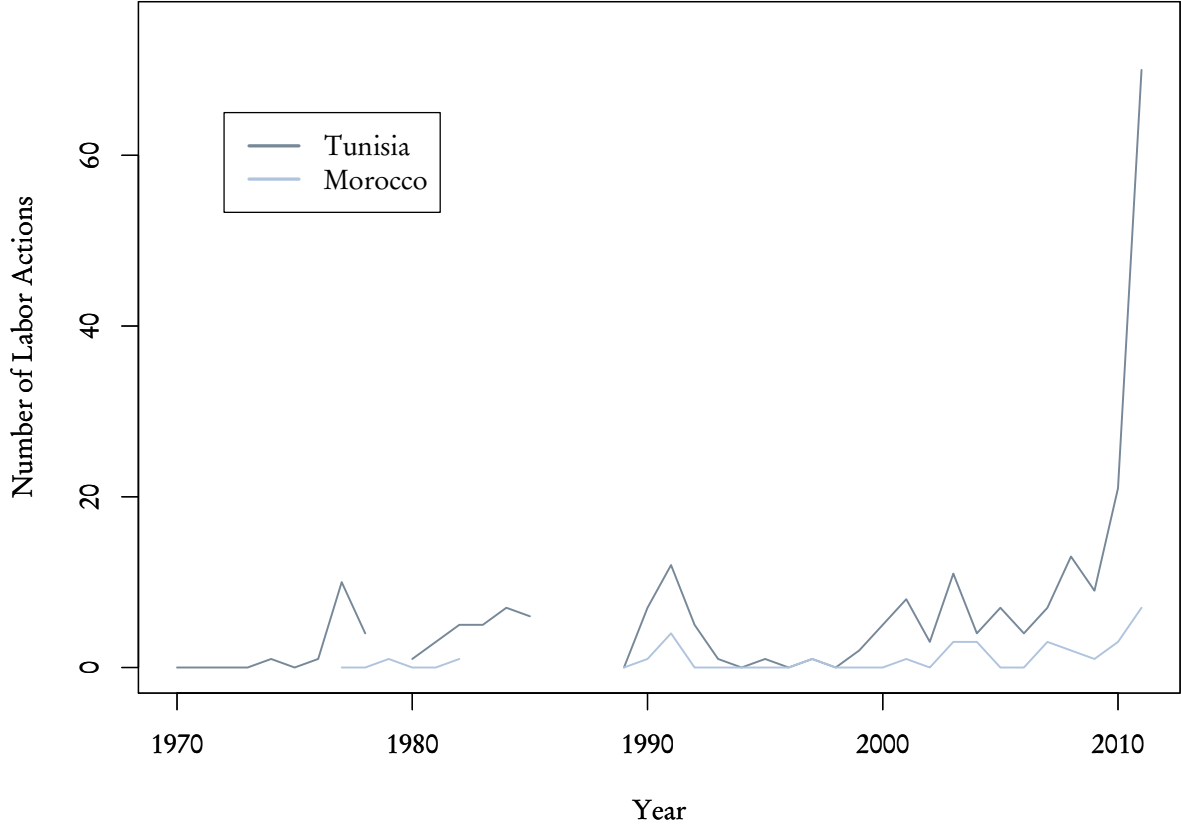
“attempts to link production to wider political issues” (Lambert et al. 1988, 21)⁷. Thus, in contrast to protests that are exclusively concerned with workplace issues of the economic well-being of the working class (commonly referred to as “orthodox” or “business unionism”), political protest deals with broader social issues and necessitates an active engagement with issues of public policy, leadership, or state craft.

⁷ Although Lambert et al. use the term “political unionism” to describe the above phenomenon, its precise definition has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Indeed, rejecting Lambert et al.’s definition, some authors use “political unionism” to refer to the practice of unions engaging in explicit partnership with political parties and instead use the terms “social movement unionism” or “radical political unionism” to refer to labor opposition with political goals (see Waterman 1991, Scipes 1993, Seidman 1994, Ost 2002, Upchurch and Mathers 2012). To reduce confusion, for the purposes of this project labor protest with political demands will be referred to as either: 1) politically-motivated protest, 2) political mobilization or 3) political protest, terms which are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

It is important to note that in any given country one may observe several of these modes of protest occurring, albeit in different combinations and with varying frequency and intensity. In the wave of protests that shook Tunisia in 1978, for example, violent riots against price inflation were held in tandem with strikes demand the removal of corrupt political leaders. However, if national trends in protest behavior can be characterized by the dominance of one type of activism versus another, a second pattern of divergence emerges between our two principal cases. Where as labor activism in Tunisia since the 1980s is characterized by the relatively frequent use of confrontational demonstrations advancing political demands, Moroccan labor opposition is largely economically focused and pursues more moderate, law-abiding tactics. Thus if we conceive of the modes of labor protest as existing on a simplified spectrum — with “orthodox” or economic protest on the leftmost end of the spectrum and political protest on the right — Moroccan unions are closer to the left while those in Tunisia are closer to the right (Figure 2.4).

What can account for these differences? Although scant research has been devoted to the politicization of labor protest in the Middle East, theories drawn from a broader literature on labor politics may be useful in developing explanations for divergent protest patterns witnessed in Tunisia and Morocco. Current scholarship offers two distinct perspectives — one focusing on the organizational traits of the labor movement and another emphasizing the economic conditions of the working class — to account for variation in labor’s willingness and capacity to undertake political opposition in authoritarian regimes. In the section that follows I review these approaches and assess their validity with empirical data before proposing an alternative account that I believe more fully explains differences in Tunisian and Moroccan unions’ protest behavior.

FIGURE 2.4: Political labor mobilization in Tunisia and Morocco



SOURCE: MENALC Database

Organizational Explanations

One set of explanations for divergent labor protest patterns emphasizes the organizational roots of labor militancy. In this literature, the organizational features of labor unions are taken as the key determinant of their interests and behaviors, placing important constraints on their ability to successfully organize collective action. Most often, features of interest are those that make labor movements more “encompassing” — high union density, centralized union structure, and the

concentration of the labor movements in a few peak organizations (Cameron 1984; Calmfors and Driffil 1988; Golden 1993)⁸. An assessment of these features yields variable predictions for the likelihood of labor militancy and that of political protest, which I discuss below.

Union Density & Sectoral Composition

In much of the literature, union density is a key indicator for assessing union strength. Drawing upon social movement theories, numerous scholars suggest that low union density should be associated with a relative dearth of strike action, due to the necessity to attain a certain basic level of organization in order to mobilize for collective action. This is especially true in the case of political strike activity — as Valenzuela notes, “the stronger the labor movement, the more likely it is to assume an important role in the [political] transition” (Valenzuela 1989, 452).

In studies of labor politics in the Middle East/ North Africa, scholars adopting this approach have highlighted the organizational weakness of unions as an explanation for the relative dearth of labor militancy in the region. To begin, scholars note that the dual legacies of repression and corporatism have undermined the capacity of unions to mobilize — because freedom of association has traditionally been limited under such circumstances, unions often face restrictions to organize, resulting in notably low levels of union density throughout the region (ILO 2012). Additionally, the domination self-employed workers and micro-enterprises in the labor force has contributed to an increasing informal sector, further undermining union efforts to mobilize the working class (Heintz and Chang 2007; Aita 2008). Particularly in the aftermath of neoliberal reforms, privatization and the subsequent reduction of government funds and subsidies is seen to have undercut the principal sources of union strength, leaving it even less capable of launching significant collective action. As

⁸ It is important to note that most of these studies have analyzed the effects of labor militancy on economic performance in OECD countries. Cameron (1984), for example, analyzes strike activity and economic performance during the 1960s and 1970s in the OECD, assessing the role that union fragmentation and the level of collective bargaining have on labor militancy. Expanding upon this research, Calmfors and Driffil (1988) find that wage militancy is lower when bargaining is centralized at the peak level or decentralized at the company level and higher in intermediate cases of industry-level bargaining. Golden (1993), on the other hand shifts the focus from centralization to concentration, arguing that workers which are concentrated in few large unions may be more likely to protest than those that are dispersed among smaller, competing organizations.

Bayat notes, “the economic restructuring of the 1980s has further undermined organized labor, as the public sector, the core of trade unionism, is shrinking because of closures, downsizing, and early retirements” (Bayat 2002, 7).

Yet although regional scholarship appears to confirm the plausibility of organizational theories, ultimately this stylized approach proves less useful for accounting for variation in protest patterns witnessed in Tunisia and Morocco. Indeed, a comparison of union density measures in both countries reveals that the two appear more similar than different. Although official statistics are unavailable, external reports estimate that nearly 300,000 workers were unionized under the UGTT in 2006, bringing the national unionization to 10-15 % of the total workforce (Harper 2006). Similarly, in Morocco, union centers comprise roughly 6-10 % of the working population, with estimates of union membership ranging from 600,000 to roughly 1 million (Herradi 2008).

Beyond simple density figures, however, the composition of the labor movement is also a useful metric for assessing unions’ strength. As Valenzuela highlights, sectoral unionization may be even more telling of unions’ capacity than overall density because unionization in key national industries can increase the relative leverage of organized labor vis-a-vis the state, making unions with workers in these sectors more likely to engage in opposition (Valenzuela 1989). Moreover, unionization in heavy and consumer durables industries may serve to “manufacture militance” due to their reliance on skilled and semi-skilled workers who have been shown to have more radical ideologies and greater tolerances for political action (Seidman 1994).

However, Tunisian and Moroccan unions also draw most of their members from the same sectors. According to data from *Trade Unions in the World*, as well as available material from scholarly reports and national union centers, the majority of union membership in both Tunisia and Morocco comes from the public sector, with the highest unionization rates found in education, health, and local administration. In terms of heavy industry, both countries draw significant union membership in formerly nationalized sectors such as transportation, utilities, and manufacturing, with an

increasing amount of workers being qualified as semi-skilled. Finally, in the private sector, both countries report high unionization rates in the banking and agriculture, although, in Morocco, unionization in these sectors remains concentrated within one single union, the UMT.

Union Centralization & Hierarchy

The relative centralization of the union movement is also an important determinant of labor's protest behavior. It signifies both the level at which collective bargaining is conducted and the authority of peak confederations over their union members. In general, unions with centralized bargaining and hierarchical structures are considered to be “encompassing unions” which have an intrinsic interest in supporting economic growth and maintaining the status quo. In the context of corporatist relations then, we should expect unions with this structure to be less likely to engage in militancy — and, in particular, political militancy — than their decentralized counterparts whose protest behavior often reflects their preoccupation with limited, parochial goals (Golden, Wallerstein and Lange 1999).

Comparing Tunisian and Moroccan unions in terms of wage bargaining, we see that the Tunisian system of collective negotiation is much closer to that associated with centrally-organized bargaining while Morocco's system is much more diverse. Since the 1973 signing of the collective convention cadre, wage bargaining in Tunisia has been concentrated at the national level with negotiations conducted by the state, employers and union representatives within multiple or individual national sectors (Alexander 2001, 110-111). By contrast in Morocco, historically labor legislation has permitted wage negotiation at varying levels of union organization — national, sectoral, and enterprise (Moroccan Labor Code 2004, Article 95). Mapping the above predictions onto our cases then, we should expect Moroccan unions to display much more militancy than their counterpart in Tunisia; indeed, as a nationally organized union, the UGTT should have little incentive to protest at all. However, as we have seen the empirical reality contradicts this expectation. Rather than displaying restraint, Tunisian unions are known for their bouts of militancy whereas

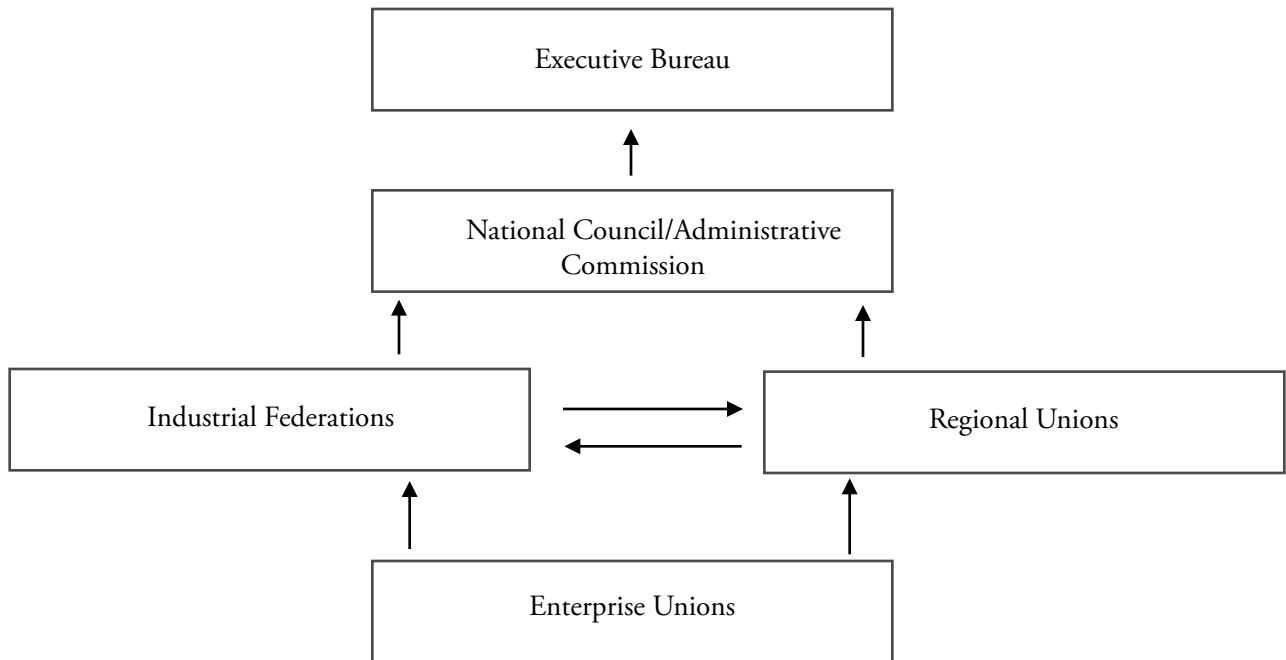
Moroccan unions are relatively quiescent by comparison. Thus, wage bargaining also proves an insufficient explanatory variable, casting further doubt on organizational explanations.

Measures of internal union centralization also fail to account for differences in protest behavior among Tunisian and Moroccan unions. According to Roomkin, trade unions with a centralized authority structure — in which national federations exert significant control over subordinate units — should be less likely to engage in strike behavior due to the ability of peak labor leaders to hold down militancy at the lower levels (Roomkin 1976). However, an analysis of the organizational anatomy of Tunisian and Moroccan unions⁹ reveals that the two share more similarities than differences. Owing mainly to their common origins within the French *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs*, both Tunisian and Moroccan unions display a relatively hierarchical structure, characterized by vertical ties between national and regional/sectoral and local syndicates and horizontal linkages at the regional and sectoral level (Figure 2.5). At the base of union hierarchy, rank-and-file members within individual businesses are organized in enterprise unions (*syndicats du base*), which are then aggregated at the industrial and geographical level in sectoral (*fédérations générales* and *syndicats nationaux*) and regional unions respectively. At the top of the hierarchy lie the national structures of the union — the Congress, Administrative Commission, and National Council — which comprise its main administrative and decision-making bodies. In both union environments, it is this national level that officially wields most authority over union affairs. Although, as will be discussed in later chapters, informal relationships between the national and local/federal branches vary from union to union, generally both union environments exhibit formally centralized structures, with the most important matters of union policy — agenda-setting, financial allocations, and matters of internal union policy — being determined at the national level (Bellin 2002; Appendix B: TU-8, 10/17/2013; Appendix B: MU-11, 3/31/2014).

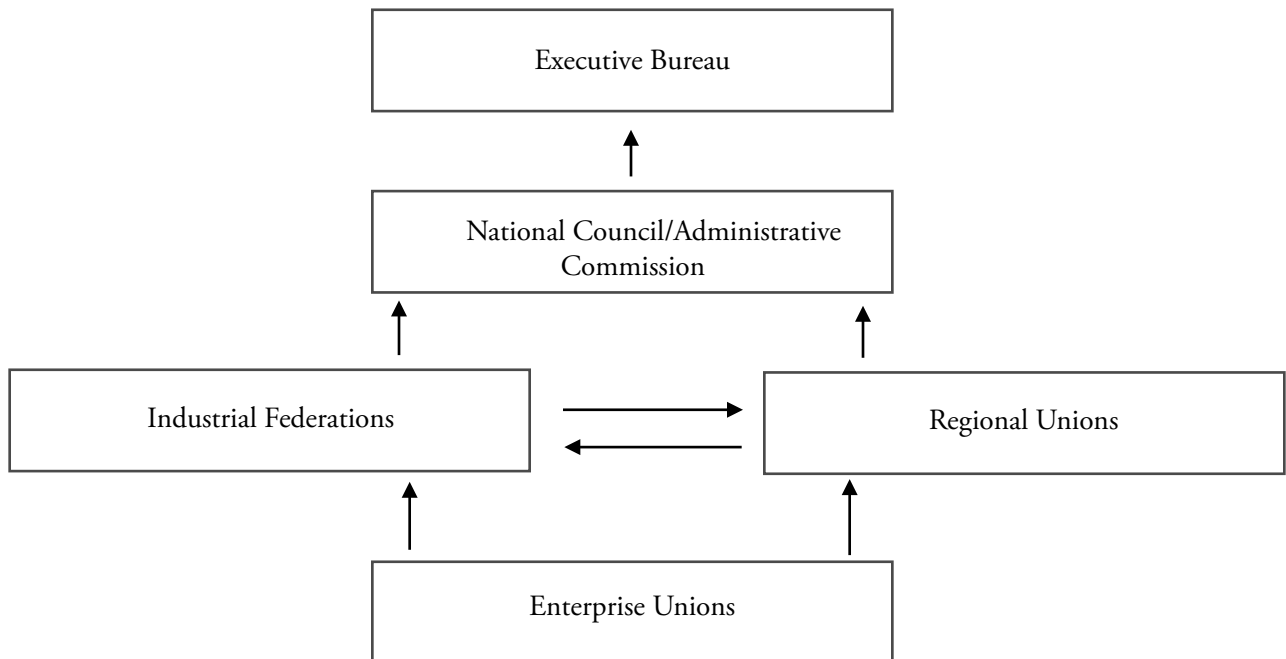
⁹ As noted in the introduction, while the Tunisian labor movement (during the period of this study) was subsumed within a single union, the UGTT, the Moroccan labor movement is divided among over thirty unions, five of which are the subject of this research. Nonetheless, personal interviews as well as analysis of union statutes, organization charts, and decision-making structure in the UMT, UGTM, CDT, FDT, and UNTM reveals homologous union structures, leading me to draw distinctions between the aggregate Tunisian and Moroccan unions rather than among individual syndicates.

FIGURE 2.4: Union organization in Tunisia and Morocco

(A) Tunisia



(B) Morocco



NOTE: Arrows indicate authority relations between bureaucratic structures.

Union Concentration

A third organizational feature that impacts unions' protest behavior is the level of concentration or dispersion of the labor movement, as measured by the number of peak union federations and the distribution of union members among them. Whereas labor movements contained with single peak-level organizations are associated with high worker solidarity, ease of mobilization and greater strength vis-a-vis the state, those where workers are divided into multiple federations are expected to suffer from competition and in-fighting, rendering them weak in comparison to regime elites (Golden 1993; Murillo 2001; Avdagic 2005). As a result, we should expect labor movements with fewer divisions to be more likely to engage in politically militant behavior, while those with large numbers of competing unions should be more prone to exercise restraint.

Significantly, union concentration represents the only salient structural difference between Moroccan and Tunisian unions. While organized labor in Tunisia is concentrated within one national confederation — the UGTT — Moroccan workers are dispersed among numerous federations of which five hold significant membership¹⁰. Undoubtedly, the monopolization of the labor force by the UGTT has proved a boon to its organizational capacity and willingness to engage in opposition with authoritarian elites. Absent much competition, the UGTT has emerged as the single largest collective organization in Tunisia outside of the state, and when motivated to mobilize, its protest actions have generated massive participation from the working class.

By contrast, Moroccan unions are notably weakened by their dispersal. With approximately thirty-four registered union organizations¹¹, and five major national federations, the Moroccan labor movement is remarkably diffuse, much to the detriment of its capacity to mobilize. According to one union activist, “With three to four unions we might be fine, but with thirty plus . . . we cannot

¹⁰ As mentioned above, these are the *Union Marocain du Travail* (UMT), *Union Générale des Travailleurs Marocains* (UGTM), *Confédération Démocratique du Travail* (CDT), *Fédération Démocratique du Travail* (FDT), and the *Union Nationale des Travailleurs Marocains* (UNTM)

¹¹ Estimates of the number of unions in Morocco vary widely among sources, but in interviews with labor activists and in independent reports (Herradi 2008), thirty-four was the modal number of unions though to exist as of 2011.

present a united force” (Appendix B: MU-10, 3/25/2014). Even more damaging, several registered unions can be classified as “*fantoche*” — comprising no official membership, these organizations are simply creations of the monarchy and regime allies, designed to bolster support for the government rather than represent the interests of workers. Therefore, in a direct sense, low union concentration undermines the political militancy of organized labor, as numerical and ideological divisions prevent unions from effectively mobilizing against authoritarian rule.

Yet although the difference in concentration among Tunisian and Moroccan unions appears to partially confirm an organizational reading of labor protest, ultimately this dissimilarity underscores the importance of adopting an alternative approach to explaining patterns of political militancy. Indeed, the fact that unions in Tunisia are monopolistic while those in Morocco are plural is not merely a reflection of organic differences between Tunisian and Moroccan patterns of labor organization, but rather is a direct consequence of these unions’ embeddedness within specific institutional structures. Although neither government legally prohibits nor endorses union pluralism, the Moroccan monarchy’s constitutional endorsement of political pluralism in conjunction with its incorporation of unions into legislative bodies has implicitly contributed to the division of the labor movement along partisan lines. As will be discussed in more detail in future chapters, these twin developments incentivized parties to ally with unions in efforts to capture more votes and influence in electoral bodies. Yet, as a result, the once unified Moroccan union movement has been increasingly fractionalized as competing parties maneuvered to create their own labor constituencies. Thus, low union concentration has emerged as a result of institutional rules, not organizational design, suggesting the need for a closer look at how institutions impact union’s capacities for collective action.

Labor Autonomy and Organizational Rights

Finally, labor’s autonomy vis-a-vis the state has been considered a critical feature in determining its capacity for protest mobilization. In broad terms, autonomy is a measure of unions’ independence

from state or political actors, indicating the degree to which a union is free to make decisions, sustain its organization, and conduct itself in the political arena without external assistance. In a more concrete sense, it is useful to think of autonomy in terms of the level of inducements and constraints placed by the state upon union action — following the work of Collier and Collier (1979) we can empirically measure labor autonomy by examining how the state *structures* union groups, whether they *subsidize* them, and how they *constrain* them (Collier and Collier 1979, 969).

Taking into account union autonomy as a measure of unions' strength is particularly important in development states such as the ones considered here. Because the state simultaneously serves as the entity which employs, adjudicates, arbitrates, and secures the welfare of the working-class, in these contexts states have numerous levers with which they can constrain union autonomy. Indeed, the existence of a developmental state makes true autonomy difficult to achieve; instead, it becomes more useful to compare cases on their *relative* degree of autonomous action.

In the Middle East and North Africa, prominent works on labor protest have placed autonomy as a central explanatory variable in accounting for unions' reluctance to oppose authoritarian regimes. Using Tunisia as a central case study, Bellin argues that the democratic diffidence of organized labor is a direct consequence of state-led industrialization, which entailed authoritarians' heavy intervention in labor markets and direct sponsorship of the working-class. Because unions benefit from state inducements such as subsidies and organizational privileges, they come to see their own survival linked to the success of the authoritarian state — to ensure their continued viability, unions must uphold the status quo lest they undermine the flow of state benefits by inviting government repression. As a result, labor sees its interests best served by a collaborative rather than confrontational relationship with the state, as unions fear cutting off the “apple cart of state patronage and privilege” (Bellin 2000, 203).

Given these advantages, Bellin argues, it is easy to see why labor might be indifferent towards and in some cases in opposition to the democratic project. If authoritarian governments are able to

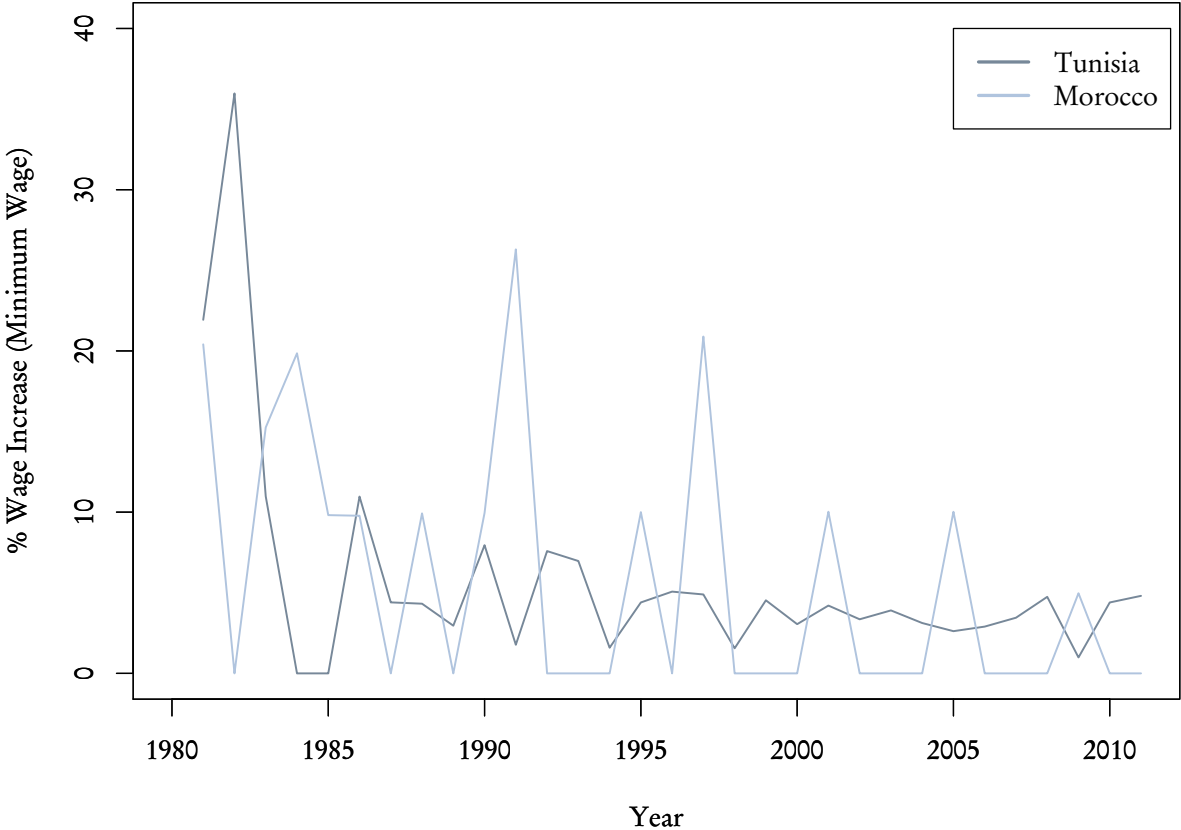
provide labor with privileges that it would not have been able to achieve under redistributive democracy, unions should largely be unwilling to launch oppositional protests for fear of ending their collusive alliance with the state. Thus, to the extent that we witness political protest among labor, we should expect it to occur in contexts where unions and organized fail to receive adequate benefits from autocrats, particularly with respect to their counterparts in the general population.

At first glance, autonomy-based approaches appear to account for important trends in labor mobilization in our central cases. For example, a focus on labor autonomy appears useful for explaining the relative political inactivity of the UGTT in the 1990s — resurrected by the Ben Ali regime through substantial wage increases, subsidies, and the restoration of its former leadership, the trade union movement remained quiescent about the government's gradual regression to hegemonic authoritarian rule, going so far as to support the regime in its suppression of Islamist political forces. However, despite their ostensible validity, these arguments, with their near-exclusive focus on material benefits and organizational privileges, contain a number of empirical flaws which cast doubt on their sufficiency for explaining divergent trends in labor's political behavior.

One drawback is that a focus on state-dependence as measured by wage increases fails to account for differences between Tunisian and Moroccan unions. As Figure 2.6 shows, despite receiving more regular financial benefits from the state, Tunisian unions more frequently engage in political militancy than their counterparts. Significantly, as Bellin herself highlights, wage increases announced in the late 1970s and the early 80s did nothing to stem the tide of labor militancy in Tunisia, with two of its most important periods of political activism, "Black Thursday" and the protest wave of 1980-1984, occurring after the government announced significant wage concessions to Tunisian workers (Bellin 2002, 104-107; 109-111). Yet even if we expand our view of state dependence to include organizational as well as material benefits, empirical evidence fails to confirm the expectations of autonomy-based theories. Comparing Tunisia and Morocco in terms of the freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB) rights allocated to unions (Figure 2.5), for

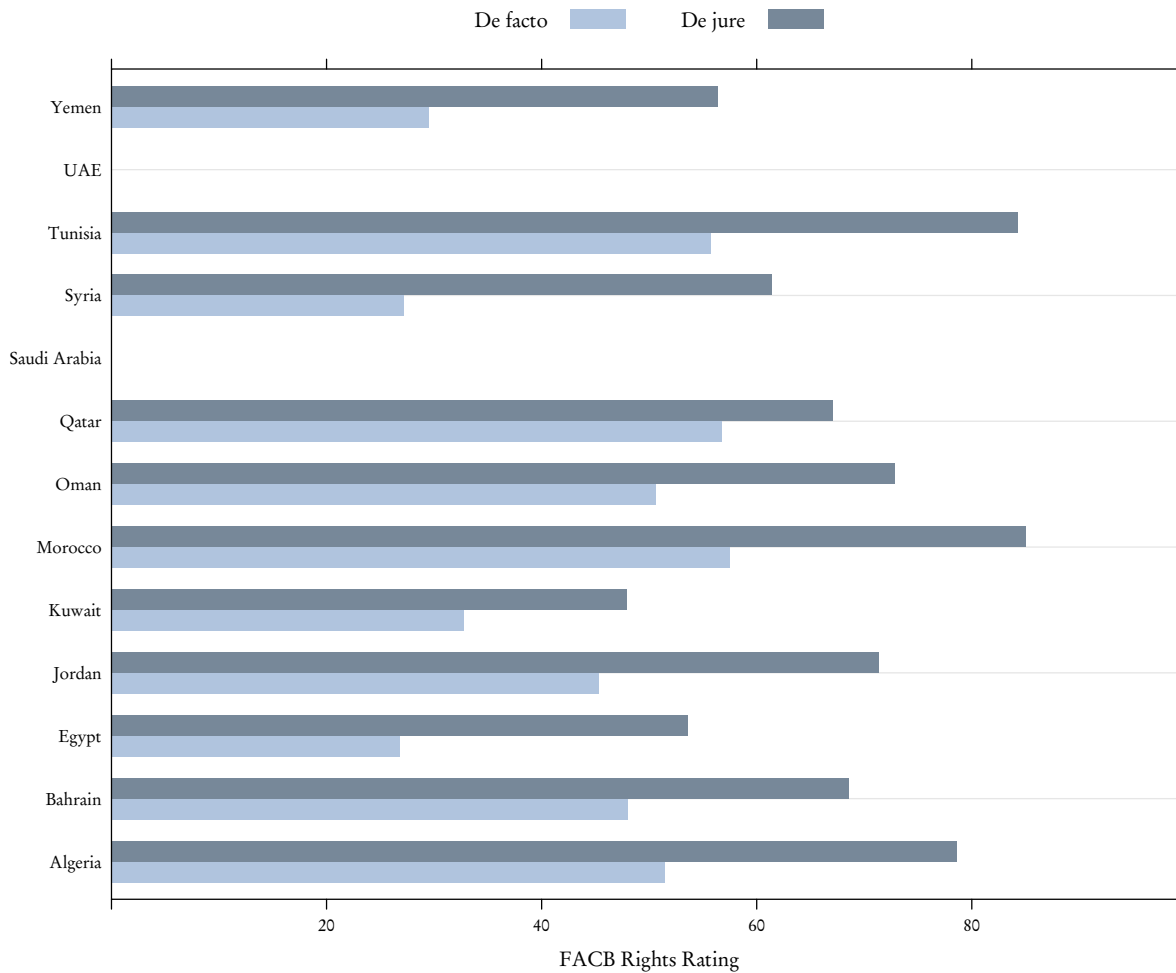
instance, shows that both countries' unions operate under relatively favorable labor conditions, rendering organizational support unable to explain variations in their protest trajectories.

FIGURE 2.6: Annual wage growth (nominal terms) in Tunisia and Morocco, 1980-2011



SOURCE: *Institut National des Statistiques* (Tunisia), *Haut Commissariat Au Plan* (Morocco)

FIGURE 2.7: De jure and de facto labor rights in the MENA region, 2006



SOURCE: Cammett and Posusney 2010

Based on the above discussion, Table 2.1 summarizes the key organizational characteristics of unions in Tunisia and Morocco. Under critical examination, however, these features reveal that Tunisian and Moroccan unions generally appear more similar than they do different. Moreover, the principal dichotomy between these unions points more to an institutional explanation that emphasizes the role of the state in creating conditions conducive to certain union structures than an organizational one. Therefore, a focus on organizational traits is insufficient to account for divergent protest patterns in our central cases, necessitating a continual search for alternative hypotheses.

TABLE 2.1: Union organization in Tunisia and Morocco

	Tunisia			Morocco		
Union Density	10-15%			6-10%		
Union Centralization	Centralized			Centralized		
Collective Bargaining	National (Sectoral)			National, Industrial, Enterprise		
Union Competition	1			34 (5 principle federations)		
Union Autonomy	Moderate			Low		
Labor Rights	High			High		
Sectoral Composition	UGTT	UMT	UGTM	CDT	FDT	UNTM
	All Sectors	Agriculture, Banking, Textiles, Construction, Transport	Agriculture, Health, Education, Water	Education, Health, Automobiles, Petrol	Education, Health, Transport	Education, Health, Public Building, Textiles, Agriculture

Source: ICTUR 2006, Union websites

Economic Explanations

A second school of thought within the literature on labor politics highlights economic conditions as the core determinant of unions' interests and behaviors. Broadly, scholars in this tradition assume that workers' predisposition for collective action can be deduced from their material interests and structural position within the national economy. Depending on the economic conditions workers' face, it is argued, organized labor has different incentives to engage in labor militancy, resulting in divergent outcomes in labor mobilization. Specifically, where workers experience favorable working conditions with higher benefits and salaries, it is expected that political militancy will remain low, as unions have little incentive to oppose the status quo.

This economic approach has informed explanations of labor mobilization in a wide array of studies, ranging from early works on union activism in the industrial West to more contemporary studies of labor politics in autocracies in Latin America, Eastern Europe and, more recently, the Middle East. Yet, these studies have offered two contrasting accounts of labor behavior, one that expects unions to be inherently opposed to authoritarian rule and another that views labor behavior as contingent upon material incentives. It is to these explanations which I now turn.

Early Origins: Labor as a Consistent Democrat

A significant body of work within political science and sociology views political mobilization of the working class as an inevitable consequence of authoritarian rule. Drawing upon Marxist analysis, this literature treats class conflict as the central cause of labor militancy. Under authoritarianism, it is argued, workers' oppression at the hands of landed elites and dictators place political concerns at the forefront of labor's agenda, as workers must seek political rights as redress for their economic subordination (Marshall 1950; Therborn 1977; Ruschemeyer, Stevens, Stevens 1992). Although labor's primary goals are material — its chief interest is obtaining redistribution to secure worker's welfare — ultimately, attaining these goals necessitates the pursuit of universal suffrage, thereby imbuing labor demands with a distinctly political character. As a result, in the context of

authoritarianism, the labor project necessarily *becomes* a political project, with workers' fundamental interests placing them in direct opposition to autocratic rule.

This approach has formed the basis of the literature on labor politics in early industrial Europe, where political unrest generated by workers, the middle class and progressive elites pressured autocrats to extend the franchise and eventually transition to democratic rule (Marshall 1950; Thompson 1963; Bendix 1964; Therborn 1977). Although the specific features of these struggles varied from country to country, the basic element that undergirded each was the political militancy of organized labor — as Goran Therborn notes, “labour movement[s] fought almost everywhere not only for higher wages and better working conditions but also for political democracy” (Therborn 1977, 34). More recently, this correlation has been used in contemporary works of labor mobilization as evidence of an inherent pro-democratic orientation among the working class. Stephens, Stephens and Ruschemeyer's class power model of democracy, for example, treats labor as the “most consistent and reliable defender” of political liberalization, highlighting its important role in both early European democratization and the third wave transitions of Latin American autocracies (Ruschemeyer, Stephens, Stephens 1992, 57). Additionally, work by Charles Boix and Acemoglu and Robinson on democracy and redistribution hinges on the assumption that the working class is a uniformly pro-democratic actor (Boix 2003; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006).

However, despite the allure of generalizing early theories of labor politics, a review of scholarship on labor mobilization in contemporary autocracies reveals the limits of applying these claims beyond their point of origin. Indeed, for as many cases of labor protest that entailed unions demanding political democracy witnessed in the industrial West, examples abound of cases in which labor movements proved disinterested with democratic aims or explicitly supported autocratic rule. Especially, in the context of late industrialization, organized labor appears much more accepting of an autocratic status quo than early theories (and their contemporary adaptations) would predict. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, unions in Kenya and Namibia remained absent from pro-

democratic mobilization, instead choosing to shore up authoritarianism by reducing mobilization and making explicit statements of support for illiberal governments (Ranchod 2007; Gona 2009). Similarly, in Latin America, the Mexican Confederation of Workers (CTM) and the Argentinean General Confederation of Work (CGT) retained long lasting alliances with single-party regimes, resulting in continued attempts by organized labor to oppose proposals for political reform (Middlebrook 1991; Middlebrook 1995; Ponte 1991; Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006). Even in cases where union mobilization played a direct role in the demise of autocratic regimes, subsequent trends reveal labor's diffidence towards the democratic project. Indeed, while both Russian and Ukrainian unions launched significant campaigns for political liberalization which led to the fall of Communist regimes in the 1990s, in the early 2000s these unions actively opposed their democratic successors and, later, remained silent about autocratic reversions witnessed under Putin and Kuchma (Åslund 1995, Kubicek 2002).

In the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) specifically, academic scholarship reflects a highly pessimistic view of labor's ability to act as an advocate for significant social and political change. As previously mentioned, numerous reports point to the declining capacity of the region's labor movements to mobilize — due to the various strictures of labor organizing and strike activity included in the region's labor laws, organized labor comprises only a small share of the total labor force, leaving unions organizationally weak and ineffective. Moreover, given the legacy of corporatism which looms large over many state-labor regimes, scholars argue that labor leaderships are often too co-opted or too embedded in clientelistic relations with authorities for unions to effectively challenge authoritarian rule (Richards and Waterbury 1990, 267). Thus MENA unions, rather than being praised as the future harbingers of democracy, are decried as “decapitated and de-proletarianized”, “appendage[s] of the state”, and “defensive”, with little to no likelihood of engaging in significant political mobilization (Clement 2000; Catusse 2001; Hibou 2011).

Ultimately, both the extreme optimism of scholars of the advanced West and the pessimism of Middle Eastern academics belie the empirical reality of labor mobilization in authoritarian contexts. In fact, rather than homogeneity, a cross-national examination of the history of labor protest in contemporary non-democracies reveals extreme diversity in labor's political orientation and behavior. While in some cases workers and labor unions have been at the forefront of movements pushing for democratic reform (Korea, Zambia), in other contexts labor has been much more ambivalent about the democratic project (Argentina) or has staunchly opposed movements for political liberalization (Mexico). In the MENA region especially, national labor movements display a variety of protest behaviors and demands which challenge the validity of early hypotheses. As described in the opening section of this chapter, Tunisia and Morocco present dramatically different patterns of protest mobilization — while Tunisian unions frequently engage in political militancy against the regime, Moroccan unions pursue more “quiet” protest strategies demanding economic reforms. More broadly, while the general pattern of mobilization in the Middle East reflects a trend of labor quiescence (as displayed by protest patterns in most of the Gulf and oil-producing countries), in several countries labor opposition is a regularized phenomenon, with protests in recent years becoming increasingly focused on political issues (Beinin 2014).

Considerable variation exists within cases over time as well. In Algeria and Morocco, for example, periods of heightened social protest in the late 1980s-early 90s, lead labor to endorse a more militant strategy of opposition marked by increasingly political demands, though more recently unions in these countries have been characterized by their dormancy and preference for negotiation (Catusse 2001; Alexander 2002; Bogaert 2015). Moreover, in Tunisia — perhaps the case most reflective of the inconsistency of labor's political orientation — mobilization trends defy early expectations. Despite being noticeably active against the Bourguiba regime in the 1970s and the early 80s, by the end of the decade, the UGTT stood in solidarity with his authoritarian successor, Ben Ali. In recent years, however, this position has also shifted, as increased militancy among the

union's base in the 2000s culminated in the UGTT's active participation in the movement against dictatorship in Tunisia in 2011.

Contemporary Perspectives: Labor as a “Contingent Democrat”

In light of this variation, a contemporary body of scholarship has emerged which emphasizes the interactive and contingent nature of labor's political behavior. Like early works, this literature views mobilization as a function of labor's material interests — unions and workers primarily seek to secure their individual welfare and engage in opposition as a means to achieve this goal. Yet, in a departure from previous theories, these arguments break with the assumption that autocratic rule is fundamentally antithetical to worker's aims, instead suggesting that labor preferences may be satisfied under a variety of political regimes. According to Kim and Gandhi, autocrats in particular should have strong incentives to appeal to labor demands — given the need for unelected leaders to maintain the appearance of popular legitimacy, they argue, dictators should be more likely to enact labor-friendly legislation as a means of courting public support (Kim and Gandhi 2010, 648). As work by Ruth and David Collier highlights, inclusionary autocratic regimes have historically engaged in preferential treatment of the working-class, often formally incorporating labor movements and establishing legal protections for worker's organizations (Collier and Collier 1977; 1979). Even in more politically closed regimes, authoritarian strategies towards labor have often entailed the conferral of significant material and organizational benefits — arbitrary wage increases, monopoly representation, and access to public office, to name a few — as a means of containing unions while simultaneously providing worker's with the means to achieve their individual and collective goals (Cammett and Posusney 2010).

Given this potential for autocratic beneficence, these scholars argue, it is premature to assume an inherently oppositional stance for labor towards authoritarian regimes. Indeed, when dictators provide ample benefits to satisfy workers' materials needs, labor has no need to pursue redistribution to improve their economic position, and thus should have fewer incentives to challenge the extant

system of political rule. Moreover, given that material inducements are often tied to constraints on labor autonomy and collective mobilization, unions receiving assistance from labor-friendly autocrats might find themselves unable as well as unwilling to launch effective opposition to the state (Collier and Collier 1979). Thus, rather than display consistent patterns of political opposition, we should expect labor behavior to vary according to the level of material benefits received under dictatorship — only when workers' needs fail to be met under the current system should we expect unions to contest the status quo.

Moral Economy

In the literature on labor politics in the Middle East, analyses of organized labor as a “contingent democrat” are routinely expressed in the works emphasizing the importance of moral economies in understanding labor behavior. In the moral economy approach, labor opposition is understood as the result of worker's collective anger over the violation of established norms. Within this paradigm, economic activity is considered to be embedded within a moral universe in which normative values such as equality, reciprocity and justice (construed as the right to subsistence) are central (Polanyi 1957; 1977; Scott 1976). Consequently, it is this moral universe — and the position of workers within it — that accounts for labor's interests and preferences as well as its behaviors with regard to political elites. On the one hand, within the working class, a common belief in egalitarianism governs relations among individual workers, forging universal expectations about proper behavior in the economic sphere. As actors who sell their labor for a wage, workers adhere to an ethos that favors “equal work for equal pay” and will eschew opportunities for individual welfare-seeking and self-aggrandizement in order to preserve distributional equilibria among the working class (Thompson 1971; Sabel 1982; Swenson 1989, 14; Posusney 1997). On the other hand, in its interaction with political elites, norms of justice and reciprocity govern worker's relationship with the state, creating a system of mutual obligations between the two which must not be violated. Indeed, as a subaltern class, labor functions as a political client of the authoritarian state — in exchange for fair wages and

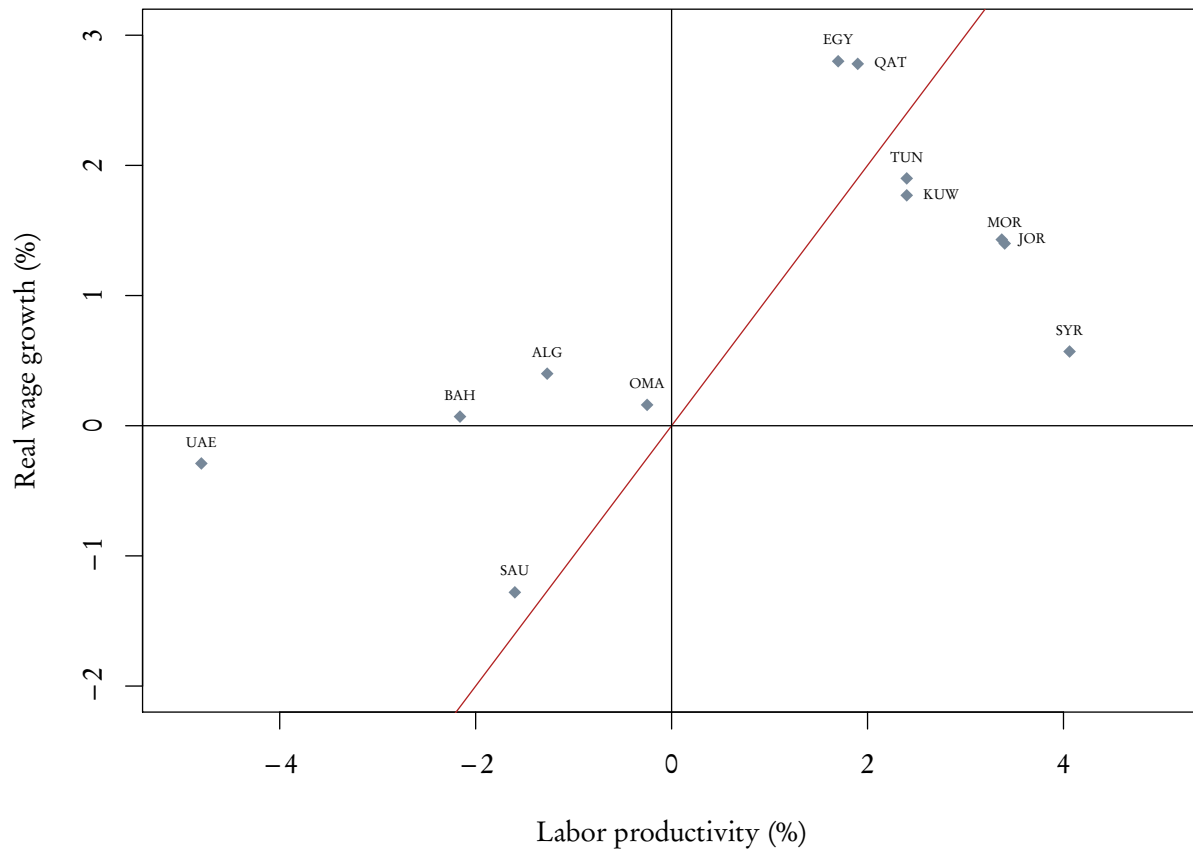
equal pay, workers are expected to provide political support for autocratic elites as well as labor to support economic production. Thus, in order to maintain a “just economy” workers will choose to moderate collective action and accept exploitative conditions, so long as their fundamental interests continue to be satisfied by their “patron” state.

Based on these assumptions, labor mobilization within a moral economy framework is expected to follow a basic “stability-disruption-protest” pattern — opposition should only occur when elites violate established norms, for example by renegeing on wage agreements or instituting prices that threaten workers’ ability to subsist (Posusney 1993, 85). Furthermore, collective action should reflect workers’ understanding of distributional equality and their obligations to the state. Rather than pushing for individual gains or disrupting actual production, oppositional behavior should focus on re-establishing previous agreements and work to maintain economic stability (Kopstein 1996, 394-395; Posusney 1997, 15-16). In this sense then, protest should be expected to be restorative rather than revolutionary — instead of constituting a new political order, mobilization aims to merely reinstate the terms of the patron-client relationship previously established with political elites.

At first glance, a moral economy approach appears to account for important trends in labor mobilization in our central cases, offering a significant improvement over early theories. Indeed, supporting the moral economy argument that labor mobilization occurs in reaction to violated expectations, protests occurring in the early 1980s in both Tunisia and Morocco coincided with the initiation of policies that inflated the prices of basic goods, causing unions to appeal to the state for price reductions as a way of restoring worker’s purchasing power (Seddon 1984; Clement and Paul 1984). However, despite its ostensible validity, this approach contains a number of empirical and theoretical flaws which cast doubt on its ability to explaining divergent trends in labor’s political behavior.

To begin, from an empirical standpoint, a moral economy approach fails to explain both cross-national and longitudinal variation in labor politics in Tunisia and Morocco, necessitating the continued search for alternative explanations. Analyzing Tunisian and Moroccan labor markets within a moral economy framework, for example, reveals that organized labor in both countries operated under roughly similar social and economic conditions. As Figure 2.8 illustrates, a comparison of real wage growth to labor productivity growth — one possible proxy for adherence to a “fair work, fair pay” ethos — in Tunisia and Morocco shows that workers witnessed similar relative decreases in real wages; however, only in Tunisia did unions decide to translate this grievance into a justification for political militancy and reform in the latter half of the decade. Further, violations of workers’ patron-client relationship with the state, as measured by increases in labor flexibility and employment insecurity, became equally salient concerns for organized labor in both countries. Following the bust of the global oil market in the late 1970s, and the subsequent economic crisis of North African economies, Tunisian and Moroccan leaders embarked on a process of fiscal reform which put formal sector workers in an increasingly precarious position. The introduction of structural adjustment programs in the early 1980s to relieve government debt, for example, led to significant cuts in public sector employment, increasing economic vulnerability for government employees as well as growing numbers of university educated youth seeking to enter the civil service. Moreover, a series of labor code reforms enacted by the Tunisian and Moroccan governments in the 1990s and 2000s further increased insecurity for formal workers by easing restrictions on firms’ ability to fire permanent workers and hire replacements on a temporary basis, resulting in significant downsizing in the private sector and the expansion of the informal working class. As a consequence, vulnerable employment (as measured by the World Bank) in both Tunisia and Morocco have seen marked increases, reaching levels of 31% and 50% of total employment respectively in 2010 (ILO KILM 2011).

FIGURE 2.8: Growth in wages and labor productivity in the MENA region, 1999-2011 (%)



SOURCE: International Labor Office, Global Wage Database 2012

Beyond these empirical shortcomings, the moral economy approach also suffers from a number of theoretical deficiencies that limits its ability to explain variation in unions' political mobilization. Notably, a moral economy approach disables us from addressing our central question — why do some labor movements become political? In a moral economy, workers wish to merely restore rather than upend the status quo. Thus, if organized labor existed in a moral economy, we should not expect to witness politicized protest behavior. More broadly however, the primary focus of contingency-based theories on the *economic* roots of labor protest offers an oversimplified

characterization of unions' interests, in which workers' preferences are constituted in narrowly material terms.

While it is certainly true that concerns over fiscal well-being play an important role in unions' decision-making process, the interests and strengths of labor organizations cannot be cleanly reduced to their material grievances or structural positions in the national economy. As a growing tradition of scholarship has shown, union behavior is sensitive to a variety of factors, including ideational benefits and institutional constraints (Collier and Collier 1991; Levitsky and Way 1998; Murillo 2001; Robertson 2004; Lee 2010). Even when the main motivation for protest is a demand for economic welfare, such grievances cannot be expressed in a vacuum — to achieve their goals unions must resolve collective action problems within their ranks and interact with other political actors to exercise their collective strength and levy demands. These processes clearly exist within a broader political context, in which institutional rules and relationships place differing constraints on union activism. Thus, to fully understand how worker grievances are actually mobilized into militant protest, we must move beyond assessments of labor's economic interests and more deeply examine the political and institutional context in which these demands are constructed and expressed. For these reasons, moral economic and structural analyses of labor behavior can be considered only partial explanations of union protest, given the insufficient attention they pay to the various ways in which political processes condition labor interests and strategies.

Bringing Institutions Back In: A New Perspective of Labor Politics

In the previous discussion, I showed that the conventional wisdom regarding labor's political mobilization is largely incomplete. While organizational and economic analyses shed light on how unions form grievances and develop capacities for collective action, ultimately they do not explain why some unions choose to express these grievances in terms of *political* demands or why they pursue varied tactics to achieve their goals. Most important, given broad similarities in their organizational features and economic conditions, extant theories fail to offer a satisfactory answer to the central

question of this study: “Why do Tunisian unions routinely engage in militant, politicized protests while their Moroccan counterparts use moderate tactics to pursue economic aims?”

To answer this question, I offer an alternative theory which emphasizes the role of institutions in influencing unions’ protest behavior. Broadly, I argue that differences in unions’ political mobilization stem from variation in the institutional structures available for labor representation and contestation under authoritarian rule. Where autocrats incorporate labor into formal, representative institutions, coalition building between unions and established parties undermine political activism by co-opting the interests of union elites and diminishing vertical accountability between union leaders and the rank-and-file. Conversely, where unions are alienated from these institutions, the formation of “outsider alliances” between union elites, social movements, and rank-and-file members facilitate political mobilization by radicalizing labor agendas and promoting internal democracy within union structures.

In developing this argument, I connect institutional legacies, political coalitions, unions’ internal organization and the modes of labor mobilization in the following causal-historical sequence. First, newly installed dictators face perceived challenges from organized labor, leading them to seek strategies to contain the labor threat and consolidate political power. Second the selection of a particular containment strategy — either inclusionary or exclusionary — generates different institutional configurations which govern labor representation and contestation, producing meaningful effects on unions’ strategies, alliances, and internal structures. This is the critical juncture from which national variations of labor protest diverge.

In the short term, I hypothesize that differences in labor incorporation incentivize unions to adopt varying strategies for advocating their interests. While unions included within formal institutions learn to moderate their behavior and work within the formal political system to levy demands, unions denied this access seek alternative methods to promote power and influence, relying on militant protest and “street politics” to give voice to their concerns. In the medium to long

term, I argue that these divergent strategies produce different opportunities for coalition building among labor and political actors, critically impacting unions' willingness and capacity to engage in political protests. Specifically, unions incorporated into formal institutions are expected to forge alliances with established parties which curb political militancy and diminish unions' mobilizational strength by weakening ties between labor elites and the rank-and-file. By contrast, unions excluded from representative structures develop ties with marginalized social actors and rank-and-file workers, which in turn radicalize labor agendas and endow unions with organizational capacity necessary to challenge authoritarian rule.

Central to this theory is its temporal dimension, that is its path dependent structure. By path dependent, I do not simply mean that "history matters"; rather I refer to the way in which the argument unfolds in logically sequential and cumulative stages, with each new phase dependent upon the set of decisions or circumstances established in the preceding period (Mahoney 2001, 4-11). My argument reveals how common antecedents in the form of state-labor conflicts set into motion critical junctures in which leaders choose different institutional strategies to equilibrate order and solidify political control. These institutional arrangements, in turn, cast profound legacies over unions' future trajectories of opposition, critically impacting their strategies, alliances, and internal capacities for political mobilization.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. In the first section, I contextualize this argument by situating it within a growing body of institutionalist literature within the field of labor politics. This discussion provides the foundation for the full elaboration of my argument in section two, in which I discuss the role of institutional incorporation in shaping trajectories of labor mobilization, tracing its effects on unions' strategies, alliances, and internal organization. Although the bulk of the discussion is cast in general terms in order to highlight the theory's broad applicability to labor protest dynamics in a wide-range of authoritarian regimes, in the chapter's conclusion, I connect the argument to the central cases of Tunisia and Morocco, offering predictions

for labor behavior in these two countries. These predictions are systematically examined in the chapters of the second section of the dissertation, which track labor protest dynamics in these cases during three critical periods of economic decline.

Institutions Matter?: Theorizing on Labor Politics in Non-Democracies

In focusing on the role of representative institutions in shaping unions' protest patterns, this study builds upon a growing theoretical tradition which emphasizes the importance of political institutions in analyzing labor behavior. Within this literature — exemplified by the works of the “new institutionalist” school — unions are viewed as social actors who consistently engage and interact with the political environments in which they are embedded (Lipset 1983; Valenzuela 1989; Collier and Collier 1991; Candland and Sil 2001; Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006; Lee 2011). As such, unions' interests and capacities cannot be simply deduced from their economic conditions and organizational features; rather, to fully understand union behavior, one must appreciate how their preferences are molded by interactions with political actors and mobilized under constraints and opportunities offered within specific institutional settings. As Eisinger notes:

[e]lements in the environment impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it. The manner in which individual and groups in the political system behave then is not a function of the resources they command but of the weak spots, barriers, and resources of the political system itself. There is, in this sense, interaction or linkage between the environment, understood in terms of the notion of a structure of political opportunities, and political behavior (1973, 12).

The importance of institutions for understanding labor behavior has been especially pronounced in the literature on labor movements in authoritarian regimes, where unions have been placed under the direct influence — and oftentimes, control — of the autocratic state. Indeed, one key insight from this literature is that under state control, the labor project becomes inseparable from

its political surroundings, as this context shapes the settings and institutions within which labor is required to operate. As Collier and Collier highlight in their study of political development in Latin America, the genesis of labor unions within authoritarian regimes was often dictated by the political whims of the state, which used incorporation dually as a means of depoliticizing organized labor and coopting working-class support for the regime (Collier and Collier 1991, 8). Moreover, the formation of party-union linkages in several regimes following incorporation effectively wed labor interests to those of the state through cooptation and mutually beneficial systems of exchange, creating alliances that have continued to shape labor politics in the present-day (Burgess 1999; Murillo 2001). Even in regimes with a tradition of independent labor organizing — that is, autonomous unions who garner support outside of the conventional structures of the state — the influence of politics remains pervasive, as unions continue to be subject to the laws and strictures on collective organization developed by the authoritarian state (Kwon and O'Donnell 1999). Therefore, a thorough examination of institutional structures and distinct historical legacies is required for an explanation of labor politics in autocratic regimes. Without disclosing the relationships between unions and their political environments, we cannot fully appreciate how the grievances and capacities given by labor's economic and organizational conditions are mediated, adjusted and finally actualized into collective protest within specific institutional opportunities and constraints.

Drawing upon these insights, the theory of union protest advanced in this chapter closely examines (1) how autocrats' strategies of labor control precondition labor's institutional environment, offering unions different opportunities for demand-making and representation under authoritarian rule, and (2) how coalitions formed between unions and political actors within these institutions shape unions' interests, and particularly, elites' willingness to engage in political protest. Yet, it also extends this literature to address a third effect of institutions on labor development currently unaddressed in extant scholarship — the impact of institutional incorporation on unions' internal organization and capacity for political activism. A significant tradition of research has shown

that unions' internal practices matter as much for collective action as their external environment (see works collected in Klandermans 1989); yet, to date, no scholarship has systematically investigated the interaction between the two. My theory emphasizes the symbiotic connection between unions' external and internal political environments, arguing that unions are more likely to establish internally democratic structures when opportunities for external coalition building are limited. Moreover, it suggests that within closed systems, democratic organization represents an effective strategy to promote political militancy, allowing unions to strengthen vertical accountability, increase mobilizing capacity, and defend against attempts at state domination. Thus, I claim that it is the interaction between a union's internal and external institutional environment that offers the best understanding of its protest behavior. In this sense, the insights of this theory are mutually influenced by the lessons of historical institutionalism and the political process approach.

Bringing Institutions Back In: Towards a New Theory of Labor Protest

Returning to the question posed in the chapter's introduction — why are Tunisian unions militant and political while Moroccan unions are moderate and preoccupied with issues of economic concern — I propose an explanation which suggests that contrasting patterns of labor mobilization reflect the institutional arrangements devised by autocrats to manage organized labor during early periods of state building. As the following sections argue, institutional arrangements created during critical moments of authoritarian rule profoundly shape unions' strategies, interests, and capacities for opposition, producing distinct and enduring trajectories of labor mobilization. However, the theory presented here does not simply focus on the consequences of different institutional legacies, it also takes seriously their origins. Indeed, the very assertion that “institutions matter” for labor protest lays bare the logically prior question of how such institutions are generated to begin with.

Institutional Legacies & Authoritarian Control

My answer is that institutions are not given, they are made. Drawing from the perspective of historical institutionalism, I view institutions as the products of “critical junctures” in which political leaders establish new rules to resolve emergent conflicts and crises. Such junctures often coincide with periods of significant unrest or heightened opportunity for political action (Stinchcombe 1975), allowing leaders to choose among an expanded number of policy alternatives to achieve intended goals. Although these decisions are typically rooted in prior events and processes, the degree to which antecedent conditions determine actor choices during these periods can vary, ranging from choices deeply embedded in previous conflicts and power relations to those characterized by high levels of individual discretion and agency (Knight 1992; Mahoney 2001, 7). Regardless of the extent to which decisions made during critical junctures can be considered random, the most important feature of these periods — essentially what makes them “critical” — is that they place institutional arrangements on divergent paths or trajectories, which can later be difficult or impossible to alter.

In this study, I hypothesize that the early years of regime-building represent a critical juncture in which authoritarian institutions and the variants of labor politics they engender are fundamentally changed. During this period, the rules regarding political incorporation, representation and repression fall into flux, as newly established dictators attempt to wrest power from potential challengers and consolidate political control. Moreover, in this context of uncertainty and change, authoritarian leaders enjoy unprecedented levels of freedom in reconfiguring institutional structures and recasting their relationships with social actors in the state.

Notably, as concerns organized labor, it is here that autocrats must first face the critical challenge of confronting the “labor question”; that is, how to manage workers so as to ensure economic progress while simultaneously containing the threat of an empowered, organized working class. Indeed, given workers’ central position in the national economy and polity, autocrats often have much to fear from organized labor as a social force. To begin, the sheer size of the labor movement and its concentration in more or less networked unions makes organized labor especially

threatening to autocrats, who fear its capacity for disruptive and often destabilizing collective action. Moreover, the central position of labor within the space of civil society poses a unique political challenge to authoritarian regimes. As noted by O'Donnell, in the absence of popular elections, the mediation of "*lo popular*" becomes essential to the authoritarian political project, which must rely on the appearance of popular legitimacy to justify its claims to rightful rule (1977, 1982). Thus, as one of the largest and most organized components of the popular sector, labor takes on special importance for autocrats due to its ability to strengthen or undermine the legitimacy of the authoritarian state.

Given its economic and political importance, the task of controlling organized labor is of paramount significance to authoritarian regimes. Yet, the issue of control is complex, and autocrats can select from a diverse range of strategies in efforts to contain the labor threat. On one end of the spectrum, authoritarian leaders may attempt to contain the labor movement through the incorporation of organized labor — that is, the inclusion of unions within the political system through the provision of channels for the representation of worker's interests. Here, the central goal is to preempt labor activism by linking unions to the state and directing labor demands into the formal political arena. As Collier and Collier aptly note, by providing institutional structures for the expression of dissent, autocrats aim to "take the labor question out of the street", thereby permitting the peaceful resolution of labor disputes (1991, 7).

In contrast, on the other end of the spectrum, autocrats may adopt a policy of containment which entails the suppression and marginalization of the working-class. Here again, the central goal is the prevention of labor activism, yet the method is isolationist rather than incorporative. In excluding unions from the public sphere, autocrats hope to diminish their economic and political strength, thereby disabling organized labor from serving as a significant source of opposition to the regime.

It is important to note that the above strategies, while opposite, are not mutually exclusive and that in any given regime, autocrats may vacillate between different methods of control, or pursue a hybrid strategy that combines both isolationist and incorporative elements. However, for heuristic purposes of analysis, it is useful to conceive of containment strategies as divided into two ideal types: inclusionary (associated with labor incorporation) and exclusionary (associated with labor marginalization)¹². Thus, in the simplest terms, I argue that autocrats face a choice between two distinct policy options: an inclusionary containment strategy and an exclusionary one.

In selecting between these strategies, political leaders set into motion key transformations concerning the structure of industrial relations and, particularly, the institutional opportunities available for labor representation and dissent under authoritarian rule. Where dictators pursue an inclusionary strategy, they facilitate the creation of meaningful channels to express labor interests, actively encouraging labor incorporation in the formal institutions of the state. By contrast, where autocrats adopt exclusionary strategies, they foreclose opportunities for the representation of labor interests, forcing unions to exist on the periphery of institutionalized politics.

In conceptualizing the difference between labor inclusion and exclusion in this study, I focus on a number of institutions through which labor interests can be expressed. These vary from traditional corporatist institutions that govern industrial relations — work councils, labor-related committees, and tripartite bargaining arrangements — to broader political institutions such as executive cabinets and legislative bodies. In the empirical chapters of the dissertation, I take pains to quantify labor's level of institutional incorporation by offering statistics on the extent to which labor representatives are included within the aforementioned bodies. However, in general, it is assumed that labor unions with access to fewer of these institutional channels for representation are operating under conditions of state-exclusion.

¹² In his 1982 presidential address to the American Political Science Association, (later reprinted in article form in 1983), Seymour Martin Lipset identifies a potential third strategy of labor control, in which regime leaders recognize *de jure* the legal existence of the union movement, but engage in *de facto* exclusion and repression of organized labor. As we shall see this more accurately describes the control strategy adopted by Tunisian leaders with respect to the UGTT, although in this analysis such policies are considered as fitting under the “exclusionary containment strategy” umbrella.

In sum, I argue that the selection of a containment strategy represents a critical juncture from which authoritarian institutions and the variants of labor politics they engender ultimately diverge. By creating different institutional channels for the representation of labor interests, these strategies profoundly affect the character of industrial relations, generating serious consequences for unions' development and behavior. In the sections that follow, I discuss how divergence in autocrats' labor incorporation policies impact unions' strategies, alliances, and internal organization, linking these effects to unions' overall propensity to engage in political mobilization.

Short-Term Legacies: Strategies of Contention

The immediate effects of variation in labor incorporation policies on patterns of union protest are evident in the strategies, whether militant or moderate, that unions adopt to advance their demands in authoritarian politics. To recall the definitions presented in Chapter 1, militant protest in the context of this study refers to "noisy" protest actions, such as strikes and riots which disrupt production lines or governance, while moderate protest refers to the use of "quiet" strategies like negotiation and intra-elite bargaining to make demands. In general, exclusive policies of labor incorporation are expected to radicalize workers' strategies, forcing them to seek more militant forms of mobilization, while inclusive policies are expected to moderate unions' tactics by increasing their use of institutional channels for dissent.

The rationale behind this expectation is rooted in the strategic nature of contention, discussed previously in this dissertation's introduction. When confronted with the opportunity to engage in opposition, actors calculate the costs and benefits of different modes of mobilization, selecting the strategy most likely to maximize the returns from activism while minimizing the costs and risks (Olson 1965). Yet, for labor organizations incorporated into formal politics, this optimal strategy is often to work within existing institutional channels to make demands, given the low cost of "within-system" opposition relative to popular protest. Indeed, within formal institutions, unions

can learn about the regime's intentions and obtain concessions without having to sustain the material and physical costs of mobilizing the rank-and-file. Moreover, because institutionalized dissent adheres to the norms set out by the regime, unions working within these channels to make claims can avoid precipitating the kinds of punishment associated with independent activism (Lust Okar 2005; Robertson 2011). Finally, by participating in formal institutions, unions can more readily secure credible commitments from authoritarian leaders. Because institutions allow opposition to monitor regime behavior and punish defection, they disincentivize autocrats from renegeing on agreements, making it more likely that contention yields successful results (Boix and Svobik 2013). Significantly, certain institutions such as legislatures can reduce long-term uncertainty over whether labor will be included in future negotiations with the government, for the simple reason that overriding or closing these institutions can be costly for the regime (Gandhi 2008).

Conversely, where institutional channels for the expression of labor interests are limited, unions operate as political outsiders and employ more confrontational methods of demand-making and dissent. Here, labor militancy emerges not as an optimal strategy but as a last resort — absent institutional avenues for demand-making, unions are forced to rely on more costly, extra-institutional methods of opposition such as protest and “street mobilization” to relay their concerns to the state. Critically, the lack of formal channels for dissent further serves to radicalize unions’ strategies by precipitating the intensification of labor demands. As Valenzuela highlights, syndically harsh environments¹³, “generate a greater accumulation of pent-up resentments and demands among workers, which can lead... to a singularly strong wave of strikes and demonstrations” (1989, 458). Thus, paradoxically, by restricting opportunities for institutional representation, exclusionary authoritarian regimes breed the types of mobilization that they are designed to prevent, producing

¹³ According to Valenzuela, syndical “harshness” or “mildness” refers to, “the extent to which the authoritarian regime limits the channels for the expression of collectively formulated worker grievances, for labor actions, and for effective labor input into the process of collective bargaining” (1989, 457). Thus, a “syndically harsh environment” is logically equivalent to a setting in which leaders adopt exclusionary incorporation policies.

unions who pursue more opposition modes of protest precisely *because* they lack the institutional access necessary to make their demands heard peacefully.

Medium-Term Legacies: Political Coalitions

The variations in labor incorporation policies that influences unions' strategies also shape another key aspect of their development — namely, the coalitions they build with external political actors.

According to Frege and Kelly, coalition-building is an essential component of labor mobilization — in the broad literature on labor politics, coalitions have been shown to positively impact unions' strength in organizing (Frege and Kelly 2003), success in collective bargaining (Nissen 1999; 2003; 2004), and achievements in labor-reform negotiations (Kim 2011). On an instrumental level, alliances between unions and other social/political partners contribute to unions' development by increasing their financial and physical resources, providing expertise and influence, and attracting new bases of support for labor demands. Most important, by wedding labor agendas to those of external actors, coalitions create significant change in the unions themselves, often serving as a site for the renegotiation and reconstitution of unions' interests and preferences (Tattersall 2005)¹⁴.

Investigating labor's alliances then, constitutes an essential step in analyzing unions' protest behavior. However, like strategies, coalitions do not develop *sua sponte*, rather, they are conditioned by the institutional environments in which they are embedded. Different institutional arrangements allow for varying levels of interaction between labor and political actors, facilitating the development of some coalitions, while rendering others unlikely or even impossible to form.

Drawing from the patterns of institutionalization discussed previously, we can identify two principal types of coalition formation in labor politics. In the first type, occurring when labor is incorporated within representative institutions, unions develop alliances with other institutionalized political actors such as regime elites and recognized political parties. Particularly within legislatures,

¹⁴ This is especially true when unions form coalitions with parties; as Brownlee observes: “parties do not merely transmit societal concerns: They create an arena in which those perspectives are renegotiated and reconciled” (2007, 203)

the exigencies of electoral politics deposit strong incentives for the development of party union linkages. For parties, the necessity of winning legislative seats to secure political influence drives elites to seek alliances with union leaders, upon whom they rely to deliver political support from the working class (Collier and Collier 1991; Murillo 2001; Robertson 2004; Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006). Similarly, for unions, the desire to extract greater concessions from the regime may motivate the development of partisan ties as larger, more stable coalitions within parliaments stand a better chance of successfully challenging authoritarian leaders (Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Reuter 2013).

Once formed, these political coalitions exert powerful influence over unions' mobilization, serving to moderate labor agendas and divert elites' interests away from political activism. As the historical experiences of labor movements in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia show, alliances between unions and parties have critically shaped labor behavior, leading unions to restrain worker militancy and pursue more moderate agendas in labor-reform negotiations (Levitsky and Way 1998; Burgess 2004; Etchemendy 2004; Avdagic 2005; Cook 2007; Kim 2011). Here the core reasoning revolves around the clientelist exchange that occurs between parties and unions within the formal political process. As the principal agents that aggregate, represent and articulate social preferences in politics, parties mediate unions' interests to the state, using their political influence to secure more favorable labor laws, welfare agreements and macroeconomic policies. In return, unions are expected to refrain from militant actions and provide support to the party in electoral contests and matters of governance. Notably, over time, the shared norms and expectations generated from these exchanges coalesce into bonds of loyalty between unions and their partisan allies, allowing party elites to leverage the delivery of benefits in the present to ensure labor quiescence over the long-term (Burgess 2004). In this sense, the rationale behind the effects of partisan alliances reflects the conventional wisdom of economic explanations discussed in Chapter 1 — in exchange for material benefits for the working-class, unions refrain from political militancy and encourage cooperation with the extant regime.

However, even when parties are too weak to substantially influence policy or economic constraints inhibit the delivery of compensational benefits to the entire working-class, partisan alliances may still moderate labor demands by co-opting union elites. In addition to general economic concessions, parties can offer a number of selective inducements to labor leaders including party appointments, government sinecures, and other financial and career perks (Robertson 2004; Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006). With the aid of these benefits, union elites can reduce uncertainty about their personal welfare, learning to rely on partisan ties rather than policy concessions to secure their economic well-being. This, in turn, incentivizes union leaders to restrict political activism within union ranks, as elite dependency on party-allocated benefits creates a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. As McAdam confirms, political action by incorporated elites reflects an “abiding conservatism” which encourages co-opted members to “resist changes which would threaten the current realization of their interests even more than they seek changes which would enhance their interests” (Tilly quoted in McAdam 1999, 38). Thus, we should expect unions with partisan allies to exhibit low levels of political mobilization, as partisan linkages discourage union elites from pursuing demands that would disrupt the existing system of power at the risk of their own privileged positions¹⁵.

By contrast, when autocracies fail to offer formal avenues for the representation of labor interests, unions struggle to build systematic relationships with established parties and continue to develop outside of institutionalized politics. This does not mean, however, that labor cannot develop alliances — as I shall argue, they can and often do — but rather that, like the unions that create them, coalitions are likely to include political “outsiders” who have been excluded from formal

¹⁵ Although this argument suggests that partisan loyalties will be the chief constraint on labor elites’ actions, other scholars note that in decision-making union leaders face a “dual dilemma” in which they must balance their loyalty to partisan allies with their duty to uphold the demands of their constituency in the rank-and-file (Valenzuela 1989, 1992; Burgess 2004). According to Burgess, how labor leaders respond to this dilemma will depend largely on the relative punishing power of partisan elites versus rank-and-file workers — where the rank-and-file has significant power to remove coopted leaders, union elites will exercise less restraint and lend more support to worker demands. However, as I will argue in the next section of this chapter, external alliances affect how much leaders are willing to invest in developing internally democratic structures and vertical accountability with the rank and file, so partisan alliances should still diminish their willingness to engage in politically-motivated protest behavior.

politics. Here, autocrats' method for containing generalized political opposition becomes important, as the relative closure or openness of the political system plays a critical role in determining labor's coalition options. On the one hand, if autocratic governments allow for institutional representation of all political actors save labor — a rare case indeed — the possibility of establishing external political alliances is virtually non-existent, forcing unions to rely exclusively on internal support from the rank-and-file to achieve their goals. On the other hand, if institutionalized politics are closed to multiple types of political opposition, labor unions may find partners among other marginalized groups, particularly radical social movements and repressed political organizations (Valenzuela 1989; Lee 2011).

As with party-union linkages, the presence of outsider-coalitions between unions and excluded political actors has a profound impact unions' interests and, consequently, their disposition towards political mobilization. Yet, in contrast to partisan alliances, outsider-coalitions are expected to radicalize union agendas, encouraging unions to adopt more militant and politicized forms of protest. This occurs for two key reasons. First, and most directly outsider coalitions precipitate the politicization of union protest by allowing opposition groups to openly influence union agendas to promote more radical, political demands. As Tattersall argues, within coalitions, alliances partners do not simply exchange physical and material resources, they also develop shared strategies, decision-making processes and organizational structures (2005, 100-105). As a result, when unions form alliances with excluded social groups, opposition elites and social movement leaders come to occupy influential positions within union leadership¹⁶, in turn, gaining significant discretion over unions agendas and mobilization tactics. With this influence, opposition leaders can essentially “capture” union agendas to reflect their own personal and political concerns. Notably, because institutional channels for voicing dissent are limited, excluded political actors may be incentivized to employ

¹⁶ This phenomenon has been documented by Lipset in France and Spain, where he observes that “intellectuals or other upper-class radicals came to dominate the labor movement” due to these regimes' harshness towards both unions and opposition groups (Lipset 1983, 10-11).

union structures as a platform to vent their frustrations about the political system, using attendant protest mobilization to pursue broader political demands and exert pressure on the regime. In this way, outsider alliances explicitly politicize union protests by modifying the labor agendas to accommodate the demands of oppositional political actors.

Second, and more indirectly, outsider-coalitions may also radicalize union protest by facilitating issue bridging between labor organizations and opposition groups. Here, radicalization occurs not because opposition elites explicitly appropriate union agendas, but because frequent interaction between unions and opposition groups initiates a process of “cognitive liberation”¹⁷, in which worker’s come to see their grievances as part of a broader political struggle. In part, this is aided by the pervasiveness of political exclusion that characterizes closed regimes — as Lenin observed in Czarist Russia, “the yoke of autocracy appears to obliterate all distinctions between [an opposition movement] and trade unions because *all* workers’ associations and *all* circles are prohibited” (1973, 179, emphasis original). Because both unions and opposition groups are denied access to institutional channels for representation, organized labor is less likely to view its oppression as an isolated concern and more likely to see it as a systematic injustice precipitated by the current system of authoritarian rule. Thus, affecting change in its own condition requires labor to advocate for change of the entire political system, driving unions to adopt more radical, revanchist demands.

Notably, it is this process of cognitive liberation which resolves potential conflicts that may arise from external actors’ “capture” of union agendas, and which differentiates the dynamics of outsider coalitions from those of party-union linkages discussed above. In creating a sense of shared victimization between workers and opposition groups, cognitive liberation reduces the ideological differences between these actors, creating a sense of cohesion that is cemented by their common political and economic exclusion. As a consequence, the modification of union agendas by leaders

¹⁷ According to McAdam, cognitive liberation refers to the process by which members of an aggrieved group fashion shared understandings that undergird collective action. In particular, he argues that “before collective [action]... can get under way, people must collectively define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action” (McAdam 1982, 51)

originating outside of the labor movement appears to be less co-optive of unions' goals and more consistent with worker demands. Thus, cognitive liberation reconciles labor interests with those of opposition groups by enabling union actors to perceive their grievances in a broader political sense (Lipset 1983, Marks 1989).

Long-Term Legacies: Internal Organization

Finally, autocrats' mode of labor incorporation — whether inclusive or exclusive — has specific and enduring effects on the internal organization of the labor movement, impacting the nature of linkages that develop between union elites and members and, consequently, unions' capacity to mobilize for political protest. That unions' internal dynamics are a critical determinant of their protest behavior has been well established in the literature on industrial relations. Beginning with Shorter and Tilly's seminal study of political strikes in France, several scholars have highlighted the importance of indigenous organization in fueling labor activism, emphasizing the effects of such traits as leadership, membership commitment and internal bureaucracy in promoting labor militancy and success (Gordon et al. 1980; Klandermans 1986; Frege 2002). Likewise, studies of union behavior in authoritarian regimes have argued that features of internal organization explain the persistence of labor contention in “hostile” environments, as grassroots support provides unions with both the means to repeatedly mobilize collective action and the strength to resist attempts at state domination (Cook 1999).

What is less appreciated, however, is how unions' internal dynamics are influenced by their external political environment, and how the interaction between unions' internal and external relations shape their ultimate paths of mobilization. Building upon the preceding discussion, I argue that labor's external alliances, conditioned by its institutional incorporation, produce patterned differences in unions' internal organization and trajectories of opposition. Whereas the formation of party-union linkages is expected to produce unions with oligarchical bureaucracies which reduce

their effectiveness in protest organization, outsider-coalitions generate incentives for the creation of participatory forms of unionism, which facilitate political mobilization by strengthening democratic accountability between union members and elites and reducing threats of state co-optation.

The adverse effects of partisan alliances on unions' internal development stem from the ways in which party-union linkages structure elite incentives in labor politics. As noted previously, by providing union leaders with a mechanism through which they can acquire selective benefits and secure their personal welfare, partisan alliances generate incentives among union elites to eschew political militancy and support the status quo. Yet, at the same time, by creating dependent relationships between labor leaders and party sponsors, such linkages reduce elite incentives to invest in internal organization — as McAdam notes, a “special danger” of elite alliances is their likelihood of diverting attention away from indigenous networks of support which can “serve as a hedge against the vagaries of elite sponsorship” (1982, 28). Indeed, in driving union elites to rely upon union external sources for survival and support, partisan alliances pose three interrelated dangers to union organization which serve to undermine internal cohesion and diminish unions' capacity to mobilize.

The first danger is that of oligarchization, that is, the concentration of power in the hands of a minority of an organization's leaders. As Tilly notes, one side effect of political incorporation is that established “members” of the political system, “fight tenaciously against the loss of power... they work against admission... of contenders whose very admission would challenge the system in some serious way” (1978, 135). As a result, labor leaders benefitting from inclusion into the formal political process will work to restrict access to leadership positions, creating obstacles to entry to maintain incumbency advantage and protect elites' positions of privilege. Particularly in cases where rank-and-file members exhibit more militant ideologies than current leaders, elites may intervene specifically to reduce rank-and-file influence over union decision-making by enacting measures which create distance between union leaders and their constituent base. These measures can vary widely, but may include the modification of legislation regarding union administration, the

restriction of member representation in governing bodies, and/or the delay of union congresses. Regardless of the measure chosen, however, the consequences of oligarchization for unions' internal organization are the same: the weakening of vertical accountability between members and unions elites and the disempowerment of the rank-and-file (Korkut 2003, 2006; Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006).

Related to the danger of oligarchization is that of co-optation, which has been treated previously and thus warrants little further elaboration here. However, one key insight does bear repeating: by creating cliency networks between unions and partisan elites, party-union linkages induce union leaders to promote conservative agendas that *may deviate from the preferences of their members*, generating significant dislocations between union elites and the rank-and-file. Under normal circumstances, these dislocations need not prove fatal to unions' internal organization — as several scholars note, union elections typically resolve elite-member conflicts by providing rank-and-file constituents a means of punishing deviant behavior (Valenzuela 1992; Levitsky and Way 1998; Murillo 2000; Burgess 2004). Yet, critically, the aforementioned danger of oligarchization impedes precisely this type of corrective retribution. Where vertical accountability is low or absent, the autonomy of union elites permits leaders to enact policies that favor themselves, even to the detriment of the rank-and-file, with relative impunity. As a result, co-optation breaks stark divisions between union members and elites, which undermines unions' internal cohesion and weakens solidarity within the labor movement. In this way, the combination of oligarchical bureaucracy and cooptation produced by partisan alliances diminishes unions' capacity for political opposition, as unions' lack the organizational cohesion necessary to sustain collective action.

The final danger to union organization posed by partisan alliances, the dissolution of indigenous membership, emerges as a natural consequence of the first two dangers. Denied voice within union bureaucracy as well as the opportunity to change the system from within, rank-and-file workers become disaffected from union membership and, consequently, rationally pursue options for

exit (Hirschman 1970; Klandermans 1986). Although, formally unions may continue to survive with the aid of partisan sponsorship, organizationally, these unions will be significantly weakened, as mass defections diminish unions' internal strength and capacity to mobilize. Notably, as labor's capacity for collective action decreases, union leaders will come to depend even more heavily on partisan linkages for support, as they can no longer deploy organizational muscle to exert political power and secure concessions from the government. Thus, the defection of indigenous members completes the vicious cycle whereby partisan coalitions inhibit labor's political militancy, as it reinforces unions' reliance on institutional channels, governed by the state, to gain influence under authoritarian rule.

In contradistinction, where labor lacks political partnerships — or where its coalition partners are limited to marginalized social groups — the absence of influential allies within the formal political system incentivizes union leaders to rely more heavily on internal networks for survival and support. Here, elite's incentives to invest in internal organization arise from the recognition that, under conditions of exclusion, union leaders cannot depend upon external resources to secure their well-being, but rather must create their own on the basis of indigenous support (Reshef 2001). While “outsider” allies may provide limited resources in terms of material and human capital, ultimately, the marginality of these actors within the political and economic spheres prevents such groups from serving as a consistent source of support for elite objectives or from sustaining elites' welfare over the long-term. Thus, in order to reliably obtain influence and power in the political system, union elites must turn inward, using rank-and-file support to bolster their positions vis-a-vis the state.

Like partisan alliances, the development of indigenous linkages between union elites and members has a significant effect on unions' internal modes of organization which, in turn, critically impacts their ability to engage in political protest behavior. Yet, in contrast to partisan ties which generate oligarchical bureaucracies that reduce unions' capacity for protest mobilization, the

development of internal support networks lays the foundation for a distinct form of organization — that of internal democracy¹⁸ — which facilitates unions’ political militancy. As Moody notes, “the activation of union members... is interwoven with the question of union democracy and leadership accountability” (1998, 277). In order to induce rank-and-file members to devote the necessary time and resources to support union goals, elites must provide their constituents with a measure of influence upon union agendas, both at the bargaining and broader social level. In the most basic sense, this means that union leaders must establish statutory procedures through which rank-and-file members can exercise their power in union administration — for example, by allowing members to propose candidates for union leadership, vote regularly for union officials, and, at least nominally, hold unsatisfactory leaders accountable through the exercise of constitutional constraints on union elites.

However, to be truly effective, union efforts to engage the rank-and-file must go beyond the simple creation of procedural mechanisms of democratic accountability; indeed, for such procedures to function properly, they must be supported by a union culture that encourages active member participation and emphasizes rank-and-file voice and rights (Strauss 1991; Jarley et al. 2000, Morris and Frosh 2000). Thus, in addition to providing the basic foundations for rank-and-file engagement, unions must also establish the conditions for participatory democracy, which includes, among other things, granting local autonomy to regional offices, including union members in policy debates, and creating channels of communication between union leaders and their constituent base (Levi et al., 1009).

¹⁸ Although definitions and measurements of internal democracy vary widely in the literature, the most basic definition is “control by the governed”, that is control by union members however expressed (Seidman 1958; Hochner et al 1980). Below I specify the definition of union democracy to be used in this study which combines internal democracy in its procedural representative form with a participatory element that allows rank-and-file members control over union agendas. This definition resonates with several studies on union democracy which emphasize the importance of representativity, leadership competition/accountability, and membership control in fostering a democratic union environment (see Martin 1968, Strauss 1991, and Levi et al. 2009, for useful reviews of the literature on union democracy).

By creating participatory structures which link union elites to members of the rank-and-file, I argue that internal democracy facilitates unions' political mobilization in three key ways. First, democratic organization strengthens leadership accountability, increasing the likelihood that unions pursue more radical, transformative goals. As the early works on union democracy discern, a key barrier to protest militancy is the absence of membership control over union decision-making — where workers are permitted to influence labor agendas, unions exhibit higher propensities to strike (Parnes 1956), greater intransigence in bargaining (Wolfe 1985), and more subversive, anti-capitalist agendas (Stepan-Norris and Zeitlen 1995). Although recent scholarship has questioned some of the theoretical foundations of this work, suggesting that rank-and-file workers may have systematically more moderate preferences than their leaders (Baccaro 2001), the general consensus in the literature on labor politics supports the conventional wisdom, demonstrating that unions are more radically militant when democratic procedures allow members to hold leaders' actions to account (Scipes 1992; Voss and Sherman 2000; Murillo 2001; Burgess 2004; Hirschsohn 2007; Levi et al. 2009).

Moreover, with reference to political militancy in specific, internal democracy and leadership accountability play a critical role in bringing political issues to the forefront of the labor agenda by allowing local unions more control over elite decision-making and union goals. According to Jonas, the union local is an important site for resistance and political action — because local unions retain stronger ties to community organizations and citizens, they are more likely to advance broader demands that resonate with the needs of the communities in which they are embedded (Jonas 1998, 331). Thus, where union leaders are responsive to local prerogatives, this type of “political localism” can scale-up to the national level, transforming union agendas to include more radical socio-political goals.

Second and relatedly, internal democracy may also support unions' political militancy by helping unions to safeguard against co-optation and state domination. As noted previously, where union bureaucracies are hierarchical and undemocratic, the co-optation of elites is a serious concern

— without effective mechanisms of vertical accountability, union leaders may be tempted to pursue more moderate agendas driven by external sponsors rather than the wishes of the rank-and-file. Yet in democratic organizations, the temptation to succumb to external pressures is greatly reduced, as members' punishing power disincentivizes union elites from deviating from worker-centered demands. Consequently, union elites in democratically organized unions are more likely to sustain political militancy; as Wolfe highlights, where participatory democratic structures are in place, union leaders are less able to exercise "social control" over their members, leading to the adoption of more radical demands (1985, 425). Furthermore, democratic organization may protect organized labor from government repression, thereby supporting political mobilization by allowing unions to sustain militant protest (Cook 1997).

Finally, internal democracy facilitates political militancy by strengthening labor solidarity, providing unions with the internal cohesion and capacity necessary to sustain radical protest campaigns. Indeed, if the consequences of oligarchical bureaucracy are anomie and isolation of the rank-and-file, the effects of union democracy are precisely the opposite. By providing rank-and-file workers with mechanisms (such as voting or open policy debates) through which they can interact with union elites, democratic unions forge closer ties between these traditionally disparate groups, reducing the "vertical social distance" between leaders and members which undermines internal cohesiveness (Mannheim 1956, 180-81; Lipset et al 1962, 260). Moreover, through repeated interactions, union members develop a stronger sense of identification with union leadership, developing a common political consciousness which can be activated to promote radical protest action (Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1995). Most important, by encouraging membership engagement in union affairs, democratic organization fosters a stronger sense of dedication to the union as a whole, increasing unions' capacity to mobilize. As Levesque et al note, where workers actively participate in union administration, they report higher levels of commitment to labor goals, in part because such agendas are perceived as products of member's own choosing (2005, 412).

Consequently, within participatory democratic unions, workers should be better able to overcome their free rider instincts, creating an atmosphere where workers are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to support militant action. Thus, where unions establish and institutionalize democratic practices we should expect that they will be more likely to engage in militant protest as these groups display higher levels of worker consciousness and capacity for collective action that can be used to support political mobilization.

Conclusion

The previous discussion has outlined a new theory of labor protest, focusing on the role that formal institutions play in shaping national patterns of labor mobilization. In it, I argued that organized labor's protest behavior emerges largely as a function of its inclusion into or exclusion from representative institutions, which offer unions and workers both a means to express their grievances to the state and an arena for forming political coalitions with partisan partners. I contend that where labor is incorporated into representative structures, coalition building between unions and partisan elites undermines political activism by co-opting the interests of union elites and diminishing vertical accountability between union leaders and the rank-and-file. Conversely, where labor is alienated from formal institutions, unions form coalitions with excluded social groups and rank-and-file workers, which support political mobilization by radicalizing labor agendas and enhancing solidarity within the labor movement.

In short, the theoretical framework advanced in this chapter stresses the importance of politics in understanding unions' mobilization patterns. Although macro-level economic conditions and organizational features constitute important factors in gauging unions' potential capacities and interests in collective action, ultimately these potentials are actualized within an institutional environment, which provides important constraints and opportunities on labor action. Like organizational perks and material benefits, institutions can serve as powerful mechanisms of co-

optation, inducing unions to support the political status quo despite declines in workers' economic conditions. Moreover, unions' institutional environments have a significant impact on their internal organizational dynamics, providing additional possibilities for labor's path between militancy and moderation. Thus, an appreciation of unions' institutional environments is necessary to develop an explanation for their protest behavior. Without disclosing the interactions between labor actors and their broader political context, we cannot fully grasp the causal paths that lead to national variations in the trajectories of labor politics.

PART II: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Chapter 3

AUTHORITARIAN CONTROL AND POLITICAL COALITIONS: COMPARING MOROCCO AND TUNISIA

“Whether they liked it or not, unions became political...”
- Seymour Martin Lipset

This chapter begins the empirical investigation of divergent protest patterns in Tunisia and Morocco by examining the political conditions faced by labor unions in both countries before the inauguration of neoliberal reforms in the early- to mid- 1970s. Among potential cases for comparison, Tunisia and Morocco are a rare set of countries who share several similarities in their paths of political and economic development. As mentioned previously, both countries spent most of the first half of the 20th century under French colonial domination, and inherited many of their political and economic institutional structures, including traditions of labor organization, under French rule. In 1956, after relatively brief independence struggles led by native intellectuals, bourgeoisie, and workers, dictators rose to power and began initiating vast reforms to the current political and economic climate in order to consolidate power and establish order over the new polity. Owing to the influence of working-class movements, following independence, regimes in both countries pursued an economic policy of “state capitalism”, in which moderate efforts to encourage local entrepreneurship and investment were combined with marked state intervention in key manufacturing and export industries.

However, despite broad similarities in their trajectories of political and industrial development, authoritarian’s specific strategies to contain political, and more specifically, labor opposition varied. Because of their unique constraints regarding domestic conditions, autocratic regimes in Tunisia and Morocco devised and relied on varying methods of incorporation and exclusion to contain labor and political protest. While in Tunisia, the Bourguiba regime relied

heavily on a combination of heavy repression and gradual exclusion of labor elites, in Morocco, Mohammed V and his successor Hassan II relied on a largely incorporative strategy meant to integrate union leaders into key state and partisan institutions. In this chapter, I specify these different labor control methods and analyze how they shaped the institutional and political context in which labor operated, ultimately influencing unions willingness and capacities for protest over the long-term. Here the analytical focus is centered around three main themes: 1) an overview of authoritarian's labor control strategies and how they impacted labor's relationship with the state, 2) an examination of how policies intended to contain political dissent more generally affected the development of other political groups (parties and social movements) and, particularly, the nature of their relationship with labor unions, and 3) how the political coalitions developed between unions and these actors (the state, parties, and social movements) affected labor actors' perceptions and capacities as they entered the neoliberal period.

The chapter thus proceeds as follows. In each of the two main sections (devoted to a discussion of political conditions in Tunisia and Morocco respectively), I begin with a brief discussion of labor unions' pre-independence origins which outlines their initial development during the French colonial period as well as their significance and contributions to the nationalist struggle for independence. It then proceeds to discuss the political dilemmas faced by dictators in their attempts to secure control over political forces in newly independent states and the varying strategies they adopted to contain potential opposition from labor and political challengers. Finally, I discuss the impact of these strategies on labor's perceptions and capacities and particularly on their ability to build meaningful coalitions with the state and other political actors (political parties and pro-democracy movement groups). Overall the goal of the chapter is to demonstrate how strategies developed by autocrats to contain labor mobilization in these two countries produced institutional environments which offered diverging possibilities and limitations for labor protest as they moved into the period of neoliberal reform.

Tunisian Labor in the Pre-Independence Era

Colonial Origins of Tunisian Unionism

In contrast to most trade unions in the Middle East, the labor movement in Tunisia predates the development of the modern state. Indeed, it was under the influence of French colonial rule that Tunisian workers first coalesced into a formal wage earning class and became acquainted with the traditions of labor organization. In 1881, when the French first arrived in Tunisia, most indigenous workers were still embedded in pre-capitalist modes of production, with only a small portion of the labor force working outside of the agriculture and handicrafts industries. However, as European investment into mines, ports, and commercial infrastructure in Tunisia grew, so too did the size of the native working class. According to estimates, by 1926, the indigenous labor force comprised over 65,000 employees¹⁹, over half of which were concentrated in manufacturing sectors such as mining, fishing and transportation (Hermassi 1966, 15).

Moreover, it was due to the efforts of French and Italian workers that Tunisians were first introduced to formal labor organization. Indeed, the significant presence of European workers within the protectorate initially proved a boon to Tunisian syndicalism, as expatriate workers brought with them established traditions of union organizing and demands for the legal protections they enjoyed at home. Although official legislation guaranteeing labor rights was not passed until 1932, by 1919, European workers had established the first trade union federation on Tunisian soil, the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), and in a series of joint strikes with Tunisian workers had won a number of significant concessions including an eight-hour workday and the application of numerous collective conventions. Through these syndical activities, Tunisian workers gained an appreciation of

¹⁹ Note that this number does not include agricultural workers (which numbered 319,000 persons, 99% of which were native Tunisians) or day workers (which totaled 121,000) workers. According to Hermassi, overall 72% of Tunisian workers were employed in agriculture, 8% in industry and 20% in services (Hermassi 1966, 12-15).

the benefits of labor organization and developed an awareness of how militant tactics could be used to achieve their own demands for better working conditions and equitable pay. Further, the partial integration of native Tunisians into union structures²⁰, endowed indigenous workers with an aptitude for mobilization, which eventually enabled them to establish all-Muslim docking, mining, and agricultural unions (Eqbal 1978, 57). As labor activist Tahar Haddad noted of Tunisia's experiences within the CGT,

“Tunisian workers were not confined to being observers. They participated in strikes, in the organization and expansion of unions, and attended meetings... Their [the CGT leaders] work had an important influence on the spirit of Tunisian workers who broke away from their past history of being content with the existing state of affairs” (Haddad 1925, 47).

However, despite this positive influence, the existence of the CGT did not prove to be an unequivocal benefit to the Tunisian working class. While European workers were content to involve Tunisians in union affairs so long as their participation served leaders' self-interested objectives, they were unwilling to support native workers in even their most basic of demands. Tunisians' call for the recognition of Muslim holidays, for example, went almost entirely unnoticed by CGT leaders and European workers openly opposed a campaign to equilibrate salaries between European and indigenous employees²¹. Moreover, many Tunisians claimed they were subject to racist and discriminatory treatment at the hands of European leaders, leading them to resent foreign domination of the labor movement.

²⁰ Although indigenous Tunisians were largely discriminated against within the CGT, and bitterly complained the specific measures taken by the union to restrict native's access to leadership positions (for example, refusing to hold meetings in Arabic, electing union leaders by “colleges” rather than direct vote”, several Tunisians did participate actively in the union and a few held positions of leadership. One prominent leader was Mokhtar Ayari who was principal adjutant of Jouchim Durel and General Secretary of the Tramway Worker's Union.

²¹ Corporations ruled under the colonial administration regularly published different wage indices for workers based on their national origin, with French workers receiving the highest wages, Italian workers receiving slightly less, and indigenous workers receiving the lowest wages. Native Tunisian's demands for “equal pay for equal work” became even more pronounced after the passage of the Morinaud law, which gave non-French Europeans living in Tunisia equal protections as French citizens in the protectorate. (Hermassi 1966)

Ultimately, it was this discrimination and the grievances that it engendered which sparked the creation of Tunisia's first indigenous labor union in 1924. That year, following the refusal of French dockworkers in Marseilles to support Tunisians' demands for equal pay, labor militant Mohammed Ali founded the nation's first exclusively Tunisian trade union, the *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (CGTT), in Tunis. Although the federation was short-lived, due to fierce repression by the colonial regime, its impact on the trajectory of the Tunisian labor movement was enduring. To begin, its success in mobilizing a significant share of the indigenous working class demonstrated the viability of a Tunisian labor movement that existed outside the scope of French influence, paving the way for future efforts to revive autochthonous union organizations in 1937 and 1944. Most important, its commitment to defending Tunisian workers' interests in the face of colonial objections established the union as one of the forefathers of Tunisian liberation and endowed the movement with a nationalist character that would strongly influence the ideological orientations of Tunisian syndicalism in the post-World War II era.

The UGTT and the Struggle for an Independent Tunisia

If the experience of the CGTT set the stage for organized labor to become an important player in Tunisian history, it was its reincarnation in the UGTT that cemented its position as one of the foremost political actors in the nation. Established by Farhat Hached in 1946, in reaction to Tunisian discrimination and the influx of Communist forces within the CGT, the UGTT initially grouped three federations²², representing roughly 12,000 members of Tunisia's indigenous working class. Ideologically, it embraced both a reformist and nationalist mission and established early alliances with pro-independence actors such as the Neo-Destour party (PND), based upon the notion of a shared "struggle against colonialism and foreign capitalists" (Eqbal 1978, 120). Despite

²² These federations were: the Autonomous Union in the North (concentrating workers mainly in Tunis), the Autonomous Union in the South (concentrating workers in Gafsa) and the Federation of Tunisian Functionaries. In the first national congress of the UGTT, 58 local unions (29 from the South, 11 from the North, and 18 from the Federation of Functionaries) provided delegates (Eqbal 1978, 108)

intense competition from members of the CGT — who had regrouped under Communist influence to form their own autonomous trade union in 1946 — in the first three years of its existence, the union expanded rapidly, organizing workers from all sectors of economic activity and establishing branches in major industrial regions such as Sfax, Bizerte, and Gafsa (ibid, 110). By 1949, it had become the most structured and efficient organization in Tunisia with an estimated membership of nearly 85,000 activists.

A primary source of appeal for the UGTT during this period was its ability to effectively support indigenous workers in their struggle against the domination of the European capitalist class. In contrast to the CGT, which refrained from adopting the demands of its Tunisian members, the UGTT actively advocated for their interests and often succeeded in obtaining significant concessions. In August of 1947, the union organized a general strike in Sfax demanding a 40% increase in the salaries of Tunisian workers, and by February 1948 had secured a wage increase of 62.5% (Bessis 1974; Eqbal 1967, 114). Additionally, in a series of negotiations with the colonial government held in August of that year, the union won assurances on fifteen additional demands including legal provisions for a *Conseil de prud'hommes*, renewal of various collective conventions, and the provision of two million francs in compensation to victims of a strike (*Mission*, August 19, 1948). More generally, the union called for long-term improvements concerning grants for family allocations, government assistance in funding training programs for workers, and the creation of more opportunities for Tunisians to enter the civil service. Though these advocacy efforts, the UGTT drew attention to the economic plight of indigenous laborers and established itself as the chief representative of Tunisian workers both at home and abroad.

More important, the unions' involvement in the struggle for national independence drew widespread support from within the larger Tunisian society, effectively expanding the UGTT's appeal far beyond the working class. Following the footsteps of their predecessors, UGTT leaders explicitly adopted a nationalist orientation and undertook numerous domestic and international efforts to

promote the cause of national liberation. In the early years of its existence, several of the union's labor actions assumed nationalist undertones. The 1947 Sfaxien general strike, for example, was characterized by the French right as a "war on the [French] government", and touted by Tunisian unionists as "a matter of life or death, and the freedom to live well" (Achour 1981, 16-17). Furthermore, by the early 1950's the union began orienting its mobilization efforts specifically towards the nationalist cause launching general strikes in protest against the arrest of Neo-Destour leaders and organizing guerrilla activity in the nation's interior against colonial interests. This commitment to the nationalist movement was further solidified in January 1952, when colonial repression forced the withdrawal of the Neo-Destour from political life, making Farhat Hached the de-facto leader of the nationalist movement. Finally, internationally, the union used its public platform to press for Tunisian independence in forums with foreign partners like the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) (Riddel 1961, 12).

In leading the vanguard of both the class and nationalist struggles, the UGTT was rapidly elevated into the ranks of a key organization in the Tunisian political landscape. Of the domestic institutions existing in Tunisia at the time, the UGTT was the only organization outside of the Neo-Destour party that could lay claim to a membership of over 100,000 persons, representing nearly 4% of the working age²³ population. Such organizational strength made the union a major player in domestic politics, a role that was cemented by its participation in the 1955 Neo-Destour party congress²⁴. Most important, France's invitation to the union to serve as official interlocutor during negotiations for independence further highlighted its significance and won the union the position of "kingmaker" on an international scale.

²³ Based upon the calculation methods of the ILO, the "working age" population in 1956 consisted of all persons ten-years old or older (International Labor Office, ILOSTAT Database 2016).

²⁴ As described in more detail in the following section, the overwhelming participation of the UGTT in the Neo-Destour congress led to Bourguiba's consolidation of power within the party, and later, the nation-state.

In sum, the developmental trajectory of organized labor in Tunisia cannot be understood without an appreciation of its French colonial origins and its role as a principal actor in the nationalist movement for independence. The trade union's long-standing presence in Tunisia and militant advocacy for indigenous workers garnered support from the working class and transformed the UGTT from a small labor union to one of the nation's first mass organizations. At the same time, its substantial involvement in the nationalist struggle endowed it with a political legitimacy that predated, and even rivaled, that of the modern state. Although these factors would contribute significantly to the strength of organized labor in Tunisia as well as its position as a chief political actor, they would also make the union a clear target for state repression once independence had been achieved, as is demonstrated below.

Authoritarian Labor Control in Tunisia: Between Alliance and Exclusion

The achievement of independence from France marked a critical juncture in the history of Tunisian politics and the trajectory of state-labor relations in Tunisia. Although many of the state's institutions and bureaucratic infrastructure would be inherited from the colonial period, the regime that came into power under Habib Bourguiba faced the daunting task of reigning in the armed forces, regulating the economy, and cultivating a sense of allegiance to the new nation-state that would be headed by Bourguiba and his Neo-Destour Party.

Yet, as the last few years of the independence struggle had shown, the task of consolidating power around Bourguiba as a national leader would not be an easy one. Even before independence was achieved, Bourguiba faced significant challenges in his effort to position himself as the sole leader of the Tunisian nation. In 1955, a former aide-turned-party-rival, Salah Ben Youssef, openly opposed his plan for Tunisian autonomy and launched a campaign against him for secretary generalship of the Neo-Destour. Given Ben Youssef's popularity with the business-owning class and

urban youth, as well as his proven credibility as a national leader²⁵, this challenge represented a serious threat to Bourguiba who had only just begun to re-establish a popular base in Tunisia following his exile. In an effort to minimize Ben Youssef's notoriety within the party, Bourguiba had him expelled from the Neo-Destour and arranged an extraordinary party congress in Sfax to establish himself as the undisputed ruler of Tunisia. Although this strategy largely reflected Bourguiba's own incisiveness and political skill— as holding a surprise Congress in Sfax would clearly disadvantage Ben Youssef whose support based resided mostly in Tunis — interestingly, the success of this strategy would depend on the intervention of the UGTT. Having vowed to support Bourguiba in exchange for the Neo-Destour's adoption of its economic plan, the union's participation in the 1955 congress decisively swayed the vote in favor of Bourguiba, definitively placing him at the head of the party. Although it would take another two years before Bourguiba would become the exclusive head of the Tunisian state, the elimination of Ben Youssef represented a critical first step in establishing a monopoly over the nation's political landscape.

Beyond the Youssefist opposition, Bourguiba was also forced to contend with potential challengers within Tunisian civil society, chief among whom was the UGTT. During the early years of independence, containing the labor movement was of paramount importance to the Bourguiba regime. Not only had the union's contributions to the nationalist struggle won it a measure of legitimacy on par with that of Bourguiba himself, but its participation in the Franco-Tunisian negotiations for independence had given its leaders considerable political experience which made them well-equipped to assume political office. Organizationally, the union had amassed a cadre of almost 180,000 members, which it had already proven (once during the nationalist struggle and again during the 1955 Neo-Destour congress) could be effectively mobilized for political ends. Thus, the union's subordination to the regime was essential, even as it was in Bourguiba's interest to win its

²⁵ In addition to having served as the secretary-general of the Neo-Destour party during Bourguiba's absence from 1945-1949, Ben Youssef had also been critical in helping to create Tunisia's first business federation, the *Union Tunisien de l'Artisanat et du Commerce* (UTAC), and the farmer's federation, the *Union Générale des Agriculteurs Tunisiens* (UGAT) (Moore 1965, 63)

support to bolster his own political position. As Alexander notes, in devising a strategy to control organized labor, the state confronted the necessity of satisfying two distinct imperatives:

“[The Tunisian government] has tried to maintain the support of a union whose cooperation has been vital to the country’s economic development and the government’s stability. At the same time, however, it has tried to keep the UGTT from threatening the party’s political monopoly over the government’s development strategy...” (Alexander 1996, 181).

To this end, the Bourguiba regime pursued a two-pronged labor containment strategy that can be best described as a “checkered alliance” (Bellin 2000, 87). On the one hand, it employed a limited incorporation policy that was largely provisional and perfunctory. In the national legislative elections, the regime put forth an electoral list containing roughly two dozen unionists and awarded four key ministerial posts to labor leaders in the first post-independence government²⁶. UGTT members also obtained representation in a number of secondary executive institutions such as the National Planning Commission, the Social and Economic Council, and the Neo-Destour politburo.

However, despite the prestigious nature of these appointments, the measure of practical influence they afforded the union over national politics was severely limited. In the context of what had essentially become a presidential monarchy headed by Bourguiba, institutions outside of the direct purview of the executive failed to play a significant role in national decision-making. Despite hopes that the National Assembly would provide an arena for unionists to influence policy on behalf of their members, the 1959 constitution produced a weak assembly whose role in affecting politics was largely to “rubberstamp” executive decisions rather than to make laws independently or act as a check upon presidential power. Furthermore, the Social and Economic Council, which had ostensibly been established to allow union leaders to consult with the president on economic policies, was routinely sidestepped and addressed only after consultation had occurred within executive commissions (Moore 1965, 79). Finally, the politburo — arguably the most effective channel

²⁶ These posts were the Minister of Agriculture (Mustapha Filali), Minister of Public Works (Ezzedine Affasi), Minister of Post and Telegraph (Mahmoud Khiari) and Minister of Education (Lamine Chaabi).

through which the union could exercise political power due to its ability to execute party directives — carried real weight only on paper and was typically convened only at Bourguiba's specific request to legitimate presidential orders in times of crisis. Thus, union incorporation was largely symbolic, providing little to no true benefit to organized labor.

Moreover, alongside its limited incorporation policy, the regime employed a strict control strategy designed to undermine the influence of the UGTT and prevent it from mounting significant social and political opposition to the state. In general terms, labor containment strategies in Tunisia were enacted at three main levels — that of formal legislation, that of enterprise organization, and that of the union's internal bureaucracy. In the legislative arena, the Bourguiba regime betrayed its previous commitments to the UGTT by enacting labor laws that, while protecting the union's right to organize, failed to include provisions for several labor rights considered fundamental to effective union organization. The 1959 constitution, for example, made no mention of worker's rights to collective bargaining or their ability to establish unions within individual enterprises, instead leaving these matters to be adjudicated in future legislation (Eqbal 1978, 245-248; Toumi 1989, 33). Additionally, references to the right to strike, which had previously been described by Bourguiba as "sacred" a few years earlier, were completely absent from the text of the constitution as well as the 1966 labor code²⁷. Most critically, legislation promulgated in January 1959 introduced limitations on union organizing by excluding non-Tunisian workers from holding leadership positions in the UGTT and proscribing unions' engagement in political affairs (Moore 1965, 79). Although these measures were billed as supporting the government's policy of "Tunisification" in the civil service — a reform initially supported by the UGTT — the policy's ultimate consequence was to expel militant leaders from the union and weaken linkages between organized labor and political parties, setting a crucial linchpin in how organized labor in Tunisia would develop in the following decades. Denied

²⁷ In addition to failing to include a clause guaranteeing the right to strike, patronal allies in the National Assembly pressed for harsher punishments against strikers. According to a speech given by Bourguiba after an olive worker's strike in Sfax, strikes occurring before a proper appeal had been made to the government would henceforth be, "regarded as a crime against the state... The worker does not have the right to stop the country's economic machine, nor can he reject a verdict by a government because it does not please him" (Presidential speech, February 8, 1957).

the opportunity to form an organic alliance with the ruling party, the UGTT would adopt a stance of political neutrality in its internal organization and welcome members from a wide variety of ideological trends (Zghal 1998, 5).

At the level of the enterprise, the government created barriers to plant-level organization and, at times, actively intervened to discourage union affiliation among the working class. Social legislation introduced in 1960 giving managers greater discretion over hiring and firing decisions, for instance, dissuaded workers from joining unions by permitting employee dismissals on the basis of vague justifications such as “professional inadequacy” and “evident bad will” (Moore 1965, 172). Furthermore, the constitution’s failure to explicitly endorse enterprise unions (*syndicats*) rendered base union leaders especially vulnerable to employer reprisals, as these individuals enjoyed no official status or protections under the law (Alexander 1996, 114). As a result, conditions for workers inside individual enterprises were harsh and attempts to combat labor exploitation through strikes were often met with fierce repression by individual employers or state police (Appendix B: TU-2, 10/1/2013; TU-3, 10/3/2013). In several factories, these despotic shop-floor practices became the first source of worker’s political consciousness, generating tensions between employees and the state which failed to adequately protect them against employer abuses.

Perhaps the most damaging blow to plant-level organizing, however, came with the establishment of party-supervised “professional cells” within local enterprises. Originally created to coordinate resistance efforts between the UGTT and the nationalist movement at the height of French colonial repression, professional cells were essentially party-directed labor organizations tasked with overseeing the “political organization and education of workers” within individual enterprises. Following independence, however, these cells were largely used as a means to undercut the UGTT’s organizational strength and preempt worker mobilization in its most militant branches. In 1962, when the party began reviving professional cells in earnest, they proliferated in traditional

UGTT strongholds — Sfax, Tunis, and Gafsa²⁸ — typically as a warning to the union's more outspoken and popular leaders. Moreover, as these cells progressively began to assume trade union functions, they undermined the efficacy of advocacy efforts undertaken within the *syndicats*. In Tunis, for example, a professional cell partially satisfied construction workers' demands for increased production bonuses after having obtained a sizable government loan for a workers' building cooperative (Moore 1965, 169). Such actions drew the ire of UGTT leaders, who argued that the intervention of professional cells into trade union matters delegitimized local syndicates and frustrated union efforts to expand into weakly organized sectors such as agriculture and private enterprise (ibid; Achour 1981, 73).

Ultimately, however, the most serious government assault on the union was undertaken at the level of the UGTT's bureaucratic apparatus and principal leadership. As would become characteristic of its political style, the Bourguiba regime routinely interfered with the union's internal organization, using a combination of manipulation and direct intervention to neutralize the labor movement. Two episodes of confrontation between the state and union leaders illustrate this trend. The first, occurring in 1956, placed Bourguiba in direct conflict with Farhat Hached's successor as Secretary-General of the UGTT, Ahmed Ben Salah. A dynamic and popular leader, Ben Salah was a constant concern for Bourguiba, who saw in the unionist the makings of a formidable political opponent. Although the two began on good terms, as evidenced by Bourguiba's willingness to include Ben Salah in his first executive cabinet²⁹, they soon clashed over their conflicting visions for Tunisia's political and economic modernization. During a contentious union congress, Ben Salah called for the transformation of the political landscape through "organic participation" between the union and the Neo-Destour party, in a manner similar to that of Britain's Labor party (Eqbal 1978, 181). Rather than pursue parochial class interests, he suggested, the union should join forces with

²⁸ According to Eqbal, by mid-1962 the Neo-Destour party had established twelve professional cells in Tunis, seven in Sfax, and four in Gafsa (Eqbal 1978, 278)

²⁹ In the first cabinet Ben Salah occupied the position of Minister of Public Health.

the Neo-Destour to promote a “democratic social and economic program” centered on addressing the conditions of Tunisia’s economic backwardness and initiating modernizing reforms (ibid).

Fearing the potential subordination of his party to the UGTT, whose active membership at the time overlapped and outnumbered that of the Neo-Destour³⁰, Bourguiba moved to quiet Ben Salah and eliminate him from union life. Playing upon existing tensions between Ben Salah and rival union leader, Habib Ben Achour, Bourguiba encouraged Achour and his followers to split from the UGTT to form their own federation³¹, which he then promptly endorsed. Once Bourguiba threw his weight behind Achour, the UGTT Executive Bureau capitulated, appointing a new secretary general, Ahmed Tlili, to head the union and organizing a unity congress to be held under the supervision of the regime. The conditions outlined for reunification — that Ben Salah retire from the union and that UGTT ministers relinquish their trade union functions — could not have made Bourguiba’s motives more clear: he sought to effectively weaken the union and marginalize it within the political sphere. Ultimately, with Ben Salah’s departure from the UGTT, the regime achieved its goal. For the next several years after reunification, the UGTT would remain subordinate to the party, choosing to confine itself to performing “exclusively economic and social tasks” (ibid, 209).

Ironically, it was the performance of these very functions that would precipitate a second major confrontation between the regime and the UGTT a few years later in 1964. That year, conflict broke out between the union and the state over the former’s demands for increased wages to offset the effects of the country’s growing economic crisis. Under the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Bourguiba regime executed a 25% devaluation of the national currency (dinar), sparking an inflationary crisis which threatened to undercut citizens’ basic purchasing power. As workers had already suffered real wage losses due to the effects of wage blockages enacted from

³⁰ Although the Neo-Destour claimed roughly 350,000 members at the time to the UGTT’s 150,000, in truth it is likely that the party held no more than 80,000 true militants (Debbasch 1964)

³¹ This splinter federation, *l’Union Tunisien du Travail*, was created by seven UGTT dissidents on October 18, 1956. As of December 24th, the union reportedly lay claim to some 50,000 members not including workers in the civil service (*L’Action* 12/24/1956)

1955 to 1960, a decrease in purchasing power represented an untenable solution for the working class, many of whom would not be able to maintain a decent standard of living with even lower real wages.

Facing considerable pressure from the rank-and-file, the UGTT leadership issued a resolution insisting that labor support for devaluation be contingent upon salary increases for workers in all sectors of the economy. Such a demand brought the union into direct conflict with the Bourguiba regime, which perceived the union's stance as an affront to its political authority and the spirit of national consensus that it had worked to cultivate. Infuriated by this display of autonomy, Bourguiba denounced Achour and his supporters as "*khubzistes*" — bread-and-butter unionists who placed parochial economic interests above the well-being of the nation — and initiated a retaliatory campaign against the UGTT. In May of 1965, Achour was arrested on fabricated charges and replaced as Secretary-General by a known party loyalist, Bechir Bellagha. A few months later, the regime organized a special union congress which was intended to rid the union of its more militant leaders by filling election lists with party-approved alternatives. By July 1965, the purge of the UGTT was nearly complete — of the nine members of its Executive Bureau, only one member of the previous administration remained, and more than half of its regional and federal leaders were replaced by party affiliates. Emasculated for a second time, the UGTT had no choice but to accept a subordinate position in the single-party state; as Bellagha announced during a union press conference, under his tenure, the UGTT would adopt an orientation that was "identical to that of the party" and pursue full collaboration with the Bourguiba regime (Eqbal 1978, 299).

These episodes of conflict reflect the overall orientation of the Bourguiba regime vis-a-vis organized labor in Tunisia, namely to suppress union militancy through a combination of repressive and exclusionary practices. Although, on the surface, the government attempted to co-opt the UGTT by placing its leaders within a number of key institutions, ultimately, their participation was limited and perfunctory, offering the union no real influence or political power. In reality, in the

post-independence period, the government approached industrial relations with a clear anti-labor stance by enacting legal restrictions on worker activism, interfering in union affairs, and launching direct attacks against top UGTT leaders. These oppressive practices, meant to subjugate the union to the will of the regime, created tensions between the UGTT and the government and fostered a sense of mistrust among the working class. It was under these circumstances that organized labor in Tunisia began to form a consciousness about its political environment that would drive its future militancy during the neoliberal period.

Political Control in Tunisia: The Ossification of the Single-Party Regime

Yet labor was not the only group that suffered under the repressive domination of the Bourguiba regime. At the same time that the government maintained a blatant anti-labor policy against the UGTT, it also relied on despotic practices to eliminate political space for opposition parties and reformist elements within the single-party regime. Shaken by the Youssefist crisis, Bourguiba quickly moved to consolidate his position as Tunisia's exclusive political authority. In 1957, he quietly deposed the ruling bey and declared himself "Supreme Combatant" and leader of the Tunisian nation. Assuming the bey's full executive and legislative powers, he concentrated virtually all political authority in his hands by simultaneously making himself both the head of state (president) and the head of government (prime minister). In the 1956 Constituent Assembly elections, he ensured the dominance of the Neo-Destour party by adopting a majoritarian system which guaranteed that only party-list candidates — all of whom were selected with his approval — could win parliamentary seats. Finally, within the government, he adroitly eliminated all sources of potential opposition through the use of two legal provisions: the laws of "national indignity" and "ill-gotten gains". Taken together, these laws permitted Bourguiba to attack wealthy political rivals for their "collaboration with the Protectorate regime" and neutralize them by sentencing them to lengthy jail terms for their crimes (Moore 1965, 88-90). Through this method, Bourguiba was able to

marginalize several of the most prominent figures in Tunisia — Tahar Ben ‘Ammar, Salaheddine Baccouche, and Mohamed Salah Mzali — thus securing his legitimacy as the dominant force in Tunisian politics.

Moreover, within the Neo-Destour party itself, Bourguiba moved to concentrate power within the office of the party executive and reduce opportunities for intra-party opposition. On October 2, 1958, he launched an extensive set of reforms to the party’s internal organization, meant to centralize the party apparatus by giving Neo-Destour leaders in the government greater control over decision-making. At the structural level, party federations, whose officers had previously been elected by branch leaders, were replaced with regional offices, headed by commissioners selected by the party’s Politburo. Additionally, paralleling the government’s administrative structure, the party’s 1,800 branches were reduced to 1,000, representing one per district, in order to give local commissioners greater authority over party branches (Debbasch 1964, 37). At the procedural level, the timeline for holding party congresses was reduced to every three years instead of annually, and in practice, only one congress was held from 1956 to 1964. Finally, the representative bodies of the party — namely the National Council and Politburo — were stripped of their decision-making abilities and served chiefly as a means to support presidential prerogatives. Although National Council meetings were important political spectacles, they were held only sporadically and were typically utilized as a platform for Bourguiba to announce pre-determined policy objectives (Moore 1965, 116). Similarly, within the Political Bureau, the chain of command reflected the primacy of Bourguiba’s position as party president. According to party statutes, as president, Bourguiba was responsible for “watch[ing] over the activities of all party organs... [and] presid[ing] over meetings of the Political Bureau”, placing the Politburo in a subordinate position vis-a-vis the party leader. As noted by several observers, more than an executive arm of the party, the Politburo functioned as a legitimating body, allowing Bourguiba to publicly validate his political decisions and co-opt potential rivals through party appointments (ibid, 120).

Through this consolidation of party control, potential opposition within the Neo-Destour was immobilized. As Neo-Destour president, Bourguiba proved to be a despotic political leader, and his experience with Ben Youssef only confirmed his willingness to use autocratic means to eliminate his challengers. Indeed, when opposition emerged within the Neo-Destour in the late 1960s, dissenting voices were quickly muzzled, typically through Bourguiba's own efforts to remove contentious leaders by playing upon personal rivalries within the party. For example, when Ahmed Ben Salah — then reintegrated into the party as Politburo member and Minister of Economic Planning — challenged Bourguiba's authority by forcing the collectivization of agricultural land in spite of executive prohibitions, Bourguiba leaned on party elites opposed to Ben Salah's socialist agenda to publicly discredit him, and later strip him of his party and ministerial portfolios. Similar treatment was reserved for second party opponent, Ahmed Mestiri, whose vocal critiques of Bourguiba's patrimonial style of governance, led him to be replaced by rival political aspirant Hédi Nouria and permanently expelled from the party leadership. Ultimately, in efforts to maintain his party's facade as a "monument without cracks"³², in 1971 Bourguiba initiated a general purge of the Neo-Destour and later appointed himself in charge of selecting all eighteen of its chief officers.

Thus, by the early 1970s, all potential centers of opposition to the regime had effectively been removed. Yet, paradoxically, it was this very effort to forestall the emergence of opposition and, as noted earlier, to prevent connections between workers and political parties that contributed to the further politicization of organized labor in Tunisia. Indeed, the complete closure of representative institutions produced two unintended consequences for the regime. First, the lack of workplace institutions radicalized workers in the rank-and-file. Because they had no official channels to express their grievances vis-a-vis employers or the state, these groups became increasingly motivated to use militant protest and strikes to press for demands. Moreover, because state officials frequently

³² This expression was frequently used by Bourguiba to emphasize the importance of having a strong state. See Sorenson 2010, for more information on the use of this term.

colluded with employers to condone despotic shop-floor practices and labor repression, workers began to see the linkages between their economic exploitation and political oppression.

Second, regime insistence on a functional separation between the Neo-Destour and the UGTT gave this latter a measure of autonomy vis-a-vis the state. Although the Neo-Destour remained a strong presence in the union throughout its existence through shared membership and common leaders, the failure to establish organic linkages with the union allowed it to house a diverse array of constituencies from other political groupings and ideological trends. As a result, by the early 1970s, the UGTT was one of the most ideologically heterogeneous and independent organizations operating within Tunisia. As we shall see in the next chapter, this heterogeneity would pave the way for an alliance between organized labor and opposition movements when the closure of the political system made it impossible for opposition elites to operate freely within the regime.

In sum, the Bourguiba regime used a combination of repression and exclusion to control organized labor. While formally, the regime incorporated union leaders into governing structures through ministerial and political appointments, these positions were largely perfunctory and ultimately subordinated to presidential control. Moreover, outside of these structures, labor freedoms were harshly suppressed and unionized workers were offered little protection in the workplace or the polity. Combined with state intervention in union affairs, this exclusion served to radicalize the labor movement and intensify worker's grievances against the state. Further, the severity of political exclusion of opposition movements in general opened the union to leftist militants and disaffected party elites. It was these social forces that would contribute to the development of an independent and democratic labor movement that would impel the UGTT's political militancy. In the 1970s and 80s, this labor-opposition coalition would engage in a more radical form of labor militancy that combined traditional economic issues with explicitly political demands.

Moroccan Labor in the Pre-Independence Era

Colonial Origins of Moroccan Unionism

In Morocco, as in Tunisia, organized labor does not owe its debt of origin to the modern state. Rather the genesis of the labor movement came as result of external colonization, embodied by the establishment of the French protectorate in 1912. Prior to the arrival of the French, the traditional orientation of the Moroccan economy prevented the development of a unified working-class — as Benomar notes, in the pre-colonial period, most laborers in Morocco were dispersed across the countryside, working either as traditional subsistence farmers or as self-employed artisans and merchants (Benomar 1991, 54). Embedded as they were in pre-capitalist modes of production, most of these workers could not even be considered formal wage-earners and therefore lacked the sense of class consciousness necessary to promote labor organization.

Thus, it was only after the inauguration of the protectorate regime that a Moroccan labor movement began to take shape. Two features of the colonial government created auspicious conditions for the development of organized labor. First, the wealth of French investment into state infrastructure gave rise to a new urban industrial sector, generating the foundations for the development of an indigenous working class. Indeed, as a result of industrial investment, Morocco's urban population ballooned from 245,000 citizens in 1900 to 865,000 in 1936 — reflecting the vast numbers of Moroccans seeking employment in coastal cities where French enterprises were most concentrated (Ayache 1956, 272). Additionally, by 1929, the indigenous labor force had grown to 100,000 workers, the majority of whom worked in “modern” sectors of activity such as mining, docking, construction and commercial agriculture (Menouni 1979, 24). Second, the influx of European migrants arriving as a result of colonization introduced traditions of trade unionism to Morocco. Rooted in previous syndical experiences and desirous of the labor privileges they enjoyed back home, European workers lead the vanguard of the movement for formal labor organization. In 1919, French employees of the colonial administration formed the first professional association —*the*

Association Générale des Fonctionnaires du Protectorat (AG) — in the civil service, and soon began organizing workers in the postal service, education, and banking sectors. In 1930, under the guidance of the French left, these diverse associations consolidated to establish the first trade union confederation on Moroccan soil, the *Union Départementale* of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (UD-CGT).

Yet, if the protectorate regime created the conditions for the development of organized labor in Morocco, it did not necessarily encourage its emergence. Until 1936, the French administration legally banned trade union organization in the protectorate, and in 1919, enacted specific prohibitions preventing Moroccans from engaging in syndical activities. Additionally, in efforts to preempt the development of an interethnic working class solidarity, the government actively discriminated against indigenous workers both through the legal system and in the workplace. Official statistics attest to the sorry state of Moroccan workers under the protectorate regime. In 1934, the average income of a full-time Moroccan employee was 1,500 francs, as compared to 5,500 for a French worker in the metropole and 17,400 for a European living in Morocco (Gallisot 1990, 77-79; Ayache 1956, 293). Moreover, since French enterprises typically employed Moroccans on a daily rather than salaried basis, they were often denied the basic labor protections — such as an eight-hour workday — that their European counterparts enjoyed. European workers, for their part, also proved less than enthusiastic about supporting indigenous labor organization. In their mobilization efforts, they regularly excluded Moroccans from participating in strikes and demonstrations and neglected to incorporate native workers into European syndical organizations (Menouni 1979).

Indeed, it was not until 1936 that the seeds of a truly indigenous labor movement in Morocco began to take root. That year, Moroccan workers participated in their first act of collective mobilization, when they joined a worker's strike led by European employees at the Casablanca sugar refinery, COSUMA. Although the strike call was issued by the UD-CGT and was primarily directed

towards its members — which, at the time, included few Moroccans — Moroccan employees responded to the call in overwhelming numbers, spreading the strike from the COSUMA factory (June 11), to the central electricity works (June 12), to the phosphate mines in Khouribga (June 13). By June 19th, when the strike action had ended, over 2,118 employees (1,400 of whom were Moroccan citizens) had participated, making the 1936 strike wave the largest in Moroccan history to date (Ayache 1982, 143). Significantly, the majority of Moroccan strikers came from sectors where European penetration was either weak or non-existent, suggesting that indigenous workers had, for the first time, engaged in labor action independent of outside leadership (Benomar 1991, 225; Menouni 1979, 31). According to Miller, this demonstration of autonomous strength from the indigenous working class marked a crucial turning point in Moroccan labor history — as the journal *Clarté* announced: “The Moroccan proletariat has finally shown that it has acquired a class consciousness and will stand without retreat alongside European workers to defend the right to work for its daily bread” (*Clarté* cited in Miller 2013, 142).

Moroccan Unions and the Nationalist Struggle

Yet, if the events of 1936 showed the first signs of indigenous workers’ strength as economic actors, a demonstration of their power as a political force in Morocco would not occur until after World War II. Indeed, in the aftermath of the 1936 strikes, the indigenous labor movement was virtually decimated thanks to a combination of repression and divide-and-rule tactics employed by the protectorate regime. In June of 1936, the granting of union rights to European workers frustrated efforts to integrate native Moroccans into existing labor organizations by specifically denying this right to indigenous employees. Additionally, legislation passed in 1938 criminalizing the unionization of Moroccan workers dealt a significant blow to the indigenous labor movement, which was forced to abandon its efforts to organize its own autochthonous labor unions (Menouni 1979, 35-36). European unions, for their part, were also harmed by these repressive measures — as a result

of the mass exodus of Moroccan workers from trade union organizations, the overall membership of labor unions fell by nearly a third (Pennel 2000, 243).

However, with the end of the war and the installation of the more liberal Labonne government, the indigenous labor movement in Morocco experienced a renaissance. In 1945, the government reversed its earlier prohibition on the unionization of Moroccan citizens, paving the way for indigenous workers to enter unions en masse. Further, in an attempt to recoup membership lost during the war³³, the UD-CGT intensified its efforts to recruit Moroccan workers, organizing new unions in native-heavy industries such as the ports, mines, dams, and large construction sites. As a result of these endeavors, the total number of unionized Moroccans grew rapidly in the post-war period; by 1944, 20,000 Moroccans had officially joined a union organization and by 1950, this figure had increased to 60,000 (Ayache 1993, 87; Menouni 1979, 54). The indigenous labor movement had finally cemented its presence in Moroccan society — in recognition of the growing influence of Moroccans within the UD-CGT, the union officially changed its name in 1946 to the *Union Générale des Syndicats du Maroc* (UGSCM) and elected a Moroccan, Mohamed Ben Tahar, to the position of co-secretary general.

The post-war period proved beneficial to the Moroccan labor movement for another reason as well. During this period, the syndicalists and the nationalists, previously hostile towards each other, drew closer together. Recognizing the power that unionized Moroccans had to pressure the colonial government by disrupting its economic foundations, the nationalist Istiqlal party (PI), reversed its previous position to boycott the unions and instead, sought to infiltrate them. Thus, in September of 1948, it called on its members to enter the UGSCM en bloc with the aim of taking over the union and using it as a base for anti-colonial mobilization. Ultimately, this strategy paid off handsomely for the nationalists. Within a few years, Istiqlal members had won executive positions in

³³ During the German takeover of France during World War II, labor organizations in Morocco were brutally suppressed. Trade unionists, rumored to be allied with Communists, were sacked from their jobs, deported to France, or arrested and sent to military prison. Further, under the Vichy regime, the CGT was officially dissolved although its members united under the Resistance. (Benomar 1991, 241)

the prestigious public sector, mining and docking federations and, at the 1950 UGSCM congress, the party succeeded in placing two of its own — Mohamed Tibari and Tayeb Ben Bouazza — at the top of the union's executive committee. Indeed, overall indigenous workers won a resounding victory during the 1950 congress; according to Ayache, Moroccans won six out of nine positions in the executive bureau and comprised nearly two-thirds of the UGSCM executive committee (Ayache 1993, 95).

The infusion of nationalist activists into the unions gave these latter more life and dynamism, paving the way for organized labor to become a major player in Moroccan politics. Once the strategy of infiltration had been completed, the Istiqlal set out to give the union a new orientation much like that of its own: to push for the full independence of Morocco through an abolition of the protectorate regime (Portes cited in Forst 1976, 276). Under the influence of Istiqlal leaders, the UGSCM acquired a highly nationalist character. In its 1950 annual report, the union explicitly tied the exploitation of Moroccan workers to “the colonialist regime imposed on Morocco since 1912” and called upon its members to “fight for the repeal of the Protectorate... [and] demand that the Moroccan people take charge of themselves” (Benomar 1991, 286) The following year, the union began orienting its mobilization efforts towards the nationalist cause, launching protests to force the withdrawal of French forces. On May Day 1951, the UGSCM staged large demonstrations in Casablanca, Oujda, Fès, and Meknes calling for an end to the repression of Moroccan citizens at the hands French authorities and a solution to the country's growing political crisis. Notably, on December 8, 1952, the union responded to the assassination of Farhat Hached by instructing its members to take up arms against the French in a massive general strike, which led to death of hundreds (Zisenswine 2010, 206-208). In the wake of the general strike, the labor movement was once again forced underground as a majority of its leaders were either arrested, jailed, or exiled (Ayache 1993, 155).

The Union Marocaine du Travail at the Vanguard of Independence

When the labor movement resurfaced in 1955, it officially cemented its position as part of the “distinct vanguard” of the independence struggle. In March, just a few months after their release from prison, Moroccan unionists held the founding congress of a new nationalist labor federation, the *Union Marocaine du Travail* (UMT). Headed by Mahjoub Benseddik, the UMT was the first autonomous union on Moroccan soil and was one of the only unions to take an active role in the unfolding battle for national liberation. From 1955, until the attainment of independence in 1956, the UMT mobilized 76,486 workers in 1,987 protests, many of which were organized with the aim of expelling the protectorate regime (Moore 1970, 193). Due to its militant efforts, it quickly became one of the strongest actors in the nationalist movement — by 1956, it laid claim to a membership of 400,000 workers (Ashford 1961, 274). As in Tunisia, this heightened organizational strength catapulted the union into the role of a major political actor in Morocco, a position that was only further solidified by its participation in the Franco-Moroccan independence negotiations.

In short, the post-independence history of organized labor in Morocco cannot be disentangled from its colonial origins nor its involvement in the nationalist struggle. As in Tunisia, the UMT’s alliance with the nationalist movement was a source of strength for the union in the pre-independence period which granted it substantial political legitimacy and helped to expand its popular base. Indeed, because of its nationalist credentials and alliance with the Istiqlal the UMT became one of the most formidable organizations in the Moroccan political scene after 1956. However, as is discussed in the remainder of this chapter, these features would also make the union more vulnerable to incorporation once independence was achieved.

Authoritarian Labor Control in Morocco: “Representation Qua Control” and the Foundations of a State-Labor Alliance

The achievement of independence marked a new phase in Morocco's political development. Newly free to determine their own state of affairs, Moroccan elites established a constitutional monarchy, selecting former sultan Sidi Mohamed ben Yusuf (Mohamed V) to serve as its King. Upon his inauguration, Mohamed V quickly set about consolidating power through a revival of the institutions of the *makhzen*³⁴ — by 1962, he had brought both the military and police under his control through the creation of the *Forces Armées Royales* and the national police force, and had instituted a new elite-centered system of governance through the promulgation of the country's first constitution.

Given his position as both king and “commander of the faithful” (Waterbury 1970), one might have assumed that Mohamed V's way forward in consolidating power would be clear. After all, his defiance of French rule and subsequent exile had won him massive popular support as well as political legitimacy as a symbol of the nationalist movement. Yet if Mohamed V had successfully emerged from exile as a “hero of independence”, he was not its only hero, and as a result, faced fierce competition for power from nationalist organizations like the Istiqlal. In the immediate post-independence period, the struggle for power between Mohamed V and the Istiqlal became the principal motif of the new state's political life (Miller 2013, 155). However, two features of the Istiqlal ameliorated the threat that the party would pose to the monarch's position. First, of the principal actors involved in the independence struggle, the Istiqlal was arguably one of least popular — despite leading the vanguard of the nationalist movement, it had always appealed to a relatively small segment of society composed primarily of urban middle-class elites. With the liberation struggle now over, the party lost much of its populist character and thus began facing competition from other groups emerging from the independence movement such as the rival *Parti Démocratique*

³⁴ Among authors of Moroccan politics *makhzen* is a contested term with multivalent meanings (Hammoudi 1999, 129-30). However in the simplest sense, the *makhzen* is the term developed in French colonial historiography for the precolonial central authority. In a modern context it is typically used to refer to the network of political elites and security institutions that support monarchical rule. See Pennel (1993) for a review of a origins and evolution of the *makhzen* and *siba* concepts, Claisse (1987) for a discussion on their continued relevance in post-independence Morocco and Ben Ali (1987, 118-123) for an overview of the different uses of the term and their historical roots.

de l'Indépendance (PDI). Second, the party suffered from its own internal divisions, laid bare in the aftermath of independence. Although the party, was still among the strongest organizations in the nation, it was plagued by ideological splits, which pitted younger, radical left-wing members under the leadership of Mehdi Ben Barka against the older, more conservative party elite. In 1959, the Istiqlal sundered, with younger members defecting to form a more “progressive” leftist party that became known as the *Union des Forces Populaires* (UNFP).

With the Istiqlal, for a time, preoccupied with trying to ensure its own unity and stave off competition from the PDI, the monarchy turned its attention to its next most serious competitor, the labor movement. In the first few years of its existence, the UMT had proven itself one of the most well-organized and influential groupings in Moroccan society. By 1958, it had organized a total of 64 sectoral and regional union branches, comprising 576,000 members from all major occupational sectors³⁵ (Ashford 1961, 280-281). Additionally, after independence it quickly demonstrated its ability to mobilize working class support — from March to November 1956 alone, it held an average of 50 strike actions a month, some of which combined political issues with those relating to grievances on the shop floor (ibid, 277; Clement and Paul 1984, 21).

Tending to measure the severity of a threat by the long-term dangers it could pose to the monarchy, Mohamed V quickly moved to neutralize the labor movement. To avoid the risk of continued violence, which he genuinely abhorred (Forst 1976, 282), he incorporated the union into the regime’s ruling coalition by granting it a number of legal, institutional, and organizational privileges. In the legal arena, the regime enacted generous labor legislation which established the right to organize and strike, codified a minimum wage, and created labor complaint courts to resolve industrial disputes. At the level of the enterprise, the government instituted a procedure for collective bargaining between workers and employers and granted workers’ organizations agency in enforcing

³⁵ The UMT’s largest concentration of members were in the public works, education, mining, and fishing sectors which each totaled over 15,000 members. For a full review of the sectors and estimated membership figures see Ashford 1961, p. 280.

wage agreements. Most notably, following the passage of a 1962 dahir, the government mandated the election of personnel delegates in individual firms, thus providing unions with a de-facto method of organizing at the plant-level and a mechanism for engaging in regular consultation with company management (*Bulletin Officiel du Maroc*, 11/16/1962, 1609).

On an institutional level, the UMT was granted representation within a number of governing and consultative bodies. In Morocco's first parliament, the union was given ten out of seventy-six seats in the legislature and its Secretary-General, Mahjoub Benseddik, was appointed to serve as Vice-President of the assembly. Additionally, through its membership in the Istiqlal, it had a direct voice in the Council of Government where three labor-affiliated party members — Abdallah Ibrahim, Abderrahman Bouabid, and Maati Bouabid — could serve as spokespersons on its behalf. Moreover, its vast network of connections to other key political elites connected the union to important decision-making institutions such as the Special Brigades and the Ministry of Interior. Finally, the union was well represented within several ancillary government organs: the Superior Council of the Plan, the Commission for the Formation of Professions, the Labor Courts, the Bureau of Placement, the Central Commission for Prices, the High Council for Collective Conventions, and the committees of the Fund for Social Aid.

Notably, in contrast to Tunisia, labor representation within these institutions was not merely perfunctory; rather it provided the UMT with useful avenues for expressing its interests and influencing policy decisions. Even in the context of a regime dominated by a powerful monarchy, the latitude given to the union to participate in decision-making and dialogue was “unquestionably great” (Moore 1970, 181). According to Douglas, UMT leaders enjoyed regular access to the King, who often consulted the union on policy matters regarding social legislation (Douglas 1960, 319). Additionally, through its participation in auxiliary institutions such as the Superior Council for the Plan and High Commission for Collective Conventions, the union had a direct role in guiding economic policy and could significantly influence legislation governing state-capital relations. Finally,

within parliament, unionists could openly question ministerial decisions, serving as a litmus test and, at times, veto-player for key government initiatives. For instance, in 1956, UMT leaders blocked a controversial labor code that would have given the Minister of Interior the right to dissolve unions during threats to public order, despite alleged endorsement of the law by the King (Moore 1970, 181).

Finally, from an organizational standpoint, the UMT benefited from numerous financial and material privileges afforded by the state. In 1957, the monarchy granted the union a de-facto monopoly over labor representation when it passed a decree requiring that union leaders be exclusively of Moroccan origin. In efforts to help the union build its organizational base, the government provided syndical detachments for all union leaders in the public and private sector and gifted the union rent-free premises in Casablanca to serve as its national headquarters (Clement and Paul 1984, 21). Substantial advantages were also afforded to the union in the management of public enterprises — in addition to high-ranking positions in state-owned firms, UMT leaders received prestigious posts in several mutual societies and were placed in charge of administering Morocco's Social Security Fund. Finally, the union received generous financial subsidies from the monarchy. According to one union source, nearly MD 200,000 of union revenue annually was acquired thanks to government beneficence (Moore 1970, 186; Filali-Meknassi 1989, 25).

It would be misleading, however, to portray state-labor relations in Morocco as unequivocally positive. Indeed, shortly after independence, the death of Mohamed V and the accession to the throne of his son, Prince Hassan II, ushered in a decade-long period of labor repression known colloquially as "*les années du plomb* (the years of lead)". During this period, virtually all signs of labor activism were harshly suppressed — in addition to becoming increasingly reliant on the use of military forces to disrupt strikes, the monarchy also routinely jailed unionists who betrayed any hint of government critique or opposition. Famously, in 1967, the king ordered the arrest of the UMT's secretary-general, Mahjoub Ben Seddik, for his criticism regarding the monarchy's close relationship

with Israel after the events of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Moreover, throughout the 1960s security forces frequently detained and tortured militant union activists, and in at least one case, were found to have orchestrated the assassination of a prominent trade unionist for his syndical and political activities³⁶ (Boum and Park 2016, 266).

Nonetheless, despite these acts of labor repression, state-labor relations in Morocco largely maintained their incorporative character. Although the government did officially terminate the UMT's de-facto monopoly over labor representation by legalizing union pluralism in the early 1960s, the government never revoked basic labor rights in the legislative arena, nor did it reduce unions' participation in government organizations. If anything, the monarchy actually expanded the scope of unions' influence within the political system. Following revisions to the Moroccan constitution in 1970, for example, union members were granted reserved seats in Parliament as well as the ability to select union candidates to run in direct municipal elections. Additionally, following a second coup attempt on the monarchy in 1972³⁷, King Hassan eased his repression of union opposition³⁸, and made direct efforts to co-opt labor representatives into the regime³⁹ (Europa 1978: 567).

State-labor relations in Morocco were thus based on a balance of inducements and constraints, of representation and control, but there was more of the former than the latter. By enacting progressive labor reforms, granting concessions, and creating institutional avenues through which unions and workers could express their interests before the government, the regime effectively co-opted labor into its ruling coalition, elevating it to the status of a junior partner within the

³⁶ One such trade unionist, Omar Benjelloun (UNFP, formerly Istiqlal) was arrested and condemned to death for allegedly participating in a plot to kill King Hassan II. Although his execution was stayed and he was later released, he was assassinated on December 18, 1977 in a plot devised by the palace.

³⁷ For more information on the 1971 coup, see Waterbury (1972) who provides a detailed discussion of these events.

³⁸ Notably from 1972-1979, only four complaints were made by Moroccan unions to the ILO relating to the government's suppression of union organizing by force. As a point of comparison, twelve such complaints were made from 1961-1971.

³⁹ Maati Bouabid, who had affiliations to the UNFP and UMT, was appointed to serve the Minister of Justice in 1977 and as Prime Minister in 1979.

regime. Thus, unlike Tunisia, where the government's periodic exclusion of the labor movement led to a contentious relationship between unions and the state, the Moroccan regime's efforts to incorporate organized labor into workplace and government institutions created the foundations for a state-labor alliance built around the notion of "representation qua control".

Political Control in Morocco: The Palace, Parties, and Parliament

Such incorporative methods to control organized labor were further embedded in a nominally inclusive political structure designed to contain domestic opposition. Unlike Bourguiba, whose greatest political challenge came from within the Neo-Destour, Mohammed V and his son Hassan II found themselves confronted with competition from a wide variety of nationalist organizations including their chief rival, the Istiqlal. To prevent the rise of a single party that could secure mass support and alienate the monarchy from the political arena, the palace adopted a constitutional framework that supported political pluralism and parliamentary representation. In the partisan arena, the monarchy actively encouraged multi-partyism and facilitated the rise of new organizations. In 1959, for example, the King promoted a split within the Istiqlal that resulted in the creation of the leftist UNFP, and in 1975 supported a further scission that gave rise to the *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires* (USFP). Similarly, over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the monarchy fostered the creation of several loyalist splinter parties — the *Mouvement Populaire* (MP), the *Front pour la Defense des Institutions Constitutionnelles* (FDIC), and *Rassemblement National des Independents* (RNI) — which emerged from the remnants of the nationalist movement.

In addition to encouraging party pluralism, the Moroccan regime also distinguished itself by undergirding its rule with a vast network of consultative and representative institutions. Immediately following independence, the monarchy expanded the institutional framework inherited by the French by founding a number of consultative bodies which would serve to guide Morocco's economic and social development in the post-independence era. Furthermore, in 1962, Hassan II

introduced a new constitution which formally shared political power between the monarchy, legislative, and judicial institutions. Most important, the constitution established the framework for a bicameral parliament in which parties and social groupings could engage in policy-making and national governance.

On paper, these features of the Moroccan political landscape gave the regime a veneer of democratic representativity — in contrast to its other North African counterparts that opted for single-party regimes, Morocco's multiparty system accommodated groupings from a wide variety of ideological trends and, through formal institutions, ostensibly gave these groups measure of influence in decision-making and determining government policies. However, in reality, this system principally served to consolidate monarchical power by subduing oppositional challenges to the regime. Indeed, the fragmentation of the party system produced parties that were structurally weak and divided, giving an advantage to the monarchy who could use divide-and-rule strategies to stave off political competition (Bendourou 1996). Moreover, the laws regulating Morocco's premier institutions (parliament, social councils, etc.) structured these largely as consultative bodies subordinated to the ultimate power of the king (Munson 1999, 259, 274; Waltz 1999, 283).

Nevertheless, Morocco's plural political system did offer opposition groups some margin of maneuver. If parliament was not a place for "producing policies" (i.e. enacting real political change) it was a space for "doing politics" (e.g. articulating interests and receiving benefits from the regime). In open sessions, legislators could check the behavior of the government by questioning ministers appointed by the King. Additionally, by submitting policy resolutions legislative blocs could exert influence on decision-making at the margins. Most important, parliament served as a generally inclusive institution through which the monarchy could co-opt and pacify oppositional political elites. This function was magnified in 1972, when, after a failed military coup, Hassan II introduced a more liberal constitution that allowed for greater power sharing between the monarchy and

political parties⁴⁰. Consequently, the 1970s would be marked by a consensus between political opposition and the King, bolstered by a military campaign in the Western Sahara and new legislative elections which secured substantial representation for opposition elites (Storm 2007, 40). Thus, at the same time as the Tunisian regime became characterized by its increasing authoritarianism and closure, the Moroccan regime began to incorporate new opposition groups into its ruling coalition — including its erstwhile rival, the Istiqlal.

The combination of incorporative labor control policies and a plural political system produced distinct legacies on the development of organized labor in Morocco and its relationship with political actors in the state. First, monarchical efforts to incorporate labor into formal institutions created linkages between unions and the government that would ultimately bind the fortunes of the union to those of the regime. By enacting friendly labor laws, granting union leaders prestigious positions in government, and providing direct subsidies to support union growth, regime elites transformed organized labor into a client of the authoritarian state. Although unions would benefit tremendously from these advantages, as they permitted labor greater access to decision-making and influential networks, ultimately these benefits would serve as important levers of control which the state could manipulate in times of crisis to bring oppositional trade unions to heel.

Second, the integration of union elites into parliament created the conditions for the establishment of party-union linkages and — as noted in Chapter 2 — the fractionalization of the labor movement. Particularly because union seats in the parliament were fixed by quota⁴¹, parties saw allying with trade unions as an efficient way to acquire more power in the legislature by capturing labor allegiance and unions' delegate seats (Appendix B:MP-14, 4/9/14). Similarly, the numerical strength of organized labor made trade unions attractive partners for alliance — by winning the

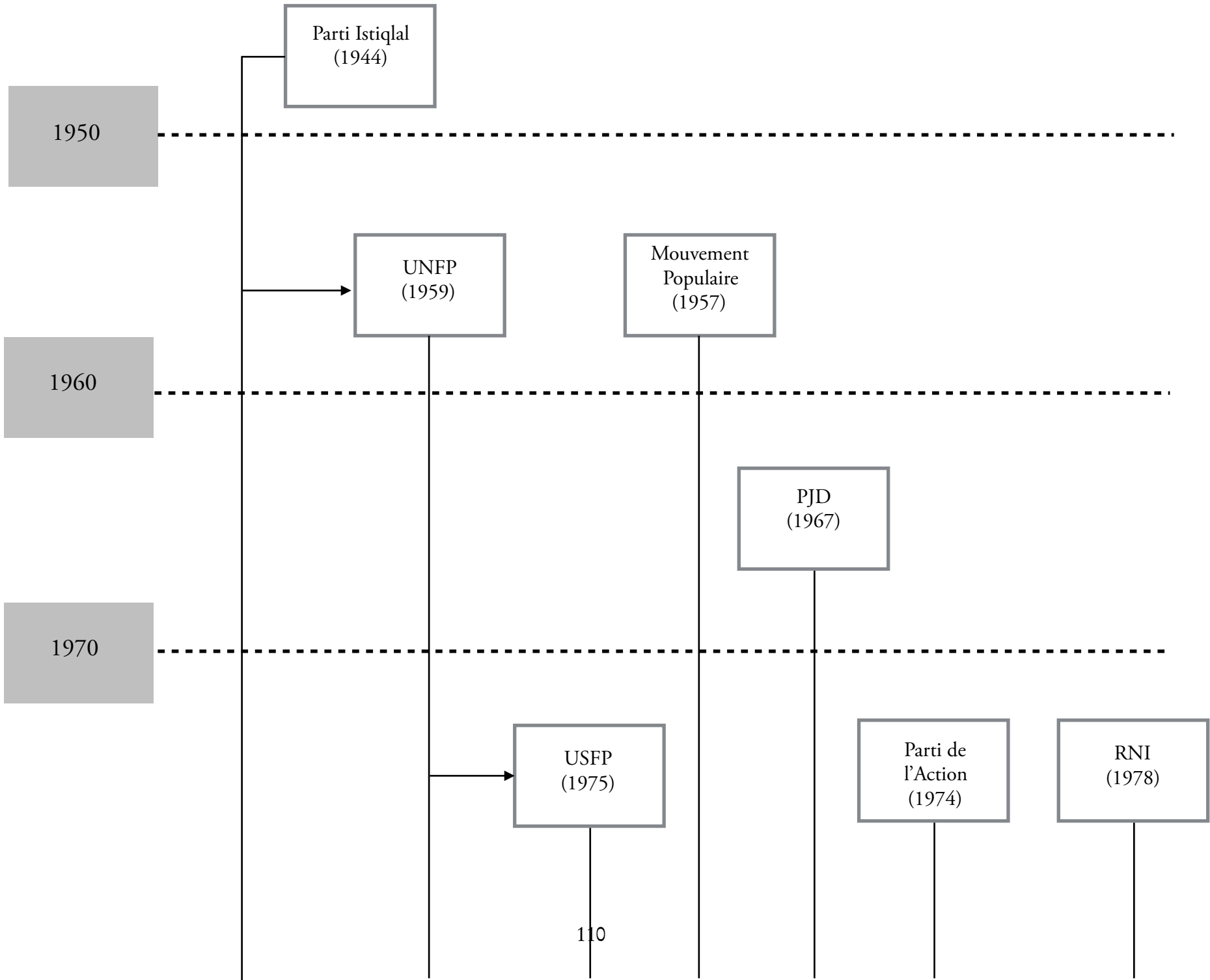
⁴⁰ Formally, the 1972 constitution restricted the powers of the King by modifying the language of articles pertaining to the right of the King to submit bills and proposition laws, specifying that he would only enjoy these rights if the bill or proposed law would not have been rejected by two-third of the members of parliament (Constitution Marocaine 1972: article 68).

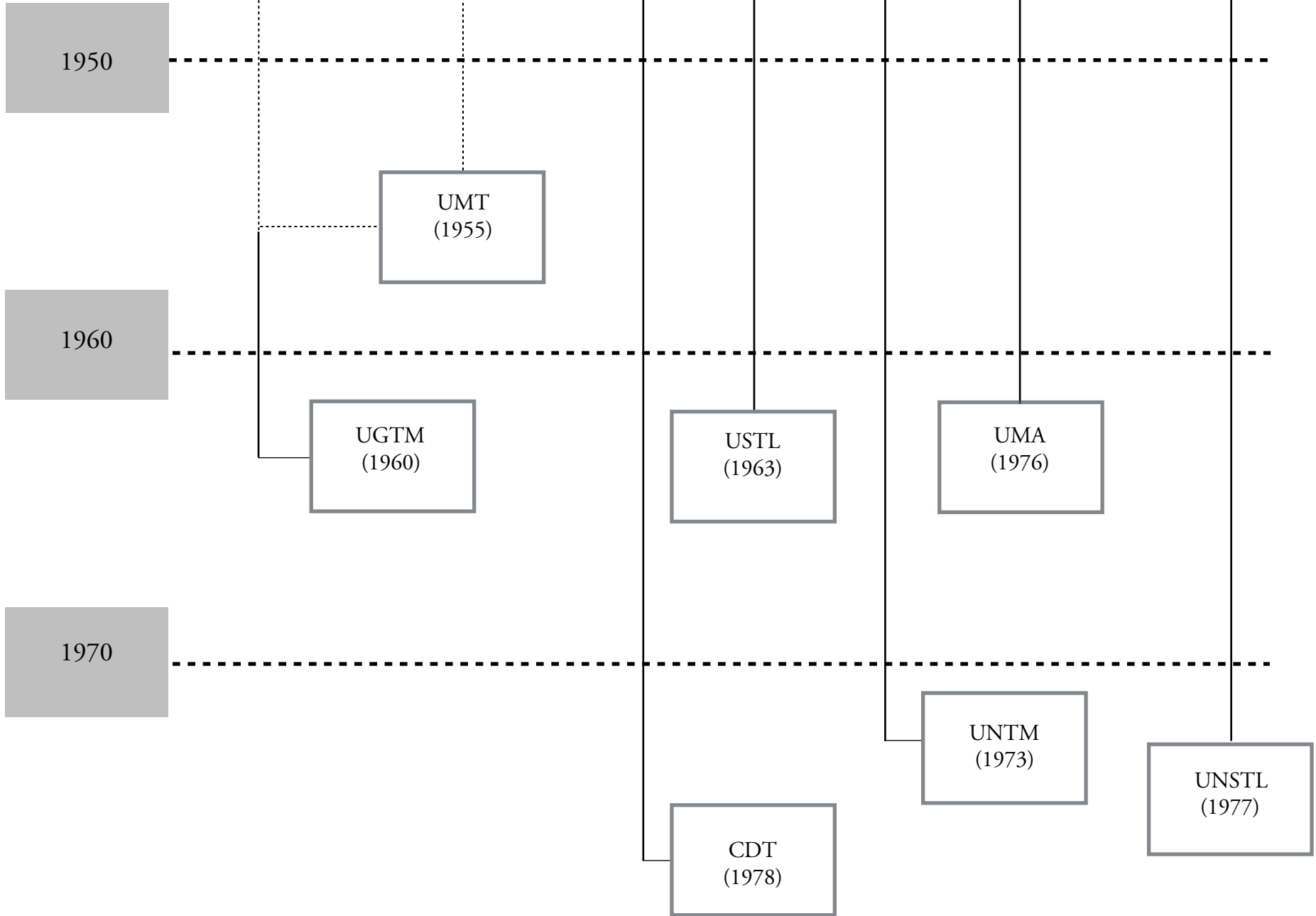
⁴¹ As of 1970, ten seats were specifically reserved for labor representatives in parliament, although members of labor unions could and did serve outside of these seats as representatives of individual parties.

loyalty of a major trade union, party elites could ensure that union members would vote for their candidates in direct elections. For a trade union, alliance with a political party was useful because of the organizational and political benefits that parties could provide. In addition acquiring high level party positions⁴² and forming networks with political elites, union leaders with partisan partners could also have a direct influence on party policy, particularly on labor issues, and receive organizational support from parties when running their own candidates in legislative and municipal elections (Appendix B: MP-14, 4/9/14, MP-15, 4/14/2014).

In the context of a pluralist party system, however, this desire for alliance meant that the labor movement was increasingly fractionalized along party lines. As competing parties tried to acquire their own labor constituencies they frequently manipulated intra-union divisions — at times with the help of the King himself — to encourage dissident unionists to form their own splinter organizations. In the late 1950s, such partisan manipulation gave rise to the birth of a new trade union, *l'Union Générale des Travailleurs Marocains*, with ties to the Istiqlal. In reaction to the departure of leftist militants and UMT leaders who left the party to found the UNFP, Istiqlal elites worked to subvert the union's de-facto monopoly by creating a rival federation subordinated to the control of the Istiqlal party. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, union development would continue to track along the lines of party formation. As Figure 3.1 shows, the combination of labor incorporation and a plural party system engendered a dynamic whereby each new party was motivated to found its own labor union. Consequently, by the late 1970s, the trade union movement was fractionalized along ideological and partisan lines. As we shall see next chapter, this division would ultimately create the conditions for intense rivalries within the labor movement that would impede the organization of successful collective action.

⁴² Traditionally at least one member of a partner union is selected to sit on their party's Political Bureau, and other peak or intermediate leaders may be called to serve on the party's Executive or Central Committee (Appendix B: MS-5, 2/19/2014, MP-15, 4/14/2014).





Finally, strong connections between labor organizations and partisan and regime elites had considerable effects on unions' internal bureaucracy. As labor leaders began to increasingly rely on political appointments and party benefits to shore up their personal power, they became progressively divorced from their constituents in the rank-and-file. Often, party resources were used to maintain the dominance of labor elites over competitors and restrict the access of base unionists to positions of authority. As a result, internal democracy within trade unions fell into precipitous decline. In the UMT, for example, national congresses were regularly postponed or subject to direct manipulation by party or union leaders. Consequently, from 1958 to 1975, only five out of twenty of the UMT's top leadership had been removed from office (Menouni 1979, 152-153; Clement and Paul 1984, 23). This paralleled organizational developments in parties and the regime writ large in which leaders were known to remain in their positions "*jusqu'à la mort* (until their death)" (Appendix B: MA-8, 3/19/2014; MS-12, 4/4/2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the different control strategies adopted by authoritarians to contain labor and political opposition in Tunisia and Morocco, focusing on the impact that these had on unions' alliances and capacities as they entered the neoliberal period. In it, I examined how variant strategies of political control (incorporative or exclusionary) affected labor's organization as well as its relationship with other collective actors. Whereas Bourguiba's use of exclusionary and repressive measures fostered radicalism within the labor movement and opposition groups, drawing these actors into an informal alliance, the incorporative and pluralist strategies adopted by Moroccan monarchs promoted the formation of party-union linkages that would moderate labor opposition and channel demands within the institutional structures of the regime. Such differences in political conditions attest to the significance of institutional opportunities in shaping the strategies and alliances of collective actors. In clear contrast to the experience of the UGTT in Tunisia, Moroccan unions were

formed with close ties to the state and political parties. This legacy would have a significant influence on how labor actors interpreted their political environments, and ultimately, would affect the choices they made regarding their modes of mobilization when they entered the neoliberal era.

PART III: CASES

Chapter 4

WORKERS IN AN ERA OF CHANGE: UNION RESPONSES TO EARLY NEO-LIBERAL REFORMS

The 1970s marked a period of profound change in the political economies of most North African countries. Having tried, and failed, to promote inward-looking state-led development for nearly two decades, regimes in North Africa began to turn outward and introduce new liberal reforms to reverse stagnating growth. In addition to opening up their economies to foreign markets, leaders experimented with austerity measures designed to reduce the state's presence in the economy and to pave the way for private sector growth. In many cases, these economic changes were accompanied by institutional innovations meant to secure political support for reform and ensure "social peace". In all cases, these changes called into question the traditional clientelistic relationships that had previously governed state-society relations, with predictably negative effects on organized labor.

In Tunisia and Morocco, labor movements responded to these changes with an increase in militancy, using protests and strikes to oppose decreases in their purchasing power, job opportunities, and general living conditions. However, beneath these similarities lie important differences in the character and aims of labor militancy which served to distinguish mobilization patterns in these two countries. In Tunisia, labor mobilization united rank-and-file workers, union leaders, and social movements in a wave of labor unrest that was political as much as it was economic. In opposing reforms, this movement went beyond exclusively material demands to express political grievances that critiqued the centralization of the state, its growing authoritarianism, and the lack of union and political freedoms. By the late 1970s, the UGTT could count supporters from various political

trends and had transformed into one of the only opposition forces in Tunisia that could provide a true counterweight to the dominance of the single-party state. In both the 1970s and 1980s, this political transformation placed the UGTT into direct conflict with the Bourguiba regime, leading to the union's almost complete evisceration by 1985.

In Morocco, by contrast, labor mobilization remained segmented and apolitical. While workers and unions did engage more heavily in strike activity as a sign of opposition to reforms, they did not do so under a common banner nor did they emerge as a significant political force. Instead, labor unions pursued divergent methods of opposition which typically pit unions against one another in their efforts to achieve limited, parochial demands. Ultimately, this competition divided the labor movement and prevented it from advancing a unified agenda as the UGTT did in Tunisia. Moreover, these same divisions impeded labor's ability to develop into a force for political change within the regime, as they produced stark disagreements about the necessity of political reforms.

These varied responses bring to light a number of questions that will be explored in the balance of this chapter. Why did unions in Tunisia and Morocco both respond to economic reforms with increased militancy? Why despite similar reforms, did this militancy evolve in such qualitatively different ways? How did labor mobilization in Tunisia manage to transcend traditional labor concerns and develop into a broad-based movement for political change? Why did the same evolution fail to occur in Morocco?

I argue that the answer to these questions lies in an examination of the different formal institutions that leaders developed to govern state-labor and state-society relations during the reform period. In Tunisia, Bourguiba crafted exclusionary corporatist institutions that alienated key segments of the labor movement and political elite, producing a highly politicized labor movement in which opposition groups and labor leaders united with rank-and-file workers in opposition to the state. By contrast in Morocco, Hassan II strengthened channels for unions to express their interests in the workplace and the polity, solidifying linkages between organized labor, parties, and the regime.

In so doing, however, the monarchy exacerbated competition among rival unions, preventing organized labor from developing a broad coalition of interests that could unite workers behind a common political agenda.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. In each of two sections, I outline the contours of the reform period in Tunisia and Morocco and detail the effects that neoliberal economic reforms had on organized labor in both countries. I then turn to an analysis of labor's reaction to reforms, using a combination of data available through the International Labor Office and MENALC database. Finally, I investigate the causes of divergent labor mobilization in these two central cases, highlighting the way in which formal institutions shaped labor interests and the coalitions and strategies that unions developed to express them.

TUNISIA

Roots of Economic Reform: The “Socialist Experiment” (1961-1969)

The origins of Tunisia's economic liberalization can be traced back to 1961, with the inauguration of the government's “socialist experiment”. Led by Ahmed Ben Salah, Tunisian socialism sought to reverse the country's economic dependency through the pursuit of four main objectives: 1) economic decolonization, 2) promoting self-sufficient industry, 3) boosting productivity, and 4) raising living standards (Ruf 1984, 106). To achieve these objectives, the government devised an expansive state-led development program built around three initiatives. First, to modernize Tunisia's agricultural sector, the state sought to “collectivize” small farms into large landholdings which could increase production by exploiting modern technologies. Second, to develop its industrial sector, the government would acquire foreign-owned enterprises and promote industrial production through an inward-looking policy of import-substitution industrialization. Finally, to create new sources of capital accumulation, the state would work to strengthen Tunisia's budding private sector through the provision of special incentives and credits.

To this end, from 1961-1969, the Tunisian economy was characterized by a dirigiste development model driven by heavy state intervention. In the agricultural sector, the government created nearly 700 agricultural cooperatives between 1961 and 1969, representing some 38% of all cultivated land (Alexander 2010, 73). Additionally, in the industrial sector, it played a leading role in promoting basic enterprises, developing new firms in the phosphates, oil, and textile industries. Finally, the state helped to create a private industrial bourgeoisie through the provision of tax holidays, protected markets, and subsidized credit. In a move uncommon for most “socialist” countries, state credits and assistance to the private sector totaled 75% of overall investment, demonstrating the government’s keen interest in promoting the private sector (Toumi 1989, 63).

For a time, this state-led development strategy succeeded, generating important short-term benefits for the national economy. Owing to significant growth in the early years of its implementation, socialist policy produced an average annual growth in GDP of 5.3% over the period (World Bank 2016). Moreover, the government managed to derive marginal profits from some of its state-owned firms, particularly those in oil and phosphates. Most important, investments into human development generated substantial long-term benefits in terms of poverty and education. By 1969, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line had fallen by nearly 30% and some 40% of children were enrolled in secondary school (Degorge 2002, 587).

However, beneath these accomplishments, the socialist policies of the 1960s generated serious economic and social dislocations that would ultimately prove to be their undoing. To begin, the bedrock of the socialist development effort — collectivization — turned out to be a complete failure. Owing partly to bad harvests, but primarily to gross mismanagement, collectivization failed to improve efficiency on agricultural tracts or to significantly or increase Tunisia’s overall agricultural production. On the contrary, the agricultural sector’s portion of GDP actually fell over the course of the 1960s from 24.2% to 16.5%. The value of agricultural production also fell over the period, declining from a total of 102,500 dinars (TD) in 1965 to 63,800 dinars in 1967 (Zouari 1993, 8).

Ultimately, this failure culminated in the destruction of most traditional farms, resulting in a mass exodus of rural citizens near the end of the 1960s.

The industrial sector, for its part, did not fare much better. Large capital investments failed to meet profit expectations due to high construction costs, inefficient management the lack of an adequate consumer base among Tunisian citizens. Indeed, according to one study, state-owned enterprises only generated profits for one year between 1963 and 1969 (Kleve and Stolper 1974, 23). At the same time, industrialization failed to produce adequate employment to absorb the masses of unemployed rural citizens that emerged in the wake of failed collectivization. Thus, despite the proliferation of new state-owned enterprises, unemployment remained a persistent feature of urban life, exceeding 20% over the period (World Bank 2016). Further, as a result of rural flight, regional disparities founded in the colonial period were maintained, with citizens in the coastal north-east benefiting at the expense of the center and the south.

Finally, state-led development cost the government dearly in terms of debt. Because the newly independent state did not yet have the capital to promote development on its own accord, the Tunisian government relied heavily on external loans to fund its development drive. According to official estimates, over one-third of financing for development was generated from foreign sources and by 1969, public and private inputs from abroad had reached \$31 per capita (Perkins 2004, 148). Combined with a general decline in agricultural production, such inputs elevated Tunisia's trade deficit by 50% from 1968-1969 and increased its debt service to 42% of exports (World Bank 2016). Overall as a result of socialist development policies, the quantity of Tunisia's debt quadrupled from 1960-1972, producing a debt to GDP ratio that was higher than anywhere else in the world (Pfifer 1996, 43).

Thus, as they did across much of the developing world, policies intended to make the Tunisian economy more dynamic resulted in stagnation and decline. By 1969, the catastrophic results of state-led development were in plain view, and the social cost of economic decline posed a

serious threat to the stability of the Bourguiba regime. The failure of the “socialist experiment” to attain the majority of its goals made a re-examination of policy inevitable and reorientation imperative. The government, for all its pro-socialist rhetoric, was faced with the need to abandon its socialist policies — it was in this context that liberalization began.

Early Economic Reform: Tunisia’s “Infitah” (1970-1985)

With the socialist model proving a stunning failure, in the early 1970s, the government decided to reorient its economic policy in a more liberal direction. To correct the errors of previous development programs, Tunisia’s new economic policy (termed “*infitah*”) would rely on both public and private sector investment while simultaneously increasing the exposure of the Tunisian economy to the open market. To lead this initiative, President Bourguiba appointed Hédi Nouira, a long-time opponent of Ben Salahist socialism, to serve as prime minister.

Under Nouira’s leadership, the government implemented a number of liberal reforms meant to stimulate growth through export-oriented development. In order to attract private investment, the state created a new *Agence des Promotion des Investissements* and enacted two new investment laws — Law 72-38 and Law 74-74 — which gave entrepreneurs special incentives to develop export industries. New firms also benefitted from improved credit facility, low property rents, and unrestricted capital transfer in hard currency. As a result, private sector investment in Tunisia skyrocketed as compared to the previous period, and for the first time since independence, exceeded that of the public sector (Bellin 1991, 51).

In addition to stimulating the private sector, the government continued to rely heavily on public sector investment to spark growth and development. Between 1973 and 1984, the state built 110 new enterprises, particularly in manufacturing and heavy industry. Moreover, to alleviate the strain of liberalization on the populace, the state dedicated targeted investments to consumer subsidies and social programs. As a result of these initiatives, Tunisian citizens saw marked

improvements in their health and education outcomes — according to Murphy, infant mortality was more than halved from 160 to 65 deaths per thousand births and adult literacy rates increased from 15% to 62% from 1960 to 1985 (Murphy 1999, 86).

Indeed, throughout the 1970s and early 80s, liberalization policies produced most of their desired results. Although the state continued to control heavy industries such as phosphates, hydrocarbons, and petrochemicals, the private sector made important inroads into light manufacturing as well as textiles and tourism. In fact, over several years during the period, private sector investment actually surpassed that of the public sector, attesting to the success of government efforts to draw in new forms of capital. Moreover, between 1973 and 1978, foreign investment increased to TD 57 million. According to Findlay, this influx foreign capital had constructive effects on Tunisia's fledgling private sector — from 1973-78 foreign investors created 523 new firms which generated 86,000 new jobs (Findlay 1984, 228).

Additionally, liberalization also served to boost Tunisia's budding export economy. Owing to a combination of increased investment and good harvests, agricultural production rose markedly from the previous decade. Cereal production, for example, increased from an annual average of 5.1 million quintals in the late 1960s to an average of 10.6 million quintals between 1971 and 1975. Further, because the price of cereal also rose during the period — from TD 4.8 to TD 6.6 per quintal — cereal exports generated significant revenues for the state, to a sum of nearly TD 3.2 million (Central Bank of Tunisia, Annual Report 1975). Similarly, a rise in the price of oil and phosphates during the 1973 oil crisis provided a revenue bonanza, effectively quadrupling the value of Tunisia's exports to TD 398 million. Overall, this increase in exports had salubrious effects on the national economy. As a result of heightened revenues GDP growth averaged 8-10% throughout the 70s, placing Tunisia among the top ten countries in terms of GDP per capita (Ben Romdhane 1985, 277-279).

Unfortunately, however, the prosperity achieved by liberalization would soon come to an end. In 1977, the formation of the EEC prompted many European governments to close their borders to Tunisian exports, and poor weather in the later half of the decade dramatically reduced agricultural production. In the agricultural sector, food exports dropped to TD 57.3 million (down from 94.4 million in 1974) while the overall value of exports decreased by TD 43.4 million from 1974 to 1977. At the same time, an increase in food imports generated serious trade imbalances — by the same year external borrowing nearly tripled Tunisia’s debt from TD 100 million to TD 294 million (ibid, 280-281).

The consequences of economic reform worsened throughout the 1980s. Although the government attempted to combat continued decline by introducing austerity measures with its 1982-1986 development plan, ultimately it was unable to stem the tide of rising debt. On the one hand, external developments produced unexpected shocks in the economy, placing further pressure on Tunisia’s debt profile. United States air raids of Libya, for example, caused tourism revenues to decline precipitously, while a drop in oil prices following the crisis cost the government millions. As a result, Tunisia’s trade deficit exceeded \$1 billion for much of the 1980-1987 period, with only a brief reprieve in 1985 (World Bank 2016). On the other hand, the state’s own financial mismanagement also contributed to the country’s growing debt. Despite marked growth in private sector enterprises, revenues generated from light industries and textiles failed to meet anticipated targets, necessitating state intervention to keep businesses afloat. Additionally, in the public sector, the state continued to create and subsidize new industries, investing nearly TD 190 million from 1969-1980 (Vandewalle 1992, 15). In the social arena, the government increased spending on food subsidies, generating a nearly TD 100 million deficit in the *Caisse Générale de Compensation* by 1980 (Alexander 2010, 79).

Ultimately, this combination of declining revenues and increased state spending magnified Tunisia’s budget deficits. By 1986, the budget deficit had climbed to TD 503.9 million, its highest point so far in the decade (World Bank 2016). To compensate these losses, the government resorted

to borrowing abroad at increasingly high costs. Ironically, the hale of Tunisia's economy in the early 1970s hampered its ability to recover from crisis in the 1980s — because Tunisia had built up such a good reputation with international financial institutions in the past, it could not borrow at concessional rates like many of its financially troubled regional counterparts. Overall, commercial borrowing to cover budget deficits pushed Tunisia's external debt to roughly \$5 billion. Further, with interest rates at all-time highs, servicing that debt consumed nearly 26% of the government's receipts (Murphy 1999, 94).

Thus, once again, the government's attempt to reverse Tunisia's financial crisis through drastic economic reforms left the country in a worse position than it had begun. By the mid-1980s, the state's mounting debt and inefficient investment in the public sector had resulted in a serious fiscal crisis that the regime could no longer hope to solve on its own. Faced with the problems of negative growth, heavy debt service, and dwindling access to foreign finance, the Tunisian government would seek external assistance to regulate its economy in the form of a structural adjustment program prepared with the IMF and World Bank in 1986.

Effects on Labor

If liberalization failed to produce lasting benefits for the economy, its effects upon the labor market were much more ambiguous. On the one hand, increased investment into new enterprises by the state and private sector created thousands of job opportunities for Tunisia's growing workforce. In addition to the 86,000 new jobs created by the private sector from 1973-1978, job creation by the state totaled 242,500 jobs (Central Bank of Tunisia, Annual Report 1978). Moreover, as most of these jobs required minimal skills, they were ideal for absorbing Tunisia's mass of unemployed citizens, many of whom were young and lacked prior professional training. Additionally, in an effort to win labor support for liberalization, the state established new corporatist institutions that more fully included union leadership within the policy-making process. In 1973, it instituted a new

system of formal wage bargaining — the *convention collective cadre* — that would unite the state, labor and business in a new “social partnership”. Through this system, the UGTT, UTICA, and the state would meet on an annual basis to negotiate wage accords, set pay grids (including a minimum wage), and establish norms for working conditions and productivity standards in various industries. To complement this institution, the government strengthened the powers of the Economic and Social Council and established new workplace institutions, *commissions paritaires consultatives* (CPC), to enforce wage accords. With the help of these institutions, workers were able to realize important gains in their wages and salaries — between 1970 and 1977 collective accords increased the average annual salary by 23-40% in real terms (Table 4.1) and throughout the early 1980s produced notable increases in minimum and public sector wages.

TABLE 4.1: Average annual salaries in Tunisia (in real terms), 1970-1977

Year	Declarations to the Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale	Census of Industrial Activities
1970	100	100
1971	100.2	105
1972	100.4	108.8
1973	103	106.5
1974	112.2	113.5
1975	127.1	119.4
1976	139	120.3
1977	146.6	123.6

SOURCE: Romdhane 1981, 445 cited in Bellin 2002, 104

Notes: Relative values using 1970 as a base rate. Salary data excludes civil service workers

Yet, despite these benefits, liberalization failed to resolve deeper problems in unemployment and the cost of living. Owing to population growth and the increased feminization of the workforce, the growth in job opportunities witnessed within the private and public sector failed to substantially

reduce unemployment. Throughout the 1970s, urban unemployment remained above 10%, and in the 1980s, it grew even more as the state began to divest from inefficient industries and end subsidies for over-employed firms. Moreover, because most private investment was concentrated in capital- rather than labor-intensive industries, job growth in the private sector was unable to compensate public sector losses. By 1986, national unemployment had reached about 15%, with even higher rates in some rural interior regions (World Bank 2016).

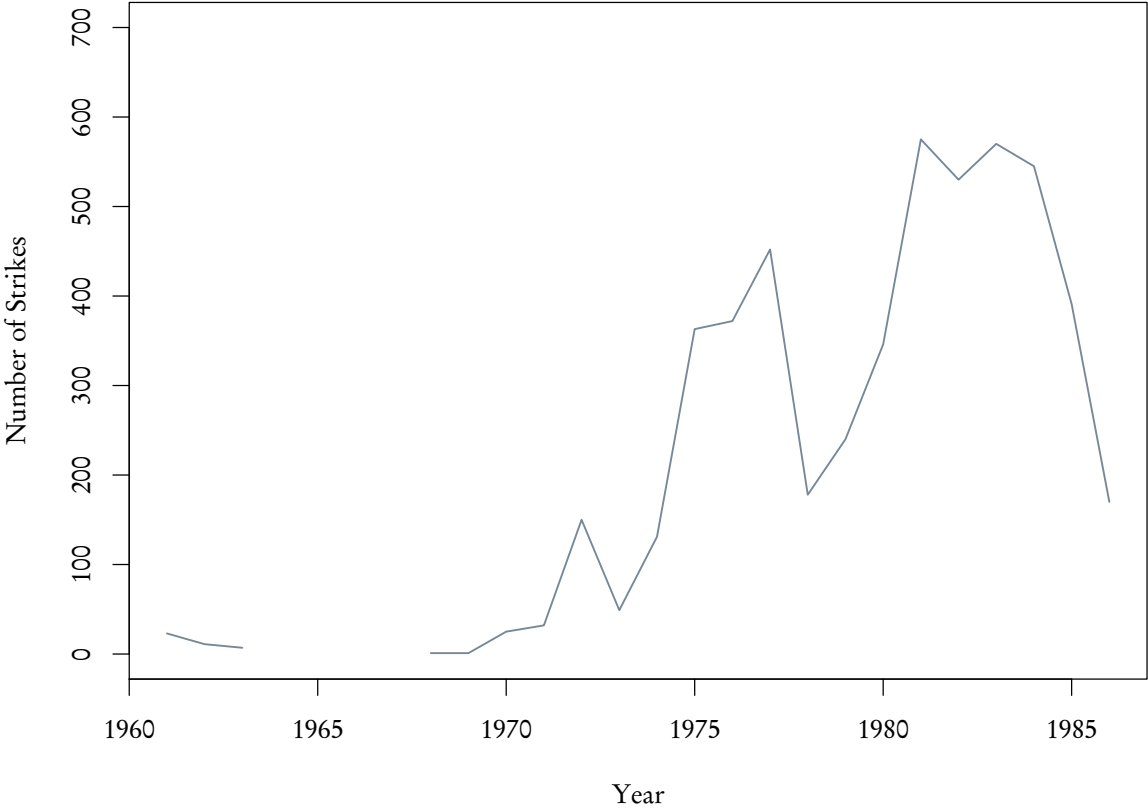
Wage increases also masked larger problems. While, as previously mentioned, salaries displayed remarkable growth during the *infitah* period, so too did inflation which averaged 5.2% each year. According to one union estimate, prices rose 36% between 1970 and 1976, indicating that the benefits of wage increases did not accrue for most workers, as they were used to maintain rather than improve workers' standard of living (UGTT 1977, 12). Moreover, in the context of rising prosperity witnessed during the early 1970s, workers failed to achieve an equitable share of economic growth. Indeed, while the average real salary grew 18% from 1971-1975, the real profits of employers grew 68%, highlighting the vast disparities within the liberal economy (Ben Romdhane 1981, 282). In the 1980s, workers' wage conditions deteriorated even further — while this period saw some of the country's largest wage increases, it also saw some of its largest declines as the onset of crisis prompted the implementation of wage freezes from 1984-1986.

Labor's Response: The Birth of a Militant, Political Movement

In response to these ambivalent conditions, organized labor experienced a resurgence of worker militancy not seen since the colonial period. As Figure 4.1 shows, in the early years of liberalization (1970-1972), strike counts more than quadrupled as compared to the socialist era, and from 1975-1977, exceeded that of the previous fourteen years combined. Thus, despite the government's efforts to create "social peace" through new compromises and institutions, the number of labor conflicts witnessed in Tunisia increased progressively during the *infitah* period. Interestingly, a close

examination of strike statistics reveals that it was only *after* the institution of collective bargaining in Tunisia that strike activity saw its most remarkable growth.

FIGURE 4.1: Strike activity in Tunisia, 1961-1986



SOURCE: International Labor Office, ILOSTAT Database 2016

In large part, strike action during this period was driven by the militancy of rank-and-file workers who initiated numerous wildcat strikes to protest their deteriorating wage conditions and unjust treatment in the workplace (Table 4.2). Indeed, throughout the early 1970s, the UGTT’s executive leadership — headed by a newly-released Habib Achour — retained close ties with the government and was otherwise too preoccupied with collective bargaining negotiations to promote strike activity at the national level. Instead, strike actions in the early years of this period were

typically led by base unions at the sectoral or local level, with the greatest concentration of strike activity occurring in the mining, transportation, and manufacturing sectors.

In the latter half of the decade, however, the composition of the strike movement changed to include a broader cross-section of the working-class. While miners and transportation workers still featured prominently as agents of strike activity, they were soon joined by public sector workers in the civil service — particularly university professors, postal workers, and engineers. In the private sector as well, strikes drew participation from higher salaried employees from the banking sector, who had previously been poorly organized and relatively quiescent members of the workforce. Most notably, in the latter years of the decade, executive trade union leadership proved more willing to endorse base-level strike action — as Table 4.2 shows, of the strikes recorded by this author from 1977-1978 some 20% were sanctioned by the UGTT central bureau.

Increased official endorsement of strikes also proved to make strike actions much more violent affairs than they had been in the previous decade. Angered by union leaders' betrayal of its "social partnership", the regime enacted harsher punishments against striking workers, often sending in military and police enforcements to brutally repress labor actions. One key example of regime violence occurred during the 1977 textile strike in Ksar Hellal. In October of that year, 1,200 workers at the SOGITEX textile factory went on an hour-long strike to demand the removal of the company's director for violating work safety conditions and endangering employees. As the dispute escalated into a full day sit-in strike, the regime deployed the police who attacked workers occupying the factory with clubs and batons. Moreover, as local residents joined the protests, transforming the simple labor action into full-scale civil unrest, the regime employed army vehicles to suppress the rebellion, resulting in numerous injuries and arrests.

Ultimately, the events of Ksar Hellal set the stage for more militant labor protests that would occur in the final years of the 1970s. Indeed, only months after the Ksar Hellal strike, labor militancy reached its peak with the 1978 UGTT general strike — the first in Tunisia's history since

independence. As in Ksar Hellal, strike actions held during the day descended into more generalized unrest as thousands of citizens in Tunisia's *bidonvilles* took to the streets to vent their frustrations about the regime. During these protests, which occurred in several cities, workers and citizens joined together to attack the symbols of regime corruption, looting government enterprises and storming state buildings. In response to the violence, the government sent in massive amounts of security forces who, in a brutally repressive campaign, killed 200 citizens and injured another 1,000. In the aftermath of the so-called "Black Thursday", the government initiated a severe crackdown on the UGTT, jailing 108 of its leaders (including, for a second time, Habib Achour) and installing a new pliant leadership to serve at its helm.

A similar progression of events occurred during the second half of Tunisia's *inftah*. Although government repression all-but eradicated labor mobilization in 1978 and 1979, by 1980 strikes were once again on the rise. As in the later half of the 1970s, these strikes were dominated by public sector workers, with most actions occurring in state-owned enterprises, the postal service, and public schools and universities. For many observers, the fact that this increase in strike activity coincided with the restoration of the former, militant UGTT leadership points to a more centralized effort on the part of union executives to launch protest action; however, as in the 1970s most early strikes were the work of the rank-and-file. Nonetheless, by 1981, the union executive again began to endorse strike activity, resulting in a marked increase in the number of official strikes (Table 4.2). Once again, this heightened militancy put the regime at odds with the UGTT, whom it accused of "fomenting social rebellion" (Kraiem 2011, 431). After a second set of urban riots erupted in 1984, the government initiated another repressive campaign against the UGTT, destroying several of its regional union branches and forcibly deposing its militant leadership.

TABLE 4.2: Number of labor actions, 1970-1986

Year	Strikes (ILO)	% Legal	Strikes (MENALC)	% Approved
1970	25	—	2	0
1971	32	—	0	0
1972	150	—	5	0
1973	409	—	5	0
1974	131	—	2	0
1975	363	—	5	0
1976	372	—	16	0
1977	452	—	28	10
1978	178	—	7	14
1979	240	—	—	—
1980	346	5	13	20
1981	575	9	44	43
1982	530	11	30	57
1983	570	15	36	55
1984	545	26	42	45
1985	391	12	26	85
1986	170	0	—	—

SOURCE: Strike levels reported by the Ministry of Social Affairs reprinted in the ILO Yearbooks, 1971-1980 and data collected by this author, available in the MENALC Dataset; Percentage legal reported by the Ministry of Social Affairs, available through internal documents; Percentage approved recorded by this author, available in the MENALC Dataset.

The Worker's Movement as a Political Movement

However, the most distinguishing feature of labor protest during the *infatih* period was not its militancy; rather, it was its heightened engagement with issues of political concern. Beginning in the late 1970s, the increased politicization of labor protest, expressed in both implicit and explicit forms, marked the transformation of Tunisia's labor movement into a broad-based political opposition force.

Implicitly, the political nature of labor mobilization is evident through an examination of the social actors that became involved in strike activities. In addition to drawing participation from various sectors of the workforce, strike actions also engaged members from different segments of Tunisian society, including students, dispossessed citizens, and opposition elites. Strikes led by transportation and postal workers in April and May 1976, for example, garnered the support of members of Tunisia's politically progressive students' union — the *Union Générale des Étudiants Tunisiens* — who staged solidarity strikes to support workers' demands for the protection of syndical autonomy. Additionally, in a series of rolling strikes that followed the events of Ksar Hellal, workers joined with local citizens to denounce the repressive tactics of the regime and its appalling neglect of Tunisia's working-class. An October strike by agricultural workers in the *Office des Terres Dominales* in 1976 provides one of the best examples of the UGTT's politicization through the unification of workers and politically-minded social actors. When agricultural workers struck to demand improvements in their pay and working conditions, engineers, university professors, and representatives from Tunisia's banned Communist Party joined alongside strikers to protest the government's campaign to privatize state-owned farmlands. Days later, these groups united again to send joint communique to the prime minister, decrying the inherent inequities of the privatization effort by claiming that privatization worked “to the benefit of a minority of large landowners in order to better consolidate the policy of Tunisian and foreign private capital in the agricultural sector” (*Le Monde*, 12/1/1976).

Explicitly, the politicization of labor protest was demonstrated through the evolution of workers' demands, which progressively shifted to include issues of political as well as economic concern. While the vast majority of strikes maintained an exclusive focus on traditional industrial issues (wages, working conditions, personnel management, etc.), in the late 1970s, strike rhetoric adopted a more explicitly political character raising grievances regarding repression and political corruption alongside workplace demands (Figure 4.2). As one of the exemplars of such strike activity, the 1978 general strike contained strong political overtones with UGTT leaders coupling demands for economic improvements with broader claims for political pluralism and democratic freedoms. Such rhetoric was replicated in the union's official press outlet, *Echaab*, which openly criticized the regime on the basis of its "rapid and illicit enrichment" and its willingness to deploy the army and Destourian militias to intervene in civilian affairs. In one of its final issues before the 1978 general strike, the paper included an acrimonious critique of the government, highlighting its:

"progressively clear contradictions between the aspirations of the Tunisian people ... and the policies of the Government which has deviated from the fundamental options that the Tunisian people have held sacred since independence and that were reaffirmed during the 1960s and 70s... [the contradictions] between the substantial progress realized by workers in the practice of liberty and democracy in the syndical arena, on the one hand, and, on the other, the hardening of political, partisan and informational structures whose evolution has not accompanied that of the Tunisian people..." (quoted in Ben Dhiab 1977, 541).

Similar politicization was evident in the 1980s. After a two-year lull in protest activity from 1979-1980, the UGTT once again increased its militant opposition to the Bourguiba regime. Particularly following the reintegration of Habib Achour into the UGTT's executive bureau in December 1981, workers organized a growing number of strikes in protest of government repression and corruption, many of which were approved by the UGTT central bureau (Table 4.2). In fact, as government repression of labor militancy became more severe, the UGTT leadership itself became more prone to adopt militant stances against the regime. In a statement following the appointment of military official, Zine Ben Ali, to the Ministry of Interior, Habib Achour indicated the new

oppositional attitude of the UGTT vis-a-vis the government: “Unionists have begun to doubt the sincerity of the government towards us. Workers have demanded that we no longer speak of friendly collaboration with the regime” (Kraiem 2011, 505). By the mid-1980s, political activity within the UGTT had reached its pinnacle — as Figure 4.2 shows, in 1985 over one-fifth of all strikes organized by trade union affiliates promoted some form of political demand.

FIGURE 4.2: Labor mobilization in Tunisia, 1970-1986



SOURCE: MENALC Database

Explaining Labor’s Response: Alternative Explanations

Organized labor's reaction to economic liberalization in Tunisia reveals two empirical puzzles which allow us to explore the hypotheses developed in Chapter 2: 1) How can we account for the rise in labor militancy in response to economic reforms? and 2) Why did the UGTT's agenda expand beyond material concerns to engage in political demand-making which challenged the established political order?

To a certain extent, the economic perspective elaborated in Chapter 2 helps to illuminate some answers to these questions. As theories centered on workers' economic conditions would predict, rises in worker militancy coincided with periods of crisis for the regime and deterioration of workers' economic conditions vis-a-vis industrial elites. Indeed, the largest increases in strike activity (1975 and 1984) occurred during years where declines worker's purchasing power were particularly acute, despite rising prosperity for economic elites. Additionally, in concert with a moral economy perspective, most of the demands launched during this period were concerned with notions of "economic injustice" and sought fair compensation of workers — primarily through wage increases — for their contributions to industrial productivity. In this way, economic arguments shed light onto the material grievances that may have served as a catalyst for labor protest, thereby accounting for the quantitative increase in labor militancy witnessed during liberalization.

In other ways, however, an economic perspective fails to account for important qualitative characteristics of labor opposition during the *infithah* period. One such characteristic is the timing of mobilization — why did strike activity increase from 1972-1978 and again from 1980-1984, rather than in some alternative period? Although from the above discussion, it is clear that these years corresponded to significant moments of economic decline, it is also true that workers had experienced worse conditions in previous decades. During the socialist years, workers not only had to contend with declining living standards and high inflation but also with wage freezes that impacted their purchasing power far worse than it had been as a result of economic liberalization. If economic

grievances are the sole catalyst of labor mobilization, why did Tunisia not witness a similar surge of labor militancy during the 1960s?

Additionally, a focus on economic conditions cannot explain the political character of labor militancy in Tunisia. According to the moral economy perspective, worker demands in response to economic crises should seek to restore rather than modify the terms of the existing state-labor bargain. If Tunisian workers abided by a moral economy then, we should expect for strike action to be strictly limited to “bread-and-butter” demands which try to compensate workers for their losses rather than to challenge the established political order. However, as we have seen, this was clearly not the case — in addition to demands for higher salaries, labor activists advocated for vast changes in the political system including greater press freedoms, human rights protections and the institution of representative democracy. Thus, a moral economy perspective cannot adequately explain why labor militancy transcended economic grievances to emerge as a source of significant political opposition to the Bourguiba regime.

Taken together, these critiques suggest that while informative, economic explanations have serious limitations in accounting for the specific trajectory of labor protest witnessed in Tunisia. While economic explanations shed light on the various grievances that contributed to worker militancy, ultimately they cannot adequately account for the precise timing of that militancy or its qualitative character. These shortcomings suggest that we must look more closely at the institutions which govern relationships between the state, labor, and other political actors to understand the specific patterns of labor mobilization that emerged in Tunisia. To explain why workers and unions engaged in increasingly militant and politicized forms of contestation, we must understand how institutions which governed labor, and political representation shaped worker’s perceptions of their interests and influenced the coalitions that they formed to promote these interests vis-a-vis the regime.

Explaining Labor Militancy: The “Fragile Bases” of State-Labor Relations

The trajectory of labor protest witnessed in Tunisia provides an interesting case study for the theory presented in Chapter 2. That is, that exclusive labor control policies should incentivize labor protest by radicalizing unions and forcing them into coalition with opposition groups and the rank-and-file. At first glance, the coincidence of labor militancy with the constitution of the collective convention cadre seems to challenge this prediction. On the surface, the convention represented a new inclusive institution through which labor could engage in dialogue with the state, thus serving as a check on labor militancy. Through the establishment of CPCs, the convention opened new avenues for workers at the enterprise level to give voice to their concerns and address grievances jointly with management officials. Additionally, at the national level, annual wage bargaining between the state, peak, and sectoral union leaders gave unions a measure of influence over labor policies that would directly affect their members.

Yet, in reality, the system of labor representation created by the convention collective cadre functioned very differently. At its core, the convention operated according to the same logic of previous labor policies enacted by the Bourguiba regime — to neutralize labor opposition in service of maintaining the exclusive hegemony of the single-party government. Facing a crisis of confidence marked by the failure of its socialist program and increasing dissent within the Destour party, the government intended for collective bargaining to funnel intermittent benefits to labor and pull workers from the left, thereby creating the conditions for social peace and regime stability (Camau 1973, 414-415). In many ways, the institutional structure created by the convention collective cadre provided the most efficient means for achieving these goals. By engaging in regular dialogue with labor officials, the government could provide an outlet for social grievances without engaging in the type of political liberalization that produced social-democratic institutions in Europe. Additionally by centralizing the bargaining process, it could reduce the costs of establishing enterprise institutions to conduct wage negotiations, while simultaneously depriving militant rank-and-file workers an organizational basis for increased opposition against government wage policies.

Paradoxically, however, it was this very centralization that prevented the *convention collective cadre* from functioning as an effective check on labor militancy. In fact, the convention was so centralized that it failed to adequately incorporate labor representatives at both the enterprise and sectoral levels. At the plant level, enterprise commissions failed to provide workers with meaningful opportunities for representation due to several shortcomings in their design. First, workers' roles in CPCs were restricted to an advisory capacity, thus limiting the amount of influence they could have in modifying extant workplace relations. Second, the fact that such institutions were only mandated in firms with more than twenty employees meant that the majority of Tunisia's private enterprises — which housed on average one to ten employees (Zghal 1987, 92) — existed without any system for labor representation. Even in large public enterprises, the explicitly ad hoc nature of CPCs meant that these institutions were not truly obligatory, but rather would have to be requested by workers or employers to be put into effect.

As the notion of labor representation was antithetical to the prerogatives of most employers, however, many managers did not support CPCs and took steps to impede their creation. In several firms, employers refused to grant workers' requests for enterprise commissions and, in extreme cases, shut down operations to avoid applying the recommendations of the *convention collective cadre* (ibid, 89). In part, the lack of union rights at the enterprise level in Tunisia aided these initiatives. Indeed, although CPCs implicitly recognized workers' "right to organize", they did not supplement this right with additional legislation that protected union members in individual plants. Thus, recalcitrant employers could always threaten to fire workers who pressed for the creation of a CPC or engaged in any type of syndical activities.

State officials also colluded with employers to limit worker organization at the enterprise level. According to Alexander, owners and managers routinely bribed regional labor inspectors not to report violations at their firms (Alexander 1996, 174). Additionally, because party-appointed governors wished to draw private investment to their regions, they too turned a blind eye to

employers' efforts to block CPCs. Even in public corporations where CPCs did exist, state owners offered selective benefits to worker representatives to prevent them from utilizing these commissions to levy worker demands. As a result, most CPCs in existence by 1977 were barely functional: out of the 188 enterprise commissions that had been established, only 38 were able to meet with any regularity (Zouari 1989, 337).

Ultimately, this dysfunction of plant-level institutions created a crisis of representation for rank-and-file workers which provided strong incentives for labor militancy. Equipped with few avenues through which they could express their interests, strikes became workers' only method for voicing their grievances and achieving their demands. For many workers, strikes came to be seen as the sole means by which they could correct power imbalances that privileged employers' (and by proxy, the state's) interests over their own. As one unionist in the banking sector commented about his colleagues' perceptions of strike action:

“We realized that [with the strike] we were stronger than we had been previously... For us, the strike became a thing of joy; a joy of consciousness, a joy of strength in numbers, a joy of being able to weaken the employers. Now, it was us who had control, not them.”(Appendix B: TU-22, 11/10/2013)

At the sectoral level, too, the circumvention of representative institutions provided an impetus for labor militancy. Although, on paper, the *convention collective cadre* permitted wage negotiations to occur within each sector — thereby allowing union federations to determine salary conditions within their individual industries — in practice, the bargaining process bypassed these channels in favor of direct dialogue with UGTT's peak leadership. In most cases, wage negotiations were conducted by the UGTT central committee, with only marginal input from sectoral union leaders (Alexander 1996, 184). For intermediate union representatives, this exclusion created serious uncertainties over whether their interests would be faithfully represented within the bargaining system — a fear that was realized when negotiations reduced pay increases for workers in a number

of skilled sectors (Table 4.3). Without assurances that they could influence the bargaining process through their direct participation, sectoral leaders began organizing strike campaigns to force union leaders and state officials to attend to their concerns. Indeed, many of the high points of sector-led strike action (1977 and 1984) coincide with significant reduction of pay differentials between high- and low-skilled workers, suggesting that strikes emerged as a reaction to perceived injustices in the negotiation process.

TABLE 4.3: Wage disparities between categories of workers (1975-1985)

Professional Category	1975	1977	1980	1985	% Δ 1975-1977	% Δ 1980-1985
Unskilled Worker	100	100	100	100	—	—
Skilled Worker	140	124	138	132	-11.4	-4.3
Supervisor	285	277	248	219	-2.8	-11.7
Engineer and Manager	581	515	502	408	-11.4	-18.7

SOURCE: Data from the *Institut d'Economie Quantitative* cited in Zouari

Finally, at the national level, the timing of the collective bargaining process generated uncertainties over whether the *convention collective cadre* provided a credible mechanism for even peak union leaders to influence labor policies. As previously mentioned, wage negotiations under the convention were conducted on an annual basis, with no specific guarantees that bargaining would continue into future years. While this system successfully produced wage accords that increased workers' salaries from 1973-1983, when economic conditions began to decline in the mid-1980s, union leaders grew skeptical of whether the government would continue to uphold its commitment to meaningful collective bargaining. Indeed, during protracted negotiations in 1983, government

representatives refused to hear union proposals containing a “material dimension”, and stipulated that any further wage increases would be tied to production rather than continued negotiations (*Réalités*, 4/19/1985). Moreover, the breakdown of social dialogue in April of the following year further increased peak leaders’ diffidence about the credibility of the convention collective cadre. In an interview given in 1985, UGTT Secretary-General, Habib Achour, confirmed this sense of mistrust, stating that collective accords under the current system were no more than “scraps of paper” that failed to serve worker’s interests over the long-term (ibid). In a direct response to failed negotiations in 1984, the UGTT central committee organized a wave of strikes within critical sectors, culminating in an October strike that shut down Tunisia’s rail system for two days (*Jeune Afrique*, 11/13/1985).

In this context of rising mistrust, the increase in labor militancy that accompanied the *infitah* period was likely to occur because the institutional structures which governed state-labor relations in Tunisia were “founded upon fragile bases” (*Réalités* 2/18/1993, 15). Despite an outward appearance of inclusivity and representativeness, the corporatist institutions that underlay Bourguiba’s “social partnership” offered workers’ representatives at all levels of labor organization very few means to express their interests or to credibly influence policy on their behalf. Faced with few options for addressing their grievances, strikes became workers’ and unions’ only viable method of pressing for demands and making themselves heard, particularly in the face of intransigent employers and government officials. Thus, by excluding the majority of Tunisia’s labor force from its “social compromise” the regime’s corporatist institutions created the very problem they were intended to solve, generating incentives for strike activity that resonated across all sectors of the labor movement.

Explaining Labor’s Politicization: Corporatist Decline within the Single-Party Regime

Yet if an examination of the institutions that governed state-labor relations helps us to explain why workers and unions became more militant during the *infitah* period, two important

questions still remain — why did labor mobilization acquire a political character during this period and how did it transform into a broad-based opposition movement? Here again, I argue that a focus on institutions is critical for addressing these questions. Just as the exclusive nature of corporatist institutions governing state-labor relations sheds light on why workers and unions felt compelled to express their grievances through militant strike actions, the decline of corporatist institutions that regulated political representation for workers and citizens helps to explain why organized labor developed into a major force for political opposition. In particular, I argue that the progressive centralization and despotism of the single party regime explains much of labor's transition towards more politicized demand-making in the late 1970s and 1980s. By limiting opportunities for both labor and political elites to represent their interests within the single-party system, the Bourguiba regime unintentionally drove these groups into alliance, creating the conditions for the UGTT to evolve into a broad-based political opposition force.

As noted in Chapter 3, by the early 1970s, the political institutions that characterized the single-party state in Tunisia had already begun to show signs of hardening. Indeed, in its efforts to secure support for economic liberalization, the Bourguiba regime purposefully rejected the types of liberalizing political reforms that accompanied similar economic transitions in Western Europe and Southeast Asia. For Bourguiba and Nouira, successful liberalization in a developing country required the leadership of a strong state, backed by a dominant party that could project an image of political stability to foreign investors (Murphy 1999, 60). Accordingly, Tunisia's economic liberalization should not be accompanied by a political opening, but rather a tightening of political control within the single-party regime.

As a consequence, over the course of the 1970s, the Tunisian regime descended down a path of increasing authoritarianism⁴³. Between 1970 and 1973, Bourguiba personally purged all liberal voices from within the Destour party (PSD) and replaced them with loyal technocrats who were

⁴³ The discussion in the following paragraph draws heavily on histories presented in Perkins 2004, Alexander 2010, and Murphy 1999.

more sympathetic to his mission to liberalize the economy without relinquishing political control. Subsequently, he expelled both liberals and socialists from the National Assembly, using a controversial clause that prevented non-PSD members from serving in the parliament. During a party congress in 1974, PSD militants rejected proposals to institute multi-partyism and allowed Bourguiba — who had been renewed as party president — to appoint his own successor in the person of the prime minister, Hédi Nouira. Finally, in a National Assembly gathering that same year, PSD members voted unanimously to establish Bourguiba as “president [of the republic] for life”, ensuring that future electoral contests would have not even the pretense of legitimate democracy.

In the absence of any meaningful political representation, the corporatist character of the regime fell into serious decline. As the PSD became more ideologically and politically void, it was increasingly ineffective at serving as a tool for mobilizing popular support, particularly among the youth who had little memory of the Destour’s past as a nationalist mass party. Moreover, the exclusion of leftist and progressive members from the Destour party stripped the organization of some of its most experienced leaders and left it weakened in the face of an “increasingly heterogenous and conflict-ridden political environment” (Tessler et al 1995, 429).

For opposition elites excluded from the PSD, this situation created strong incentives to organize collective action in opposition to the regime. Denied the opportunity to reform the political system from within, many leftist leaders saw protest mobilization as the best way to exert pressure on the regime and force it to liberalize from the outside (Appendix B: TP-24, 11/21/2013). However, for this strategy to succeed, these political elites would need to develop a mobilization strategy that could galvanize a broad cross-section of society behind a common agenda for political change. As political outsiders with a weak resource base and low levels of popular support, this meant that opposition elites would have to work within a pre-existing organizational structure to mobilize opposition to the regime.

For a number of reasons, the UGTT provided the most conducive environment to achieve this goal. Following its resurrection in the 1970s, it enjoyed considerable autonomy and was possessed of a number of important resources — an official press, independent financial holdings, and numerous local and regional offices — that most civil-society organizations lacked. Additionally, as one of Tunisia’s most ideologically diverse organizations⁴⁴, the union provided a ready-made base of support for the left, particularly among its newer federations in the civil service and banking sectors. Indeed, as a result of demographic change experienced during the socialist era, these federations had gained younger, better educated cadres who had “graduated” from Tunisia’s progressive student union and were eager to promote a more radical vision for Tunisia’s economic and political development within the UGTT (*Afrique-Asie* 5/31/1976; Zeghidi 1987, 285). Finally, the breadth of trade union issues provided fertile terrain for protest activism that could later evolve into political opposition. By organizing strikes that defended workers’ right to organize and that tied their poor economic conditions to the regime’s own corruption and pro-capital stance, opposition activists hoped to distance union members from the Bourguiba regime and turn the UGTT into a battering ram for political as well as economic reform (Appendix B: TP-21, 11/14/2013; TP-24, 11/21/2013).

Thus, in the early 1970s, political elites from a variety of leftist trends began to invest heavily in the UGTT as a potential base for opposition. Between 1970-1973, leftist activists entered the union en masse, establishing a notable presence within the UGTT’s civil service unions such as its education, postal and banking federations⁴⁵. For leftist elites, these unions provided an ideal context

⁴⁴ According to an interview published by the Tunisian magazine *Le Maghreb* with UGTT secretary-general, Habib Achour, the union could count up to twelve different political trends, including leftists, baathists and some Islamists. These statements were confirmed by a number of different interviewees (Appendix B: TU-2, 10/01/2013; TS-4, 10/3/2013; TS-38, 12/13/13) and in scholarship published by Taieb Baccouche (1987) and Christopher Alexander (2000).

⁴⁵ These federations mainly comprised members of the Tunisian Communist Party, the *Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes*, and the civil society group, *Perspectives*, which later formed the basis of the *Rassemblement Progressive Socialiste* founded in 1983. Members from these groups who received notoriety within the trade union leadership were: Taieb Baccouche (Independent-Communist), Mondher Gargaoui (Communist), Hacine Hammouda (Independent-Communist) and Salah Zeghidi (*Perspectives*).

in which to organize militant activity — in addition to operating in critical areas of government administration, these federations concentrated a large number of the UGTT’s “intellectual” workers who were more sympathetic to the opposition’s message and progressive agenda⁴⁶. By 1975, these cadres began organizing wildcat strike campaigns in their respective sectors. Reflecting the influence of the left, these strikes articulated a more critical understanding of the source of workers’ economic grievances which highlighted both the regime’s liberal economic program and its increasing authoritarianism as reasons for the neglect of workers’ interests in favor of the enrichment of the capitalist class. While such militancy resonated with a broad cross-section of the rank-and-file⁴⁷, it initially drew the ire of the UGTT’s central administration, who denounced the strikes as the work of foreign elements who wished to “use...[the UGTT] for non-union ends” (*La Presse*, 5/5/1973).

Indeed, official disapproval of leftist-organized labor militancy might have prevented the politicization of the UGTT had it not been for two intervening factors. First, the union’s own persecution at the hands of the state intensified conflict between labor officials and the regime, prompting the leadership to undergo its own process of radicalization. As previously noted, the increase in wildcat strike activity during the 1970s precipitated severe repression against the UGTT’s base — in the face of workers’ rejection of its corporatist bargain, the regime proved more willing to use force against the rank-and-file to secure its desired “social peace”. Yet, at the level of the leadership too, this increase in strike activity provoked a repressive reaction from the regime. Convinced that the rash of wildcat strikes indicated the peak’s inability to control labor militancy, it soon directed its antagonism towards prominent members of the UGTT’s executive bureau. In June 1977, for example, the government announced its intention to replace Habib Achour as the union’s Secretary-General, selecting in his stead his personal rival and loyal Destour militant, Ferhat Dachraoui (Kraiem 2011, 412). When Achour refused to step down unless by a vote at the union’s

⁴⁶ The higher education federation, for example, had long housed a number of militants from the Tunisian Communist Party, who entered into the union as university professors.

⁴⁷ Frequently militancy drew in members of manufacturing enterprises and transports, as well as those more “intellectual” workers in the UGTT’s engineering, civil service, and banking federations.

national congress, the regime initiated a large-scale offensive campaign against the UGTT. In November 1977, the Destour Party devised a plot to assassinate Achour in order to forcibly remove him from the head of the trade union. Later that month, the regime violated the terms of its social accord by calling on all public enterprises to halt dialogue with workers at the plant-level and to freeze the implementation of current wage accords (Achour 1981, 191). In efforts to deprive the union of political allies, Bourguiba expelled UGTT sympathizers from his ministerial cabinet and replaced them with party loyalists known for their willingness to use force to curb labor militancy. Finally, in its last act of labor repression, the government organized attacks against the UGTT's regional offices, culminating in three days of successive violence against the union's national headquarters in Tunis.

This rise in government hostility did much to politicize the UGTT's leadership. As government attacks against the union mounted, the union's executive bureau proved more willing to endorse rank-and-file strikes and even to support some of workers' more radical demands. In response to the death threats launched against Habib Achour for instance, the executive bureau approved a series of rolling strikes in the transportation, banking, and civil service sectors protesting "the hardening of a government which is visibly engaged in a battle against the labor movement" (*Echaab*, 11/11/1977). As it had done to the left, the increasing despotism of the Bourguiba government convinced labor leaders that militant opposition was the only viable mechanism through which they could express their grievances. According to Achour, in the face of a such a repressive government, "the natural choice of the [UGTT leadership] was none other than to strike" (Achour 1981, 199). Moreover, like the leftist opposition, the leadership began to view labor grievances as a consequence of deficiencies within Tunisia's larger political environment. In comments made following government attacks on local UGTT offices, the Secretary-General of the Sfax regional union blamed workers' poor economic state on "a military occupation with a relationship with a minority that holds power... This minority controls the country and keeps it in a

state of increasing dependency on the West” (Ghorbal quoted in *Parti Socialiste Destourian* 1978, 79).

In addition to being fostered by the radicalization of its leaders, the UGTT’s politicization also emerged as a product of its own internal bureaucracy. Unlike many of its North African counterparts, the UGTT had never been fully subordinated to state control. Indeed, due to Bourguiba’s decision to prevent an “organic fusion” between the union and the Neo-Destour, the UGTT enjoyed a surprising amount of autonomy vis-a-vis the regime, particularly in the management of its local and regional affairs. While administration at the top of the organization sometimes reflected the designs of the Bourguiba regime, bureaucracy and elections at the lower levels were relatively free from government control, providing a space of internal debate and democracy that was unprecedented in Tunisian society (Appendix B: TS-4, 10/3/2013; TS-38, 12/13/13; Eqbal 1978, 295). Moreover, despite the government’s attempts to periodically influence the union’s executive, the leadership was never completely divorced from its accountability to the rank-and-file. Rather, due to the routinely conflictual relationship between the union and the regime, the peak leadership existed in a “precarious equilibrium between autonomy and dependence vis-a-vis the government as well as the union base” (Yousfi 2015, 34).

For the leftist opposition, these features of the UGTT’s internal organization provided a unique opportunity to advance its political program beyond the level of the rank-and-file. By infiltrating and winning elections at the local level, opposition elites could gain a measure of influence within the UGTT’s internal administration, which could then be used to pressure the peak leadership to orient labor agendas towards more political ends. As noted above, over the course of the early 1970s this strategy largely succeeded in producing the left’s desired results — by 1975, leftist activists had won prominent positions in the higher education and banking federations, and by 1977 had achieved enough standing in the union to contest for peak leadership. To win elections at the national level however, opposition elites would have to successfully force UGTT executives to shift

their allegiances away from the Bourguiba regime. Indeed, since Bourguiba's purge of the union's peak leadership in 1965, elections at the national congress had been subject to heavy intervention by the government. Although union delegates were still permitted to vote for their preferred representatives, state officials — in collaboration with union leaders — manipulated the nominations process to keep unfavorable candidates off of elections lists. As a result from 1965 to 1976, the composition of the executive bureau had seen very few modifications, with only six incumbents failing to secure re-election⁴⁸.

Fortunately for the opposition, the progressive exclusion of union elites from the regime's ruling coalition helped to shift the UGTT executive's loyalties squarely in their favor. Realizing that threats of his replacement meant that he could no longer credibly rely on the support of the regime, Achour began trying to improve his position among his remaining base of support, the rank-and-file. To do this, he expanded opportunities for the rank-and-file to participate in union politics and permitted popular base union leaders a chance to secure positions of power within the union. In addition to more frequently convening National Council meetings, where executive, sectoral, and regional union leaders could debate and decide upon union policies, Achour oversaw the first UGTT national congress in twenty years that was relatively free from government intervention (Kraiem 2011, 411). Consequently, leftist leaders were elected by substantial majorities into the UGTT executive bureau and were later appointed to important posts in the union newspaper, *Echaab*, and the Office of Studies and Research⁴⁹.

The ascendance of leftist militants into positions of power within the union executive marked a major milestone in the politicization of the UGTT. With opposition elites securely at the helm of

⁴⁸ It is important to note that before this period, national elections seem to have abided by relatively democratic procedure. Although the regime did play a hand in the removal of two previous secretary-generals (Ben Salah and Ahmed Tlili) elections for other members of the Executive Bureau were relatively free from interference and competitive. According to Ahmed, at the 1960 National Congress, twenty-one persons contested for the eight seats in the Executive Bureau. Additionally, many members from the outgoing bureau, some of which received the explicit support of the Secretary-General failed to be re-elected (Ahmed 1978, 207).

⁴⁹ These leaders were Taieb Baccouche (Independent-Communist) and Hacine Hammouda (Communist).

the organization, the left was able to construct a cross-sectional alliance within the union that was prepared to act collectively to achieve political goals. Using their authority over its press and research wings, leftist elites began giving the union's rhetoric a more explicitly political content. Moreover, under the influence of leftist members inside the UGTT's executive bureau, the peak leadership proved more willing to support the radical protest actions of the rank-and-file, accounting for the rise in political strike activity after 1977.

Most important, the growing influence of the base within the UGTT's decision-making bodies triggered a shift in the union's relationship with the state. As they gained positions of power, base militants became more willing to challenge some of the collaborationist policies of the union's peak leadership. During the 1977 Congress, for example, 600 unionists signed a petition rejecting the executive's decision to enter into a "Social Pact" with the regime because the peak had not consulted with the rank-and-file before agreeing to it. Additionally, after a National Council meeting in which regional and federal leaders opposed the practice of dual leadership within the union and the Destour party, Habib Achour was forced to submit his resignation from the PSD Politburo, signaling a definitive rupture between the union and the state. Following this, the UGTT was propelled into a position of opposition to the Bourguiba regime which culminated in the government crackdown on the union and the executive bureau's decision to challenge the regime during the 1978 general strike.

A similar combination of factors helps to explain the resumption of political militancy within the UGTT during the 1980s. For a time, pacification of labor opposition seemed possible given the early efforts at political liberalization initiated by the Bourguiba regime. In efforts to avoid another crisis like the one that erupted in 1978, the Tunisian government — under the guidance of prime minister Mohammed Mzali — began to express more tolerance for political opposition and opened new space for parties and organized labor to participate in the political system. In 1981, the government pardoned and reinstated the UGTT's former trade union leadership, and invited the

union to form a common front with the PSD in upcoming legislative elections. Additionally, that same year, Bourguiba announced the official end to Tunisia's one party system by promising that any group receiving at least 5% of the vote in the November parliamentary elections would be granted legal recognition.

Through these inclusionary gestures, the government hoped to co-opt the union leadership and reduce leftist influence within the UGTT, thereby neutralizing it as a source of opposition to the regime. Yet militancy within the union was not so easily subdued. On the one hand, continued opposition resulted from the failure of the government to fully incorporate radical elements within the UGTT. Indeed, in allowing union members to run for parliament alongside the PSD, the regime failed to grant permissions to some of its most militant leaders, whose detention following the 1978 strike disqualified them from holding public office (Appendix B: TU-39,1/12/2014). On the other hand, labor militancy persisted due to the continued presence of the left within the union. Despite having presented multiple candidacies for parliamentary elections, opposition parties failed to acquire the necessary votes for legalization, prompting leftist elites to continue their strategy of mobilizing for reforms inside of the UGTT.

Over the course of the 1980s, pressure from these groups once again drove the UGTT into political confrontation with the regime. Within the union base, opposition movements continued to organize strikes in the education, banking, post and communications sectors, using as a pretext for their militancy the precipitous decline in worker's purchasing power and the country's poor economic conditions. Although these strikes bedeviled the chief leadership's attempts to forge a compromise with the Bourguiba regime, as noted previously, these actions were increasingly supported by the UGTT central, attesting to the continued effectiveness of rank-and-file pressure on radicalizing the decisions of the peak. Additionally, within the union leadership, leftist elites, and radical militants again moved to create distance between the union and the party state. In 1982, the UGTT National Council refused to participate in government consultations over the Sixth Plan,

arguing that it had not be contacted early enough for its recommendations to be incorporated into the plan. Similarly, in 1983, the UGTT decided to boycott participating in the Economic and Social Council, under the claim the union's inability to choose the members it wished to serve on the council was an intolerable assault on its freedom and autonomy (*L'Avenir*, November 1983, 20-21). Finally, in an ultimate show of organized labor's separation from the state, members of the UGTT's Administrative Commission voted to exclude seven members of the executive bureau from their leadership positions because of their complicity with the regime in joining the PSD-orchestrated "National Front" during the 1981 parliamentary elections.

Ultimately, these moves opened the way for the left and other opposition groups to reinforce their positions within the UGTT and instrumentalize union activity to serve political ends. Indeed, through its strikes in the public sector, the left succeeded in discrediting the economic policies of the Bourguiba regime and in driving a wedge between the union and the state. In response to increased labor militancy — which he interpreted as a sign of union leaders' bad faith and renewed efforts to topple the government — Bourguiba increased the use of repressive tactics against the union, driving the UGTT leadership further into opposition against the regime. Thus, by the mid 1980s, the UGTT had resumed its role as a key opponent of and force of resistance against the autocratic party-state — following mass arrests of striking unionists in the post, transportation, and education sectors in 1985, the UGTT executive began preparations for a second general strike to protest the government's "politic of intransigence and authoritarianism" which risked generating "an explosive situation similar to the bread riots [of 1984]" (*Echaab* 6/7/1985).

Yet, if opposition elites succeeded in transforming the UGTT into a hub for political opposition to the Bourguiba regime, they did so at the expense of the strength and vitality of the labor movement. Ultimately, the UGTT's politicization would spell doom for organized labor on two fronts. First, opposition efforts to reinforce union autonomy vis-a-vis the regime generated divisions within the labor movement, provoking an internal split that weakened the UGTT.

Following their expulsion from the UGTT executive bureau in 1984, PSD-affiliated unionists created a rival trade union — the *Union Nationale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* — that undermined UGTT hegemony and facilitated the government’s use of divide-and-rule tactics to curb labor opposition to the regime (Appendix B: TU-2). Second, labor politicization engendered a wave of government repression that organizationally crippled the UGTT. In response to the perceived threat that labor militancy posed to the durability of the Bourguiba regime, the government set about emasculating the union through a variety of harassments and sanctions. In 1984, the government implemented a ban on trade union meetings at the workplace and began arresting workers and civil servants en masse for their participation in “syndical activities” (Bras 1986, 991). In order to undercut the financial base of the union, the government seized UGTT assets in the Amilcar Hotel and Ettihad Insurance and voided the 1% checkoff system through which workers contributed a portion of their salary to the UGTT’s annual budget (Bras 1987, 713). Finally, in 1985, the regime took direct action against the union by invading local offices, imprisoning trade union officials, and replacing elected leaders with “provisional syndical committees” composed of party loyalists with little or no syndical credentials. Thus, by 1986 organized labor had lost its capacity to act as a force of opposition to the regime — besieged as it was by internal divisions and external repression, the UGTT was reduced to no more than a “transmission belt” for the policies and politics of the Bourguiba regime (Hibou 2011, 124).

Conclusion

From the perspective of standard economic theories, the rise in political militancy among organized labor in Tunisia during the 1970s and 80s appears somewhat counterintuitive. Although workers did experience marginal declines in their purchasing power, they were no more adversely affected by liberalization than they were by socialism in the 1960s, and they ostensibly benefited from new bargaining mechanisms which garnered substantial wage increases from 1973-1983. If

theories focused on economic grievances are to be believed, we should expect militancy to be higher during the socialist period of development rather than under the period under study — why were Tunisian workers more willing to mobilize and challenge the state during a period of relative prosperity?

Further, moral economic explanations fail to account for the politicization of labor protest witnessed during the period. A key proposition of the moral economy approach is that labor militancy should be restorative rather than revolutionary. If workers were responding to a violated moral economy, demands and militancy should have been oriented towards restoring the terms of the status-quo ante. Yet, the pattern of labor protest clearly defied this expectation. Why did labor mobilization transcend economic grievances to engage with political issues that drastically challenged the established political order?

The absence of sufficient channels for labor and political representation provides a useful if not obvious answer. Indeed, the government seemingly expanded opportunities for labor expression by institutionalizing collective bargaining and giving the UGTT a greater role in economic policymaking through the 1973 convention collective cadre. However, while theoretically this institution should have secured social peace and labor cooperation, in reality, it played a vital role in generating labor militancy because it failed to incorporate crucial constituencies in the labor movement and increased uncertainties for both rank-and-file workers and union elites. To begin, the dysfunction of plant-level institutions embedded in the convention collective cadre created a crisis of representation among rank-and-file workers, who saw militant protest as the only way to force recalcitrant employers to attend to their concerns. Similarly, the high degree of centralization in the collective bargaining process disabled sectoral union leaders from expressing their interests faithfully before the government, generating further incentives for labor militancy. Finally, annual wage negotiations created uncertainties for labor elites as to whether the convention collective cadre was a reliable mechanism for influencing labor policies. Particularly as worsening economic conditions

triggered a withdrawal of the state from the bargaining process, this short time-horizon heightened mistrust among peak union leaders and government officials, encouraging the former to organize strike activity to express their discontent with the state and press for the immediate satisfaction of their demands.

At the same time, deficiencies in the corporatist system of political representation played a critical role in politicizing the UGTT and transforming the labor movement into a force for opposition against the Bourguiba government. As the single-party state became more exclusive and authoritarian, opposition elites were driven outside of the PSD to find spaces for political expression and to try to enact liberalizing reforms to the regime. The integration of these elites into trade unions helped to bring a new, more radical vision of labor politics into the UGTT — one that connected worker's grievances regarding unfair wages and abusive treatment by employers to the pro-capital orientation, corruption and democratic deficiencies of the regime. Thus, by facilitating an alliance between opposition groups and workers, political institutions converted the UGTT into a locus of resistance to the autocratic state — as prominent leftist and UGTT Secretary-General, Taieb Baccouche, observed, “The development of the union movement and its opening to new educated, politicized constituencies, destabilized the former relations [between the Bourguiba regime and the UGTT] which had become progressively anachronistic and stifling” (Baccouche 1987, 167).

Finally, features of the UGTT's internal bureaucracy helped to create a cross-sectional coalition within the union that could support the opposition's political efforts and mobilize for collective action against the regime. Within the union base, democratic organization of local UGTT branches allowed leftist and opposition militants to influence union agendas and imbue rank-and-file strike activity with a political character. Moreover, at the level of the leadership, dependent relations between the UGTT executive and the rank-and-file combined with deteriorating relations between the union leadership and the state propelled labor leaders to support the militant actions of the rank-and-file and promote opposition elites into prominent positions within the union. Consequently,

leftist elites were able to form a broad coalition of interests across the union hierarchy that could unite organized labor in opposition to the regime. This cohesion and politicization of labor militancy in Tunisia would contrast sharply with the pattern of union activism witnessed during the same period in Morocco, as is discussed below.

MOROCCO

The Roots of Economic Crisis: State-Led Industrialization (1973-1977)

In contrast to Tunisia, the most proximate cause of Morocco's turn toward neoliberal reform can be traced back to the phosphate boom of the mid 1970s. Unlike most of its regional contemporaries, the Moroccan government never fully embraced a socialist model of development, instead preferring a liberal economic system based upon agricultural production. In its industrial policy, however, the state pursued a highly interventionist development strategy through the implementation of import-substitution industrialization in 1962. Absent a robust private sector to lead the vanguard of industrialization, the state took a leading role in the promotion of new industries, actively expanding the parastatal sector through the acquisition of foreign enterprises and instituting tariff controls to support industrial growth.

For a time, this state-led development strategy favorably impacted the Moroccan economy — from 1960-1965, GDP growth averaged a respectable 5.4 % (World Bank 2016). Yet by the late 1960s, the economic system was already showing signs of fracturing, as state-led development began to reveal its limitations. By 1964, a combination of poor agricultural harvests and heavy state investment in development and defense led to a deterioration of Morocco's balance of payments, sparking the nation's first major fiscal crisis. Further, in 1965, attempts to reduce trade deficits through the revision of price controls on basic commodities resulted in mass social unrest⁵⁰, alerting the regime to the political consequences of continued economic decline.

⁵⁰ In April 1965, violent riots broke out in the bidonvilles of Casablanca following a general strike held by the UMT. During these events students and resident set fire on government buildings in protest against Morocco's economic underdevelopment and poor educational system. See Pennel 2000, 323 for more information on these events.

Thus, in the midst of a growing economic crisis, the Moroccan state began to revise its economic policy in a more conservative direction. In 1973, it released an ambitious four-year development plan which aimed to increase annual GDP growth to 7.5% through an emphasis on exports and fiscal moderation. However, despite these positive steps, the level of public investment persisted and even increased in the 1970s. In 1974, a crisis in the global oil market led to a tripling (in real terms) of the price of phosphate rock, resulting in a significant increase in Morocco's export revenues. As a result of this windfall, the government stepped up its investment in the public sector, increasing its real government expenditures by 340% between 1974 and 1977 (Azam and Morrisson 1994, 89). The state's decision to continue its active role in economic development was reflected in the nature of its public investments— by 1977, it had created 215 new public firms and had increased the salaries of civil service employees by 26% (Saulniers 1992; Morrisson and Amour 1991, 253).

Unfortunately for the government, however, the phosphate boom was short-lived. By 1976, the price of phosphate rock had returned to its 1973 levels in real terms, leading to a dramatic decline in export revenues. Even more unfortunate, due to the irreversibility of many of its investments, the government failed to adjust its consumption patterns accordingly, and instead financed its public expenditures by resorting to heavy borrowing abroad. By 1976, the external current account and the state budget both registered deficits of 14.6% and 18.1% of GDP respectively, the majority of which was compensated through foreign loans (Horton 1990, 5). Indeed, between 1974 and 1977, foreign borrowing increased from 12.5% to 37.9% of GDP and the national debt service had risen to 18.8% (ibid). By 1977, the regime had entered a full-blown debt crisis, necessitating a serious shift in economic policy.

Early Economic Reform: Stabilization and Adjustment (1977-1982)

Stabilization

In the face of rising financial turmoil, it became clear to the Moroccan government that stabilization measures would be needed to slow the pace of public sector expansion and reduce macro-economic imbalances. Thus, on two occasions, from 1977-1978, and from 1980-1982, the regime implemented stabilization policies in an attempt to avoid continued crisis. In the first phase of stabilization, reforms aimed to reduce current account and budgetary deficits through the use of demand-side measures. In 1977, the government cut public expenditures, instituted restrictive credit policies, and intensified its import restrictions through the use of trade taxes and quotas. To curb imports and increase revenues, the stamp duty and special imports tax were raised to 4% and 8% respectively, and the number of goods subject to quantitative restrictions rose from 26.7% to 37.7% (Bassani 1993, 48). In 1978, further efforts at stabilization were undertaken, resulting in a salary freeze in the civil service, a rise in tax rates, and a 36% reduction in public investment (Azam and Morrison 1994, 90).

In broad terms, these measures had positive effects on the economy. Indeed, the overall macroeconomic results from 1978-79 were considerably better than those of the previous two periods — in 1979, GDP growth had increased to 4.7% (up from 2.2% in 1978) and the fiscal and current account deficits were held to 10% of GDP, as compared to 17% in 1977 (World Bank 2016). However, despite its notable performance, in 1979 the stabilization program was abandoned due to a number of exogenous factors. Rises in the costs of food imports combined with escalating tensions in the Western Sahara, increased the need for budgetary outlays on consumption subsidies and defense. Additionally, catastrophic droughts and a second oil price shock negatively impacted Morocco's fiscal revenue streams and placed further pressure on its current account and budget deficits. As in 1976, the state compensated government expenditures through borrowing abroad. By 1979, external debt amounted to US \$5.2 billion, representing a 20% increase from the previous two years (Horton 1990, 34).

In light of these circumstances, the improvements of 1978 and 1979 proved to be transitory. Rather than ameliorating economic crisis, stabilization measures (or better, the government's failure to adhere to them) had served to exacerbate it, necessitating another reappraisal of economic policy. In 1980, the government concluded that short-term measures would not be enough to restore economic balance; what was needed was a longer term approach which would combine both demand and supply-side restrictions. Accordingly, it requested the assistance of the IMF in implementing its second stabilization program through the aid of a three year Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

The IMF Extended Fund Facility and Standby Agreement

As with the previous stabilization measures, the primary objective of the EFF was to attenuate, if not eliminate, Morocco's budget and current accounts deficits through a reduction in government consumption and an increase in domestic savings. To contain government expenditures, it called for a 10% to 50% increase in the price of subsidized goods, effectively returning consumption subsidies to their 1979 levels in real terms. On the supply side, it demanded that capital formation be undertaken primarily by the non-governmental sector and that state resources be redirected from underperforming public enterprises to export-oriented industries — agriculture, fisheries, phosphates, etc. In 1982, the stabilization policies begun with the EFF were continued through an IMF sponsored standby-agreement, which sought to further tighten government expenditures by freezing public sector wages and increasing the prices of public utilities.

Despite their lofty goals, however, these stabilization initiatives failed to achieve measurable success. In fact, only months after their inauguration, both programs were abandoned in light of a series of unanticipated events. A severe drought in 1981, for example, caused agricultural output to fall by 23%, leading to increases in the demand for imported foods such as sugar, cereal, and olive oil (Azam and Morrison 1994, 90). At the same time, an unexpected appreciation of the dollar caused

the price of imports to increase, making several basic goods unaffordable for the majority of Moroccan citizens. To temper the negative effects on the populace, the government defied IMF proposals and substantially increased the price of food subsidies. By November, overall budgetary expenditures on consumption subsidies exceeded the targeted amount by 50% and were projected to reach 4.8% of GDP by year's end (Bassani 1993, 53).

Similarly in 1982, a shortfall in phosphate prices combined with the continued effects of drought exacerbated Morocco's current account and budgetary deficits. Overall, Morocco's terms of trade fell to less than half of their 1980 value, resulting in an increase of the current account deficit by 4.6% of GDP. Moreover, as much of this deficit was financed by foreign debt, Morocco's external debts also grew, reaching an all-time high of \$11.8 billion in 1983, with a debt service of 37.1% of exports (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998, 57). Significantly, in the aftermath of Mexico's repudiation of its own foreign debts, the Moroccan government could no longer borrow at concessional rates to compensate its debts, initiating a full-fledged financial crisis. By March 1983, foreign exchange reserves had dropped to \$30 million, an amount which could cover only two weeks of imports. In the face of crisis, it became clear that sporadic, short-term stabilization measures were inadequate to address Morocco's economic problems. In the years that followed, the government would embark upon a longer-term trajectory of economic reform through the implementation of an IMF-mandated structural adjustment program.

Effects of Stabilization on Labor

If stabilization measures failed to alleviate Morocco's economic crisis, they also did little to improve the condition of Moroccan workers. Although, owing to the government's reluctance to fully implement stabilization policies, workers did realize some early gains in the form of increased minimum wages and public sector jobs, the overall impact of reforms on workers' employment and living conditions was predictably negative. By 1982, the number of unemployed Moroccans had

risen to 640,000 persons, representing 13% of the working population (ILO Yearbook of Labor Statistics 1983). Moreover, in urban areas, workers fared even worse, as the number of unemployed persons in cities doubled from 1980-1983. Even in the public sector, which saw a net increase in job creation, employment rested on fragile bases — high levels of public investment in the public sector, in spite of an increasingly serious budget deficit — paving the way for a dramatic reversal of fortunes as the debt crisis intensified.

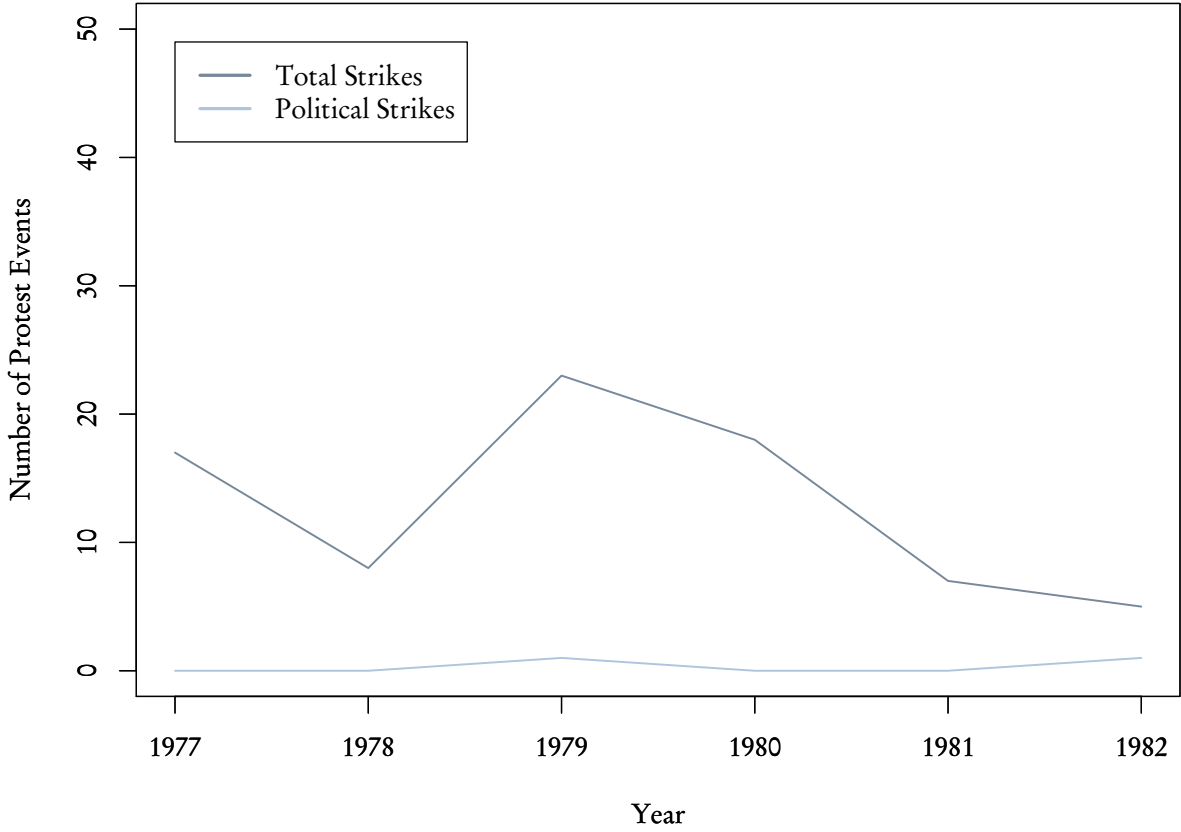
Workers' incomes too, declined measurably during the reform period. While the government did raise salaries for public sector workers, ultimately these increases failed to keep pace with the high rates of inflation — on the order of 10% annually — that resulted from subsidy cuts and fiscal deficits (World Bank 2016). Nominal wages in the private sector also lagged behind price increases, even more so because labor conditions (low productivity and increasing unemployment) in this sector were unfavorable to wage demands. Finally, in the agricultural sector, average incomes decreased by 10% from 1980 to 1983 (Azam and Morrison 1994, 91). During the reform years, only one group saw its purchasing power increase: workers paid the minimum wage, whose salaries rose by 5% in real terms (*Haut Commissariat au Plan du Maroc* 2012).

Labor's Response: Apolitical Militancy

Given its negative effects on the working class, one might have expected economic stabilization to provoke a militant, politicized response from organized labor in Morocco, as it did in Tunisia. However, while reforms did trigger an increase in strike activity among workers and unions (Figure 4.3), labor militancy in Morocco developed in a qualitatively different fashion than that witnessed in Tunisia. To begin, in contrast to Tunisia, Moroccan labor protest suffered from a lack of cohesion and failed to effectively organize coordinated opposition to economic reforms. In large part, strike activity was split among unions affiliated to three different federations — the UMT, the UGTM, and the CDT. Indeed, the relatively high volume of labor protests during the reform period

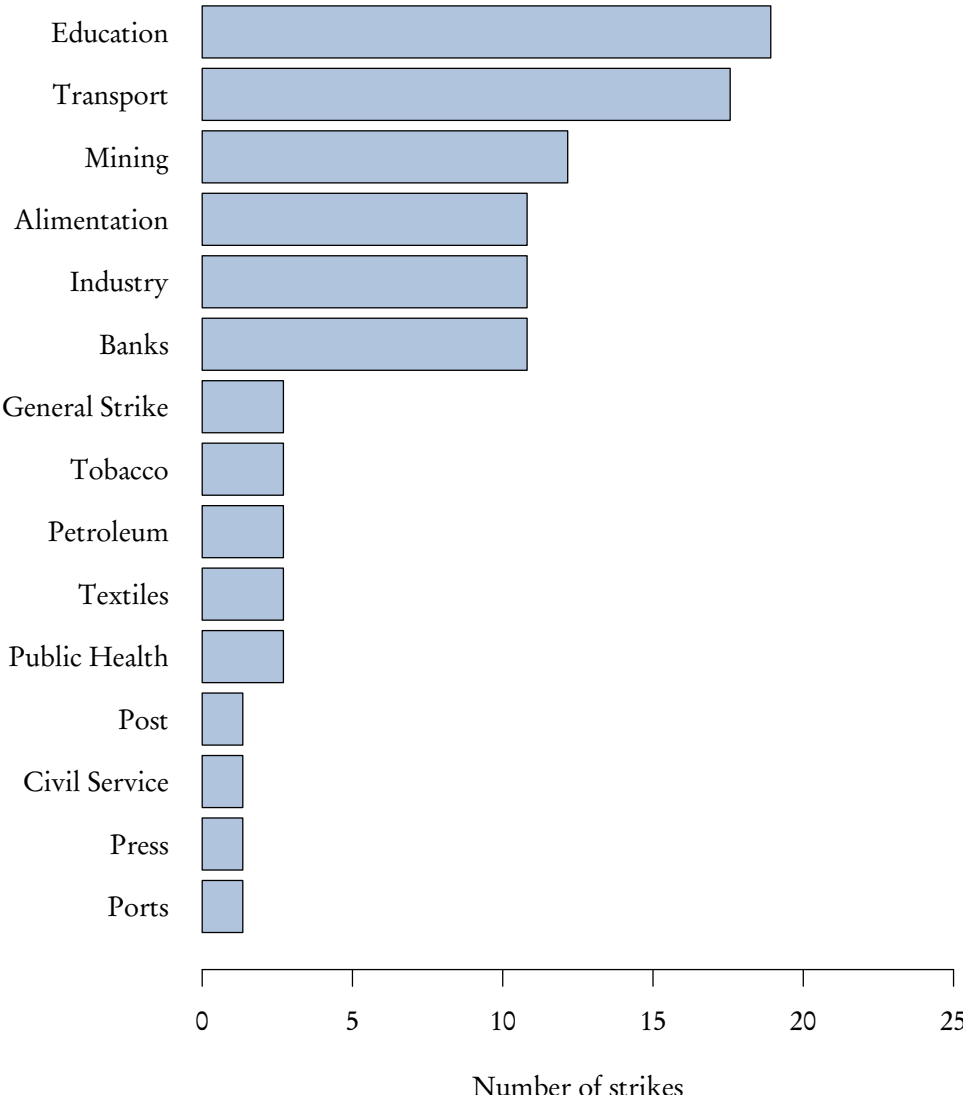
can mainly be explained by competition between these organizations rather than unions' collective opposition to neoliberal reforms. As Figure 4.4 shows, sectors in which protest volumes were highest were those in which national unions had established rival federations, for example, mines, transportation, and education.

FIGURE 4.3: Labor mobilization in Morocco, 1977-1982



SOURCE: MENALC Database

FIGURE 4.4: Strike activity by sector in Morocco (1977-1982)



SOURCE: MENALC Database

At the national level too, protest patterns reflected a lack of coordination among union federations. An examination of unions' strike activity in response to price increases undertaken in May 1981 demonstrates the extent of competition among national labor federations. Although each of Morocco's three main trade unions expressed opposition to the government's proposed price hikes, — which would increase the cost of basic commodities by 14-77% — and complained bitterly about reductions in workers' purchasing power, Moroccan unions failed to take coordinated action to oppose price increases. On the contrary, labor activism during this period reflected the conflicting, and often contradictory reactions of union organizations to neoliberal reforms.

On the one hand, CDT strike patterns demonstrate the more militant response taken by organizations of the left, characterized by a course of recurrent protest mobilization. In early June, the CDT led the initiative against austerity reforms by coordinating a series of localized strikes to pressure the government to rescind price increases. When these actions failed to produce measurable results, the union escalated its militancy by calling all Moroccan workers to participate in a nationwide general strike, to be held in coordination with the UGTM and UMT. Although both rival federations rejected the call, on June 20th, the CDT pressed forward with its opposition and held a 24-hour general strike which drew the participation of thousands of workers and virtually shut down Morocco's main commercial center, Casablanca. Notably, throughout the course of the day, the strike gave way to violent civilian protests, touching off one of the largest and most deadly episodes of political unrest in Morocco's post-independence history.

On the other hand, opposition from the UMT and UGTM displayed a much more moderate response to neoliberal reforms. Although the UMT did organize its own strike action in response to price increases, this effort was somewhat belated and garnered only marginal participation from workers in Casablanca and surrounding areas. Moreover, the timing of the strike (June 18th) directly undermined planned strike action by the CDT, attesting to the antagonistic and incoherent nature of Moroccan labor mobilization. Finally, the UGTM, for its part, adopted a

conciliatory strategy that directly contradicted the efforts of both the UMT and CDT. Rather than participate in strike action, which it denounced as “opportunistic” (*L’Opinion* 6/22/1981), the leadership of the UGTM engaged in repeated negotiations with the government to revise price increases, using as its main interlocutor the parliamentary bloc of the Istiqlal.

The Apoliticalism of Worker Protest

In addition to lacking a unified approach, labor mobilization in Morocco also failed to acquire an explicitly political character as it did in Tunisia. Of the 79 strikes recorded from 1977-1982, only two directly expressed political demands — both of which were focused on issues of foreign rather than domestic concern. More commonly, strike demands centered on typical economic grievances such as wage increases, the application of collective conventions, or improvements in working conditions. Significantly, even the larger strikes witnessed during the period were distinguished by their lack of engagement with political demands. Indeed, although the 1981 Casablanca strikes generated local riots which launched anti-monarchy slogans and attacked various symbols of the regime, unionized workers remained notably distant from these actions. According to Benhilal, the peculiar absence of union actors during the protest movement highlighted their fundamentally apolitical and “*khubziste*” nature:

“The political scene occupied by the disinherited and the armed forces was deserted by the legitimate representatives of the aspirations of popular masses [parties and unions]... no political or syndical movement intervened to channel the crowds or to offer them an instrument capable of transforming their diffuse energies into a vast current of reform” (Benhilal 1982, 242)

Explaining Labor’s Response: An Institutional Approach

How can we account for the distinct patterns of labor protest witnessed in Morocco? What explains Moroccan workers’ increased militancy, and why did labor mobilization not develop into a highly politicized opposition movement as it did in Tunisia? I argue that a focus on institutions helps

to address these questions. In contrast to Tunisia, where leaders developed exclusionary corporatist institutions which united workers and political movements in opposition to the regime, Moroccan leaders modified existing institutional structures to more tightly incorporate labor and political opposition into the government's ruling coalition. In both the workplace and the polity, the government strengthened channels for labor representation and provided new opportunities for unions to access influential political networks. In so doing, the regime exacerbated competition among rival unions and prevented the labor movement from developing a broad coalition of interests that could unite workers behind a common political agenda.

Explaining Labor Militancy: Personnel Delegate Elections and The Fight for “Most Representative” Status

At the level of the enterprise, the government's modification of the personnel delegate system strengthened plant-level labor representation while simultaneously institutionalizing cleavages among labor unions that provoked increased militancy. As noted in Chapter 3, personnel delegates constituted the *de facto* system of labor representation at the plant-level in Morocco. Although Moroccan law did not establish explicit union rights within the individual enterprise, it did allow for workers to represent themselves before management through the election of personnel delegates in firms containing ten or more workers. Through personnel delegates, workers could bring forth individual and collective complaints to company management, which could later be resolved through joint negotiation or arbitration by regional labor officials (Filali-Meknassi 1989, 44-45). In this way, workers had a direct, albeit limited, means of expressing their interests to employers and of addressing their grievances in a non-confrontational way.

Following a brief surge of labor protest in the early 1970s however, the government sought to enhance the personnel delegate system by introducing two new innovations that would strengthen labor representation at both the plant and national levels. First, in an effort to decentralize labor-

employer relations, the government introduced the concept of the “most representative union”, which allowed labor organizations with the largest share of elected delegates in each firm to exercise exclusive rights to collective bargaining. Second, in 1977 the monarchy endorsed a new constitution that allowed personnel delegates to select ten of their members to occupy reserved seats in parliament.

From the point of view of its architects, Morocco’s revitalized personnel delegate system should have neutralized labor opposition to reform by strengthening worker representation and dialogue at the level of the polity and the firm. Theoretically, this was not an unrealistic expectation — after all, more so than their Tunisian counterparts, Moroccan workers enjoyed more opportunities to directly express their interests and could influence decision-making through a variety of channels. Through collective bargaining at the firm level, worker representatives could negotiate wage agreements, set pay scales, and win better working conditions and indemnities for their constituents. Additionally, through their presence in Parliament, unions could express their policy preferences on a national scale and obtain political support to advance labor agendas. Most important, because personnel delegates enjoyed long tenures and substantial legal protections⁵¹, workers could credibly rely on this system to promote their interests over the long term.

Yet contrary to expectations, in many cases the personnel delegate system worked to incentivize rather than to discourage labor militancy. Because unions enjoyed ambiguous status at the plant level, personnel delegate elections served as the only means by which these organizations could gain recognition within individual firms and thereby access the benefits of representation described above. However, the need to galvanize workers’ support to win these elections created perverse incentives among rival unions to engage in competitive striking behavior. For newly created unions in particular, strike activity enabled federations to build a reputation for “legitimacy” and thus draw

⁵¹ Protection for personnel delegates were regulated by the Penal Code (Art. 15 of Dahir no. 1-61-116, 29 October 1962). If an employer was found to have acted abusively against an elected personnel delegate he or she could face fines of 50 to 1000 dirhams and a jail punishment of six days to a year.

workers away from existing organizations. For established unions, in turn, increased militancy became necessary to defend their membership base against competitors and maintain their credibility as representatives of the working class.

By incentivizing competition in this way, the personnel delegate system created the conditions for the surge in labor militancy witnessed in Morocco from 1977-1982. Indeed, the years with the highest strike counts during the period (1979 and 1980) coincided with the establishment of the CDT as a national union center, and largely reflected its efforts to develop constituencies in sectors already dominated by the UMT and UGTM. The rise in strike activity in the educational sector provides an illustrative example. In February 1979, a group of CDT militants began organizing strikes through its newly incorporated teachers' union, the *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement* (SNE), to oppose the complacency of existing teachers' organizations which it accused of "[being] more concerned with promoting their privileges than with being a dynamic force for social change"). In the weeks that followed, both the UMT and UGTM-affiliated teachers' federations — the *Federation National de l'Enseignement* (FNE) and the *Federation Autonome de l'Enseignement* (FAE)— organized rolling strikes in public schools and universities, setting off a wave of protest activity that lasted for nearly three months. During these strikes, which reportedly drew participation of anywhere from 45-90% of public school teachers, unions mobilized workers around an agenda of material grievances, typically focused on pay increases or employee promotions. Yet, as one former bureaucrat in the Ministry of Education noted, most observers "... understood that [the strike wave] was a thing of internal rivalries", generated by more by union competition rather than a sincere desire to address teachers' needs (Appendix B: MB-3, 2/16/2014).

In one significant way however, the structure of the personnel delegate system allowed company managers to prevent labor militancy from coalescing into a unified opposition movement. Despite requirements stipulating that only workers could place ballots in personnel delegate elections, labor laws allowed company managers significant discretion over the distribution of worker

members among electing organizations (i.e. trade unions) and the distribution of seats to be allocated to these organizations. Thus, while elections sounded like a democratic procedure, they provided employers with multiple opportunities to manipulate the electoral process to divide and weaken labor unions. Indeed, through this mechanism company managers could and did selectively deny representation to unions with more militant reputations while simultaneously inducing their competitors to display a certain level of cooperation in exchange for more delegate seats⁵² (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014).

Additionally, because designation as the “most representative unions” at the firm level was a tied to a union’s ability to win the majority of seats in worker delegate elections, employers often used their discretion over the seat allocation process to empower cooperative unions over uncooperative ones by allowing them to secure exclusive privileges through collective bargaining. In cases where such inducements failed to compel a union to be quiescent, as was often the case with the CDT, employers utilized their prerogatives to fire workers not yet designated as personnel delegates to eliminate the support base of unions that stepped out of line (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014, MU-20, 5/5/2014). In this way, the personnel delegate system kept union militancy in a delicate balance — while delegate elections provided unions with incentives to strike to secure a support base, it also provided a check on this behavior through the employer’s ability to deny opportunities for representation to recalcitrant unions. Most important, by allowing employers to utilize a divide-and-rule strategy to manage labor opposition, employer discretion over the elections process further institutionalized competition among union organizations that hindered the ability of rival federations to act collectively to achieve common goals.

Explaining Labor’s Apoliticism: The Moderating Effects of Incorporative Institutions

⁵² Most often this practice was used to discriminate against members of the CDT. For evidence of such complaints see issues of *Libération* 2/21/1980, 3/27/1980, 2/5/1981)

If a focus on institutions helps us to explain why labor mobilization in Morocco remained militant yet divided, it also helps us to understand why workers were unable to unite behind a common politicized protest agenda. In the political arena, labor's strategies and modes of interest articulation were directly impacted by their level of incorporation within representative institutions and the extent to which they could rely on partisan allies or elite linkages to express their concerns. Though all unions shared common grievances that could have been translated into a political challenge against the regime, those unions with institutional linkages to the state and alternative channels for interest expression moderated their positions and chose to work within these structures to levy their demands. Even for those unions existing on the margins of the regime's ruling coalition, fractionalization of the labor movement and the new spirit of "consensus politics" developed by the King prevented the formation of anti-government agendas and impeded the organization of political militancy against the regime.

As noted in the previous chapter, in contrast to Tunisia, political developments in the 1970s in Morocco were characterized by the relative liberalization of the political system and an effort to expand the monarchy's ruling coalition. In 1970 and 1972, King Hassan promulgated new constitutions meant to pluralize political power within the regime. The 1970 constitution, for example, reinstated the Moroccan parliament and increased the position of trade unions, communal councils and professional associations within decision-making bodies (Storm 2007, 27). Similarly in the 1972 constitution, revisions formally restricted some of the powers of the King and gave parties a greater margin of influence in censuring the government and proposing laws (*ibid*, 32).

Through these measures, the monarchy hoped to build consensus around its rule and co-opt potential opposition into the regime. However, the successful realization of this goal would not occur until the mid 1970s. During this period two political developments — one foreign and one domestic — helped to restore the monarchy's broad base of support. First, Spanish withdrawal from the Western Saharan sparked a national reunification project which served to appease some of the

regime's most critical opponents. Under the banner of "national unity" government rivals in the Istiqlal and leftist opposition came to endorse the government's political program and quieted most of their more acerbic attacks upon the regime (Lust 2004, 162). Additionally competitive municipal and legislative elections in 1977 brought labor unions and opposition groups back into the political fold. As a result of their electoral successes, members of the UMT and UGTM won significant positions within the government, as did parliamentary representatives from the UGTM's partisan affiliate, the Istiqlal (Table 4.5).

The opening of the political system helps to explain unions' apolitical responses to economic reforms. By incorporating unions and parties into political institutions the monarchy created incentives for these groups to refrain from engaging in open confrontation with the regime and from promoting conflicts that excluded opponents could exploit. It is important to note that unions' failure to engage in political militancy does not suggest that they did not harbor grievances about reform efforts or express opposition to government policies. However, the way in which this opposition was articulated was mediated by unions' institutional environment and the availability of alternative channels through which they could express their concerns.

A comparison of union reactions to the government's 1981 price increases demonstrates the importance of political institutions in moderating labor opposition. The UGTM's decision to adopt a more conciliatory response to reforms, for example, emerged as a direct consequence of its integration within the parliamentary system. To be sure, the UGTM did express vehement opposition to price reforms. As early as May 31st (two days after price increases were announced), the UGTM published a communique denouncing the government's decisions and threatening to use "all methods of struggle to repair the damage caused to poor sectors of society and workers" (*L'Opinion* 5/31/1981). Additionally, throughout the month of June, UGTM leaders, acting as part of the Istiqlal parliamentary bloc, pressured the government to reduce price increases through a variety of means. In open sessions, UGTM and Istiqlal representatives critically

interrogated Prime Minister Maati Bouabid about the decision to raise prices without having properly consulted other ministers or submitted a proposal before parliament (*L'Opinion* 6/3/1981). Additionally, on June 5, the UGTM-Istiqlal parliamentary bloc introduced a motion to parliament calling for a 50% reduction in the price increases. However, despite this opposition, UGTM leaders never threatened to withdraw from the government and rejected proposals to organize a general strike. Instead, UGTM representatives expressed their grievances regarding reforms by working within the institutional system and engaging in intra-elite negotiations, adopting behaviors that Burgess describes as “norm-based voice” (Burgess 2004, 9).

UGTM leaders had two reasons for choosing to limit their mobilization against reform to “within-system” opposition. First, given their integration into the political system, leaders found it less costly to work within the parliament and executive council to seek a compromise rather than trying to force a solution outside of it. Indeed, of all the groups expressing opposition to reform, the UGTM arguably had the most power to affect change within the parliament — of the 263 seats within the legislature, UGTM and Istiqlal party affiliates comprised 50, making them the largest non-loyalist parliamentary bloc. Moreover, the union had limited influence in the ministerial council where Istiqlal representatives held secondary positions in the Ministries of Handicrafts and Social Affairs, Justice, Education and Foreign Affairs. Taken together, these positions granted the union a measure of influence in the system through which they could pressure regime elites to rescind price increases without engaging in anti-regime opposition.

The attractiveness of working within the system rather than outside of it was compounded by the UGTM’s weak presence within the labor force. By the end of the 1970s, the UGTM had not been able to expand its influence beyond 10% of the working class (Clement and Paul 1984, 24). In delegate elections it lost to the UMT by significant majorities in the metallurgy, textile, tourism, and transportation sectors (Morocco Ministry of Labor, internal document). Additionally, reflecting its weak position among worker representatives, the UGTM managed to secure only one of the ten seats

reserved for unions in parliament as compared to the UMT's seven. This organizational weakness was critical in deterring the UGTM from engaging in radical protest mobilization. Faced with the real possibility that strikes would not attract sufficient levels of support, UGTM leaders thought it better to opt for a negotiated strategy that would be less likely to result in defeat or repression (Appendix B: MU-10, 3/25/2014). Most significantly, by adopting a conciliatory strategy, the union could try to gain concessions that would bolster its legitimacy among workers without sacrificing its privileged position within the regime.

Finally, the UGTM's decision to adopt a more moderate response to reform was supported by union leaders' perceptions of the government's willingness to compromise on price increases. This perception was reinforced by the Prime Minister's efforts to meet with the Istiqlal parliamentary bloc to discuss their proposals for amending price reforms. Following a June 6th meeting, an article appearing in the Istiqlal daily, *L'Opinion*, praised the government for its "willingness to open a dialogue on fundamental questions whenever necessary" and its "accordance of all [its] interests... in the opinions of the Chamber of Representatives in their evaluation of...previous price increases" (*L'Opinion* 6/7/1981). Indeed, the following day, the government announced a 50% reduction in the increases on subsidized goods, conforming to many of the recommendations outlined by the UGTM and Istiqlal.

The UMT's response to price increases also demonstrates the moderating effects of institutional incorporation on union behaviors. Although the UMT did organize a general strike to oppose reforms, this action conformed more to a logic of "within-system" opposition than it did to radical militancy. Indeed, in organizing its strike the UMT combined the threat of militancy with a continual emphasis on dialogue. Moreover, UMT leaders took pains to acquire government approval for the strike and, when striking, to highlight its "peaceful" nature (*Al-Bayane* 6/17/1981). Most notably, despite common objectives, the UMT rejected the possibility of a joint strike with the CDT,

for fear that the “[the CDT’s] motivations were driven by subversive, partisan concerns” (Appendix B: MU-20, 5/5/2014).

UMT leaders' decision to adopt a strategy of apolitical militancy reflected the union's precarious position within industrial and political institutions. On the one hand, the union's weak performance vis-a-vis the CDT in personnel delegate elections militated in favor of the call for a general strike. During the late 1970s, the CDT captured former UMT constituencies in education, mining, and transportation. In order to defend its legitimacy against its new rival — who had previously criticized the union for its “reprehensible collaboration with employers and the government” (Benhilal 1982, 237)— the UMT would need to mobilize protest action to demonstrate its willingness to protect workers' interests vis-a-vis the regime. On the other hand, leaders' reluctance to engage in political militancy reflected their desire to protect the UMT's privileged position within government institutions. In addition to occupying the majority of union parliamentary seats, the UMT held prestigious appointments within the social security administration and maintained loose alliances with key government ministers. To oppose the state directly would jeopardize these positions and risk potential exclusion from the regime. Thus, while they could oppose the government's economic agenda, they could not do so in a way that would threaten the regime directly. Consequently, UMT leaders selected a mobilization strategy that allowed workers to “express their dissatisfaction with austerity policies” while still operating within the confines of acceptable action as defined by the government (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014).

Finally, the CDT's militant response to price increases emerged as a result of its marginal position within formal institutions and its lack of influence within the political system. Indeed of the trade unions considered in this chapter, the CDT was the least well-integrated into formal politics — although it had a partisan partner in the USFP, the party held no ministerial positions and very few seats in parliament and thus could not credibly affect decision-making within the government. Despite this however, it should be noted that the CDT did initially try to exercise “within-system”

opposition. On May 31st, it issued a request for a meeting with Prime Minister Bouabid to discuss reductions in price increases; however this demand was ultimately rebuffed. For leaders in the CDT, this rejection of dialogue suggested that the socio-economic situation had reached an unprecedented level of crisis and that working within the system would not be effective for achieving reforms (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014; MU-18, 4/25/2014). In efforts to force the government to attend to its concerns, on June 2nd, it called on its members to engage in a general strike to “compel the government to account for the price increases and press for the satisfaction of workers’ demands” (Benhilal 1982, 239).

It is important to note that unlike the UMT’s general strike, CDT strike activity clearly trespassed the bounds of “within-system” opposition. Notably, the CDT general strike was officially prohibited by the government and consequently was the subject of harsh military repression. Despite this, however, it would be incorrect to interpret CDT militancy as a political challenge to the regime. In fact, both during and after the strike, CDT leaders attempted to distance themselves from violent behavior and political demands.

Ultimately, the CDT’s decision to limit its opposition to apolitical militancy reflected two tactical considerations on the part of its leadership. The first was a concern over the success of potential political opposition — acting alone, it was highly unlikely that the union would attract enough support to pose a credible challenge to the regime (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014). Second, union leaders were bound by the climate of “national consensus” created in the aftermath of the Saharan War. Much like their partisan partners in the USFP, CDT leaders realized that opposing the monarchy while the country was at war would be tantamount to an act of treason (Appendix B: MP-14, 4/9/14). Thus, labor opposition in Morocco would remain apolitical and divided. With unions institutionally bound to the government and pursuing different strategies to advance their demands, organized labor could not develop into a cohesive force capable of uniting workers behind a common agenda of opposition to the regime.

Conclusion

As in Tunisia, organized labor's response to economic reforms in Morocco raises serious questions about the utility of standard economic approaches in explaining labor behavior. From a purely economic perspective, we might have expected substantial labor grievances to turn the union movement into a politicized opposition force. However, while militancy did increase over the period, labor mobilization remained apolitical and divided. Rather than uniting in common opposition to the regime, unions pursued divergent strategies to express their interests that were often competitive and contradictory.

In this chapter, I have argued that both the rise in labor militancy and its apolitical nature can be explained with a greater attention to formal institutions. Institutions governing labor representation in the workplace, for example, fostered competition among unions which resulted in increased strike activity. At the same time however, these institutions contained labor opposition by allowing employers to exploit divisions among workers. By utilizing divide-and-rule strategies to co-opt moderate unionists while punishing militant ones, employers could ensure that labor militancy stayed within acceptable limits.

Similarly, a focus on political institutions helps us to understand why labor failed to develop into a united force for opposition against the regime. By selectively incorporating unions and their partisan partners into the institutional organs of the government, the monarchy effectively channeled most labor grievances within the formal structures of the state. For those unions who were marginalized from political institutions, exclusion did provide incentives to engage in more oppositional strategies. However, given divisions within labor movement such tactics were ultimately self-limiting, and could not be translated into an effective challenge against the regime. Thus organized labor in Morocco was unable to form the broad coalition of interests necessary to develop into a force for political opposition, as it did in Tunisia.

Chapter 5

WORKERS IN AN AGE OF ADJUSTMENT: UNION REACTIONS TO STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

The 1980s inaugurated a period of significant economic and political change within the Middle East and North Africa. By the middle of the decade, several states were on the verge of financial collapse, having suffered under the weight of nearly thirty years of costly and inefficient state-led development. Moreover, extensive borrowing to resolve public sector deficits, to subsidize consumer prices, and to bolster struggling enterprises had created serious levels of external debt, most of which could no longer be covered by rents or currency reserves. In an effort to address this crisis, governments throughout the MENA region embarked on a path of neoliberal reform designed to stabilize the macro-economy, liberalize markets, and make local enterprises more efficient and competitive abroad.

In some cases, these reforms were accompanied by institutional changes in the form of new bargaining mechanisms and political reforms that were intended to induce popular constituencies to support liberal economic policies. In other cases, leaders relied on established institutions to contain opposition and consolidate support for economic change. However in all cases, economic reforms entailed a shift in the terms of the traditional state-labor alliance. If the preliminary adoption of neoliberal reforms in the 1970s called into question the Nasserist contract which traded social benefits for political quiescence, structural adjustment shattered the terms of patron-client relationships established by organized labor and populist autocratic states. As governments moved to reduce state spending and withdraw from the public sector, workers could no longer rely on the beneficence of the “*état providence*” to secure their collective welfare. Instead, they would need to

adapt to the terms of a new state-labor bargain that in many ways undermined long-standing worker interests.

Particularly in Tunisia and Morocco, leaders implemented structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that negatively impacted organized labor in a variety of ways. In their efforts to reduce state presence in the public sector, governments cut wages and shifted capital and human resources away from traditional labor strongholds. By stabilizing the economy, states removed critical subsidies and decreased purchasing power for most of the working-class. Finally, measures to promote labor flexibility increased the vulnerability of the workforce, resulting in general declines in the number of secure jobs.

However, despite these negative effects, responses to structural adjustment from organized labor in Tunisia and Morocco were dramatically different. While in Tunisia, unions remained the focal point for opposition to economic reforms, labor militancy was relegated to the firm level where rank-and-file workers organized limited strikes to protest against their poor economic and working conditions. Indeed, the official position of the union was one of cooperation with the economic policies of the regime — while peak leaders and workers alike expressed concerns about the negative effects of austerity and privatization on the working class, ultimately neither launched concerted campaigns to oppose these reforms. Most important, in contrast to previous periods, labor mobilization during structural adjustment did not involve collaboration between workers and political actors. Instead, the UGTT adopted a position of political neutrality which entailed offering tacit support to the economic and social programs of the Ben Ali regime.

By contrast in Morocco, labor mobilization evolved in two phases. In the first phase, lasting from 1983-1989, labor militancy was minimal and unions hesitated to organize large-scale strike campaigns. However in the second phase of mobilization (1990-1997) this pattern was reversed, with trade unions from all sectors of the labor movement launching a growing number of strikes. Notably, the latter half of structural adjustment was marked by a new spirit of cooperation among

rival unions who joined together in opposition to the government's economic and, at times, political policies. By the end of the decade, however, this unity was broken, and organized labor returned to its former state of divisive, apolitical militancy.

These contrasting reactions are puzzling for two main reasons. To begin, despite broad similarities in the reform process in both countries, organized labor displayed distinct responses to economic change. This variant behavior flies in the face of economic theories which assume that common grievances should produce common reactions. Why was Moroccan opposition to reform more militant and cohesive than that witnessed in Tunisia?

Additionally, protest patterns in Tunisia and Morocco are puzzling from a historical perspective. Based on the trajectories outlined in the previous chapter, we would not have expected these behaviors to emerge, particularly in Tunisia. Why did the UGTT experience a retreat from its militant past? Moreover, why do Moroccan unions begin to engage in more radically militant opposition and why do previously divided sectors of the labor movement suddenly cooperate?

These are the questions that will be explored in the remainder of this chapter. Again, I argue that a focus on the institutional channels available for labor and political representation helps us to address these questions. In Tunisia, changes to the corporatist bargaining system provided new channels for the expression of labor interests, quieting most sources of worker opposition to the regime. At the same time, limited political liberalization incorporated opposition elites into the political system, effectively breaking the alliance between these social groups and organized labor. In contrast in Morocco, existing institutions for labor representation interacted with declining economic conditions to produce new uncertainties for workers and union leaders, who were newly motivated to strike. Combined with the relative closure of channels for interest articulation in the political system, this generated a resurgence of labor militancy that implicitly challenged the exclusionary practices of the Hassanian monarchy.

As with the previous chapter, this argument is elaborated in two main sections. In the first, devoted to a discussion of labor mobilization during structural adjustment in Tunisia, I detail the economic policies that comprised Tunisia's reform program and highlight their effects on workers. I then analyze the UGTT's reaction to reforms using a combination of existing and original quantitative data. Finally, I elaborate an institutional explanation of labor's response, defending my position against alternative explanations. In the second section, a parallel analysis is undertaken for Morocco.

TUNISIA

Tunisia in the Age of Structural Adjustment

As we saw in the previous chapter, by 1986, Tunisia's mounting debt and inefficient public investments had created a full-fledged economic crisis. At its worst point, the government only had enough foreign exchange to cover two weeks of imports, necessitating a dramatic shift in economic policy. To help resolve the crisis, Tunisia embarked on an IMF-funded structural adjustment program, which, like most others, called for market liberalization, budgetary austerity, privatization and labor reforms. This section traces the effects of these policies on the overall economy and workers, before moving to an analysis of organized labor's reaction to these economic changes.

Trade Liberalization

Although the Tunisian government had initiated its own program of economic liberalization more than a decade earlier, prior to structural adjustment, Tunisia was still a relatively closed economy. In 1986, roughly 99% of domestic manufacturing output and two-thirds of tariff items were subject to quantitative restrictions, and nearly all imports were placed under exchange controls (Bassani 1993, 81). As a result, Tunisia's industrial sector was largely immune to competitive pressures, making most industrial enterprises unable to perform on the global market.

To correct this situation, a principal initiative of structural adjustment in Tunisia was to reduce protectionist barriers in efforts to prepare domestic industries for international competition and improve the country's export profile. To this end, the government began rationalizing tariff levels and gradually phased out quantitative restrictions on most imported goods. From 1986-1987, it reduced the maximum tariff rate to 41% and decontrolled roughly 70% of manufactured goods at the production level. By 1992, it had freed 85% of imports from quantitative restrictions and had cut the average tariff level to 43% (Dillman 1998, 9). Finally, in a testament to its commitment to a new liberal orientation, in July 1995, the government entered into a multi-year free trade agreement with the European Union.

In addition to limiting trade protections, the government also accelerated diversification of its exports to reduce its dependency on oil and natural gas. Between 1981 and 1989, the textile share of exports had risen from 16.3% to 31.5% and exports accounted for by mechanical and electrical products had increased by 5%. Moreover, by 1995, over half of all exports were generated from the sale of textiles and leather goods, while the hydrocarbon share of exports had been reduced to 10%. (IMF Survey, 18 June 1990; IMF Staff Country Report, 2000)

Overall, these measures had positive effects on the Tunisian economy. Between 1985 and 1995, exports grew at an annual rate of 7.1%, and the overall contribution of exports to GDP increased from 32.1% to 44.9% (World Bank 2016). In large part, these gains were fueled by expanded trade within Europe; by 1995, roughly 75% of Tunisia's trade was with countries from the EU, most notably France, Italy and Germany (Dillman 1998, 10). As a result, Tunisia's balance of payments witnessed marked improvements during the period. At the end of 1995, the current account deficit had been reduced to 4.2% of GDP (from a high of 9.26% in 1984), and external debt stock as a percentage of GNI had declined by 6.1 percentage points from 1986 to 1995 (World Bank 2016).

However, for labor, the effects of economic liberalization were not nearly as positive. Indeed, trade liberalization benefitted large export-oriented firms at the expense of small and medium-sized enterprises, which were considered the “most dynamic in terms of job creation” in Tunisia (Ghali and Mohnen 2004, 17). As a result, workers in these firms suffered considerable losses in terms of their employment opportunities — according to one French weekly, nearly 1,000 small enterprises suffered financially as a result of their inability to adjust to new competitive conditions, putting an estimated 25,000 jobs at risk. Such employment problems were compounded by the increased use of temporary work in export-oriented businesses, which increased the precariousness of worker’s employment situation and compensated them at lower wages.

Stabilization

In addition to liberalizing trade, Tunisia’s structural adjustment program also sought to stabilize the country’s macro-economy by controlling inflationary trends and reducing public expenditures. In efforts to correct its external account, the government began stabilization with a devaluation of the dinar in 1986. In 1987, it followed this policy up by tightening monetary policy and removing interests rate controls. Further, to promote gains in economic efficiency, it introduced a new tax code which simplified tax rates and revised the corporate tax system to benefit capital investors.

The cornerstone of Tunisia’s stabilization program, however, was its initiative to reduce government spending. As noted in the previous chapter, by 1986, the government was heavily overburdened by its expenditures in the public sector which totaled over TD 1263.3 million in 1985 (Central Bank of Tunisia, Annual Report 1985, 133). To alleviate this burden, the government implemented a two-fold austerity program targeted towards the reduction of consumer subsidies and divestiture from public enterprises. In 1986, the government lifted price controls on several manufactured goods and raised the price of staple grains by 10% to 15% (Nsouli et al. 1993). These

increases were followed by gradual subsidy reductions over the period 1987-1992, complemented by poverty assistance to those most affected by price control removals. In order to reduce state presence in the business sector, the government initiated a restructuring program for unprofitable SOEs, and created a new ministerial commission to review firms for possible privatization (to be discussed below). Finally, to complement its divestment initiatives, the government implemented a new investment code and freed banking credits to attract more foreign and private investments.

As with liberalization, stabilization policies produced most of their desired results. Despite an initial decrease in the growth rate from 1987-1988, GDP growth rose steadily over the period, reaching a high of 7.95% in 1990 (World Bank 2016). Additionally, inflation, another target of austerity reforms, declined from a high of 16.2% in 1982 to an average of 6.5% from 1987-1993 (ibid). While the government failed to substantially reduce its public investment spending (largely due to increases in the public sector wage bill), it did manage to attract more private investment, particularly in the energy and tourism sectors. By 1995, about 87% of all foreign direct investment was in hydrocarbon production and tourism receipts had increased to 5.8% of GDP (Central Bank of Tunisia, Annual Report 1995). As a result, by the mid-1990s Tunisia was able to cover most of its debt repayments, and its capital account balance was significantly increased.

The impact of stabilization on organized labor and its constituents, however, was mixed. On the one hand, stabilization was not marked by a rise in overall poverty and was accompanied by an increase, rather than a decrease in social services provided by the state. In part due to its fear of provoking social unrest similar to that witnessed in 1984, the government complemented stabilizing reforms with heavy spending in education, health, and social welfare, making Tunisia the highest social spender in the Middle East (El-Said and Harrigan 2014, 113). Although the government did revise price controls and reformed its health compensation system, it also created new institutions to directly compensate those who lost out to reforms. One such institution was the *Fond de Solidarité National*, which provided healthcare, housing, and community assistance to areas of the country in

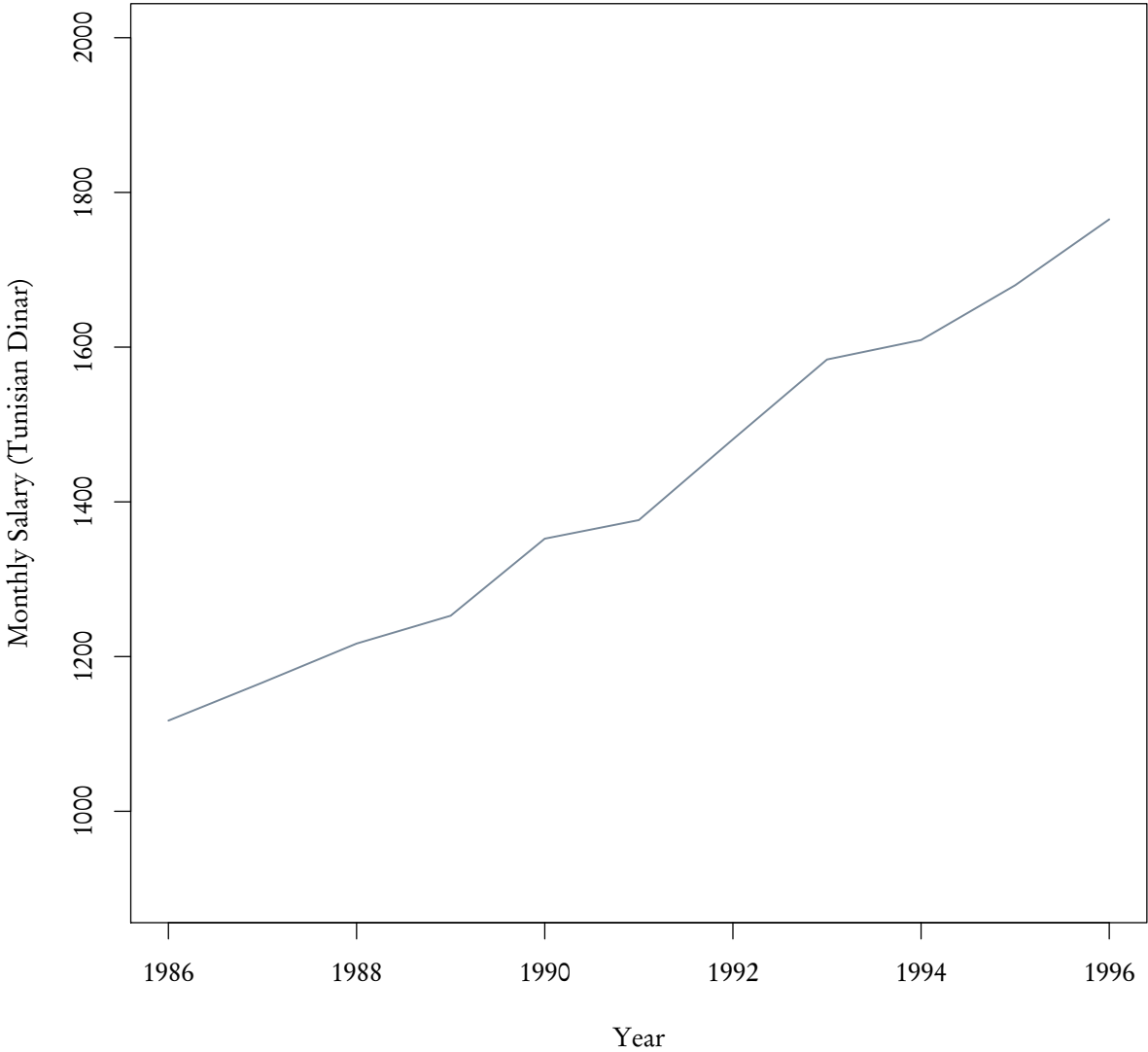
which most families were impoverished and lacked basic goods. Because of the FSN and other institutions, the government was able to reduce the proportion of citizens living in poverty⁵³ from 13.8% of the population in 1985 to 10.6% by 1995 (World Bank 2016).

On the other hand, however, stabilization initiatives produced serious distortions in the economy that were not be resolved by institutional innovations. For example, strong regional disparities in human development continued to exist, particularly between the coastal regions and the center-west (African Development Bank 2011, 8). Additionally, class inequalities remained relatively high, with the Gini coefficient increasing slightly from 40.24 to 41.66 between 1990 and 1995 (World Bank 2016). Nevertheless, even the poorest workers saw an overall increase in their annual wage, which rose from TD 1117.2 to TD 1765.2 over the reform period⁵⁴ (Figure 5.1).

⁵³ Based on the percent of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day in 2011 PPP.

⁵⁴ According to an annual report released by the Central Bank of Tunisia, these increases were complemented by an 18% increase in the average annual wage between 1990 and 1995, amounting to an average annual increase in average wages of 2.9%. (Central Bank of Tunisia, Annual Report 1995, p. 70). Referencing a 1995 report from the Tunisian Ministry of Social Affairs, Murphy cites very different figures which suggest that average wages increased at annual rates of 11 - 16% between 1991 and 1994 (Murphy 1999, 155).

FIGURE 5.1: Annual wage growth in Tunisia (minimum-wage workers)



SOURCE: *Institut National de la Statistique de Tunisie*

Privatization

Perhaps the most arduous undertaking of structural adjustment in Tunisia was privatization. Although by the mid-1980s, the government had realized that most state-owned enterprises suffered

from poor mismanagement and unprofitability, SOEs still accounted for 31% of GDP and 29% of total employment in 1983, making their transfer to private investors a particularly sensitive issue (Saghir 1993, 5). Consequently, Tunisia's privatization program proceeded at a gradual and somewhat delayed pace. While initial efforts at privatization were begun as early as 1985, the government did not launch a serious privatization until 1989. That year, it altered the definition of the public enterprise sector to include a total of 184 businesses (down from 450) and established a new inter-ministerial agency, the *Commission d'Assainissement de la Restructuration des Entreprises et de la Participation Publique* (CAREPP) to oversee the privatization effort. In the same year, it initiated the sale of several small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism and agribusiness sectors, privatizing a total of 48 firms by 1994. After a slowdown in privatization sales in 1995 drew the criticism of international financial institutions, the government accelerated its privatization efforts in 1996 and began the sale of larger, more profitable firms. By 1999, it had privatized an additional 41 enterprises — including two large cement works — generating some \$461.5 million in total proceeds (World Bank Privatization Database 2015).

As concerns labor, privatization had almost wholly negative effects on the working class. According to a CAREPP study, through June 1990, about 6,500 workers from twenty-six public enterprises were affected by restructuring that occurred before or after privatization, of which 48% were either fired or retired. Additionally, between 1996 and 1998, privatization was responsible for around 2,000 public sector workers annually losing their jobs (Layachi 1999, 4). When combined with the previous statistics, this meant that nearly 6% of the pre-privatization workforce suffered from unemployment (Posusney 2000, 279).

However despite these losses, the government did take some measures to minimize privatization's damage to the working class. In 1987, it established the *Fond de Restructuration des Entreprises Publiques*, which provided severance pay to laid-off workers and financed social security contributions using privatization proceeds. Moreover, as a condition of most sales, purchasers were

asked to maintain the company's existing labor force or find alternative employment for redundant workers on a temporary basis. Nevertheless, structural adjustment failed to reverse the high unemployment rate that Tunisia had experienced over the previous twenty years. Indeed, during the 1990s, the labor force grew measurably, from 2.49 million in 1990 to 3.16 million in 1999 (World Bank 2016). As Table 5.1 shows, job creation failed to keep up with the resultant increase in demand for jobs, leaving many Tunisians out of work. In 1997, Tunisia's unemployment stood at a likely underestimated 15.9%, and was disproportionately high among the poor (El Said and Harrigan 2014, 117). Moreover, structural adjustment created serious disparities within the working-class as unemployment posed a greater risk to younger workers and those with high skills (Ghalil and Mohnen 2004, 13).

Labor Organization and Flexibility

Finally, structural adjustment introduced numerous reforms which impacted labor organization and employment flexibility. In response to the World Bank's recommendation for revised labor legislation, the Tunisian government initiated a new labor code in 1994 which included updated provisions for plant-level labor organization and the right to strike. At the plant-level, the code consolidated existing workplace institutions to create a single *commission consultative de l'entreprise* within which workers could be represented. In regards to the right to strike, the new labor code brought Tunisian legislation into conformity with international standards by restricting the government's right to force binding arbitration during labor disputes and to requisition striking workers that harmed "the national interest" (Alexander 2001, 116). In 1996, the government introduced further reforms which addressed the issue of employment flexibility by specifying the conditions under which firms could employ temporary workers. In general terms, these reforms increased manager's prerogatives for hiring and firing by allowing them to employ workers under fixed term contracts during a firm's initial development, for seasonal work, or to replace fired

employees. Finally, in an effort to boost labor productivity, labor reforms stipulated that a portion of workers' salary increases in individual firms be tied to performance at the plant-level.

TABLE 5.1: Unemployment and Job Vacancies in Tunisia

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Number of Persons									
Unemployed registered	194,697	209,737	237,302	174,193	152,153	133,072	136,855	142,212	160,224
Skilled	64,960	68,215	73,482	45,554	27,363	23,960	24,035	29,184	34,692
Unskilled	76,954	77,738	84,924	60,681	65,400	57,008	53,594	57,012	57,816
First job	52,803	63,784	78,896	67,958	59,390	52,104	59,256	56,016	67,716
Vacancies Reported									
Skilled	21,338	24,624	26,981	29,585	34,332	29,428	31,045	34,956	44,522
Unskilled	35,083	37,368	35,638	38,057	46,087	39,192	34,247	33,144	37,131
Total placements									
Skilled	17,489	19,243	19,368	20,915	16,244	15,023	17,439	18,036	20,898
Unskilled	31,861	34,508	33,104	34,425	42,239	37,805	32,379	31,848	36,845
First Job	3,998	4,304	5,355	7,546	16,935	11,497	11,579	15,600	18,816

SOURCE: Agence Tunisienne pour l'Emploi

Of all of the reforms initiated during structural adjustment, labor code revisions had the most direct impact on organized labor. On the surface, labor's interests were directly harmed by the labor code — because new legislation permitted greater use of temporary contracts, it increased the precariousness of workers' employment, posing a threat to both workers and unions alike. However, in reality, strict restrictions on manager's ability to fire permanent employees served to increase job security for most workers. Indeed, if found to have fired an employee abusively, a manager could expect to pay up to three years worth of salary in severance pay (Posusney 2003). As a result, workers already employed in permanent positions had little to lose from labor code reforms.

Ironically, for the labor force as a whole, however, such reforms proved to be a double-edged sword. At the same time as restrictions on employer's capacity to fire protected employed workers, they also prevented new workers from entering the labor market, causing a rise in overall unemployment. Consequently, Tunisia maintained one of the highest unemployment rates in the world during the period, at an average of about 15% (Rama 1998, 59). This, in turn, promoted the growth of Tunisia's informal economy, in which most workers found themselves underpaid and unprotected (Aita 2008, 78).

Summary

In sum, structural adjustment had an overall negative impact on organized labor. While liberalization and privatization cut jobs, stabilization increased prices and diminished workers' overall purchasing power. Although the government did implement some measures to reduce the negative effects of reform on the working-class, ultimately these policies failed to curb rising inequality or unemployment. Thus, structural adjustment undermined key interests of the labor movement, generating the conditions for significant labor opposition to structural reforms.

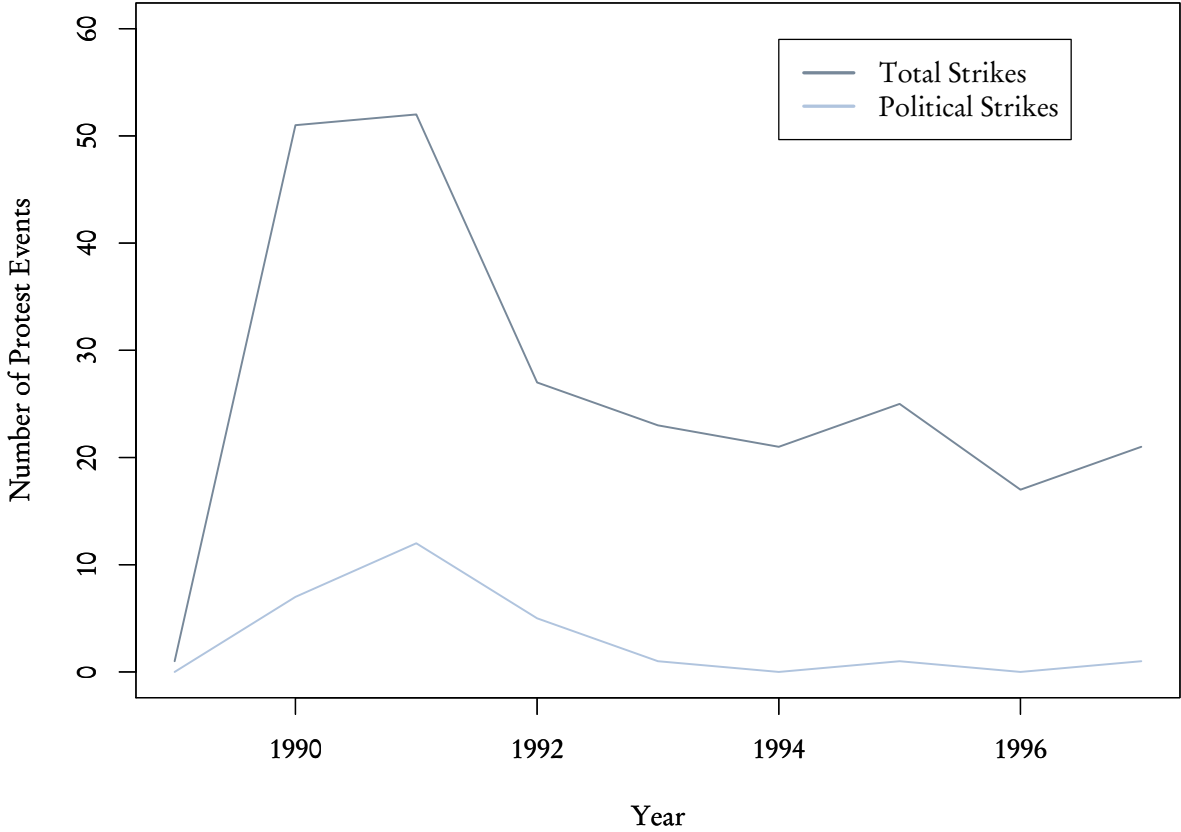
Labor's Reaction: Depoliticized Militancy

Interestingly, despite having harmed labor interests, structural adjustment did not elicit a particularly militant reaction from the UGTT. While peak union leaders and members of the rank-and-file occasionally criticized aspects of the government's reform program they did not undertake serious efforts to challenge it or mobilize against it. Indeed, in sharp contrast to previous periods, the union leadership facilitated reform efforts by calling for a reduction in labor militancy and moderating wage demands. In a 1992 speech, the UGTT's Secretary General, Ismail Sahbani, betrayed the union's new conciliatory approach to reforms:

“[The UGTT] has chosen in principle to adapt itself to international transformations by adopting new methods of work and intervention... Today the union is trying to adapt to changes in the international economic system, the structural adjustment program, the new world order and the market economy. The task of meeting these challenges is the unions' preoccupation” (*Le Tournant* 1992, 6 cited in Alexander 1996).

Nonetheless, acceptance of reform did not translate into a reduction in strike activity. According to official statistics, from 1986-1997 workers launched a sum total of 4,639 strikes, representing a 10.5% increase over the previous decade. This trend of increased militancy is corroborated by the data collected by this author — despite an official policy of moderation, the early years of structural adjustment saw some of the highest incidences of strike activity in Tunisia's history (Figure 5.2). It is important to note, however, that labor militancy during structural adjustment differed markedly from that of previous periods. In contrast to the 1980s, strike activity was largely confined to individual plants and typically involved only low-skilled workers in the public and private sectors. Although sectoral and executive leaders did occasionally support some of these strikes, they worked to limit protest to a duration of only one or two days. Most important, union executives did not organize general strikes of their own and explicitly forbade sectoral and regional strike campaigns (Appendix B: TU-33, 12/2/13).

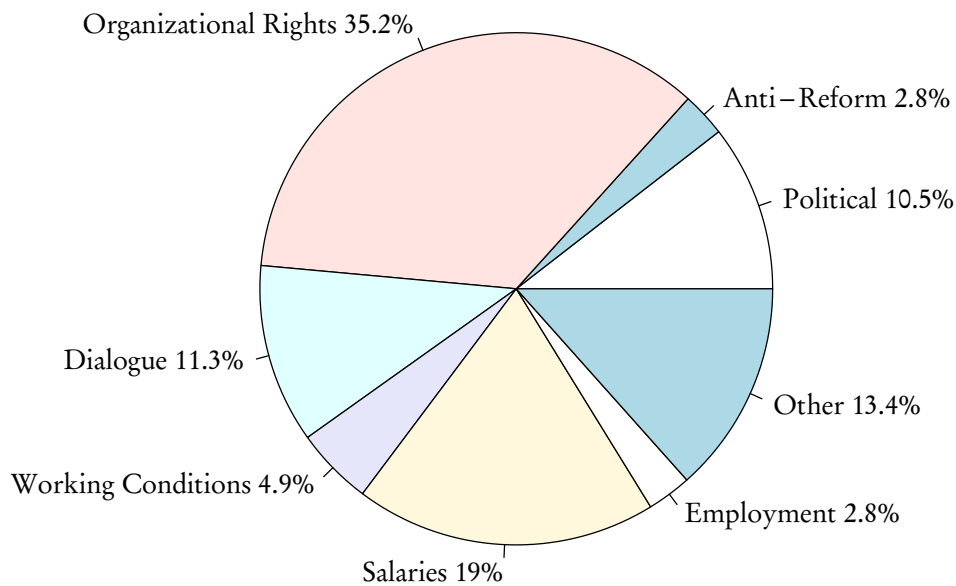
FIGURE 5.2: Labor mobilization in Tunisia, 1989-1997



SOURCE: MENALC Dataset

Finally, labor militancy during structural adjustment was distinguished by its lack of political preoccupations. As Figure 5.3 shows, most demands launched during strikes related to traditionally economic or organizational concerns. While workers did mobilize some political strikes, these concentrated on foreign policy issues (i.e. Gulf War, Palestinian Intifada) and typically received explicit endorsement from the government. Thus, by the mid-1990s, the UGTT’s role as a political opposition force in Tunisia was effectively abandoned — in addition to restraining its political militancy it also gave tacit support to some of the more authoritarian practices of the Ben Ali regime⁵⁵.

FIGURE 5.3: Labor actions in Tunisia by demand Type, 1987-1997



SOURCE: MENALC Database

⁵⁵ For example, the union was relatively quiet about the regime’s crackdown on the Islamist Nahda party, and did little to stop its complete suppression of the Tunisian League of Human Rights (Alexander 2010, Bellin 2002)

Explaining Labor Behavior: Alternative Explanations

An analysis of labor's reaction to structural adjustment in Tunisia again presents us with a number of puzzling questions. What explains the qualitative shift in labor militancy? Why, in the face of policies that negatively impacted their constituencies, did union leaders accept rather than challenge neoliberal reforms? Why were rank-and-file workers less willing to follow suit? And finally, why did the UGTT abandon its role as a force for political opposition against the regime?

For many observers of Tunisian politics, the answers to these questions lie in an analysis of the UGTT's organizational conditions during structural adjustment. On the one hand, the government's neoliberal development strategy is said to have undercut the UGTT's traditional sources of power, effectively disabling it from launching concerted opposition to structural reforms (Bellin 2002). Indeed, many discussions of the politics of neoliberal reform across the globe have identified organized labor as one of the losers of structural adjustment. While privatization and budget reductions negatively impact unions in the public sector, moves towards greater employment flexibility threaten labor interests overall.

In Tunisia specifically, emphasis on private sector growth undermined labor solidarity by scattering workers among small, spatially dispersed firms and by concentrating economic activity in sectors where the UGTT was traditionally weak. At the same time, budget cuts in the public sector threatened those enterprises where labor typically found its strongest base, while layoffs and high unemployment diminished the union's potential membership. As a consequence, during structural adjustment, the UGTT saw a marked decline in its membership base to only 300,000 members by 1993 (Upham 1993). Significantly, because this deterioration in organized labor's structural power occurred during a period when Tunisia's employer's association, UTICA, was experiencing an organizational revival, neoliberal reforms clearly put the UGTT at a disadvantage in any effort to challenge neoliberal reforms (Bellin 2002). Thus, for many trade union leaders, the pragmatic question surrounding structural adjustment was not how to oppose reforms — this having largely

been a *fait accompli* — but rather how to modify them to suit labor’s needs given its weakened organizational position. As one observer commented regarding the UGTT’s shift towards moderation: “Tunisian trade unionism is experiencing... the most profound change it has ever known. It is going through the same kinds of changes as the economy... It is engaged in its own structural adjustment” (*Réalités* 3/9/1989, 14).

On the other hand, numerous scholars point to the government’s deliberate suppression of the UGTT as the reason behind labor’s quiescence during the structural adjustment period. As mentioned in the previous chapter, by the mid-1980’s, the Bourguiba regime had all but eliminated the UGTT in the wave of repression that followed the country’s 1984 bread riots. In addition to stripping the union of most of its basic privileges and rights, the government forcibly deposed most of the union’s national, regional and base leaders, replacing them with regime-approved alternatives known as the “Chourafa”. Under this leadership, all semblance of trade union autonomy was effectively destroyed, making the union no more than a “transmission belt” for the Bourguiba regime (Hibou 2011, 124). Thus at precisely the time that structural adjustment was begun, the UGTT lacked the organizational strength necessary to act as an effective check on the government’s economic policy initiatives.

Even as the UGTT witnessed a revival during the course of structural adjustment, heavy government intervention in its organization arguably prevented the union from returning to its former militancy. Surprisingly, just years after structural adjustment was initiated, the union was resuscitated under the auspices of Bourguiba’s presidential successor, Zine Abedine Ben Ali. In efforts to consolidate his position as Tunisia’s new leader, Ben Ali personally set about restoring the UGTT to much of its former capacity. In 1988, he ordered the release of ex-trade union leader, Habib Achour, from jail and pardoned hundreds of union activists arrested as a result of the government crackdown on the UGTT in 1985 (Larif-Béatrix 1989, 648). Further, in an accord signed with members of a provisional trade union committee, he demanded the reinstatement of public and

private sector workers that were fired for union activities, restoring some three-hundred employees to their previous functions (*La Presse* 5/14/1988, 6/16/1988). Financially, he placed the UGTT's two commercial properties back under trade union management and forgave nearly TD 5 million worth of UGTT debts (Bellin 2000, 117). Most important, under the guidance of an appointed National Labor Commission, he oversaw the organization of new union elections at the local, regional, federal and national level that restored many former "legitimate" trade union leaders to their previous positions.

However, despite these seemingly positive gestures, this trade union revival fit squarely within the traditional logic that had governed state-labor relations in Tunisia since independence: to ensure the political hegemony of the regime by marginalizing organized labor and subordinating its leaders to the control of the state. Thus, while many of the UGTT's former privileges were restored, the government continued to place strict limits on its independent exercise of political power. For example, in reviving labor's organizational benefits, the government failed to renew the 1% checkoff system which provided the UGTT with most of its independent financial base. Additionally, under claims that close ties between the union and the state would delegitimize the union leadership in the eyes of its militant base, Ben Ali instituted a policy of "*neutralité*" between the UGTT and political parties and banned union members from holding official positions within the government (Gobe 2008, 276). Finally, in organizing new trade union elections, the regime took measures to ensure that militant elements of the UGTT would not exercise substantial influence over trade union policy. At the national level, it worked with the Labor Commission to remove radical members from electoral ballots by claiming that these members had not submitted their candidacy by the appropriate deadline. Even for those militant candidates who did make it onto electoral lists, the regime took efforts to limit their success by making them the subject of smear campaigns in the national press and systematically denying delegates from more militant regions entrance into the National Congress

(Table 5.2)⁵⁶. As a result, union elections which restored “legitimate” labor activists to UGTT leadership ultimately preserved the subordination of the union to the regime, as these leaders effectively “owed their positions” to government intervention.

Thus, for many observers, the government’s persistent manipulation of the UGTT made organized labor unlikely to sustain any serious opposition to the Ben Ali regime (Bellin 2000; Alexander 1996; Alexander 2010). With most of its leaders beholden to the state, the union lacked the direction and autonomy necessary to launch an effective challenge to the government’s new neoliberal policies. However, a strict focus on the UGTT’s organizational weakness and subordination during structural adjustment fails to account for critical features of labor behavior during the reform period. To begin, an emphasis on how neoliberal reforms undercut labor’s structural power fails to explain the continued militancy of the UGTT’s rank-and-file. Indeed, if any sector of the labor movement was likely to be weakened most by structural adjustment it was rank-and-file workers who, unlike most union leaders, enjoyed little job security and were confronted with the real threat of unemployment in an increasingly scarce and flexible labor market. Yet, if rank-and-file unionists had the most to lose from challenging economic liberalization, why were these workers also the most willing to use militant protest to oppose neoliberal reforms? Moreover, if the co-optation of union leaders effectively subordinated their interests to those of the state, what explains their willingness to approve so many of these strike actions?

Contra economic and organizational explanations, I argue that institutional analyses help us to address these questions. In conjunction with its implementation of economic reforms, the Tunisian government developed new institutions to better regulate state-society relations during its period of economic liberalization and transition. With regards to organized labor, the Ben Ali regime instituted a new decentralized wage bargaining system and strengthened avenues for unions and

⁵⁶ For examples and a full description of these measures see *La Presse* 4/19/1989, “Un réconciliation difficile”, *Le Temps* 4/22/1989, “Congrès extraordinaire de l’UGTT: Pour l’unité, contre l’extrémisme” and *Réalités* 1/26/1989, “Bataille pour un siège”.

TABLE 5.2: Delegates to the 1989 UGTT Congress

Governorate	Number of mandated delegates	Number of delegates present
Tunis	204	140
Zaghouan	8	4
Bizerte	30	26
Beja	13	13
Jendouba	16	14
Kef	13	13
Silana	7	7
Gafsa	45	45
Kasserine	12	12
Sidi Bouzid	7	7
Gabès	17	13
Tozeur	6	6
Medenine	20	19
Sfax	45	12
Monastir	21	17
Mahdia	5	5
Kairouan	11	7
Sousse	36	29
Nabeul	28	28
Total	544	417

Source: *Le Temps*, 5/1/1989

workers to represent their interests vis-a-vis employers and the state. Similarly, with regards to the political opposition, the government initiated limited political pluralism and reformed the dominant party to incorporate a broader range of political views. In designing these institutions the Ben Ali regime hoped to ease social tensions arising from the adjustment process by placing rhetorical emphasis on the importance of inclusion, consensus, and dialogue between the state and various elements of society. However, over time, the government's actual commitment to these principles was found to be wanting, sowing the seeds for a rejuvenation of labor and social opposition in the late 1990s.

Explaining Labor Militancy: New Bargains, Old Deficiencies

Although structural adjustment was initiated under the tenure of Habib Bourguiba in 1986, it was not until the arrival of his successor, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, that this economic transition was accompanied by significant institutional reforms. Coming to power on the heels of a “bloodless coup” in 1987, Ben Ali quickly set about distinguishing his regime from the exclusionary authoritarianism of his predecessor by establishing a new model of state-society relations built around consensus and dialogue. Embodying this new model was the creation of the 1988 National Pact. At its core, the National Pact sought to consolidate the new regime's authority by binding diverse factions of Tunisian society together in social contract that would “permit even those who opposed [government] policies to pledge their allegiance to the country and articulate a common vision of politics and society” (Anderson 1991, 252). In the document's main sections, it laid out a number of broad principles that would guide the new Tunisia including competitive elections, freedom of association, and the right to hold and express opinions that differed from the majority and the government.

Most important for organized labor, in its section on development, the National Pact laid the foundation for a new bargain between labor and the state built upon “the broad participation of the masses in the identification of objectives and instruments of development” (Tunisia External

Communications Agency, 14). In accordance with its focus on national consensus, the document highlighted the need for labor and capital to move beyond “sectarian and narrow interests” in order to restore the Tunisian economy to its previous period of economic growth. As compensation for their sacrifices for development, workers would receive greater freedom to express their interests vis-a-vis the state as well as “fair distribution of the fruits of production” (ibid). In effect, through the principles and rhetoric of the National Pact, the Ben Ali regime reformulated the image of Tunisia as an inclusionary corporatist state, recasting the role of organized labor as a partner within the regime, rather than a potential and sometimes actual combatant against it.

However, the National Pact was not the only element of Ben Ali’s new state-labor bargain. In 1989, his government also introduced important changes to the wage bargaining system that regulated state-labor-capital relations to more effectively include labor within the corporatist structure of the state. In large part, these changes were reminiscent of the institutional innovations developed in the collective convention cadre of 1973. Like the convention collective cadre, the new wage bargaining system provided a regularized means for labor representatives from different levels of union organization to engage in dialogue with employers and to exert influence over policy matters that would effect their constituents. Additionally, in granting formal provisions for union representation at the plant-level the new bargaining system reinforced the cadre’s commitment to establishing workers’ right to organize within the individual enterprise (*Journal Officiel du Republique de la Tunisie*, no.6, 1/9/1995).

However, in two critical ways, the new collective bargaining system improved upon the corporatist model outlined in the convention collective cadre to decrease incentives for militancy among labor organizations. To begin, the revised system of collective negotiations decentralized wage bargaining to incorporate union representatives at both the national and the sectoral level. As mentioned in Chapter 5, a key drawback of the convention collective cadre was its extreme centralization — by limiting the bargaining process to only a few peak union officials, the

government generated uncertainties among sectoral union leaders who feared that the UGTT executive could not accurately represent their interests in negotiations. This uncertainty, in turn, drove federation leaders to organize strike campaigns in their respective sectors as a way to force the executive bureau and employers to better address their concerns. Hoping to alleviate this uncertainty in the new collective bargaining system, the government took serious efforts to ensure that sectoral representatives had greater influence in modifying wage conditions in their individual sectors. In the first round of wage negotiations in 1990, it stipulated that all wage bargaining be conducted between two four-person teams — one from the UGTT and one from UTICA — comprised of union representatives within a given sector. Moreover, in certain instances when UTICA officials expressed reluctance to abide by the decentralized wage bargaining format, Ben Ali personally stepped in to arbitrate conflicts and require employer representatives to execute negotiations with their appropriate sectoral negotiating team. As a result, in 1990, a much larger section of the labor movement was represented in wage talks — according to an article appearing in *La Presse*, over 1,000 union cadres participated in negotiations as compared to an estimated three or four in 1983 (*La Presse* 8/1/1990, 1).

The revised collective bargaining system also improved upon the 1973 collective convention cadre by modifying the timing of negotiations. In the 1970s and 80s, annual wage bargaining exacerbated tensions between labor and employer representatives by increasing union leaders' uncertainty about whether bargaining would continue to occur in future years. Particularly since an annual timeline gave employers the flexibility to refuse to conduct new negotiations during economically difficult periods, peak leaders came to distrust this mechanism as a credible means to represent their interests, providing greater incentives to use militancy to secure concessions and voice their concerns. In order to resolve these tensions, the government, in collaboration with the UGTT and UTICA, decided to extend the length of negotiated accords to cover a three-year period. In many ways, the three-year timeline represented a sub-optimal compromise for both workers and

employers. On the employers' side, UTICA representatives complained that three-year accords would not allow them to sufficiently adapt to changing economic conditions, while on the workers' side, some union representatives worried that long-term, incremental wage increases would negatively impact their purchasing power in the case of unexpected inflation (Appendix B: TE-28, 11/27/13). Nonetheless, for both UGTT and UTICA representatives, three-year wage accords did serve the critical function of making wage accords more credible by extending both parties' time horizons and by giving unions relative assurances that their constituents' interests would be protected in the future.

Significantly, the government and UTICA's efforts to respect the new negotiation timeline did much to enhance the credibility of this institution and promote elite-level labor cooperation. In particular, the decision to renew talks in 1993 despite financial upheavals resulting from the Gulf War and a brief slowdown in GDP growth, along with the revision of all 46 sectoral accords, convinced union leaders that the government was serious about its commitment to continued dialogue and that it would work to uphold its end of the corporatist bargain outlined in National Pact. As a result, union leaders praised the new collective bargaining institutions and credited them with success in improving the quality of state-labor relations even during a period in which the state's chosen development strategy weakened their structural position (UGTT 1993, 24).

Taken together, these institutional innovations and the regime's willingness to intervene to ensure their proper functioning did much to incentivize moderation among national and sectoral union officials during the neoliberal reform period. On the one hand, extended accord timelines diffused conflicts surrounding the credibility of the state's/employer's commitment to negotiation while on the other, expanded participation in wage talks resolved tensions around wage disparities and reduced the need for sectoral leaders to use strikes to voice their grievances. While such leaders continued to support base level strikes, they did so largely as a means to improve their bargaining position prior to negotiations, and refrained from organizing coordinated strike campaigns at the

federal and regional levels as had frequently been done in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For many leaders, such militancy was no longer necessary given Tunisia's more inclusive bargaining environment — as one Secretary-General commented regarding the UGTT's relative quiescence regarding structural reforms:

“The sincerity and engagement on the part of militants has not changed. On the contrary, it is the social and political situation that has changed... With different social partners, dialogue is fruitful, that is what explains the numerous accords signed and the better working conditions that have existed since 1989 until today. It is also what explains the revisions of collective conventions and salary increases that have been obtained over the past six years...the union movement is conscious of the challenges that face our country and that require increased cohesion and national solidarity” (Mohamed Trabelsi quoted in *Réalités* 4/13/1995, 13).

However, while the institutional reforms incorporated into Tunisia's new collective bargaining system decreased incentives for militancy among elite actors in union movement, it is important to note that this was not the case for all sectors of organized labor. In particular, the revised *convention collective cadre* failed to adequately protect union members and representatives at the plant-level, leading to a continuation of rank-and-file militancy within individual firms. Indeed, of all the reforms included in the revised collective cadre, union rights at the enterprise were the most late-in-coming and the least well-enforced. Although UGTT officials made enterprise unionism one of their key platforms for negotiation as early as 1989, it was not until 1995 that the government provided legal recognition of unions at the firm level (*Journal Officiel du République de la Tunisie*, no. 6, 1/9/1995). Consequently, unionization and labor representation were consistently suppressed at the firm level — according to one union source “an unfortunately large number of employers... do not accept the presence of unionists in their enterprises. There is no lack of examples in which managers have proceeded to fire union representatives before their election” (*Réalités* 4/13/1995, 13)

This lack of representation, in turn, created powerful incentives for rank-and-file workers to use militancy to voice their grievances at the firm level. In many cases, it appears, strike activity

served as a direct response to worker's inability to organize at the enterprise. As Figure 5.3 shows, the vast majority of strikes undertaken from 1989-1995 had as their chief grievance protections for the right to organize or abusive layoffs of unionized personnel. Particularly in the private sector, strikes were seen as one way of forcing recalcitrant employers to comply with collective agreements established in sectoral negotiations. As one unionist in the textile sector noted: "You cannot get managers to cooperate without [the strike]. Employers do not respect workers and they do not respect the negotiations, they only care about profits and [their personal] wealth... They only respond to the possibility of loss. This is what motivates workers to strike" (Appendix B: TU -26, 11/22/13).

Explaining Labor's Depoliticization: The Specter of Incorporation within the Ben Ali Regime

Interestingly, in contrast to base-level strikes launched under similar circumstances in the 1970s and 1980s, rank-and-file militancy in the 1990s lacked any larger preoccupation with political demands. Although workers continued to be concerned with the issue of associational rights — in particular the right to organize at the firm level — ultimately, they did not connect these grievances to larger problems within the political system and instead saw strike actions in purely economic, or "business unionist" terms. In part, this move to distinguish workplace demands from their potential political significance reflects the changes in the relationship between the state and organized labor in the context of increased concertation following the National Pact. Indeed, in contrast to previous periods, the state proved more reluctant to collaborate with employers to infringe upon worker's rights to organize, and in exceptional cases served as a neutral arbiter to resolve conflicts between employers and their personnel. For example, when the owner of a newly privatized hotel in Tunisia fired 93 unionized workers in 1992, Ben Ali personally threatened to jail him if he did not immediately hire all of them back (Alexander 1996, 202).

Yet in larger part, this shift reflected broader changes in the political system that came to affect both the union's relationship to political organizations and its own internal composition. In

conjunction with his effort to sanitize state-labor relations, Ben Ali also worked to recast Tunisia's political landscape in a more inclusive and participatory mold. Unlike his predecessor, Ben Ali saw political liberalization as critical for the success of an externally-oriented development strategy. In light of the frustration and social unrest that resulted from Bourguiba's attempts to centralize the political system, Ben Ali recognized the necessity of incorporating the opposition and restoring public support to create the type of political stability that would attract investors abroad. Thus, in the National Pact, the new Tunisian government positioned itself as "a state of law and institutions" built upon the fundamental principles of democracy, pluralism, and "the legitimate right to difference which signifies neither sedition nor division" (Tunisia External Communications Agency, 14). As an indication of the seriousness of his commitment to these ideals, Ben Ali inaugurated his first years in office by ordering the release of prominent opposition figures from jail, relaxing controls on the Tunisian press, and revoking legal provisions which established the "presidency-for-life".

The new liberal orientation of the Tunisian government was further evidenced in two of the regime's principal efforts at institutional reform: restructuring the ruling party and reforming the electoral system. In his first months in office, Ben Ali reformed the PSD to incorporate a wider range of political perspectives and attract support from a larger demographic base. In February 1988, he announced a change in the party's name from the *Parti Socialiste Destourien* to the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD), a title which signified both the party's commitment to democratic transformation and its desire to gather together more diverse political voices. In anticipation of its 1988 Congress, the RCD launched a recruitment drive to bring younger members into the party's structures in efforts to reinvigorate its composition and reform its ideology. In a series of changes to the RCD's internal bureaucracy, the political bureau expanded the scope of participation in party organs by doubling the central committee from 90 to 200 members (Murphy 1999, 170). Ultimately, these moves proved progressive enough to convince some PSD-defectors and

opposition elites to reintegrate back into the ruling party, most notable among them Hamouda Ben Slama (MDS) and Habib Boulares (Independent).

In addition to its reforms to the RCD, the regime also took steps to modify the electoral system to allow opposition parties to contest for political positions within the government. In 1988, the parliament approved a new law governing the creation of political parties, which permitted all opposition groups except the Islamist *Mouvement Tendance Islamiste* (MTI) to benefit from legal recognition. In the beginning of 1989, the government introduced piecemeal electoral reforms which marginally reduced the likelihood of single party dominance within the political system. Although it refused to abolish the country's majority list voting rules — a chief means through which the party had previously ensured its hegemony— it increased opportunities for participation by expanding the number of seats in the National Assembly from 125 to 141. Further, it allowed opposition parties to distribute voting cards and created an independent commission to supervise upcoming elections. Finally, to assuage the opposition's fears that these measures would not be enough to help them to secure political office, Ben Ali offered the opposition the opportunity to run on a coalition list with the RCD.

It is important to note that in undertaking these reforms, Ben Ali was not building a truly competitive democracy. Instead, much like his National Pact, Ben Ali's vision of "democratic" rule emphasized the tenets of liberalism and political expression while circumscribing these freedoms in the fundamental concept of consensus. Opposition parties might be allowed to organize and could even participate the political system, but they could not be permitted to overturn the RCD's electoral majority nor disrupt the regime's monopoly on political control. Thus, unsurprisingly, the opposition failed to win any seats in the 1989 legislative elections and were only incorporated into the government after the fact through ministerial appointments.

Nonetheless, minimal inclusion of the opposition did much to undermine the alliance between opposition parties and the UGTT. For leftist elites who rejoined the RCD, the revitalization

of participatory mechanisms within the party provided a new forum in which to discuss their political perspectives and advocate for further reforms (Appendix B: TP-21, 11/14/2013). For other members of the opposition, legal recognition made a strategy of working through the UGTT to advance their political demands obsolete. As one former syndicalist and member of the RSP (now Hizb al-Jomhuri) noted, “In the generation [of liberal democracy] everyone could have their own mission — political parties could focus on political issues, unions on labor issues, human rights groups on human rights... there was no need for confusion between politics and syndicalism” (Appendix B: TP-24, 11/24/2013).

Consequently, the political character of the UGTT fell into serious decline. With leftist elites no longer using the labor union as a platform for political expression, most rank-and-file workers contented themselves to focus only on bread-and-butter issues without connecting their grievances to larger deficiencies within the regime. Moreover, since most of the union’s peak and intermediate leadership was effectively co-opted, the UGTT lacked prominent internal figures willing to advocate for political reforms. Indeed, the combination of state repression and co-optation eliminated most of the radical left from positions of power within the UGTT — at the 1993 UGTT national congress leftist militants comprised only 10% of the total number of union delegates, as compared to 25% at the national congress held just four years before (*La Presse* 12/15/1993).

Finally, changes within the UGTT’s internal bureaucracy further contributed to the depoliticization of organized labor. In efforts to protect its new bargain with the Ben Ali regime, the union leadership took steps to distance itself from radical elements within the rank-and-file by relying on some patently undemocratic practices. To begin, the executive bureau upheld a regulatory provision requiring that strikes receive approval from the central administration in order to be considered legitimate. Additionally, it increased the powers of the Office of Interior Regulation and Disciplinary Committee to dismiss militant unionists for “indiscipline” and “bad behavior” (Appendix B: TU-39, 1/12/2013). During the 1990s, these provisions were used to curb

the militancy of traditionally political federations and to eliminate a number of left-leaning unionists from their positions in the regional and sectoral leadership⁵⁷. On a few occasions such measures were directed against prominent members of the UGTT's executive bureau who sympathized with militant factions or otherwise challenged the secretary-general's hold on power⁵⁸.

Most notably, in contrast to previous periods, members of the union executive intervened in elections at the regional and local levels and subverted democratic procedures at the UGTT's National Congress. In one of the more dramatic examples of the union's authoritarian turn, votes for the executive leadership during the 1993 Congress were tallied by a show of hands (Appendix B: TU-33, 12/2/13). As a result, from 1989-1997, only five of the unions' top sixty leaders were voted out of office. Under the domination of a co-opted and autocratic leadership, oppositional voices within the union were effectively silenced. Henceforth, the UGTT executive would be free to commit itself a policy of "social stability" by supporting the government's initiatives, and in so doing, maintaining its privileged position within the Ben Ali regime.

Conclusion

Given the deleterious effects of neoliberal reforms on the structural power of organized labor, it is tempting to conclude that labor weakness and state control helped to induce the UGTT to adopt a more moderate attitude towards structural adjustment. However, a focus on the union's organizational weakness does not explain why labor militancy increased during the period of economic reforms nor does it explain certain aspects of its qualitative character. If structural adjustment dampens militancy by increasing labor's vulnerability vis-a-vis employers and the state, we should expect that the most vulnerable workers — those in the rank-and-file — to be least willing

⁵⁷ Three leaders of the Nabeul regional union were expelled from their positions for having voted out their Secretary-General, who was a protégé of Ismail Sahbani. In a similar fashion, a prominent leader in the Post, Telegraph and Telecommunications Federation was transferred out of Tunis because his federation had organized a strike. (Hamzaoui 1999).

⁵⁸ For example, Abdelmajid Sahraoui, Abdennouar Maddahi, and Ahmed Ben Remila were all removed from the Executive Bureau for their disagreements with the Secretary-General (Appendix B: TU-39, 1/12/13).

to protest. However, during the 1990s these were the very workers who impelled UGTT militancy, at times against the wishes of union leaders themselves.

I argue that an explanation of both the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of labor mobilization in Tunisia requires a focus on formal institutions. After coming to power in 1987, President Ben Ali introduced drastic modifications to the institutions governing both labor and political representation. On the industrial side, the government revised the system of collective bargaining to include previously marginalized sectors of the union hierarchy, and lengthened the time-horizon of wage accords to provide greater assurances to workers and labor elites. However, despite these modifications, neo-corporatist bargaining institutions still failed to provide adequate channels of interest articulation and influence for rank-and-file workers. As a result, these workers led the charge of labor militancy during economic reforms, in many cases voicing grievances about employer's refusal to engage in dialogue or abuses against their organizational rights.

At the same time, the new inclusionary character of the Ben Ali regime permitted partisan elites a margin of maneuver within the political system, driving many members of the opposition to articulate their political demands outside of the UGTT. This contributed to the decline of the left within the union, and to the depoliticization of the UGTT's base. Depoliticization was further fueled by internal organizational changes within the union that affected its ideological composition and bureaucratic orientation. With the state supporting elites at the union's helm, the UGTT leadership became increasingly autocratic, relying on draconian practices to eliminate militant unionists in efforts to forcibly maintain "social peace".

Thus by the mid-1990s, Ben Ali's new "inclusionary" corporatist system had quieted most sources of labor opposition to the regime. With the UGTT executive co-opted, and most of the opposition incorporated into the government, the next five years of his rule would be characterized by relative social stability. However, beneath the surface of "social peace" lie numerous fissures that would place stress on Tunisia's cooperative state-labor bargain. First, autocratic practices within the

union exposed divisions between its moderate and militant wings. In the late 1990s, these latter would lead the call for the restoration of the UGTT's autonomy, generating tensions between the trade union and the authoritarian state. Second, the growing authoritarianism of the regime itself alienated crucial elements of the opposition who, given their marginalization from formal politics, sought new methods to liberalize the regime. Taken together, these factors would foster the conditions for a renewed labor-opposition alliance. They would also usher in new round of state-labor conflict, as we shall see in the following chapter.

MOROCCO

Morocco in the Age of Structural Adjustment

As in Tunisia, by the mid 1980s, Morocco's high public deficits and external debt had plunged the country into a full-force economic crisis. Having implemented short-term stabilization measures to no avail, in 1983 the government was forced to turn to the IMF to implement a more comprehensive structural adjustment program. Like many others, Morocco's adjustment plan would include measures to liberalize trade, stabilize the macroeconomy, privatize state-owned enterprises and increase labor flexibility. In the following section, I review some of the key elements of this reform program before turning to a discussion of labor's reaction.

Trade Liberalization

Trade liberalization provided the cornerstone of Morocco's structural reform effort. Because the Moroccan economy prior to 1983 had been characterized by high levels of protectionism and inefficiency, the main goal of its IMF-sponsored package was to reduce import restrictions and promote exports in efforts to better integrate Morocco into the global economy. In compliance IMF recommendations, the government immediately lowered its special imports tax and began relaxing most of its exchange controls. In 1985, it decreased the number of goods subject to quantitative restrictions from 61% to 13%, and in 1993, reduced their number again to 11.8% (Moroccan

Ministry of Commerce and Industry). Within two years, it reduced the maximum average tariff from 400% to 45%, resulting in a significant drop in the average rate of import imposition. In 1987, it reaffirmed its commitment to free trade by acceding to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, which it then followed with its acceptance of a free-trade agreement with the European Union in 1995. Subsequently, maximum customs duties were brought down even further, reaching a level of 23.5% in July of 1995 (World Trade Organization 2016).

Parallel to its dismantling of restrictions on imports, the Morocco government initiated assertive export promotion efforts. In 1986, the state effectively ended its monopoly over the commercialization of Moroccan products abroad and created a new public agency — the *Etablissement Autonome de Contrôle et de Coordination des Exportations* (EACCE) — to coordinate exports and enforce quality controls. Additionally, the government abolished export duties and provided fiscal and financial incentives for export-oriented industries. Most notably, as in Tunisia, the government began a serious effort to improve revenues by diversifying its export base. By 1993, the share of minerals (largely phosphates) and derivatives in total exports declined from 50% to 30% and the share of manufactured exports rose from 15% to 30% (Nsouli et al. 1995, 96).

Ultimately, the combination of liberalization and export diversification led to significant improvements in Morocco's balance of payments. With average exports growing about 5.85% a year from 1983-1996, the government was able to successfully reverse its current account balance from a deficit of 10.92% of GDP in 1982 to a surplus of 0.08% in 1996 (World Bank 2016). Similarly, as a result of these trends, external debt stock was reduced from 87% of GNI in 1983 to 60% in 1996, and its service fell from 41% of export earnings to 36% (ibid).

The effects of trade liberalization on labor however were much more mixed. Although export-oriented firms, particularly in the public sector, did experience a rapid expansion of employment, these firms relied heavily on temporary workers and often paid lower wages than their domestic-oriented counterparts. According to one study, all else equal a 10 percentage point

reduction in tariffs at a public firm resulted in a 2.6% decrease in public sector wages (Currie and Harrison 1997, 61). In the private sector, the effects of liberalization on workers were even more striking — in addition to a reduction in wages, a 10 percentage point decrease in tariffs led to an estimated 1.65% decline in firm-level employment (ibid, 60).

Stabilization

The second major pillar of Morocco's structural adjustment program was macroeconomic stabilization. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Morocco's earlier stabilization efforts failed to restore balance to the economy — due to lack of political will to fully divest from the public sector, the government remained mired in domestic debt and engaged in several inefficient investments. Thus, in efforts to improve its resource allocation, from 1981-1993, the state substantially reduced its interventions in the domestic economy. In 1981, it implemented a four-year public sector wage freeze, which it later restored between 1992 and 1995. Additionally, officials removed direct price controls for most manufactured goods, except for those of a few subsidized products. While the prices of sugar, edible oils, and flour were merely adjusted, the government eliminated subsidies on milk (1982), butter (1984), petroleum (1985) and cement (1991). Due to these reductions, the burden of consumer subsidies on the fiscal budget declined significantly from 2.7% of GDP in 1981 to 0.8% in 1993 (Bank al-Maghrib 1982, 1994).

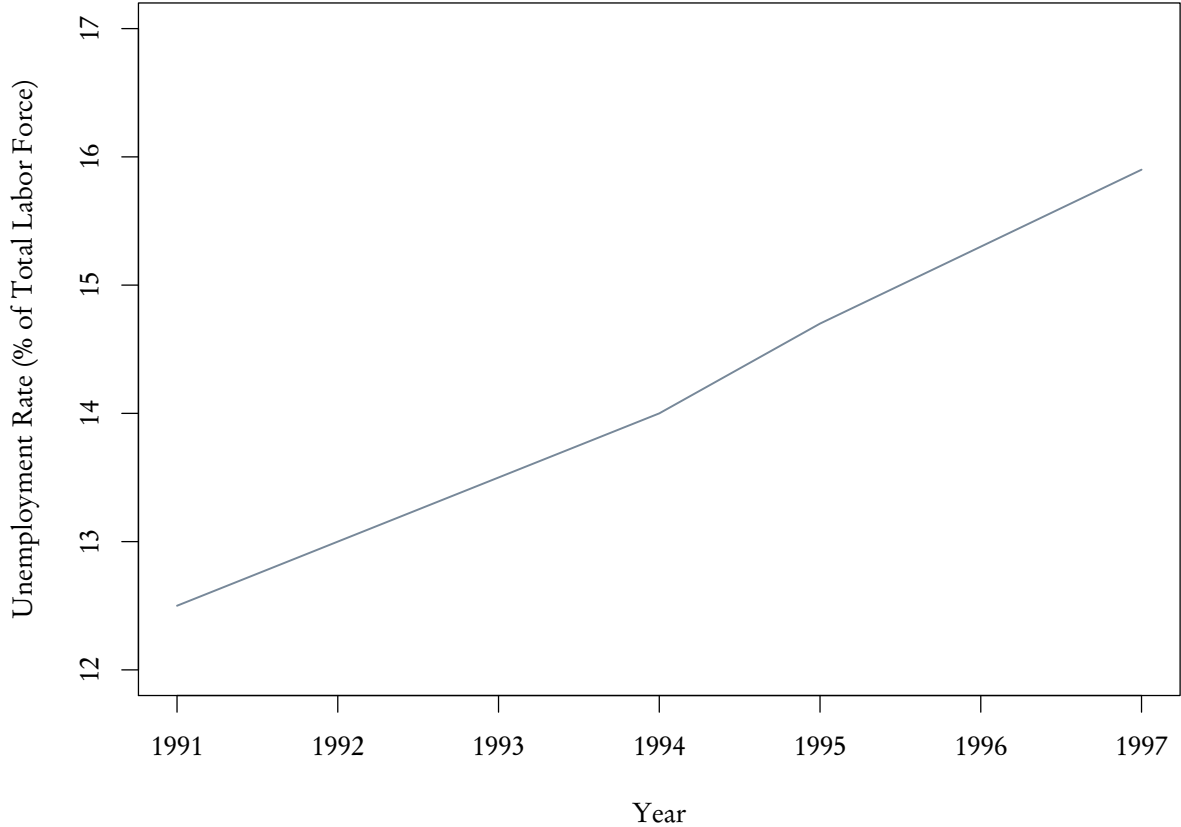
In tandem with its efforts to reduce public expenditures and liberalize the economy, the government also undertook numerous efforts to promote foreign investment. In 1990, King Hassan devalued the dirham which he later made fully convertible in 1993. In order to stimulate private investment, the Moroccan parliament promulgated a new investment code in 1988 which provided fiscal incentives to investors through exemptions and preferential tax treatment. Additionally, tax incentives were granted to investors who operated in privileged sectors or were willing to locate to less developed regions of country. Finally, to attract foreign investors, the state abandoned its

previous “Moroccanization” policy, which imposed a 49% limit on foreign ownership in local enterprises.

As a result of these policies, Morocco’s fiscal balance improved steadily during the adjustment period. From 1981 to 1996, total government expenditures were reduced by 7.4 percentage points of GDP while government transfers declined from a peak of 2.1% in 1982 to 0.5% in 1995. Concomitantly, the budget deficit was reduced over the same period to 2.8% of GDP (World Bank 2016). In terms of consumer prices, inflation decreased from a high of 12.4% in 1981 to a mere 3% in 1996. Finally, devaluation promoted marked growth in foreign direct investment which increased nearly six-fold over the period 1983-1994 (ibid).

Like liberalization, stabilization policies had ambiguous effects on workers in Morocco. On the one hand, the government made a serious attempt to protect social welfare during its spending cuts. According to data from the World Bank, education expenditure declined by only one percentage point of GDP from 1981 to 1995, while health expenditures were maintained at 1.1% (with slight fluctuations). Additionally, poverty declined noticeably during the early years of structural reform, though it began to increase again in the later half of the 1990s. Nevertheless, the government failed to protect wages or employment during structural adjustment. In the manufacturing sector in particular worker’s saw marked declines in their average wage (Lane et al 1999), while overall unemployment increased throughout the first half of the 1990s to 15.3% (Figure 5.4).

FIGURE 5.4: Unemployment rate (% of total labor force) in Morocco, 1991-1997



SOURCE: World Bank Development Indicators, 2016

Privatization

As in Tunisia, privatization was one of the more difficult elements of Morocco’s structural adjustment policy. Although Morocco never embraced the socialist ideology that motivated Tunisia’s heavy investment in the public sector, it did engage in limited state-led development that increased its number of SOEs. Thanks largely to its “Moroccanization” drive in the 1970s, the public sector grew by roughly 75% reaching a total of 620 enterprises by 1985(). Moreover, as in Tunisia, these

firms represented a crucial part of the Moroccan economy, accounting for some 20% of Morocco's GDP in 1989 and some 17.3% of total employment (Nsouli et. al 1995, 31).

Nonetheless, by the late 1980s, the government realized that state intervention in the public sector had come at too high of a cost ⁵⁹. Thus, in 1989, the Parliament passed law 39-1989, which authorized the privatization of 112 firms to be completed by 1995. Notably, in contrast to Tunisia, Morocco's initial privatization plan was ambitious, including both strategic and non-strategic firms. However, as in Tunisia, privatization proceeded at a relatively slow pace. Indeed, the country's first privatization sale did not occur until 1992, and by 1996 only twenty-five companies and seventeen hotels were completely or partially sold. While these sales placed Morocco at the top of the Arab World in terms of its privatization proceeds, the pace still lagged behind IMF standards, resulting in increased pressure from international lenders. Thus, in 1996, the government extended its privatization program and began to divest from new companies in the energy, infrastructure, and primary goods sectors. However, by 1999, only thirty-three additional companies had been sold, generating a sum of \$3.1 billion in total revenue.

Interestingly for organized labor, privatization did not produce wholly negative results. Indeed, total employment in the original list of privatizables accounted for less than 1% of the labor force, meaning that workers should not have been too adversely impacted by sales to begin with (). In fact, an analysis of privatized firms over the period of 1989-1996 showed virtually no change in aggregate employment — if anything, employment increased slightly by 1% in privatized firms (Table 5.3). In part, this seemingly paradoxical result is due to the stringent measures taken by the Moroccan government to protect workers during privatizations. During the first round of privatizations, the government specifically focused on “healthy” firms with little over-employment in efforts to reduce dislocations to workers. Moreover, although privatization law did not provide for

⁵⁹ In 1989 capital subsidies to public enterprises totaled roughly MD 2.02 billion, which increase 16% from the previous year (Moroccan Ministry of Finance).

individual employment guarantees, sales contracts typically stipulated that private investors should maintain a firm's level of employment for a period of three years.

TABLE 5.3: Employment in Privatized Manufacturing Enterprises

Firm Name	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	% Δ per year
CHELCO	833	900	900	900	1000	188	520	649	-3.5%
CIOR	609	630	630	630	783	770	778	764	3.3%
FERTIMA	390	373	373	373	373	775	775	370	-0.7%
GTR	528	529	500	511	740	578	719	626	2.5%
ICOZ	979	979	981	1018	1018	1016	1021	1025	0.7%
MODULEC	60	60	54	54	60	60	45	40	-5.6%
SICO CTR	360	289	424	424	356	415	390	382	0.9%
SIMEF	390	401	385	385	401	345	327	309	-3.3%
SNEP	474	472	470	467	472	477	484	490	0.5%
SODERS	137	139	150	155	150	155	152	156	1.9%
SONASID	592	600	615	629	577	581	581	587	-0.3%
SOTRAMEG	49	84	61	78	57	71	74	67	4.6%
Total	5401	5456	5543	5624	5987	5431	5866	5456	1%

Note: Red, bolded figures indicate year of privatization

Source: Ernst et al. 1999, 58

However, while the general impacts of privatization appear to be negligible, serious dislocations to labor did occur in specific cases. In a highly publicized privatization at the textile firm ICOZ (*Industries Cotonnières d'Oued Zem*), 1000 workers were laid off after the factory was closed due to insufficient financing (*L'Economiste*, 6/25/1998). Moreover, firms privatized after 1996 likely resulted in greater lay-offs as they were concentrated in more inefficient firms with over-employment. Indeed, according to reports cited in *L'Economiste*, during the late 1990s, factory closures provided the second largest contribution to total unemployment (*L'economiste* 12/11/1998).

As a result, between 1985 and 1998, unemployment rose from 11.5% to 16.6%. Joblessness was especially concentrated in urban areas, where unemployment reached a high of 23% in 1995 (World Bank 2016). As in Tunisia, unemployment disproportionately affected the young and educated, who, given public sector cuts, found it difficult to enter into positions in the civil service. Consequently, structural adjustment gave rise to a new category of economically disadvantaged citizens, *les diplômés chômeurs* (unemployed graduates), that came to exist alongside the labor movement.

Labor Organization and Flexibility

Although labor code reform provided the final pillar of the IMF-sponsored adjustment package in Morocco, the Moroccan government did not implement any major labor reforms during its structural adjustment period. Instead, recognizing the potential social costs of layoffs, it largely reinforced its already strict labor provisions to combat labor flexibility and retain employment. In the private sector, the government maintained regulations that restricted employer's ability to dismiss individual workers and increased the settlements that workers could be paid if found to have been fired unjustly. To combat job losses due to financial restructuring, it instituted a informal, short-term freeze on layoffs within privatized enterprises and stipulated that employers who expanded their firms after downsizing be required to re-hire laid-off workers.

Taken together, these measures endowed Morocco with what was considered one of the most “worker friendly” set of labor protections in the Middle East (Cammatt and Posusney 2010, 272). However, as in Tunisia, this restrictive legal framework hindered labor demand, costing organized labor in terms of overall unemployment. Although judicial practice strengthened permanent workers’ job security — a benefit for many of organized labor’s constituents — it left those without jobs or on temporary contracts at a clear disadvantage. As a result, organized labor lost out on the opportunity to incorporate a new body of workers into its ranks, as new entrants to the labor market were progressively forced to find work in the informal sector (Aita 2008, 76).

Summary

As in Tunisia, structural adjustment in Morocco produced negative effects for much of the labor movement. As a consequence of neoliberal reforms, workers saw considerable declines in their real wages and diminished job opportunities in the public sector. Moreover government initiatives to ease the negative effects of reform on labor failed to strengthen workers’ purchasing power or job security. Ultimately then, structural adjustment harmed key actors within the labor movement, creating the conditions for widespread opposition to neoliberal reforms.

Labor’s Reaction: Cooperative Militancy

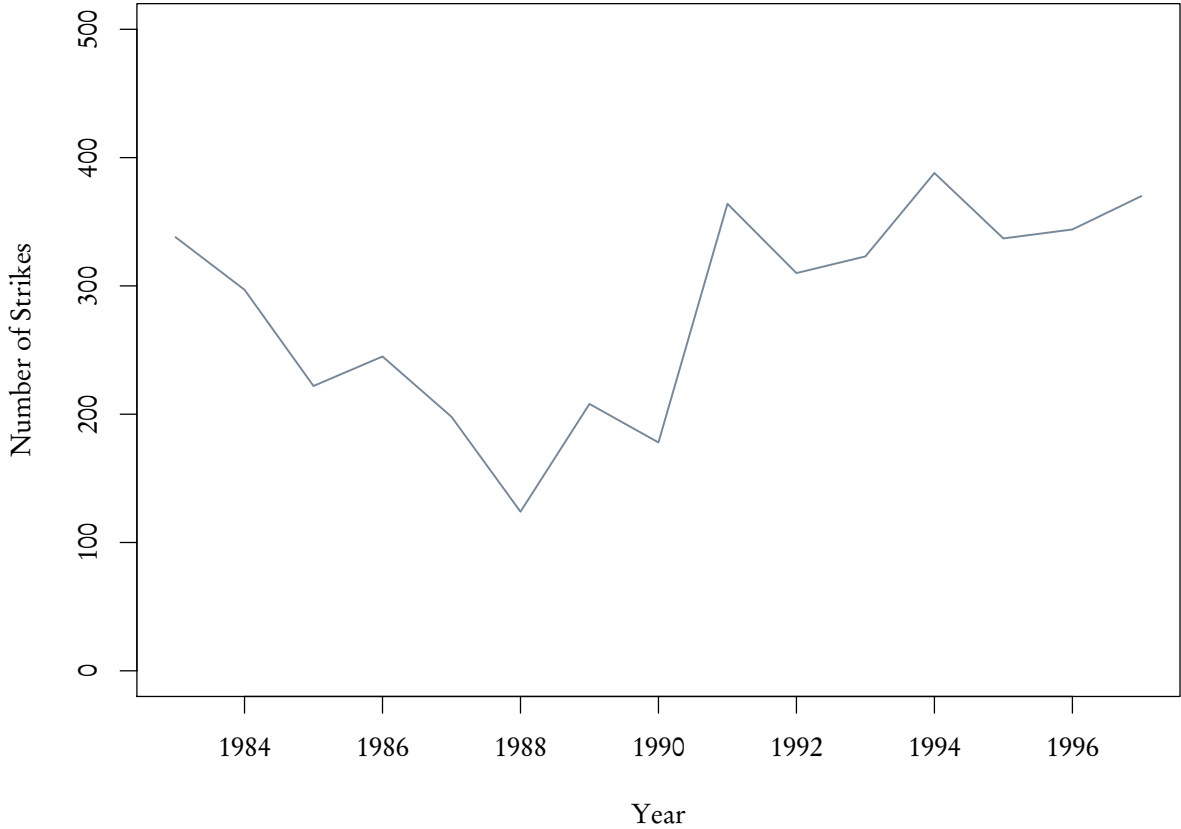
Counter to expectation however, structural adjustment did not result in increased labor militancy during the first years of economic reforms. Although missingness in the MENALC data prevents an accurate temporal comparison, official statistics show a marked decrease in strike activity from 1983-1989 as compared to the previous period. During this time workers engaged in a total of only 1,632 strikes, representing a decrease in strike frequency of roughly 50% as compared to the period 1977-1982. Ultimately however, labor quiescence would not endure long. As Figure 5.5⁶⁰

⁶⁰ This trend is roughly corroborated in the data collected by this author (Figure 5.6).

shows, from 1990-1997, unions and workers reversed their pattern of militancy by engaging in an increasing number of protest actions and strikes.

Beyond these general quantitative trends, labor militancy also displayed distinctive qualitative features during the era of structural adjustment. To begin, in contrast to the previous period, protest activity appears to be more dispersed across different sectors of the labor movement. While leftist unions such as the CDT continued to engage in high levels of strike activity, traditionally moderate

FIGURE 5.5: Strike activity in Morocco, 1983-1997



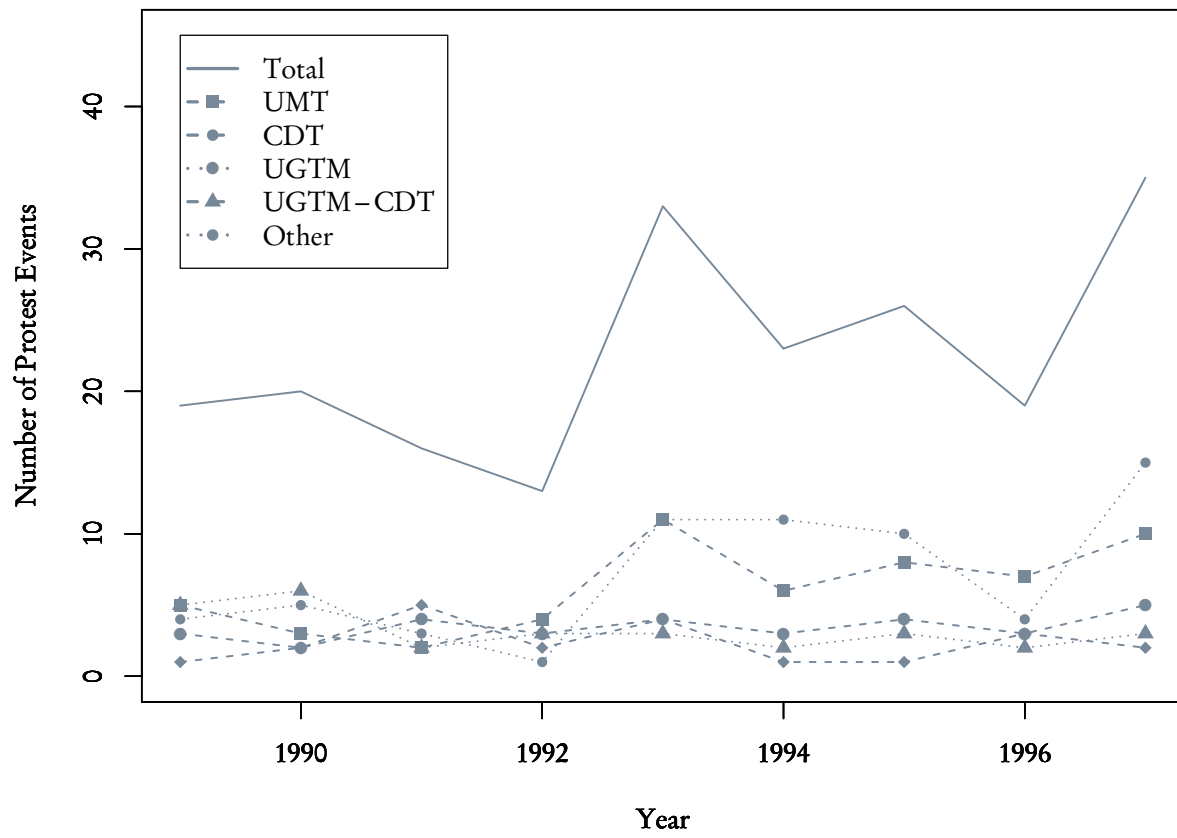
Source: International Labor Office, ILOSTAT Database 2016

FIGURE 5.6: Labor mobilization in Morocco, 1989-1997



SOURCE: MENALC Database

FIGURE 5.7: Labor actions in Morocco by actor, 1989-1997



SOURCE: MENALC Database

unions such as the UGTM and UMT also displayed rising militancy (Figure 5.7). Additionally, in the later years of neoliberal reform, strikes exhibited an unprecedented degree of coordination across different union federations. Particularly from 1989-1994, mobilization patterns of the CDT and UGTM displayed a new spirit of inter-union unity and cooperation. In addition to holding a joint general strike in 1990, the unions also frequently coordinated sectoral strike campaigns in the education, transportation and public health sectors. However, by the mid-1990s this spirit of cooperation appears to have partially collapsed — in 1994, unions were once again at odds with one another and failed to coordinate a general strike to secure “social dialogue” with government and wage increases in the public sector.

Finally, in contrast to the 1970s and 1980s, labor militancy in the 1990s appears to have acquired a more political character. Although explicitly most labor demands remained relegated to economic and organizational issues such as salary demands and requests for tripartite negotiations, strikes by the CDT and UGTM frequently received support from political parties and were alleged to have been coordinated as a part of broader partisan campaigns. The public sector strike wave that hit Morocco in 1993 provides a case in point. Just months before parliamentary elections, the CDT and UGTM called for rank-and-file workers to launch rolling strikes in the transportation, education, and mining sectors in protest of the government’s “utter intransigence vis-a-vis the workers” and its willingness to “falsify popular will, violate public and individual liberties, and consolidate a situation of impoverishment... by transferring national riches to hegemonic groups” (*Libération* 2/11/1993).

Explaining Labor Behavior: Alternative Explanations

As in Tunisia, the trajectory of labor opposition in Morocco brings forth a number of empirical puzzles. What explains the reduction of labor militancy during the first few years of structural adjustment? Why did labor protest experience a surge the early 1990s? How can we

account for the increased level of cooperation witnessed between unions during this period? And finally, why, by the end of structural adjustment had the labor movement returned to its previous pattern of divisive, apolitical militancy?

Again, an analysis of unions' organizational characteristics during structural adjustment provides a useful first step in addressing these questions. To a greater extent than in Tunisia it seems, neoliberal reforms negatively impacted unions' organizational power by decreasing job security and discouraging workers from engaging in strikes. Particularly in the public and semi-public sector where the UGTM and CDT were concentrated, highly publicized cases of mass layoffs made workers aware of the precariousness of their employment, while hiring freezes decreased the possibility of re-entry into new jobs. Similarly, in the private sector, abusive layoffs of unionized workers were astonishingly high during the period, undercutting the constituent base of private sector federations affiliated to the UMT (Appendix B: MU-21, 5/7/2014)⁶¹. Facing high levels of unemployment and few job prospects, it is reasonable to believe that rank-and-file workers would have feared being let go if they engaged in labor activism, and would thus restrain their militancy to protect their wellbeing. Moreover, as a whole, organized labor was not in the best structural position to be engaging in opposition — according to membership numbers reported in *Trade Unions of the World*, by 1989 Moroccan unions comprised no more than 18% of Morocco's working age population, and even these numbers are likely to have been inflated (Upham 1993, Appendix B: MU-16, 4/21/2014). Thus, given their weak organizational climate, it would have been in unions' interests to refrain from strike activity and undertake more cooperative strategies to address their grievances during structural adjustment.

Yet although organizational conditions help to explain some elements of labor behavior, they cannot account for the full trajectory of labor protest witnessed over the course of Morocco's experience with neoliberal reforms. Indeed, one can identify several characteristics of labor militancy

⁶¹ For examples of the extent of these layoffs see *Al-Bayane* 1/20/1987, 3/7/1987, 10/13/1987 and others.

that an organizational approach has difficulty addressing. To begin, an organizational approach is insufficient for explaining the timing of labor protests: if unions' weak structural position and heightened job insecurity prevented unionized workers from striking, why did protest increase in the early 1990s? Arguably, organized labor's fear of militancy should have been most acute during precisely this period. As mentioned previously unemployment steadily increased over the course of the 1990s and by 1992, unions represented even less of the working class than they did in the late 1980s⁶². If organizational power was a true constraint on labor militancy then, we should expect workers to be more reluctant to engage in strikes during the 1990s, rather than more willing to do so.

Alternatively, one could argue that the increased prevalence of layoffs and steady decline in worker's wage conditions during structural adjustment created grievances among workers that had finally come to a boiling point in the 1990s. But this account only makes the task of explaining the timing of labor opposition more interesting and important. If legitimate grievances had been increasing steadily during the 1980s, what happened in 1989-1990 to produce the renaissance of labor militancy witnessed in the early 1990s?

Additional questions concern the characteristics of the militancy itself. In Chapter 5, we saw how the institution of personnel delegate elections created serious divisions between rival trade unions that prevented the Moroccan labor movement from developing a unified, coherent platform and agenda. Yet, one of the most striking features of post-1989 labor militancy was the high degree of cooperation between the CDT and UGTM. How did this new unity come about? Why did categories of workers that had not cooperated in previous periods of economic reform suddenly begin to do so? Furthermore, in explaining this new unity it is also necessary to account for its demise. By 1994, unionists from the CDT and UGTM were once again at odds and failed to coordinate a proposed joint general strike. Why did this alliance suddenly collapse?

⁶² According to *Trade Unions of the World*, the total rate of unionization in Morocco in 1992 was 11.9% (Upham 1993).

Finally, it is important to note that in its strike activities organized labor did not simply seek to restore previous patron-client relationships as a moral economy perspective would predict. Although unions did levy demands concerning salary raises and increased benefits in an attempt to recoup workers' diminished purchasing power, they principally advocated for the creation of a new collective bargaining system and institutional reforms that would fundamentally reshape the terms of extant state-labor relations. In so doing, they challenged the established industrial and political order, violating the principles of any pre-existing moral economy. To provide a complete account of labor behavior then, we must go beyond perspectives which assume that workers' grievances seek to only restore the status quo.

The following section offers an alternative explanation that can account more fully for the growth of labor militancy, for the cooperation witnessed within the labor movement, and for the relationship that developed between unions and the government during the period of neoliberal reform. In it, I argue that changes in the extant system of labor and political representation combined to produce shared grievances among previously divided classes of workers, resulting in the development of a more cohesive movement of labor opposition against the economic policies of the regime.

Explaining Labor Militancy: The Difficulties of Decentralization

In contrast to Tunisia, Morocco's experience with structural adjustment was not accompanied by significant institutional reforms. Because government officials continued to believe that a decentralized system of labor representation was the most efficient means to address worker grievances and keep labor militancy in check, they introduced no new mechanisms for collective bargaining and maintained the structure of personnel delegate system largely in tact. Indeed, as we saw last chapter, during the first period of economic reform the functioning of the personnel delegate system kept labor militancy locked in a delicate balance — while delegate elections incentivized competitive striking behavior among rival unions, they also placed a check on this militancy by

allowing employers to use their discretion over the allocation of delegate seats to reward moderate unions and punish militant ones.

However, the onset of structural adjustment disrupted this balance in one significant way. As a condition for their cooperation with adjustment policies, employers demanded more flexibility in the management of personnel decisions within their individual firms. To adapt to changing economic conditions, they argued, managers would need to have greater latitude to layoff workers, to replace permanent workers with temporary ones, and to unilaterally determine their own pay and promotion criteria. While the government was unwilling to formally acquiesce to these demands for fear of inciting labor opposition, it did strike a compromise with employers by scaling back its regulation of personnel decisions within individual firms (Appendix B: MU-13, 4/8/2014). As a consequence, in the first years of structural adjustment, managers often used their increased powers over personnel management to bypass mechanisms for labor representation and negotiation. To a greater extent than in the previous period, employers fired workers for engaging in union activities, using as a justification for these dismissals “financial reasons” or “restructuring of [their] enterprise” (Douieb 1987, 1). Additionally, in several private firms managers impeded workers’ right to organization by neglecting to hold delegate elections or refusing to meet with workers’ designated representatives. Significantly, government officials proved more willing to overlook employer abuses at the firm-level — according to multiple sources, labor inspectors rarely intervened to enforce concertation among employers and employees and court proceedings to redress arbitrary firings were often costly and drawn-out affairs (ibid, 9).

This subversion of labor representation had a tremendous impact on the labor movement from the shop-floor to the central. For workers in the rank-and-file, employer abuses and the deterioration of dialogue elevated their grievances and increased their uncertainties. While workers were often reluctant to strike for fear of jeopardizing their employment, they resented the despotic management practices of employers and expressed their opposition by increasing the number of

collective complaints sent to local authorities for arbitration⁶³. One private sector worker summed the frustrations that employer's refusal to engage in dialogue generated thusly,

“The private sector has initiated a systematic anti-union policy that tries to annihilate all union organizations by firing and persecuting all who wish to create a force to defend workers... it is to counteract the offensive of the employers which is facilitated by the unpopular choices of the government that the working class mobilizes” (*Al-Bayane*, 1/20/1987).

Similarly for peak labor interests, the failure of Morocco's decentralized labor bargaining process highlighted the need for more formal, centralized mechanisms for negotiation. To recoup their losses at the firm level, union representatives in parliament demanded that the government take action against arbitrary dismissals and institute a centralized bargaining process that would take power out of the hands of abusive employers. When the government proved unwilling to quickly implement a solution for negotiations, union leaders developed strong incentives to promote strikes at the sectoral and national level. In deciding to launch the call for its 1990 general strike, the lack of negotiation was the CDT's chief complaint: “The government has chosen a policy of indifference and refusal to engage in dialogue or negotiation, preferring to resort to measures to avoid all union demands... The strike is for us the legitimate way to defend our rights and to protect our dignity” (*Liberation*, 11/30/1990).

It is important to note that, in contrast to the previous period, opposition regarding employer abuses and the lack of meaningful dialogue was not limited to the CDT. Indeed, in their efforts to increase managerial autonomy, employers engaged in abusive dismissals of workers from all syndical affiliations, including those from traditionally moderate unions such as the UMT. Consequently, strike calls and demands for negotiation were increasingly diffused across different segments of the labor movement. Interestingly, in choosing to use their autonomy to close off opportunities for representation for unionists of all types, employers undermined their capacity to

⁶³ According to data published in *Libération* 6/1/1990, 41,421 collective complaints were sent to labor inspectors for arbitration through November 1987. The vast majority of these complaints were over layoffs and salary concerns.

use divide-and-rule strategies to pre-empt worker solidarity, creating the foundations for common action among once-rival trade unions.

Explaining Labor Cooperation: The Rise of the “Koutla”

The uncertainties that employer abuses and Morocco’s decentralized system of labor representation generated help us to understand why incentives for strike activity increased over the course of structural adjustment. They also help us to begin to explain why previously divided segments of the working class exhibited greater cohesion in their platforms and agendas. However, this explanation does not account for the specific timing of the protests nor the level of cooperation witnessed between the UGTM and CDT. What changed to make these unions more willing to engage in strike action in the 1990s?

To answer this question, I argue that we must turn our attention to changes that reshaped the broader political landscape after 1989. As I noted in the previous chapter, one key mechanism that the monarchy used to contain labor opposition in the 1970s and early 80s was selective incorporation of unions and their partisan partners into the institutional structures of the regime. By providing representation for unions and their allied parties in the legislature and executive ministries, the crown effectively channeled labor opposition from the streets into government institutions, as unions found it more efficacious to make their demands heard through inter-elite bargaining and negotiations.

In the early years of structural adjustment, the monarchy again employed incorporative strategies to stave off labor and partisan challenges to its plans for reform. To co-opt opposition from the USFP-CDT bloc, Hassan II appointed USFP leader and perennial labor advocate Abderrahim Bouabid to the executive council as minister of state in 1983. Additionally, to maintain the loyalty of partisan factions already incorporated within the regime, the King increased the number of ministerial portfolios awarded to the Istiqlal and reintegrated into his council loyalist party leaders

with ties to the UMT⁶⁴. For a time, these appointments ensured that unions would not mobilize their constituents against the government's program for economic reform. While most unions opposed plans for price increases and public sector cuts, they were reluctant to organize against these policies for fear of inviting government repression and sacrificing their opportunity for representation within the regime (Appendix B: MU-26, 5/13/2014). This was especially true for the CDT, who suffered the most from the regime's retaliation following its previous general strike in 1981. Significantly, labor-affiliated parties also cautioned against labor militancy, as they did not wish to undermine their chances for success in the 1984 legislative elections (Appendix B: MP-14, 4/9/2014). Thus, although they spoke out openly against structural adjustment in parliamentary sessions, unions agreed to the first round of austerity measures and made no efforts to mobilize a general strike.

Yet, if labor and opposition elites believed that cooperation with the government's agenda would help them to expand their political power within the regime, they were soon sorely disappointed. Despite having won a marginally larger share of seats than they did in the 1977 parliamentary elections, both the USFP and Istiqlal registered serious losses relative to pro-monarchy parties during legislative elections in 1984. Consequently, these parties and their union affiliates saw their relative power within the government significantly reduced — in addition to diminishing the size and strength of their respective parliamentary blocs, elections also resulted in a cabinet that was composed almost entirely of candidates outside of the opposition.

This marginalization provided serious incentives for both labor and opposition elites to mobilize protest campaigns to voice their demands before the government (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014; MP-14, 4/9/2014). However, two features of the political environment postponed the use of this strategy in the short term. First, the political crisis in the Western Sahara continued to preoccupy the opposition and limit its capacity for protest mobilization. As in the 1970s, the

⁶⁴ Maati Bouabid and Mohamed Aarsalane El-Jadidi, both with alleged connections to the UMT, were appointed to the positions of Minister of Interior and Minister of Employment and National Protection, respectively

monarchy framed the Sahara as an issue requiring national unity and consensus — to oppose the regime while the country was at war would be tantamount to declaring one's disloyalty to the nation. Thus, neither parties nor unions wished to mobilize until after tensions in the Sahara had abated, lest they risk jeopardizing popular support (ibid). The second barrier to mobilization related to divisions that arose between and within the opposition groups themselves. Especially among unions, the results of the 1984 parliamentary elections reinforced rivalries between the major confederations, facilitating the government's use of divide-and-rule strategies to weaken labor opposition. In contrast to the 1977 elections — in which the UMT won a secure majority of parliamentary seats — in 1984 it faced fierce competition from the UGTM and CDT, who gained two and three seats out of ten respectively. This attenuation of the UMT's position heightened tensions between the union central and the CDT, whose leaders it accused of breaking away from the union and undermining its representative hegemony (Appendix B: MU-22, 5/7/2014). At the same time, parties also suffered divisions that weakened their ability to engage in opposition, particularly regarding internal debates over the extent to which they would benefit from cooperating with or challenging the King (Storm 2000, 52; Bras 1990, 611-616).

Nonetheless, by the late 1980s, most opposition and labor elites were convinced that if they did not place pressure upon the regime, they would remain in an unacceptably stifling position (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014; MU-27, 5/14/2014; MP-14, 4/9/2014; Bras 1989, 681-682). In part, the government's own actions helped to confirm these suspicions. In 1989, the King requested that the parliament approve the postponement of upcoming legislative elections to allow the conflict in the Western Sahara to improve. While opposition parties eventually acquiesced to this demand, members of the USFP were angered by what they perceived to be an attempt to prolong the promonarchy parliamentary majority and prevent their access to power (Appendix B: MP-14; Lust 2004, 164). Additionally, as the regime intensified its commitment to reform, it proved more willing to side step parliament in its decision-making, much to the chagrin of the opposition. Especially

alarming was its effort to unilaterally ratify the 1989 Privatization Law and 1990 Finance law without accepting any of the amendments proposed by the USFP, PPS (*Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme*), or Istiqlal (Hajjam 1989).

For the opposition, these acts demonstrated that the government was no longer committed to incorporating them into its ruling coalition, nor to creating a political system through which they could effectively exercise their voice. Threatened by the possibility of continued exclusion, opposition groups moved to collaborate and present a united front against the regime. After years of internecine rivalries and infighting, the opposition joined forces in a coalition known as the Koutla, which comprised members of the Istiqlal, USFP, UNFP, PPS, OADP (*Organisation de l'Action Démocratique Populaire*), CDT, and UGTM.

The consolidation of the Koutla helps to explain much of the intensification of labor militancy witnessed in the 1990s. As a means of placing political pressure on the regime to open up the polity and enact liberalizing reforms, opposition parties encouraged their union affiliates to launch strikes beginning in the second half of 1989. For the opposition, strikes were considered the most effective way to strengthen their position vis-a-vis the regime — by drawing attention to the negative effects of the government's economic program, opposition elites could reinforce their own credibility in the eyes of public opinion and thereby convince the regime of the necessity of their participation in government (Appendix B: MP-15, 4/14/2014). Similarly for trade unions, strikes were seen as a necessary measure to force the regime to take seriously their requests for negotiation in a closed political system. With their partisan partners effectively excluded from government and traditional institutional mechanisms for expressing labor grievances rendered ineffective, unions felt increasingly “constrained to strike” as a way of making their demands heard (*Libération* 11/2/1990).

The development of the Koutla alliance also helps to explain the high incidence of cooperation that existed between the UGTM and CDT in the early years of the 1990s. With their political partners in alliance, these unions gained new incentives to coordinate their actions in efforts

to achieve their goals. Particularly as both unions were progressively marginalized from centers of power, they developed a common interest in implementing institutional and economic reforms that would allow them to regain effective voice within the system. Furthermore, given that joint strikes often resulted in concessions, union leaders began to see alliance as necessary to force the government to acquiesce to their demands (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014; MU-10, 3/25/14). Finally, cooperative strike action offered unions a measure of protection that they had not experienced in previous periods — by organizing in partnership with another union, both labor leaders and workers had greater assurances that their strike would not be an isolated event that could be easily manipulated or broken by the regime (Appendix B: MU-18, 4/25/2014).

Finally, the formation of the Koutla helps to account for the increasing politicization of labor protest. In part, labor politicization resulted from the high level of influence that the USFP and Istiqlal parties exercised over their union partners. As mentioned previously, as part of their campaign to share political power with the regime, opposition parties increasingly pressured their union allies to orient their strike activities towards political ends. While labor officials maintain that all strikes and protest agendas were solely controlled by union leaders, evidence suggests that opposition elites successfully instrumented a number of these strikes. In 1990, for example, a general strike called by unions to express solidarity with Iraqi citizens during the Gulf War was utilized by opposition parties as a means of critiquing the monarchy for its participation in the US-led offensive in the Gulf. Similarly, the public sector strike wave witnessed from February to March 1993 is argued to have been orchestrated by the opposition in order to garner support for the Koutla alliance in advance of the June 1993 parliamentary elections (Appendix B: MA-8, 3/19/2014).

However, the radicalization of labor protest also reflected an emerging new consciousness on the part of workers and union leaders about the ultimate source of their grievances. For workers in the rank-and-file, local authorities' complicity with employer's attempts to subvert labor representation and union rights in the enterprise highlighted that their problems were not only with

abusive employers but also with corrupt government officials (Appendix B: MU-24, 5/8/2014). Likewise for labor leaders at the peak of union organizations, the government's reluctance to implement a new collective bargaining system that could reduce the autonomy granted to abusive employers demonstrated that their grievances were intimately linked to broader political issues. As the adjoint secretary general of the CDT remarked:

“The termination of initiatives for industrial reforms since 1990... is due to a tentacular administrative apparatus that imposes its desires against these reforms, it is the same apparatus that is responsible for the political blockage and for the crisis that prevails in the country at the social, economic, cultural and moral levels” (Taieb Mounchid quoted in *Liberation* 11/29/1993)

To return to our question then, members of the CDT and UGTM became more willing to strike in the early 1990s because their institutional circumstances militated in favor of this strategy. Absent effective institutional mechanisms through which they could express their grievances and address their demands, unions opted for strikes as a last-resort strategy to force employers and the state to institute new procedures for labor representation and collective bargaining. Moreover, the partisan actors that had traditionally defused labor militancy by serving as a conduit for union demands now encouraged it because worker unrest served their own political interests. Thus the UGTM and CDT were able to form an unprecedented labor alliance that mobilized previously divided groups of workers behind a common agenda of opposition to the regime.

Explaining Labor Demobilization: Renewed Incorporation and Renewed Divisions

Yet if changes in the level of partisan and labor incorporation within the regime drove labor militancy and cooperation in the early 1990s, these same features help to explain the decrease in these activities in the later half of the decade. In the aftermath of the 1990 general strike — which, like the general strike of 1981, descended into political violence in a number of towns — Hassan II realized that he could not continue to enact economic reforms without at least partially incorporating the opposition. Indeed, employing incorporative strategies had been the key to

avoiding even larger-scale labor unrest during the 1990 general strike; by undertaking negotiations with the UMT, the monarchy had been able to prevent the union from joining forces with the UGTM and CDT in their protest efforts. Thus, in 1992, the government began to take more serious steps to co-opt the opposition through offers of institutional incorporation. To appease organized labor, it appointed union representatives to sit on the newly-established Economic and Social Council and developed a new institution, the Consultative Council for the Following of Social Dialogue (*Conseil Consultatif pour la Suivi du Dialogue Sociale*, CCSDS), to initiate social pact negotiations with the UMT, UGTM and CDT. Additionally, as a gesture to the opposition, it created numerous advisory councils in which prominent opposition figures were called to take a leadership role⁶⁵. On a broader political scale, the monarchy took steps to satisfy the opposition's demands for political liberalization. By the end of 1992, the government had introduced a new, more liberal constitution, set a date for upcoming legislative elections and granted opposition elites new ministerial portfolios within the King's executive council.

These reforms did much to undermine cooperation within the Koutla and UGTM-CDT alliances. On the partisan side, the 1992 constitutional reforms convinced the PPS to diverge from the opposition, while the 1993 parliamentary elections reignited divisions between and within the remaining Koutla parties over whether or not to accept an offer to participate in the government (Storm 2007, 59; Garcia 2000). Similarly on the syndical side, elections results once again reinforced competition between different unions and heightened tensions among rival confederations. In particular, the fact that the CDT was finally able to surpass both the UGTM and — to a lesser extent — the UMT in securing a plurality of personnel delegate and legislative seats, brought to the fore old rivalries that served to divide labor leaders and undermine the spirit of cooperation previously witnessed between the UGTM and CDT (Appendix B: MS-12, 4/4/2014).

⁶⁵ For example in 1991, King Hassan II inaugurated a new National Council for Youth and the Future (*Conseil National de la Jeunesse et de l'Avenir*, CNJA) and appointed USFP leader Habib El Malki to serve as its head (Lust 2004, 165).

Such divisions were clearly manifest in the events surrounding a month-long strike in the transportation sector in 1995. That year, a bitter conflict erupted at the national railway operator, *Office National des Chemins de Fer du Maroc* (ONCF) when company supervisors failed to provide railway workers with their regular bonus for the *Eid-al-Idha* holiday. In a surprising show of solidarity, rank-and-file unionists from various syndical affiliations joined together to launch an indefinite strike. Largely following the course of events on the ground, trade unions held separate negotiations with the management, hoping to achieve a quick end to the conflict. Tensions reached an all time high in mid-May when workers continued to strike despite pleas from union officials that they immediately return to work. Ultimately, the 28-day strike was resolved after government ministers, on the order of the King, convened a meeting of the CCDS to facilitate a compromise between unions and ONCF management which resulted in the partial satisfaction of workers' demands.

The way that this conflict unfolded and was resolved reveals a complicated history that, in many ways, goes beyond the scope of the present project. However, several features of the strike serve to advance the theoretical propositions of this dissertation's institutional argument, and thus warrant further discussion here. The first characteristic of note is that the strategies pursued by labor leaders to resolve the strike conflict largely reflected their levels of institutional incorporation within the state. Whereas unions with less representation within institutional structures advocated for militant strategies involving recurrent strikes, unions whose leaders were more tightly incorporated into the state apparatus relied on more moderate strategies involving negotiation and compromise. Illustrative in this regard is a comparison between the tactics adopted by the CDT and UGTM. As the official "most representative union" following the 1993 parliamentary elections, the CDT enjoyed privileged access to centers of power in the government, which it routinely used to seek a negotiated solution to the ONCF strike. Indeed, throughout the month-long conflict CDT executives initiated recurring meetings with the Ministers of Transport, Finance, and Interior to resolve worker grievances through

bi-partite negotiations. Moreover, in communiqués and public statements the CDT executive bureau warned workers of the dangers of escalating strike action, claiming that “experience has demonstrated the inefficiency of [undertaking] general strikes” (*Al-Bayane* 5/13/1995).

By contrast, effectively marginalized from industrial and political institutions, the UGTM proved more willing to promote continued militancy as means of addressing worker’s grievances. In contrast to the CDT, which cautioned against continued strikes, UGTM leaders encouraged the rank-and-file’s protest efforts, deciding to renew strike activity on a 24-hour basis until the railworkers’ demands had been satisfied. In large part, this militancy reflected the revival of competitive strategies between unions to win legitimacy among workers. To prove their credibility as “true” advocates for workers’ interests, UGTM officials adopted more oppositional stances vis-a-vis their rivals. However, this militancy also reflected the UGTM’s weak bargaining position in the conflict. With few delegate seats and limited access to channels for negotiation, UGTM representatives believed that strikes were the most viable means to force company officials towards a compromise (Appendix B: MU-28, 5/14/2014).

Finally, the pattern of militancy in the ONCF strike conforms to theoretical expectations about the effects that institutional incorporation has on relations between rank-and-file workers and union leaders within labor organizations. Despite clear grievances among the rank-and-file, labor elites repeatedly tried to call off the strike and ultimately negotiated a compromise that met only a few of the workers’ demands⁶⁶. Conversations with labor activists revealed that some union leaders feared the possibility of strikes escalating to larger, more violent conflicts, which could in turn, invite government repression and compromise their positions within the regime (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014; MU-22, 05/07/2014). Partisan pressures also contributed to labor passivity during the 1995 strike. According to Lust, “Party elites... knew that if they promoted unrest they would pay a

⁶⁶ Although workers did win an annual bonus they were only remunerated half of their salaries for the days they participated in strikes (Lust 2004).

very high price... [they] thus preferred to back down than to escalate conflicts with the palace” (Lust 2004, 167).

Thus by the mid 1990s, labor unions were once again divided, and for the most part, were unwilling to mobilize. While they disagreed with the regime’s neoliberal agenda and routinely critiqued its governance practices, they feared exclusion from the regime even more and wished to defend their ability to bargain from within the governing coalition. In some ways, this demobilization benefitted unions by pacifying state-labor relations and avoiding a potentially disastrous conflict with the regime. Yet, it also cost unions in terms of their legitimacy with rank-and-file workers and their organizational strength, as evidenced by the growing number of wildcat strikes and workers’ representatives claiming no syndical affiliation (Table 5.4).

TABLE 5.4: Labor representation in regional councils, 1997

CDT	UMT	UGTM	Other Unions	No Syndical Affiliation
38	24	15	5	31

SOURCE: Catusse 2001

Conclusion

In the preceding section, I argued that an analysis of the formal institutions governing labor and political representation are critical for understanding the evolution of labor militancy in Morocco. Several institutional factors influenced the move towards a more militant labor force. While structural adjustment failed to result in any formal changes to the system of labor representation, it did impact its functioning in such a way to generate severe uncertainties among

rank-and-file workers and labor elites. For the rank-and-file, increased employer flexibility in firm management led company owner to subvert the personnel delegate system, incentivizing workers to strike to express their demands. At the national level, such abuses highlighted the need for a more formal, centralized wage bargaining system. When the government proved reluctant to acquiesce to this demand, peak labor leaders too gained incentives to strike.

At the same time, the monarchy's subversion of political institutions for labor and partisan representation served to further increase militancy and endow strikes with an implicitly political character. Over the course of the 1980s, the progressive exclusion of unions and their partisan partners from positions of power within the parliament and executive ministry intensified grievances among these groups, giving both labor and opposition parties incentives to mobilize protest campaigns to voice their demands before the government. Threatened by the possibility of complete marginalization from politics, these groups formed an historic alliance, which encouraged labor militancy and fostered cooperation between the UGTM and CDT. Ultimately, however, this alliance was short lived as tentative steps at incorporating opposition reinforced divisions between unions ushering a new stage of competitive and depoliticized militancy.

Chapter 6

WORKERS IN THE SHADOW OF REFORM: LABOR PROTEST IN THE AUTUMN OF AUTOCRACY

For many observers, the end of structural adjustment augured a period of economic and political stability for the autocratic regimes of the Middle East and North Africa. As a consequence of their implementation of neoliberal reforms, several MENA states were able to generate impressive levels of GDP growth which scholars and citizens alike expected to produce positive externalities for regional economies over the long-term. Moreover, improvements in human development during the adjustment period had reduced some of the tensions that generated social conflict during the early years of reform, and in many cases, produced a burgeoning middle class that was seen as a critical support base for MENA governments and their continued economic success. Finally, on the political front, a combination of limited liberalization, selective repression, and external support had subdued traditional opposition within MENA states, producing a new equilibrium of “durable authoritarianism” which was expected to continue to stabilize MENA regimes. Consequently, countries as diverse as Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt were hailed as “success stories” of structural adjustment, generating high hopes that regional economic and social progress would continue well into the future.

By the late 2000s however, it was clear that much of this optimism was unfortunately misplaced. Although MENA regimes continued to enjoy moderate levels of economic growth throughout the new millennium, macroeconomic indicators masked larger systemic problems that came into plain view in the aftermath of structural adjustment. Economies, while growing, were still unable to keep pace with rising populations and increased demands for jobs by young, educated citizens. Moreover, many of the benefits of economic prosperity failed to accrue evenly for different sectors of the population, creating a growing distinction between the “privileged” and “disinherited”

segments of MENA societies. As a result, the mid to late 2000s was characterized by rising levels of social unrest among diverse sectors of the population, leading to a gradual revival of the so-called “Arab Street”.

Organized labor’s reactions to these developments varied markedly across the MENA region. As we saw in Chapter 2, while some unions tracked the course of social developments and experienced a resurgence of labor militancy and anti-regime protest, others remained firmly aligned with the state and generated little opposition to the negative consequences of neoliberal reforms. Particularly in Tunisia and Morocco, labor unions adopted variant modes of protest in response to economic imbalances emerging in the aftermath of structural adjustment — while the UGTT progressively resumed its role as a militant force for opposition against the authoritarian regime, culminating in its organization of anti-regime strikes during the 2011 Arab Spring, Moroccan unions pursued more moderate forms of mobilization that focused exclusively on issues of economic concern.

The central goal of this chapter is to explain these differences in Tunisian and Moroccan labor protest behavior. Again I argue that differences in the institutional structures that governed state-labor and state-society relations provide the most useful account. In Tunisia, the closure of representative channels for both labor and political expression reanimated an alliance between UGTT leaders, social movements, and the rank-and-file that once again propelled organized labor into opposition against the regime. By contrast, the development of new representative institutions in Morocco helped to quiet potential labor and partisan opposition to the regime and stabilize the foundations of monarchical rule.

As we shall see in the forthcoming discussion, an institutional analysis helps to fill in explanatory gaps left by organizational and economic approaches. While this is not to say that organizational structures and economic grievances do not matter for explaining labor opposition — indeed, they provide a critical window into union’s motivations for protest and their capacity to

mobilize — I assert that these features must be appreciated in interaction with the broader institutional environment, which shapes how workers and unions define their interests and the strategies they use to pursue them. In the following sections, I analyze economic developments in Tunisia and Morocco, their effects on the labor movement and union reactions to these changes. In particular, I examine how institutional conditions shaped labor responses to pro-democratic protests occurring during the 2011 Arab Spring.

TUNISIA

By the late 1990s, Tunisia was widely considered one of the key exemplars of structural adjustment success (Pfffer 1999). Of all of the MENA countries – save Jordan – Tunisia went the furthest in implementing the recommendations outlined by the IMF, generating positive effects for the national economy. As we saw in the previous chapter, throughout the 1990s, Tunisia achieved impressive levels of growth which allowed it to reduce its public debt and improve its current account. Moreover, increases in GDP spawned significant advancements in welfare and human development, leading to considerable improvements in the quality of life for most of Tunisian citizens.

Over the course of the 2000s, economic development in Tunisia continued much in the same manner that it had in the previous decade. From 2000-2010, GDP growth averaged roughly 4.3% and central government debt declined from 57% to 41% of GDP. Continued liberalization and trade with Europe fueled increases export volume of nearly 56% (World Bank 2016). Additionally, investments in education, health, and poverty assistance propelled Tunisia into the ranks of the top countries in Africa in terms of human development – improving its position from 98th in the world in 2000 to 81st overall in 2010 (UNDP 2000; 2010).

Yet despite generating these macroeconomic successes, structural adjustment also produced a number of distortions in the Tunisian economy that would undermine the country's overall

stability and health. As noted in the previous chapter, structural adjustment did little to resolve Tunisia's growing unemployment problem, which produced unemployment levels of around 15% over the course of the 1990s. Similarly, from 2000-2010, economic growth failed to produce sufficient jobs to meet citizen demand. Although overall unemployment was reduced by 2%, job creation failed to keep pace with the growth of new entrants into the labor market, resulting in levels of youth and female unemployment that reached 30% and 18% respectively in 2010 (ILO 2016). Paradoxically, the success of structural adjustment in improving human development outcomes likely exacerbated Tunisia's issues with unemployment. By generating improvements in literacy and education while simultaneously demanding employment reduction in the public sector, structural adjustment policies fostered the development of a new class of educated workers who were unable to find jobs to match their skills. Consequently, the rate of unemployment for workers with university degrees skyrocketed over the course of the new millennium, increasing from 8.7% in 1999 to 22.9% in 2010 (Kaboub 2013, 14).

A second distortion that became evident in the wake of structural adjustment was the growing corruption of the Ben Ali regime. Although the government had long been subjected to accusations of corruption — beginning with the UGTT's criticisms of the "illicit enrichment" of the Bourguiba regime — perceptions of government corruption and its consequences became much more prevalent under the reign of Ben Ali. Indeed, the promulgation of a new investment code in 1993 gave the government enhanced control over the regulation of the economy, providing new opportunities for rent-seeking and graft. Using a provision requiring that all large investment contracts receive prior approval by the government, Ben Ali concentrated business power and revenues in the hands of a coterie of wealthy, well-connected families, much to the detriment of Tunisia's small-business owning elites (Rijkers et al. 2014). Additionally, privatization was plagued by practices of nepotism which served to exacerbate crony capitalism under the Ben Ali regime. Although no systematic data on the extent of bias in privatization sales exists, anecdotal evidence

suggests that several private transfers directly benefited members of Ben Ali's extended family and network of friends. A 2009 offer on telecommunications firm Orange Tunisie, for example, was won by the Mabrouk Groupe, which was then under the direction of a son-in-law of Ben Ali. (Beauge 2011).

Finally, increased government corruption combined with state withdrawal from the public sector exacerbated regional inequalities in Tunisia. Indeed, because a large share of private investment was concentrated around the Ben Ali clan, business development projects were disproportionately located in regime-favored areas in the coastal center-east (Figure 6.1) . While this contributed to considerable growth in cities such as Sousse (Ben Ali's hometown) and neighboring villages, it did so at the expense of traditional industrial centers such as Gafsa and Sfax (Appendix B: TU-13, 10/23/2013; Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/13). Moreover, because firm creation was typically accompanied by increases in public infrastructure, this unequal development generated wide disparities between coastal cities and the interior/south-west in terms of human development and social welfare. Indeed, interior regions of the the country fared the worst in terms of a number of key human development indicators — poverty, unemployment, education, and healthcare — despite having contributed to a substantial portion of national GDP (Joyce 2013). Ultimately, this generated growing social tensions, particularly among younger citizens in the interior, who grew increasingly dissatisfied with rising corruption, government neglect and lack of opportunities for upward mobility.

Effects on Labor

Yet if economic dislocations emerging from structural adjustment produced a sense of general malaise within the disadvantaged segments of population, they also had serious negative effects on organized labor. Massive unemployment, for example, weakened the UGTT's bargaining power and contributed to an ever-expanding informal economy. While unemployed persons could not be considered union members and thus did not impact organized labor's interests per se, growing

numbers of unemployed citizens did contribute to a labor surplus in Tunisia which increased vulnerability for union members who were employed. With a significant “reserve army” of unemployed and underemployed workers at their disposal, business owners often exploited their employees and neglected labor interests, threatening to replace workers should they make excessive or costly demands (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/13). Moreover as the share of the labor force in the informal economy grew — accounting for a reported 37% of private sector workers in 2010 (Ben Cheikh 2013, 6) — trade unions lost out on a potential base of membership which undercut their structural power vis-a-vis employers and the regime.

Corruption too produced negative downstream consequences for organized labor. As evidence from Rijkers et al and Achy confirms, corrupt business practices often produced lower levels of employment and decreased wages for most of Tunisia’s private sector workers. In a survey of “politically-connected” firms, Rijkers et al found that firms owned by Ben Ali and his family employed only 1% of the labor force, although they accounted for nearly 21% of all private sector profits in 2010 (Rijkers et al. 2014, 3). Similarly, research by Achy suggests that most new jobs created via foreign direct investment — which was highly regulated by the Ben Ali regime — were increasingly low technology, low skilled, and low paying (Achy 2011, 10-11). Combined with the fact that labor productivity (in terms of GDP per person employed) was actually increasing over the 2000-2010 period, such conditions signaled to workers that the fruits of their labor were going mostly to the benefit of employers. For many unionists, this situation recalled the adverse labor conditions of the late 1970s in which the state colluded with corrupt business owners to deny workers an equitable share of economic growth (Appendix B: TU-37, 12/11/13).

Finally, regional inequalities harmed workers in Tunisia’s interior and contributed to growing divisions between “privileged” and “disadvantaged” workers within the UGTT. As investment funds and businesses were moved to the coastal cities, workers in peripheral areas found it increasingly difficult to find or maintain jobs. Indeed, in addition to high rates of regional unemployment,

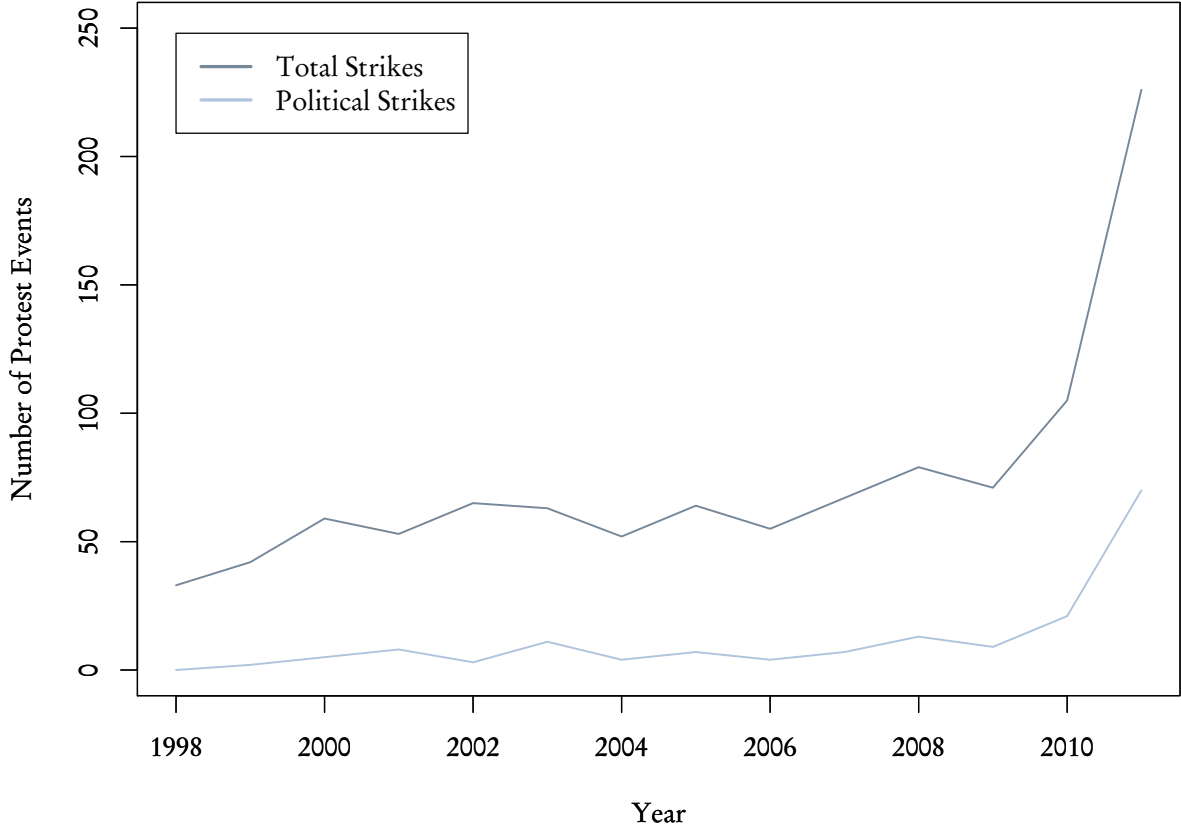
workers in these areas often had to cope with the effects of downsizing which occurred as a result of the closure or displacement of their firms⁶⁷. Moreover, the progressive utilization of subcontracted workers in capital deficient industries kept the salaries of most workers in interior regions comparatively low. As a result, most “middle class” workers in Tunisia’s central regions — previously considered a bulwark of the Ben Ali regime — came to see their status move closer to that of the disenfranchised poor while the socio-economically vulnerable population in the interior steadily increased. Ultimately, this socio-economic deprivation led to an increase in tensions between unionized workers in the interior and their representatives within the executive branches of the UGTT. As one observer in the Tozeur province put it “People believe that the region is being left behind... The government is not trying to create jobs for people and the [UGTT] central leadership does not try to find another solution... this is a cause of frustration for most workers, they get angry and then they revolt” (Appendix B: TU-37, 12/11/13).

Labor’s Reaction: The Resurgence of Political Militancy

In response to these inequities, unionized workers in Tunisia engaged in a wave of militant activity (Figure 6.1). While overall, strike frequencies remained relatively consistent with that witnessed in previous periods, the intensity of labor militancy in the 2000s was much more pronounced. As noted in Chapter 2, measures of strike intensity (i.e. the number of persons participating in strikes) grew steadily over the period, increasing by an average of nearly 23% from 1998-2011. Similarly, in contrast to previous periods, labor actions held in the 2000s were much longer affairs. In the data collected by this author, protest events ranged from isolated strikes involving one to two individuals, to regional protest campaigns that lasted for months and attracted broad support from civil society organizations and local citizens. As Figure 6.2 shows, these actions

⁶⁷ One notable example of such downsizing took place within the Gafsa Phosphate Company (Compagnie Phosphates du Gafsa, CPG), which saw its workforce reduced from 15,000 to 5,000 workers from 1985 to 2006 (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/13)

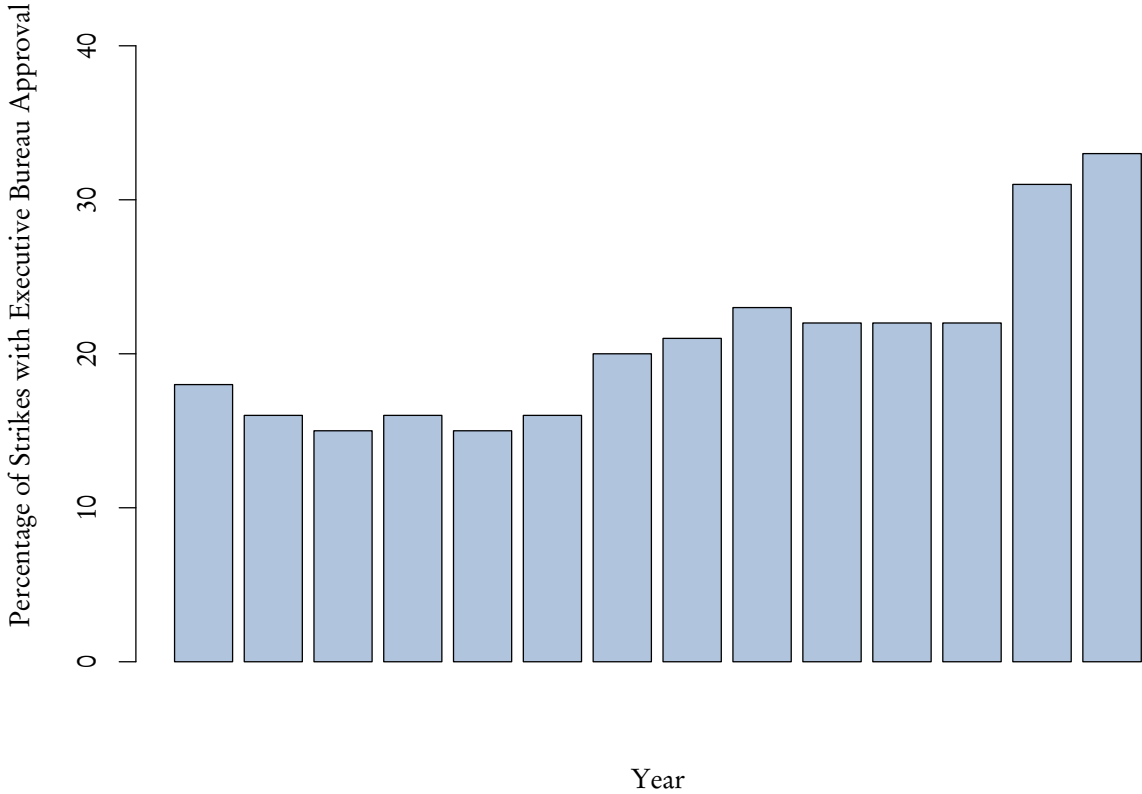
FIGURE 6.1: Labor mobilization in Tunisia, 1998-2011



SOURCE: MENALC Dataset

were increasingly supported by the UGTT's executive leadership. Moreover, in contrast to previous periods, strike activity was more frequently organized at the sectoral level and involved a broad cross-section of workers including those in private-sector enterprises and, more often, public sector employees.

FIGURE 6.2: Approved labor actions in Tunisia, 1998-2011



SOURCE: Ministry of Social Affairs, Tunisia

Reflecting the growing authoritarianism of the Ben Ali regime, from 1999-2011 strike actions were increasingly repressed. Although systematic reports of labor repression are unavailable, some 30% of strikes recorded by this author involved employer harassment or police intervention. More so than in previous periods, the government was willing to crackdown on virtually all public demonstrations that could be interpreted as labor dissent. In one notable example, military forces were called in to forcibly disperse a UGTT-led march in 1999, because it had deviated from its original route and advanced towards the Prime Minister's headquarters in La Kasbah (Hamzaoui 1999).

Finally, over the course of the 2000s, labor protests in Tunisia became much more explicitly political. Three episodes of labor unrest exemplify the varieties of anti-regime opposition undertaken by the UGTT. First, in March of 2005, the union's executive bureau issued a protest letter opposing the President's decision to invite Ariel Sharon to host the UN World Summit on the Information Society later that year in Tunis. When the President refused to rescind the invitation, militants within the UGTT mobilized to condemn the regime's "Zionist collaboration" (Appendix B: TU-22, 11/16/2013). Although the leadership limited its opposition to official statements and communiques, a number of UGTT regional offices organized illegal strikes and demonstrations that were frequently repressed by the police. The conflict escalated when, on March 4th, some union federations coordinated with opposition parties and human rights groups to mobilize a rally in the heart of Tunis to contest the World Summit and the President's invitation. Following a brutal intervention by the police, protestors were forced to take shelter in the UGTT central headquarters, which was later encircled. Consequently, demonstrations died down, but the repressive actions of the police force drove further public criticism from the UGTT.

Second, from January to June of 2008, UGTT members participated in a militant rebellion in the Gafsa mining basin. That year, conflict broke out when the state-owned Gafsa Phosphate

Company announced the results of a recruiting competition for relatively well-paying, low-skilled technical and administrative jobs. When the results were released, local citizens and UGTT representatives protested against the company's hiring decisions, claiming that authorities had discriminated against qualified applicants to grant positions to less deserving, but better connected, candidates. In the early weeks of the protests, a popular committee composed of local UGTT leaders, workers and unemployed graduates sought to defuse the crisis through negotiations with the CPG management and government officials. However, when negotiations stalled the protest movement continued, employing a wide array of tactics — hunger strikes, work stoppages, street demonstrations, and roadblocks — to force the regime and UGTT officials to attend to their cause (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/2013). In the months that followed, protests spread from their point of origin in Redeyef, to nearby Moularès, Mdhilla, and Metlaoui attracting limited support from local unionists there. As strikes spread, they invited increasing repression from both military forces and the UGTT executive committee. At the height of the conflict in June, security forces arrested over 200 demonstrators, some of whom faced trials and official union sanctions for their “syndical activities” (ibid).

Finally, in 2011, the UGTT assumed a leading role in coordinating the protests that comprised the Jasmine Revolution. Following the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi on December 17th, 2010, union activists in Sidi Bouzid coordinated with local citizens to organize daily strikes protesting the regime's indifference towards the region and its blatant corruption (Appendix B: TU-33, 12/2/2013). On December 18th, the UGTT Executive Bureau dispatched a mission to the city to meet with the governor and to investigate citizens' grievances. When labor actions were met with police repression, local UGTT branches intensified their opposition, calling for an end to the government's brutality and launching subversive slogans against the regime⁶⁸. On December 22nd, a second suicide drove further union-coordinated protests in Mekkassy, Regueb, and Menzel

⁶⁸ One such slogan was “A job is a right you pack of thieves” (Appendix B: TU-34, 12/3/2013)

Bouzaiane which drew thousands together to express solidarity with the protestors in Sidi Bouzid. By December 25th, protests had expanded throughout Tunisia as far as the capital, where three-hundred trade unionists, human rights activists and students gathered in front of the UGTT headquarters chanting slogans such as “Work is a human right” and “Social Justice, Freedom, Dignity” (Appendix B: TU-7, 10/10/13).

In early January, UGTT regional leaders demonstrated with Bar Association members in Kasserine to protest the death of Bouazizi and the complicity of the government in creating a social situation that prompted his suicide. Notably, in an interview given to Al-Jazeera that evening, Jamal Balabi, a member of the UGTT Kasserine Executive Bureau, released an acerbic critique of the political climate in Tunisia which was characterized by the regime’s “inhumane repression”⁶⁹ (Beinin 2016). When demonstrations in Kasserine were met with extreme levels of violence, UGTT officials in the national leadership began to take a stronger stance against the regime in supporting the protest events. On January 4th, the Executive Bureau released a communique calling for the “release of detainees” arrested during protest demonstrations and expressing “complete solidarity with the grievances of protestors in Sidi Bouzid” (UGTT 2011, Internal Document). This show of union support sparked a new wave of social unrest across Tunisia, stretching from urban centers in Sousse, Sfax and Nabeul to regional hinterlands Jendouba, Kebili and Gabes.

The turning point of union opposition however came on January 11th, when the UGTT Administrative Commission issued a decision permitting regional unions to organize general strikes in protest against the government. These strikes culminated on January 12th, when a reported 30,000 protestors gathered at the UGTT regional branch in Sfax to denounce the violent crackdowns on protestors perpetrated by the state. After Sfax, protest slogans advanced during strikes became revolutionary, calling for both the departure of Ben Ali and the fall of the regime. Ultimately,

⁶⁹ This interview was posted on youtube but has since been removed.

these events catalyzed the mobilization of a nation-wide general strike on January 14th, which precipitated the demise and eventual ouster of the autocratic government of Ben Ali.

Explaining Labor's Response: Alternative Explanations

Organized labor's behavior from 2000-2011 present us with one of the final empirical puzzles to be explored in this dissertation. In a manner recalling its activism in the late 1970s, the UGTT gradually resumed its political militancy, culminating in the organization of a wave of anti-regime strikes during the events of the Jasmine Revolution. Given the union's quiescence and cooperation with the regime in the 1990s, this activism is surprising if not counterintuitive — what changed within the union to spark a revival of its role as a force for political opposition against the authoritarian regime?

To a greater extent than in previous periods, economic explanations can help us to address this question. As mentioned previously, unemployment and corruption harmed key labor interests, providing an impetus for renewed militancy and growing dissatisfaction with the Ben Ali regime. As workers saw their job security and material well-being decline — at the same time as Tunisia experienced economic growth and elites accumulated substantial financial gains — resentment grew with regards to the current government, which many believed no longer served labor interests. Indeed, an examination of the origins of key labor conflicts attest to the importance of deteriorating economic conditions in driving union opposition to the regime — although they were later characterized by their political statements and anti-regime sentiments, strike movements in Gafsa and Sidi Bouzid began because workers wished to protest the economic corruption and financial mismanagement of authorities within the regime.

Moral economic explanations also help to shed light on the resurgence of labor militancy. In the majority of cases recorded by this author (roughly 75%), strikes were driven by the kinds of grievances that moral economists emphasize. In both the public and private sector, workers launched

strikes to protest violations of wage agreements by employers, illegal firings, and considerable declines in their purchasing power. Notably, echoing the language of moral economy, many of the strikes launched during the 2011 Arab Spring protests were oriented around demands for “social justice”, or a more equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth.

Particularly in the underdeveloped regions of the nation’s interior, moral economic concerns about “fairness” and “equality” drove increasing conflict between organized labor and the regime. For many workers, government withdrawal from industries and public investments in their hometowns was understood as a violation of a “fair” state-labor bargain, especially given these regions’ notable contributions to economic development⁷⁰. Moreover the injustice of government neglect appeared even more galling in light of the apparent increase in the wealth and capacity of the state. As one UGTT militant in Sidi Bouzid noted, “The political and social situation in Sidi Bouzid was not stable... because the regime no longer invested in the region, despite the fact that the RCD was rather strong” (Appendix B: TU-34, 12/3/2013).

Yet if economic explanations help us to understand some of the motivations of labor protests, this does not mean that they can fully account for all the characteristics of this militancy. Indeed, a number of features of labor mobilization fail to conform with and even defy the key assumptions of economic accounts. As has been mentioned previously, moral economic explanations cannot explain the growing politicization of labor militancy. Even if protests were labor’s response to a violated moral economy, workers should have restricted their demands to call for a mere restoration of the status quo. Yet, as we have seen, what happened was precisely the opposite — in both Gafsa and Sidi Bouzid concerns over fairness and equality sparked broader political frustrations which led to calls for the radical reconfiguration of the authoritarian regime.

Another feature which economic theories have difficulty explaining is the composition of actors in political protest movements. If desperation and material grievances drive labor opposition

⁷⁰ According to an interviewee in Gafsa, the region contributed to roughly 18-19% of the national GDP (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/13)

to the regime, we should expect only the most disadvantaged workers to be willing to engage in such radical militancy. However, as we noted above, during the 2011 protest events, strike activity extended beyond interior cities to attract workers in some of Tunisia's most well-developed and "privileged" regions. Significantly, both during and prior to 2011, political strike activity was most common among wealthier workers in Tunisia's civil service, who were traditionally considered members of the UGTT's labor elite (Bellin 2002).

Finally, economic explanations have trouble accounting for the timing of politicized labor militancy. As we saw last chapter, rank-and-file workers had been expressing grievances regarding unemployment, arbitrary dismissals, and violated wage agreements since the 1990s. Yet during this period such grievances did not translate into significant demands for political change. Why, then, did workers move beyond economically based issues and begin actively opposing the state beginning in the mid 2000s?

Together, these observations challenge the ability of economic approaches to fully explain the pattern of labor militancy witnessed in Tunisia over the course of the 2000s. While such theories help us to understand the origins of labor grievances, they cannot account for the specific ways in which these grievances were expressed, nor for why labor opposition was manifest through militant strategies such as anti-regime protest and strikes. To fully understand labor behavior, I argue that we must examine how workers' interests and capacities were formed in interaction with the broader political system. We must examine how the institutions that governed labor and political representation facilitated the revival of labor militancy and how they shaped the way that worker's grievances were understood, mediated and finally actualized within the context of the authoritarian regime.

Explaining Labor Militancy: Persistent Deficiencies in the Neo-Corporatist Labor Bargain

In contrast to previous periods, state-labor relations in Tunisia during the 2000s were not marked by significant changes in the existing system of labor representation. By the mid 1990s, the government's triennial wage negotiations had largely succeeded in containing labor militancy and preventing the UGTT from launching a concerted challenge to the economic policies of the Ben Ali regime. Consequently, government officials sought to maintain the collective bargaining system in tact, introducing no major modifications. Over the course of the 2000s, this produced three successful rounds of negotiations, all marked by the enthusiastic participation of national and sectoral union elites.

However while this bargaining system succeeded in institutionalizing state-labor relations and providing some measure of representation for key members of the labor elite, it still failed to incorporate significant interests within the UGTT's rank-and-file. Despite revisions to the convention collective cadre in 1995 which promised "a union in every enterprise", by the mid-2000s, effective labor representation for the majority of Tunisia's workers was more of a dream than a reality. Indeed, the proliferation of micro and small enterprises in Tunisia's manufacturing industries meant that most firms in this sector were exempt from establishing representative workplace institutions. Additionally, as in the previous period, private sector employers proved increasingly unwilling to accept union representatives within their firms (Appendix B: TU-7, 10/10/12). As a result, rank-and-file workers continued to lack appropriate channels through which they could express their grievances peacefully, generating persistent incentives for these workers to engage in militant actions.

The effects rank-and-file exclusion in generating labor unrest are apparent in an analysis of the dynamics of contention surrounding the 2008 Gafsa mining rebellion. Indeed, the motivations for the protest movement were intimately linked to a split between union actors who were fully integrated into the regime's corporatist apparatus— the regional secretary general of the UGTT, and the executive bureau of the miners' union — and those "marginalized" unionists and individuals who were simply a part of the workforce. In part, anger over the results of the hiring contest was driven

by workers' frustration with the behavior of regional labor elites, who used their privileged bargaining power to secure exclusive rights to determine the allocation of reserved positions within the CPG. When it was revealed that these leaders used their discretion to secure employment for their relatives and friends, workers felt that the current system of labor representation was corrupt, and that union elites used negotiations only as a means to serve their own political interests (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/13, Gobe and Chouika 2009). Faced with the failure of labor representatives to faithfully act in their interests and few alternative avenues through which they could voice their concerns, these individuals turned to protest to express their dissatisfaction with the current union leadership and force state officials to attend to their demands. Although workers frequently expressed their grievances using the language of a moral economy (e.g. "fairness" and "justice") the core issue which undergirded these concerns was rank-and-file workers' marginalization from the corporatist institutions of the state⁷¹.

However, rank-and-file workers were not the only ones who suffered from deficiencies in the regime's neo-corporatist bargaining system. Some sectoral leaders too faced serious uncertainties regarding the ability of bargaining institutions to serve as a credible means for expressing their interests. Particularly in the public sector, union leaders' efforts at negotiating were consistently frustrated by authorities' rejection of trade union representatives and failure to apply wage accords. In one highly-publicized case, negotiations between members of the UGTT's higher education federation (*Syndicat général de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche scientifique*, SGERs) and the education minister were blocked for nearly two years because the minister failed to accept the federation's militant executive bureau as legitimate bargaining partners (Appendix B: TU-27, 11/22/2013). Ultimately, the uncertainties generated by these experiences created serious incentives for public sector workers and union leaders to initiate strike actions. In response to the continued

⁷¹ It is notable that, following negotiations between striking unionists and state officials on January 9th in which it was agreed to involve local union members in the selection of new recruits to the CPG, workers and unemployed graduates participating in the initial hunger strike suspended their actions. From then until mid-March, protest activism is limited to peaceful weekly demonstrations in which the unemployed, temporary workers, and high school students and their parents launch claims regarding their "right to work".

blockage of negotiations in 2005, leaders in the SGERS launched the country's first administrative strike which resulted in the closure of Tunisia's public schools for nearly five weeks (Tounsi 2007).

Thus, persistent deficiencies in Tunisia's neo-corporatist bargaining system explain most of the qualitative changes in the pattern of labor militancy witnessed in the 2000-2011 period. As the institutions that regulated state-labor-capital relations became more exclusive of key constituencies within the labor movement, they generated grievances among these groups which were increasingly expressed through militant protest. Significantly, in contrast to previous periods, deficiencies in the wage negotiation system came to affect sectors of organized labor that had previously been well-integrated into bargaining institutions. Ultimately, this created the conditions for more broad-based labor opposition that included both rank-and-file workers and union elites.

Explaining Labor Politicization: Repression and Exclusion under Ben Ali

However, if a focus on the institutions that regulated state-labor-capital relations helps us to understand some of the qualitative changes witnessed in Tunisian labor militancy, it does not address an important question that we raised earlier: why did labor opposition become so highly politicized? Answering this question is significant because the UGTT's turn towards political militancy was surprising to most observers. For many academics, the tight integration of the union into Ben Ali's neo-corporatism system suggested that organized labor could no longer serve as a political counterweight to the authoritarian regime. Yet this is precisely what happened. After years of adopting increasingly oppositional stances, the UGTT emerged in 2011 as one of the only national organizations that played a critical role in mobilizing resistance to the autocratic rule of Ben Ali.

I argue that a focus on institutions is necessary for understanding the political evolution of the UGTT. At the same time as deficiencies in Tunisia's collective bargaining system prevented key segments of the labor movement from representing their interests within industrial institutions, exclusionary practices adopted by the ruling-party diminished opportunities for both labor and

opposition groups to express their interests within the political system. Ultimately, this common marginalization generated the conditions for a renewed alliance between labor and the militant left and catalyzed radical changes within the union movement that sparked the resurgence of political militancy within the UGTT.

As noted in the last chapter, by the mid 1990s, the façade of “*changement*” that marked the early years of Ben Ali’s rule had all but worn off. Although a limited democratic opening in 1994 formally incorporated opposition parties into the legislature and government, their margin of inclusion was so circumscribed as to have produced no real change in the political system. As Sadiki notes, by the late 1990s, the only real transition witnessed in Tunisia was the shift from “single-party rule to ruling-party hegemony”, marked by the dominance of the RCD in both presidential and legislative elections (Sadiki 2008, 121). Notably, as Ben Ali gained confidence regarding the stability of his rule, Tunisia once again became characterized by the abiding “exclusivity and singularity” of its authoritarian regime (ibid).

At the turn of the new century, the exclusionary authoritarianism of the Ben Ali regime was evident in all facets of Tunisian society. On an institutional level, Ben Ali concentrated power within his presidential office and a tight network of loyalist elites. In 2002, he abandoned his commitment to end Bourguiba’s “presidency-for-life” by altering the constitution to enable himself to run for a fourth term. Additionally, within the government, he replaced “party men” with hand-picked technocrats who were beholden to the regime, and frequently rotated them to prevent them from developing independent power bases. Even within the RCD — which was periodically praised for its renewed inclusivity and internal life— bureaucratic reforms made the party no more than a mobilization tool for Ben Ali. Thus, by the mid 2000’s one could characterize Tunisia’s political system as “extend[ing] no further than the palace at Carthage” (Appendix B: TP-20; 11/05/2013).

Similarly at the level of civil society, the government subordinated most spaces of autonomous action and eliminated virtually all sources of potential opposition to the regime. After a

brief honeymoon period which had suggested that civil society would be able to play an extensive role in Tunisia's democratic transition, Ben Ali turned against not only Islamist forces but also the student movement, human rights organizations, and opposition groups who had once served as a counterweight to the authoritarian state. Moreover, using a series of judicial provisions backed by the force of an omni-present *mukhabarat*, Ben Ali silenced dissenting voices and closed spaces for political expression within the regime. As a result of such draconian repression, most of the "legitimate opposition" had been jailed, driven underground, or otherwise forced to operate outside of Tunisian territory.

Ultimately, these exclusionary practices produced three changes within the labor movement that contributed to the rising politicization of the UGTT. First, the progressive closure of the political system eroded institutional linkages between the union and the regime. Particularly as the state switched from a populist to a pro-capital orientation, union members found themselves gradually marginalized from centers of power and excluded from Ben Ali's ruling coalition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, by imposing a policy of political neutrality upon the union, Ben Ali ensured that no labor leaders could serve in positions of authority within the government. Similarly in 1989 and 1994, the president denied the UGTT an opportunity to form joint electoral lists for legislative elections with the RCD. Finally, within the party itself Ben Ali systematically eliminated UGTT leaders from the RCD's Political Bureau and Central Committee. As a consequence, by 1998, only five members of the UGTT's top leadership⁷² could claim any position of power within the state's institutional apparatus.

Over time, such exclusion heightened tensions between members of the UGTT executive and the Ben Ali regime. On the eve of legislative elections in 1999, an editorial article printed in *Echaab* lamented the UGTT's weak presence in the parliament and hinted at the possibility of the union forming its own labor party to compete against the RCD. Further, in an interview with a US

⁷² These members were Habib Atiq (Ben Arous), Mohsen Dridi (Bizerte), Mohamed Malaki Ouartani (Kef), Mohamed Sghaier Saidane (Kairouan) and Amara Abassi (Gafsa)

magazine, Ismail Sahbani touted himself as “presidential”, which many considered to be a subtle challenge to Ben Ali (Erdle 2010, 211). In the end, these bold statements put the secretary general into direct conflict with the regime — after being forced to resign from the UGTT’s executive bureau, Sahbani was sentenced to five years in prison for alleged “mismanagement” and “embezzlement of [union] funds” (*Jeune Afrique Intelligent* 6/4/2011, 1).

The dismissal of Sahbani provoked a critical split between the Ben Ali regime and the UGTT. Though few unionists expressed disappointment with his departure, many believed that the circumstances of his resignation demonstrated the intolerable degree to which the government had compromised the union’s autonomy. Henceforth, protecting the independence of the UGTT would be a key point of the union executive’s platform. Indeed, in 2005 it was this desire to defend union autonomy that led peak leaders to reject an offer to serve in a new parliamentary body appointed by Ben Ali⁷³. For many unionists this decision marked a definitive shift in the political behavior of the union and its relationship with the authoritarian state. According to one interviewee, “That was the first time that [the UGTT] took a stand against the government. We would not allow the desires of a dictator to compromise our autonomy, which was sacred above all” (Appendix B: TU-5, 10/06/2013).

The growing authoritarianism of the Ben Ali regime also helped to radicalize the union by drawing militant opposition groups back into alliance with the UGTT. While the regime’s limited liberalization effectively co-opted most opposition parties into the president’s ruling coalition, those who rejected this process or were otherwise excluded from it faced harsh repression at the hands of the authoritarian state. Interviews with members from illegal opposition parties revealed numerous harassments — regime surveillance, media suppression, mass arrests — that made operating as an independent organization difficult or even impossible. For many members of these organizations,

⁷³ The principal controversy over the chamber was not over its existence but rather its selection process. To ensure control over the composition of the chamber the government requested that all participating organizations submit candidate lists that contained names for double the number of seats they were to be allotted. For members of the UGTT this represented an unacceptable violation of their autonomy and thus the Administrative Commission voted not to participate in the institution. (*Réalités* 6/15/2006)

this suppression created serious incentives for reintegration within the UGTT (Appendix B: TP-40, 1/16/2014; TU-11, 10/21/2013). Indeed, in the late 1990s, members from a variety of political trends that had once found refuge within the union — Communists, Arab Nationalists, social democrats, and independent leftists — reactivated within the UGTT, establishing a significant presence in the union’s post, education, public health, and to a lesser extent, transportation and banking sectors. In 2002, a change in the union’s internal bureaucratic procedures (to be described in more detail below) permitted many of these militants to accede to secondary leadership positions within the union hierarchy.

Ultimately, these positions allowed opposition figures to once again use their influence within the union to begin orienting the UGTT’s agenda in a more political direction. By 2004, leftist militants had gained enough power within the union to force a real debate in the Administrative Commission over whether the UGTT would officially endorse Ben Ali’s fourth presidential campaign. During the Gafsa mining rebellion, all of the local unionists who coordinated protest strikes in Redeyef were members of unrecognized leftist organizations⁷⁴. Finally, opposition figures in the UGTT played a direct role in politicizing the 2011 conflict in Sidi Bouzid. According to one union executive (formerly a member of the UGTT’s militant secondary education federation), “we had a critical role in developing the movement... we called on the people to consider Bouazizi’s death as closely connected to the regime. We wanted them to know that he did not commit suicide, he was a political martyr” (Appendix B: TU-29, 11/28/2013).

Finally, the oppressive practices of the Ben Ali regime triggered internal changes within the UGTT that further contributed to its politicization. Indeed, in the early 2000s, the effects of nearly a decade of government intervention in the union’s administration loomed large over its constituent base. For many members, regime interference had destroyed the UGTT’s credibility as a legitimate representative of workers’ interests. Instead, the coopted union leadership had become nothing more

⁷⁴ The movement’s charismatic leader Adnane Hajji for example had former ties with the Communist Party of Tunisia, while Bechir Labidi was a member of the Left Socialist Party (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/2013)

than a conduit for government policies and direct mirror of the authoritarian state⁷⁵. Similarly for many union leaders, state intervention had tarnished the UGTT's public image and threatened to undercut its organizational strength (Appendix B: TU-3, 10/3/2013). The highly publicized trial of Ismail Sahbani fueled rumors of corruption within union and intensified concerns about the UGTT's "bureaucratic decay". Already, a group of labor militants disaffected by Sahbani's rule had begun preparations for the founding of an independent union federation⁷⁶. If the UGTT persisted in its current course of management, it might be subject to another debilitating scission that would further contribute to its organizational decline.

Thus, following Sahbani's resignation, union leaders sought to restore the legitimacy of the UGTT by instituting changes in its internal bureaucracy. In 2001, the Administrative Commission announced a new platform of "*redressement*" — correction — built around three key pillars of reform: democratization, transparency, and decentralization. To enhance internal democracy, the commission modified regulatory statutes to limit union executives to a tenure of two terms. Additionally, the current Executive Bureau organized an extraordinary congress in Djerba, which sought to rejuvenate the UGTT by electing a new, more militant leadership⁷⁷. Transparency in union administration was restored through the creation of a new National Commission of Financial Control that would ensure that all union expenses and receipts would be subject to external audit. Finally, the union decentralized organizational authority by allowing regional unions more autonomy in the management of their affairs and establishing new training programs to educate rank-and-file workers about syndical practices and to prepare them for future roles in union administration.

⁷⁵ Commenting on the reign of Sahbani, one interviewee commented: "The dictatorship of Ben Ali and his rule over the state was projected in the form of the dictatorship of Sahbani over the structures of the union" (Appendix B: TU-16, 10/23/2013)

⁷⁶ These members included former UGTT leaders who had been dismissed or elected to disaffiliate from the UGTT during Sahbani's tenure. Together they formed a separate wing of the labor movement, the "Platform" that sought to press for democratic changes within the UGTT (Cavallo 2008).

⁷⁷ Three leaders known for their militancy were elected at the 2002 National Congress. These were Abdennour Madahi, Ali Romdhane, and Moncef Yacoubi.

Ultimately, these organizational changes helped to politicize the UGTT in three key ways. First, involvement of the rank-and-file in aspects of internal administration helped to enhance feelings of individual efficacy within the union and politically socialize new members of the UGTT's base. Individual interviews with workers revealed that those who participated in union training programs believed that they had more power to exercise control over internal union affairs (Appendix B: TU-1, 09/30/2013; TU-11, 10/21/2013). This in turn, increased their activism within the union and contributed the UGTT's more oppositional stance. Additionally, training programs and workshops served as important sites for developing the political consciousness of the rank-and-file. Frequently, these meetings served as the only space in Tunisia where workers could engage in open political discussions and debates. Although meetings were typically centered around economic or social themes, questions of political concern were consistently brought to the fore. As one young union activist noted,

“For me, Mohammed Ali Hammi [the union training program] was critical... there I learned about about the UGTT's historical past, the need for its autonomy... It was there that I understood the role of the worker and his position in society... I learned what it meant to be an activist and the necessity for workers to contribute to the social and political development of the state” (Appendix B: TU-11, 10/21/2013).

Second, devolution of administrative authority to regional and federal branches allowed local union leaders greater freedom to orient labor agendas in a more political direction. Throughout the UGTT's history, its regional branches were typically more politically active than its executive, due to the former's close proximity to local communities (Appendix B: TS-4, 10/3/2013; TA-9, 10/18/2013). Similarly as we have seen, certain federal branches — principally those with connections to the left — had a stronger inclination towards political militancy. However, under the restrictive direction of Ismail Sahbani the ability of these branches to act as a voice for communal and political interests was severely curtailed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during his tenure, Sahbani forcibly suppressed expressions of opposition within the UGTT and, through the use of

administrative controls, limited the ability of regional and federal leaders to organize strikes. When these controls were formally removed under the new administration, however, these leaders once again gained substantial latitude to mobilize⁷⁸.

Indeed, autonomous regional and sectoral branches were behind some of the key episodes of political labor mobilization witnessed over the course of the 2000s. In 2003, regional union leaders known for their militant orientation organized spontaneous demonstrations to protest against the US intervention in Iraq. While these protests did not launch specific slogans against the regime, such acts of autonomous political expression were seen as a threat to RCD hegemony and several of these demonstrations were harshly repressed⁷⁹ (Appendix B: TU-15, 10/23/2013). Similarly, local union leaders in Redeyef were instrumental in framing the 2008 protest movement in the Gafsa mining basin and providing local citizens with resources and premises to mobilize. According to interviewees, these unionists provided the “intellectual leadership” of the movement and utilized their privileged positions as intermediate authorities within the UGTT to deploy parts of its organizational structure for contestation (Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/2013, TA-19, 10/31/2013). In addition to permitting protestors to hold meetings in union assembly halls, local leaders at times financed the cost of protest materials and utilized their contacts within the community to facilitate protesters’ attempts to organize. Most important, local union officials opened up UGTT branches as shelter for demonstrators in the wake of government repression (Appendix B: TA-45, 1/24/2014).

During the events of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, regional and federal leaders provided the backbone of the UGTT’s mobilization efforts and engagement with political demands. While the impetus for protest initially originated outside of the union movement, regional leaders quickly assumed the mantle of organizing protests and ensuring their diffusion to nearby areas. In Sidi

⁷⁸ In the 2007 UGTT Internal Statute, regulations on strikes were modified such that regional strikes no longer needed approval from the Executive Bureau to be considered legitimate. Instead, strikes held at the regional level merely needed the approval of 2/3 of the members of the regional union’s Executive Bureau (UGTT 2007).

⁷⁹ For example demonstrations in Sfax and Gabes were forcibly dispersed by the police (Appendix B: TU-13, 10/23/2013)

Bouزيد, regional officials described efforts to coordinate protests with neighboring unions in Regueb, Meknassi, and Menzel Bouzaiane: “On the 26th, after the death of our comrade in Menzel Bouzaiane we organized a committee that was called the ‘Committee of Popular Resistance’ to mobilize unionists, members of human rights organizations, parties... together we tried to spread the movement and organize popular insurrection in the street” (Appendix B: TU-34, 12/3/2013). Similarly, other leaders in the intermediate structures of the union helped to channel diffuse protest efforts and frame citizen’s socio-economic grievances as explicitly political demands. In an interview given to the International Crisis Group, a member of the secondary education federation described the role of intermediate UGTT leaders as political agents thusly,

“The intifada had no principal leader but everywhere there were local leaders, who were often trade unionists. Sometimes we organized our own events and sometimes we would just join existing protests and politicize them, providing slogans that posed questions about the regime and not just about socio-economic issues” (International Crisis Group 2011, 4).

Finally, democratic reforms within the union enhanced peak leaders’ accountability to the rank-and-file, pressuring members of the Executive Bureau, at critical moments, to adopt the base’s more political demands. As noted in Chapter 4, traditionally peak union leaders existed in a delicate balance vis-a-vis the regime and its more militant base — frequently the Executive Bureau was in the contradictory position of having to appear radical to their constituents and moderate to officials at the same time. Throughout much of the early 2000s, the desire to maintain this liminal position manifest itself in belated or lackluster support of radical protest events. During the Gafsa mining rebellion in 2008, for example, the Executive Bureau initially dismissed local unionists for participating in the protests, and only offered support once these activists had been unjustly imprisoned by agents of the regime (Gobe 2008; Appendix B: TU-36, 12/10/13).

Yet, in the context of a rhetorical campaign that emphasized the need for activism and increased internal democracy, such moderate actions cost the union leadership dearly in terms of

rank-and-file support (Appendix B: TU-3, 10/03/2013, TS-10, 10/19/2013). Thus in the 2011 crisis, certain members in the Executive Bureau committed themselves to “not repeat the mistakes of Gafsa” by advocating for more systematic engagement with mobilization efforts and protestors demands (Appendix B: TU-29, 11/28/13). Indeed, throughout early January union executives worked as intermediaries between the protest movement and the regime, advocating for the release of detained demonstrators and attempting to negotiate concessions to satisfy some of the protestors more socio-economic demands. However, under continual pressure from regional and federal leaders in the Administrative Commission (AC), union executives were forced scale-back efforts at negotiation and take a more militant position against the regime. In particular, heated debates within the AC convinced union leaders that their survival was dependent on the support they were willing to provide to regional unionists who played an active role in the protest movement and suffered from government repression as a result (Appendix B: TU-8, 10/17/2013; TU-13, 10/23/2013). To appease the demands of these leaders, the Executive Bureau approved a proposal recognizing “the right of regional trade union structures to observe protests” and the “right of... professional sectors to express their solidarity in coordination with the National Executive Bureau” (UGTT 2011, Internal Document). This in turn marked a decisive shift in the momentum of the protest movement and the UGTT’s engagement with the regime — after a string of successful regional strikes calling for the ouster of Ben Ali, the union executive was forced to accept the regime’s eventual demise and position itself at the forefront of the pro-democracy movement by organizing its January 14th general strike.

Labor Opposition and Authoritarian Breakdown

While numerous factors ultimately contributed to the success of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, the critical role of labor militancy propelling the protest movement that ousted Ben Ali can not be understated. On a symbolic level, the participation of the union fueled perceptions among the

population that the country was experiencing a historic moment of change and that protest mobilization might actually succeed. On a practical level, the UGTT's actions, first by its local branches and then by its national executive, were pivotal in mobilizing protests and spreading opposition to a point that the regime could no longer contain. Indeed, when asked about the most important forces in the Tunisian revolution, most respondents underlined the fundamental role played by the various representations of the UGTT. As emphasized by one protest activist:

“In the end the role of the UGTT was considerable... at first it was the base unions who protested with the people, helped to organize... these unionists wanted to change the regime, and wanted to reform the Tunisian state....The union base imposed its decision upon the leaders, so in the final days of the revolution it played a considerable role” (Appendix B: TA-12/2/2013).

Conclusion

If the UGTT's resurgence of political militancy was surprising to most observers it should not be considered counterintuitive. In the preceding discussion, I demonstrated that labor opposition and politicization over the course of the 2000s was a natural consequence of institutional changes that occurred within the regime. As avenues for interest articulation and compromise broke down in the bargaining system, workers and unions became more militant, organizing coordinated campaigns to protest against their poor economic conditions and the unwillingness of government officials to attend to their demands. At the same time, increasing alienation of labor representatives and opposition parties from the political system produced changes within the union that enabled this militancy to become more explicitly political. In addition to reigniting the conditions for a labor-opposition alliance, repression of the labor movement and continual state interference highlighted the need to restore union autonomy vis-a-vis the regime and restructure the UGTT's internal organization. Over time, the institution of more democratic practices within the UGTT helped to politicize its base, and provide mechanisms for militant local, regional, and sectoral leaders to pressure the central leadership to adopt more oppositional demands.

During the events of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, these features of the union movement helped to propel the UGTT into a directly oppositional role and force union leaders to take a clear position against the regime. Thus while the beginning of the revolutionary movement in Tunisia was rooted in worker's economic concerns, its eventual trajectory cannot be understood without an appreciation of the broader institutional context. In a closed political system, the UGTT became the natural focal point for anti-regime mobilization and its engagement in political protests proved critical in precipitating the ouster of Ben Ali. This would differ dramatically in a context of more inclusive environment, as we shall see in the following analysis of Morocco.

MOROCCO

Like Tunisia, Morocco emerged from the 1990s as one of the “cinderella stories” of structural adjustment. Despite a more measured implementation of its SAP, by 1995 the Moroccan government had achieved enough macroeconomic success to be held up as one of the textbook cases of successful economic reforms (Nsouli et al. 1995). Throughout the 1990s, it achieved moderate levels of GDP growth, reaching an average of roughly 3.1% per year. Additionally, successful stabilization measures contributed to a massive reduction in the budgetary deficit and current account from highs of 15 and 16% of GDP respectively in the 1970s to lows of 2 and .4% of GDP in 1999 (Bank al-Maghrib 2000; World Bank).

Over the course of the 2000s, the Moroccan government continued to improve upon these successes. Although annual levels fluctuated widely, Morocco witnessed an average of 4.6% of GDP growth per year from 2000-2010. From 2000-2008, Morocco's current account reversed from an average deficit to an average surplus of 1.1% of GDP. Moreover, while the government's budget deficit was exacerbated over the period due to increased subsidy provision, much of this expenditure was compensated by increases in foreign direct investment flows which reached an average of 2.1% of GDP from 2000-2010 (World Bank 2016).

Such achievements however, masked import structural deficiencies that produced serious dislocations in the national economy. First, as in Tunisia, economic growth in Morocco failed to reach the necessary levels needed to create adequate jobs for the country's growing workforce and reduce high levels of youth unemployment. Although the overall unemployment rate fell considerably from 13.6% in 2000 to 9.1% in 2010, joblessness among the young (ages 15-24) increased over the period reaching a high of 18.4% in 2008 (ILO 2016). Additionally, as in Tunisia high unemployment levels disproportionately affected new entrants in the job market holding university degrees. According to Badimon, the unemployment rate for university graduates was as high as 30% in 2006, with a slight reduction to 27% in the aftermath of the Arab Spring (Badimon 2007, 3; Badimon 2013, 195).

Second, economic prosperity in Morocco has been marred by accusations of unfairness and corruption. As elsewhere, many observers alleged that the benefits of liberalization and privatization accrued only to a small group of politically well-connected elites. Indeed a 2010 Wikileaks cable revealed the extent of corruption and rent-seeking among government elites — according to the report, the royal family's personal holding company, Omnium Nord Africane, solicited bribes from real estate developers in Morocco and coerced a number of companies to give beneficial rights to the ONA. Consequently, Morocco ranked as one of the highest countries in terms of perceptions of corruption in the MENA region, maintaining an average corruption index of 3.3 from 2001-2010 (Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2001-2010).

Finally, economic development failed to produce equitable improvements in social welfare and human development outcomes. Although some human development indicators such as poverty and health prospects saw marked advancements over the 2000s, Morocco maintained a high illiteracy rate — on the order of 44% in 2009 — as well as staggering levels of inequality⁸⁰. Additionally, regional inequalities between rural and urban areas continued to persist throughout the

⁸⁰ According to the World Bank Development Indicators, Morocco's GINI coefficient in 2007 was 40.7 (World Bank 2016)

new millennium. In general, residents in rural areas disproportionately suffered from poorer education, employment, and poverty outcomes as well as lower access to necessary medical facilities (African Development Bank 2012).

Effects on Labor

As in Tunisia, these socio-economic deficiencies had serious effects on organized labor and the working-class. While unemployment primarily impacted un-unionized workers who were first-time entrants into the labor market, increased labor flexibility in the public and private sector meant that a number of unionized workers were also exposed to job insecurity and vulnerable work. Moreover, given that welfare protections for the unemployed were relatively weak in Morocco, joblessness resulted in precipitous declines in income for many workers who were formerly housed within the middle-class. Finally, unemployment diminished union's actual and potential membership, thereby weakening their bargaining position vis-a-vis employers.

Corruption and inequality also had negative effects on organized labor. Although Morocco's entrepreneurs accrued benefits during liberalization and privatization, the costs of these reforms fell upon the middle-class, particularly among employees in the public sector. In notable cases, owners' compensated their mismanagement of public funds by engaging in mass layoffs or failing to pay public sector salaries. Moreover, as the cost-of-living in Morocco rose these workers found their purchasing power most directly affected. By 2009, a consistent complaint among unionized workers was that moderate wage increases — at an average of roughly 5.1% for the lowest paid workers (*Haut Commissariat au Plan Maroc*, internal document) — failed to adequately compensate for rising prices and could not provide a decent-living for most families. Such complaints were particularly prevalent among workers in rural areas, where it was estimated that over 80% of families lived on an income of less than MAD 5,163 (\$USD 668) per month (*La Vie Économique* 7/6/2009).

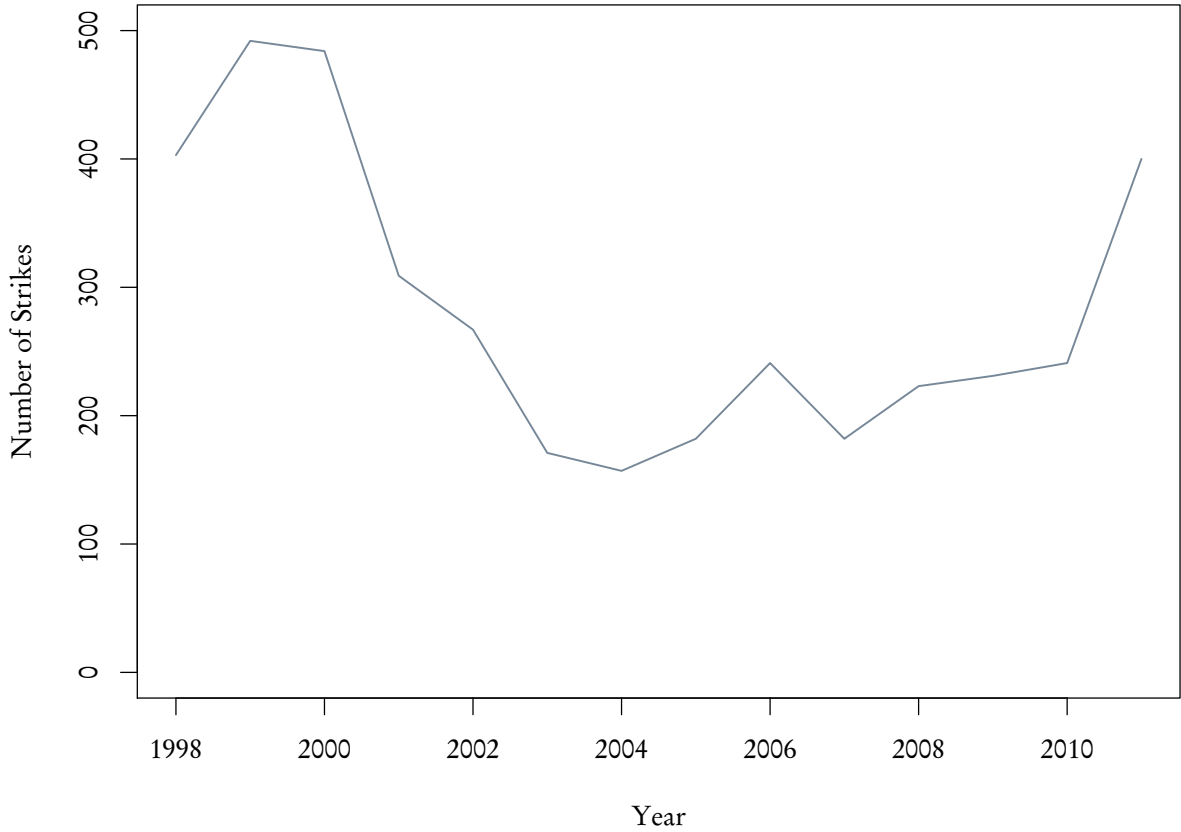
Labor's Reaction: Depoliticized Quiescence

Yet, although economic dislocations resulting from the aftermath of structural adjustment harmed workers and organized labor, Moroccan unions' responses to these disparities were relatively mild. As Figure 6.3 shows, despite a brief increase in strike activity in 1999, strike levels largely decreased from 2000-2007, reaching a low of 154 strikes in 2004⁸¹. Although strike activity experienced a revival 2008, labor militancy still remained relatively moderate and failed to reach the levels attained in the 1990s. Consequently, outside observers have described the 2000s as a “dead age” of Moroccan unionism in which “unions are in a logic of partnership with the government and business... they opt for negotiation and prevention” (*L'économiste* 11/12/2007).

Beneath this general trend of quiescence however lies considerable variation in protest patterns among different trade unions (Figure 6.5). On the one hand, traditionally militant unions such as the CDT continued to mobilize strikes, particularly in the education, health, and banking sectors. On the other hand, formerly active unions such as the UGTM proved particularly quiescent during the period. Indeed of the three main unions discussed thus far, the UGTM consistently displayed the lowest levels of strike activity, a trend which became even more pronounced after 2007. The UMT for its part, experienced a resurgence in labor militancy which often rivaled or outpaced that of the CDT. Further, in the mid-2000s, the entrance of two new actors into the labor movement — the *Fédération Démocratique du Travail* (FDT) and the *Union Nationale Marocaine du*

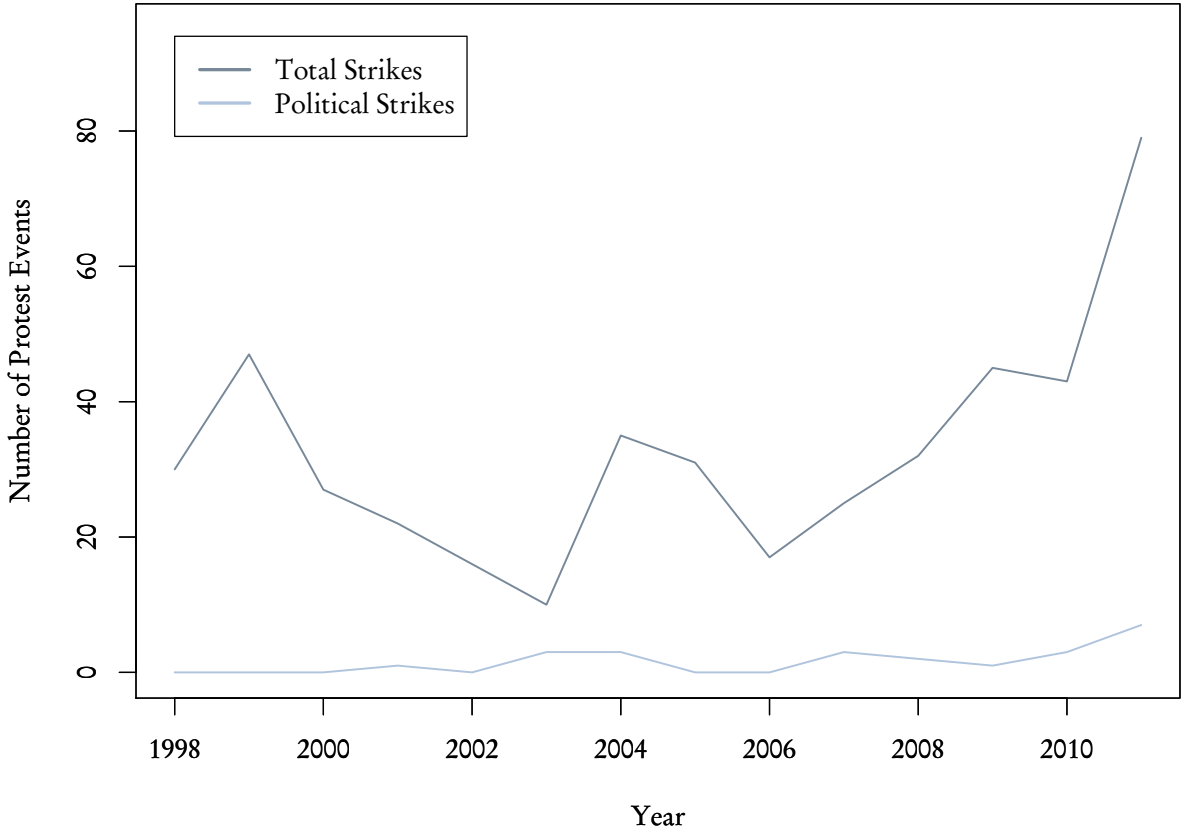
⁸¹ These trends are slightly different in the data collected by this author, available in Figure 6.4.

FIGURE 6.3: Strike activity in Morocco, 1998-2011



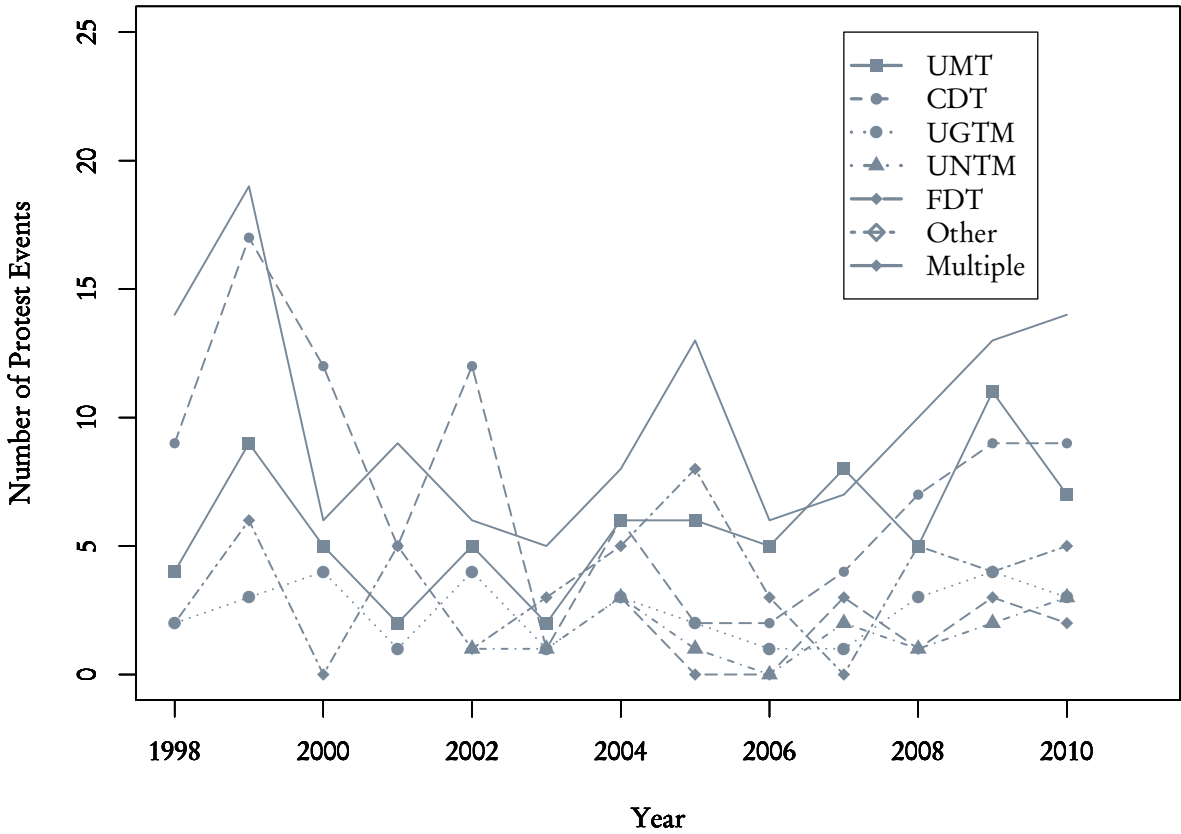
SOURCE: International Labor Office, ILOSTAT Database 2016

FIGURE 6.4: Labor mobilization in Morocco, 1998-2011



SOURCE: MENALC Database

FIGURE 6.5: Labor actions in Morocco by actor, 1998-2010



SOURCE: MENALC Database

Travail (UNTM)⁸² — contributed to a noticeable increase in strike activity in 2004. Finally, reflecting the growing number of workers choosing to disaffiliate from unions, the majority of strikes coded over the period were held by employees with no clear syndical affiliation.

As in previous periods, strike activity continued to be characterized by competition and division. The rise in strike activity in 2004, for example, can be mainly attributed to rivalries that emerged between the CDT and its splinter union, the FDT. Similarly in 2005, a wave of competitive strikes between the UMT and CDT contributed to a marked increase in work stoppages in the banking sector. In perhaps the most striking example of competitive labor militancy, in 2008, the CDT and a coalition of unions led by the UMT organized separate general strikes — a mere eight days apart — in Morocco's public administration (*L'économiste* 5/12/2008). In some exceptional cases, however, unions displayed a surprising amount of cooperation. Particularly in the latter half of the period, unions in the public sector — representing workers in education, public health, and public works — joined together to coordinate large-scale strikes that disrupted public service provision and shut down several of Morocco's public institutions. Cooperative strike activity was especially prevalent in 2011; that year, nearly one-fourth of the strikes recorded were organized by two or more unions in coalition.

Most notably, in contrast to the early 1990s, Moroccan protest behavior in the 2000s was largely apolitical. Although unions did organize some political strike campaigns in 2003 and 2004, these were often held in coordination with the monarchy to protest international issues such as the Israeli occupation and the US invasion of Iraq. Indeed, domestic political opposition among unions was virtually non-existent. Although the late 2000s were characterized by a rising number of anti-government protest campaigns, unions typically did not participate in these events and at times, openly criticized popular demonstrations.

⁸² The FDT was created in April 2003, following a split between the CDT and its partisan ally, the USFP. Since that date it has become the new union wing of the USFP while the Secretary-General of the CDT formed his own political party, the *Congrès National Ittihadi* (National Unionist Congress, CNI). The UNTM which resurfaced in 2004, is the union affiliate of the *Parti du Justice et du Développement* (Justice and Development Party, PJD).

The political behavior of unions leading up to and in response to the events of Morocco's 2011 Arab Spring protests is particularly revealing of their political passivity. That year, a pro-reform movement emerged to protest Morocco's poor economic conditions and to demand liberalizing changes to the regime. Organized under the banner of the "February 20th Movement", thousands of Moroccan citizens participated in demonstrations, sit-ins, and protest marches calling for changes in the government and its adoption of constitutional reforms. In the face of this movement however, Moroccan unions displayed a lackluster response. While a few unions supported demonstrations and offered protestors logistical support, the majority distanced themselves from the February 20th Movement, preferring to launch independent protest campaigns. Significantly, even those unions who endorsed the movement disassociated themselves from its more radical demands — for the most part, unions centered their protest mobilization on economic grievances and openly endorsed the monarchy's proposal for limited reforms.

Explaining Labor's Response: Alternative Explanations

What explains the relative passivity of organized labor in Morocco? Why, in the face of economic and social unrest were unions so willing to moderate their opposition and support the regime? To a certain extent organizational and economic approaches help us to address these questions. However, as we shall see, these also suffer from a number of limitations which highlight the necessity of adopting an institutional approach.

On the one hand, organizational explanations would suggest that labor quiescence in Morocco emerged due to unions' weak structural position. As noted in the previous chapter, structural adjustment diminished labor's organizational capacity and contributed to unions' decline. Particularly as labor leaders proved less able to secure sufficient benefits for their members, a number of workers disaffiliated from union organizations, preferring to act as independent agents vis-a-vis employers and the state. Labor weakness was further intensified by the continuing fractionalization

of the labor movement. As mentioned previously over the course of the 2000s, Morocco saw the rise of two new federations, the FDT and UNTM. Since these unions were largely offshoots of existing federations, they undercut the capacity that extant unions could draw upon to mobilize. Undoubtedly, such divisions undermined unions' strength, contributing to their overall ineffectiveness.

However, a focus on labor fragmentation and organizational weakness cannot fully account for patterns of labor militancy witnessed in Morocco. Indeed, although the abundance of trade unions weakened the labor movement, as we have seen, in many cases competition among these groups contributed to rising militancy. Still in other cases, unions' common recognition of their weakness spurred coordinated mobilizations. This calls into question the sufficiency of organizational features in explaining patterns of labor opposition.

On the other hand, economic explanations might suggest that labor passivity was the result of largely improved economic conditions. In comparative terms, Moroccan workers enjoyed lower levels of unemployment, higher salaries, and greater purchasing power than their Tunisian counterparts (World Bank 2016; *La Vie Économique* 5/1/2012). However, despite these facts, it would be wrong to assume that relative prosperity translated into a dearth of labor grievances. Indeed, throughout the 2000s, a common complaint among workers was that wage increases for the poorest employees (which grew at a rate 1.5% annually as compared to 3.9% in Tunisia) were insufficient to keep pace with growing inflation (Appendix B: MA-1, 2/7/2014; *Haut Commissariat Au Plan* 2011). In 2011, the profusion of labor grievances spurred an escalating wave of union mobilization that attracted thousands and, at times, openly criticized prominent figures in the regime. Yet despite these grievances, labor opposition stopped short of advocating for revanchist changes in the system of political authority, and instead limited its demands to call for purely economic reforms.

Finally, scholars of North African and Moroccan politics have suggested that mobilization in Morocco was generally depoliticized due to the ability of the King to creatively co-opt potential opposition through offers of concessions or by incorporating dissidents into the regime (Gause and Yom 2012). However, this points to the necessity of adopting and elaborating an institutional explanation. In order to understand how the regime co-opts opposition we must understand the mechanisms through which potential opponents are incorporated into the political system, and how grievances (both labor and otherwise) are institutionalized in such a way as to prevent serious challenges to monarchical power.

In what follows, I elaborate one such explanation that focuses on the role of new corporatist and political institutions in quieting labor opposition by incentivizing unions' to channel their demands into the formal political system. On the heels of structural adjustment, Hassan II inaugurated two new institutions — the 1996 accord for “social dialogue” and the second parliamentary chamber (*Chambre des Conseillers*) — that granted unions new channels to represent their interests vis-a-vis employers and the state. In concert with a political policy of “*alternance*” which allowed for the government to be formed from a coalition of parties in parliament, these new institutions more tightly incorporated labor and partisan opposition into the government's ruling coalition, thereby pre-empting the growth of labor militancy and transforming organized labor into a critical buttress of the authoritarian regime.

Explaining Labor Quiescence: The Pacifying Effects of “Social Dialogue”

In many ways, the end of structural adjustment marked a critical turning point in Moroccan labor history. With the monarchy's powers of resource allocation severely diminished and labor unrest still a persistent feature of social life, King Hassan II realized that top-down reforms without the support of organized constituencies — particularly labor — could no longer be sustained. The month-long strike at the ONCF had proved that limited incorporation of labor elites had not

quieted opposition among the rank-and-file and a subsequent general strike in 1996 suggested that if the monarchy maintained its current course, union leaders might be tempted to defect as well. To mitigate this situation, a change in the regime's mechanisms of control would be needed. To this end, in 1996 Hassan II would inaugurate a new process of "social dialogue" meant to pacify relations between unions, employers and the state.

The development of social dialogue marked an effort on the part of the regime to institutionalize the relationship between the state, employers and organized labor by developing a system for negotiation in which the "social partners" could regularly meet to discuss socio-economic issues. In August 1996, the first phase of this process was crowned by the adoption of a Joint Declaration, which systematized dialogue by setting regular intervals — once every six months — for meetings, and establishing mechanisms for concertation at the sectoral level. This agreement also set forth the issues to be addressed by the three parties including wages, social protection, housing, and career promotion for civil servants. Subsequent rounds of dialogue in 2000 and 2003, established procedures for collective bargaining and concluded the adoption of a new worker-friendly labor code, which codified mechanisms for union representation at the enterprise and created new institutions to resolve labor disputes (Social, Economic and Environment Council of Morocco 2015).

The institutionalization of social dialogue, as well as the adoption of the new labor code, did much to dampen labor militancy in the early 2000s. To begin, the establishment of mechanisms for tripartite negotiations satisfied one of the key demands of union leaders and affirmed the importance of labor representatives as "legitimate" social and economic actors (Appendix B: MB-3, 2/17/14; MU-32, 1/16/2015). As we saw last chapter, one of the chief drivers of social unrest in the early 1990s was the lack of adequate mechanisms for labor representation at the national and firm level. Because employers and the state colluded to bypass mechanisms for labor to express its interests, workers generated grievances that were frequently manifest through the use of strikes. Under the new

scheme of social dialogue however, national labor leaders gained access to institutionalized mechanisms for interest articulation that prevented the need to organize large-scale social conflicts. Additionally, the new labor code provided stronger protections for rank-and-file workers representing unions at the firm level. For example, the labor code banned employers from taking disciplinary actions against workers or firing them from belonging to a union, participating in union activities, serving as a labor representative, or filing a complaint against an employer (Essaidi 2007, 141). In cases where employers were found to have violated these provisions, courts had the authority to reinstate unfairly dismissed workers and could compel employers to pay substantial damages and back pay (ibid). For many labor representatives, these protections signaled a shift in the relationship between unions, the state, and employers from one based on a logic of “conflict” to one rooted in the notions of “mutual understanding” and “compromise”. As CDT Secretary-General Noubir Amaoui noted in a speech justifying his union’s ratification of social dialogue, “Once our struggles were concluded in tragedy... by deaths, injuries, lawsuits, and layoffs. Today this struggle is concluded in a civilized way through an historic agreement. This agreement is one of the most important achievements of the labor movement and of the CDT” (Noubir Amaoui quoted in Benhilal 1999, 217).

Second, social dialogue pacified labor opposition by providing unionized workers with an institutionalized mechanism for receiving concessions from employers and the regime. In commemoration of the inauguration of the first round of accords, the government satisfied a long-held demand to reinstate dismissed civil service employees to their posts, providing the additional benefit of funding these workers’ wage arrears (Social, Economic and Environment Council of Morocco 2015). In successive negotiations in 1996, 2000, and 2004 social dialogue accords produced wage increases of nearly 21% for the lowest-paid category of employees, with additional benefits and indemnities for higher-scale workers. Most important, because social dialogue systematized collective bargaining at the national level, this institution enhanced the ability of peak

union leaders to deliver exclusive benefits to their members, providing them a means of attracting new bases of support and exercising “social control” over their constituents (Appendix B: MS-13, 4/8/2013). In exchange for acquiring scarce benefits from the state, labor leaders, in turn, were responsible for restraining the demands of their members in the rank-and-file. In this way, union leaders committed themselves to a policy of “social stability” in order to guarantee a balance in the distribution of the benefits of economic growth. According to one labor activist:

“The possibility of resolving problems through dialogue gave union leaders a culture of negotiation more than of activism. Before there were always strikes, strikes for this or that union talking about the need for social dialogue, and today some unionists still strike... but now leaders understand that unionism needs to be professional and propositional... to give recommendations, to conduct studies... there is no longer a ‘combative unionism’” (Appendix B: MA-8, 3/19/2014).

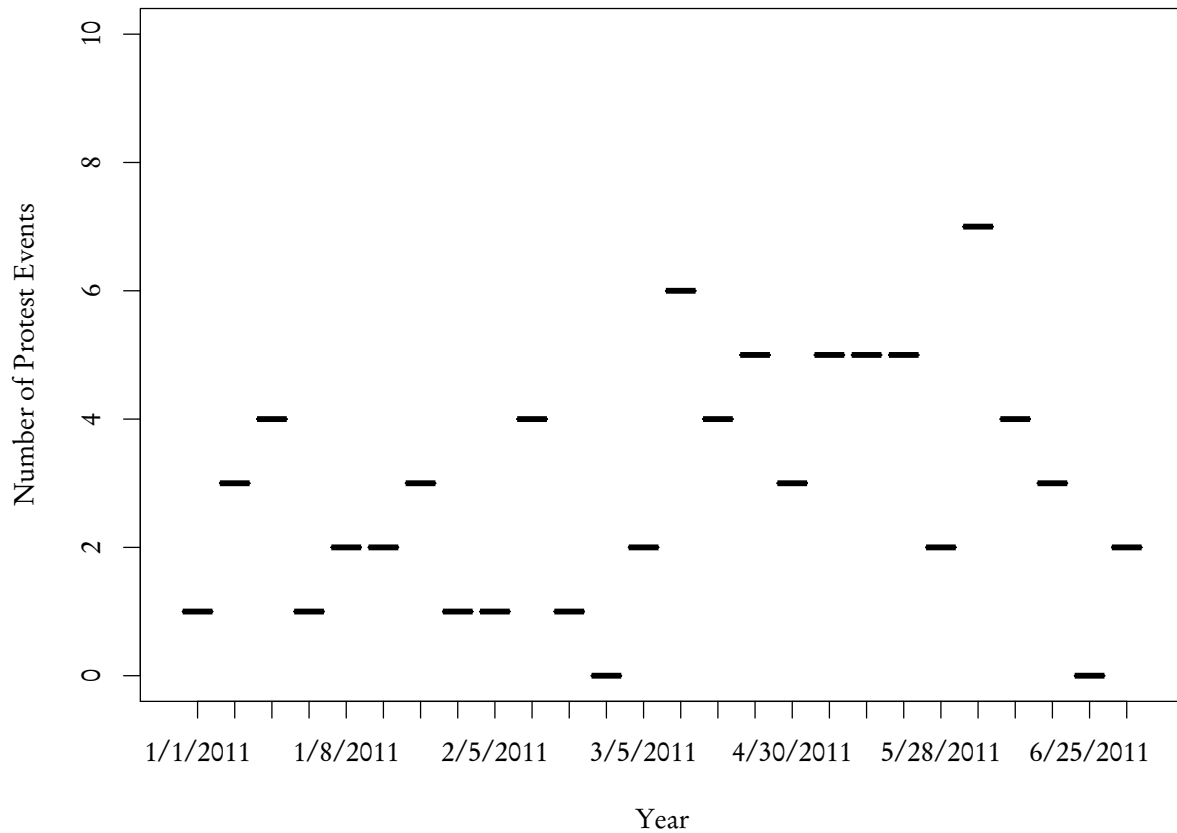
Thus, implicit understandings between union leaders, employers and the state constrained the militancy of unions, accounting for most of the reduction in labor protest witnessed in the early 2000s. However, if the attainment of social dialogue explains labor passivity in the first half of the decade, the dysfunction of this institution explains the rise in labor militancy since 2008. Indeed, by 2007, most observers and unionists considered social dialogue to have “broken down” due to deficiencies in its implementation (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014; MU-19, 4/29/2014; *L’Economiste* 4/22/2008). At the level of the rank-and-file, the provisions of the Labor Code failed to be consistently applied, and were reported to have been enforced in only 15% of enterprises (*L’Economiste* 12/20/2006). Similarly, at the national level, discussions between peak labor leaders and the new government led by Abbas El-Fassi (Istiqlal) had failed to produce significant results. Arriving in office in the context of a looming financial crisis, the El-Fassi government offered unions meager concessions in terms of wage increases and virtually ignored their proposals for tenure and pension reforms (*At-tajdid* 7/15/2009).

Ultimately, these failures reignited workers' and unions' incentives to strike. Particularly in the public sector, where the government proved especially negligent of union's demands⁸³, workers used their positions as operators of public institutions to force concessions from the Moroccan regime (Appendix B: MU-32, 1/16/2015). Hoping that disruptions in critical services like trash collection and education might stoke the government's fears of social unrest, in 2010, workers struck in 139 public offices, including schools, municipalities, hospitals and courts. In some cases, a generalized malaise among workers incentivized cooperation between members of different union federations, particularly in the education, health and public works sectors (Appendix B: MU-21, 5/7/2014). Such labor unrest was particularly palpable in the context of the events surrounding the 2011 Arab Spring — as a social movement developed which challenged the regime for its democratic deficits and corruption, workers launched an unprecedented number of strikes from January to June of that year (Figure 6.7).

It is important to recall however, that while these strikes were contemporaneous with a broader political movement for reform, the demands of striking workers were explicitly material. Indeed, the vast majority strikes arose not out of a greater concern for rights or democracy, but out of frustrations with the government's intransigence in opening negotiations and addressing workers' demands. In describing their justifications for strikes, union leaders regularly betrayed their economic motivations. Commenting on the wave of public sector strikes held in early January, UNTM leader Mohammed Yatim noted that the government was "fully responsible" for labor unrest, as it had shown "no desire to steer social dialogue in the direction of tangible benefits" for public sector employees (*At-tajdid* 1/28-30/2011).

⁸³ For example, unions had routinely lobbied the government for wage increases that would bring the minimum wage up to MAD 3500. However in successive government proposals the minimum wage had only been raised to MD 2109.12 by 2008 (Appendix B: MA-1, 2/7/2014, *L'Opinion* 2/18/2011).

FIGURE 6.6: Labor mobilization in Morocco, 2011



SOURCE: MENALC Database

Explaining Labor’s Apoliticalism: Moroccan Unions between Incorporation, Cooperation and Conflict

Thus, changes in Morocco’s system of corporatist labor representation help to explain a number of the trends witnessed in union mobilization over the course of 2000s. However, if a focus on the institutions that regulated state-labor relations illuminates why labor militancy was characterized by relative moderation, it does not explain why it was explicitly apolitical. As we have seen, in the late 2000s, unions had largely abandoned the logic of compromise and had begun launching more militant actions in opposition to the government’s economic proposals. In the

context of growing social and labor unrest, why did this militancy not transform into a broad-based movement for political reform?

To answer this question, I argue that a focus on political institutions is necessary. In tandem with its efforts to incorporate labor into a new corporatist bargaining system, the Moroccan monarchy developed new political institutions that would provide additional fora for labor and parties to represent their interests. These institutions strengthened the linkages between parties, unions and the state, exercising a moderating effect on labor militancy. In what follows, I describe these institutions in detail and discuss how they channeled labor interests away from demands for revanchist political change in the context of the Arab Spring.

The Chambre des Conseillers and Alternance

Interestingly, at the same time as the end of structural adjustment induced changes in Morocco's system of industrial relations it also catalyzed reforms within the broader political regime. In the context of growing social frustrations with economic reforms, a period of political pessimism set in as parties lost faith in the government's economic program and its limited attempts at institutional reforms (Munoz 2001, 98). Following a sharp downturn in the economy in 1995, a scathing World Bank report made clear the connection between Morocco's economic and political decline. If the monarchy "failed to invest in human capital... and to correct the bureaucratic and legal archaisms of its excessively centralized administration" it would be "unable to adapt to economic growth" which could increase the potential for social and economic unrest (*Al-Maghreb* 10/17/1995).

Hoping to reverse his economic fortunes and prevent the possibility of a disruptive political challenge to the regime, Hassan II embarked on a process of redefining the Moroccan monarchy through institutional reforms. On August 20, 1996, he announced new amendments to the constitution that would lead to parliamentary elections in the following year. Most important,

constitutional reforms would set the stage for a new parliamentary system to be composed of two chambers. In the first — the *Chambre des Représentants* (House of Representatives)— parties would compete for their members to occupy a portion of 325 seats for five-year terms. In the second — the *Chambre des Conseillers* (House of Councillors)— party representatives would share seats with appointed members of professional councils, employers associations, and trade unions for renewable mandates of nine-year terms.

In creating this new institution, Hassan II clearly had in mind a desire to pluralize the political system without transferring any real political power away from the authoritarian regime. Although formally both legislative bodies gained new prerogatives to initiate laws and censure the government, ultimately the monarchy retained its powers to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister and to dissolve the parliament and modify the ministerial council (Storm 2007). Nonetheless, most parties and professional organizations proved enthusiastic about the chamber and supported the monarchy's proposals for reform. In 1997, legislative elections led to a recomposition of the parliament in which opposition parties (and their affiliated unions) won a substantial portion of parliamentary seats (Table 6.3). Subsequently, individuals from these groups would be incorporated into the new government, under the banner of consensual "*alternance*".

TABLE 6.3: Parliamentary elections in Morocco, 1997

Party	Seats	Indirect	Total
USFP	57	16	73
UC	50	28	78
RNI	46	42	88
MP	40	27	67
MDS	32	33	65
Istiqlal	32	21	53
MNP	19	15	34
PND	10	21	31
MPDC	9	0	9
FFD	9	12	21
PPS	9	7	16
PSD	5	4	9
OADP	4	0	4
PA	2	13	15
PDI	1	4	5
MD	0	0	0
UMT	—	8	8
UGTM	—	3	3
CDT	—	11	11
Other trade unions	—	5	5
Total	325	270	595

SOURCE: Moroccan Ministry of Communication (1997)

Throughout the latter half of the 1990s and the 2000s these institutional reforms helped to alter the relationship between opposition parties, unions and the government, and shape the nature

of their engagement in protest mobilization against the regime. To begin, the inclusion of parties and unions into the institutional organs of the state provided these groups with an alternative mechanism for articulating demands which reduced their need to resort to militant strategies to express their interests. Indeed, union parliamentarians described the second chamber as an important space for receiving concessions from the government as well as an arena for engaging in dialogue and debate. Although individually their powers to enact legislation or modify proposals with monarchical approval are limited, in coalition with partisan partners they can influence legislation on the margins and jointly lobby for particular reforms.

Second, the incorporation of opposition parties into the government neutralized previously critical voices against the regime, transforming them into no more than a “loyalist” opposition. In particular, the appointment of Abderrahman Youssoufi (USFP) as the head of the new *alternance* government signaled the domestication of the left and its acquiescence to a new “politics of consensus” in which the position of the monarchy and its dominance over the political sphere was no longer to be questioned. Although at times, this created severe divisions between militant and moderate elements of opposition coalitions⁸⁴, in general the effect has been to reduce partisan and union resistance to the regime. As one observer noted, “The depoliticization of Morocco began with the government of *alternance*. All of the world wanted ‘social peace’, wanted this process of transition... however this lead to a stagnation in which there was no longer a living rhythm... it created a clientelistic relationship between parties the state and the unions” (Appendix B: MA-8, 3/19/2014).

The effects of these political institutions in neutralizing labor opposition to the regime are most evident in an analysis of organized labor’s response to the events surrounding the 2011 Arab Spring. Indeed, a principal factor that conditioned union responses to pro-democratic protests

⁸⁴ In interviews with members of the CDT, the passivity of the USFP following its inclusion into the government, as well as its failure to implement progressive social reforms was highlighted as the chief reason provoking the USFP-CDT split. (Appendix B: MU-4, 2/19/2014, ; MU-18, 4/25/2014)

during these events was the nature of their alliances with political parties in power. Unsurprisingly, the two unions most reluctant to support the February 20th Movement — the UGTM and UNTM — were those linked to parties that were tightly incorporated into the regime, retaining the highest share of seats in the legislature as well as several high ranking positions in the *alternance* government. In fact, these unions were careful to distance themselves from political protests, denouncing them as “anti-Moroccan” and discouraging their members from participating in demonstrations (*L’Opinion* 2/18/2011). According to one February 20th activist “[The conservative unions] wanted nothing to do with us. The other unions at least provided symbolic support. They released communiques, provided shelters, some even marched with us” (Appendix B: MA-25, 05/05/2014).

This cleavage between unions affiliated to regime-friendly and opposition parties became even more pronounced following King Mohammed VI’s invitation of the nation’s leading parties to a consultative council for the formation of new constitutional reforms. Following this declaration, union support of the February 20th protests once again fractured, as the leftist *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires* (USFP) and its new sister union, the FDT, withdrew from the movement in favor of negotiation with the government. While accurate estimates of USFP/FDT participation are unavailable, temporal analysis of news coverage reveals a marked decline in FDT engagement following Mohammed VI’s infamous March 9th speech⁸⁵ — although the FDT was mentioned as a principal supporter of the February 20th movement in the early weeks of the uprising, FDT participation was barely registered at the crucial March 20th and May 1st protests, and by June 16th, both the USFP and FDT actively supported the monarchy’s plan for constitutional reform (Appendix B: MP-14, 4/9/14; MS-13, 4/8/14).

Undoubtedly, ties between incorporated parties and unions constrained the actions of the latter, disincentivizing alliances with oppositional movements and limiting unions’ capacity for

⁸⁵ In a televised speech on March 9th, King Mohammed VI announced his intention to introduce sweeping reforms to Morocco’s constitution including advanced regionalization, recognizing Amazigh identity, strengthening the role of parties in parliament, and devolving power to the Prime Minister. (Rubin 2011)

political mobilization. According to one Istiqlal official, overlapping leadership and relations of subservience (Arabic: *تبعية*) between parties and unions allowed the Istiqlal Secretary-General⁸⁶ to influence the decisions of the UGTM, pushing it to scale-back its protest mobilization and channel its efforts to enact reforms into submitting demands to the consultative council (Appendix B: MP-15 4/14/2014). Similarly, directives from the PJD Executive Bureau appear to have changed the course of UNTM affiliation with the February 20th Movement. Although the union announced its support of the movement and its protest march soon after it was publicized on February 12th, following the announcement on the 17th by PJD leader Abdellilah Benkirane of his party's boycott of the February 20th demonstrations, the union quickly withdrew its support (Appendix B: MP-23, 05/07/2014; Chraïbi and Jeghlilaly 2012). In some instances, labor coalitions with parties close to the regime enabled unions to act as a mobilizing force for monarchical efforts to reduce the influence of the February 20th Movement through the promotion of its own plan for reform. Notably, in Fez, confluence of the state, party and union in the position of the city mayor, allowed Hamid Chabat — a long-time government executive as well as Secretary-General of the Istiqlal party and UGTM — to campaign openly for a “yes” vote on the 2011 constitutional referendum, mobilizing several hundred unionists for a pro-monarchy demonstration⁸⁷.

As a result, following the king's announcement of a regime-initiated plan for constitutional reform, the only unions who continued to support the February 20th Movement were those who remained independent from political affiliations or retained ties with politically marginalized parties. Significantly, this support went beyond the symbolic pronouncements of solidarity given by unions with regime-affiliated partisan ties. In Rabat for example, local branches of the UMT and CDT provided meeting space for February 20th activists and acted as safehouses for militants facing

⁸⁶ As noted below, the Secretary-General of the Istiqlal in 2011 was Hamid Chabat, who simultaneously served as the Secretary-General of the UGTM as well as the mayor of Fez.

⁸⁷ For example UGTM banners in Fez displayed slogans with the following text, “We are mobilizing together for the success of the council chaired by the King to reform the constitution”. (Appendix B: MU-28, 01/05/2015)

government repression during street marches (Appendix B: MU-18, 04/21/2014). Additionally, given the connection of the UMT Rabat branch with other oppositional forces in Morocco — political parties *Annahj Addimocrati* and *Parti Socialiste Unifié* (PSU), as well as civil society organizations, *Association Marocain des Droits Humanes* (AMDH) and *Association Nationale des Diplômes Chômeurs du Maroc* (ANDCM) — UMT support linked the February 20th Movement with a network of experienced political activists, allowing it to draw both physical support and technical know-how from these militant groups (Appendix B: MA-24, 5/8/2014). Finally, on a national level, CDT executives continuously supported the protest movement both in its demands and in its strategies. In line with the actions of the February 20th Movement, the CDT was the only union to boycott participation in the both the regime’s consultative council and referendum vote due to its “undemocratic composition” and failure to “respond to the constitutional and political issues that hamper the political development of [Morocco]” (*Sahara Press Service* 6/21/2011).

Like unions with incorporated partisan allies, the UMT and CDT were critically influenced by their political alliances, or, in some cases, the lack thereof. As a “politically independent” union, the UMT comprised a number of ideological and political tendencies, ranging from loyalist parties like the *Union Constitutionnelle* to extreme left parties like *Annahj Addimocrati*. Given the organization’s political neutrality, UMT militants had much more freedom to act in favor of pro-reform protests. Although deep divisions existed at the center of the organization, individual unions were largely left to their own devices enjoying relative autonomy to support or distance themselves from political protests. For this reason, the protest behavior of UMT branches displayed considerable diversity along partisan lines. As Table 6.4 shows, those regional branches whose leaders were

connected to parties of the left were more likely to mobilize in the initial February 20th demonstrations. Similarly, the existence of leftist militants within the CDT and particularly its connection with politically marginalized parties like the *Congrès National Ittihadi* (CNI) and *Parti de l'Avant Garde Démocratique Socialiste* (PADS) proved critically influential in driving the federation's National Council to call for a boycott to constitutional reforms. According to one activist, "It was the true militants who said that there should be a political discourse that demanded the freedom of expression, human dignity, and the liberalization of institutions towards a true democratic change, and not only a focus on those demands tied to the concerns of the employed" (Appendix B: MA-17, 4/21/2014)

A second constraint on the willingness of labor unions to participate in political protests in Morocco was their incorporation into legislative institutions as was reflected in unions' responses to the debate regarding the existence of Morocco's "*deuxième chambre*". Indeed, a key point of controversy among February 20th protestors was the necessity of the House of Councillors. On the one hand, opponents of the second chamber criticized it as "useless window dressing" which enabled the monarchy to co-opt and marginalize opposition to its rule at the tax payer's expense (Appendix B: MS-12, 4/4/2014). On the other hand, supporters of the House of Councillors argued that its diverse composition bolstered democracy by ensuring that multiple voices were represented in government (Appendix B: MB-32, 1/29/2014). For trade unions specifically, the existence of the second chamber was paramount due to the political and financial benefits that participation in the legislature provided. As mentioned previously, several union representatives described the House of Councillors as an important forum for exercising political influence in which they could propose legislation, contest controversial laws, and exercise direct, albeit minimal, influence over the policy process. Most important because parliamentary deputies received high compensation — estimated at 36,000 Moroccan dinars — unions stood to benefit financially from retaining seats in the legislature,

as a portion of deputies' salaries was frequently "kicked back" to union coffers (Appendix B: MA-8, 3/19/2014; MU-9, 3/24/2014; MP-15, 4/14/2014; Challot 2010).

Given this, it is unsurprising that the issue of the second chamber created a second fault line dividing unions with respect to their support of pro-democratic protests. While activists of the February 20th Movement and unions marginalized from parliament stood firmly for the dissolution of the House of Councillors, unions incorporated into this institution actively fought for its renewal in the new constitution, creating divisions between the pro-democratic movement and some of its labor allies. In particular, following the monarchy's insinuation of a possible abolishment of the second chamber in his March 9th speech, the UMT — which enjoyed the highest level of representation in the House of Councillors — struggled to maintain alliances with the February 20th movement and its radical platform for parliamentary change. While UMT local branches continued to provide the movement with meeting spaces, shelter, and material support for their anti-government demonstrations, the national bureaucracy of the union participated actively in the King's consultative council, hoping to lobby for the persistence of the second chamber and influence the process of constitutional reform in their favor (Appendix B: MU-26, 5/13/2014). Paradoxically, for a time, cleavages between the UMT and February 20th Movement with respect to the existence of the House of Councillors served to strengthen militancy among the UMT, as union leaders used the threat of participation in political demonstrations to increase their bargaining power in the consultative council. Consequently, in the early weeks of the protests, the UMT openly aligned with the February 20th Movement, with 1,500 UMT militants in Casablanca demonstrations explicitly supporting the movement's demands (*Reuters* 2011). Furthermore, throughout the month of May the union continued to support February 20th activists, participating in peaceful protests on May 8 and May 22 as well as providing refuge to battered militants following police repression of the May 22nd demonstration.

Ultimately however, this alliance was short-lived. Following the King's announcement of the final reforms to be included in the draft constitution on June 17th, the UMT's Administrative Commission decided to break with the radical demands of the February 20th Movement and officially endorse a "yes" vote for constitutional reforms. In large part, this decision reflected the leadership's preoccupation with the fate of the House of Councillors, leading credence to the argument that institutions act as an important constraint on union behaviors. Indeed, the rhetoric used by UMT leaders to justify their approval of the constitutional referendum suggests that their response was contingent upon the extent to which the draft constitution addressed key issues of union concern, and in particular the existence of the House of Councillors. According to one member of the Administrative Commission, "We opted for the 'yes' because the text of the Basic Law was largely in line with the proposal made by the UMT in its memorandum... in addition to wage increases in the public sector and the signature of agreements in certain enterprises, the decision to protect Morocco as an institutional state militated in favor of the 'yes' for the project of the Constitution" (Appendix B: MU-11, 3/31/2014).

Labor Passivity and Authoritarian Persistence

Ultimately, it was this reversal by the UMT that once again fractured labor support for pro-democratic protests, dealing a clear blow to the February 20th Movement and its platform for political change. Without the support of the UMT, only the CDT — unsurprisingly the only union without influential partisan allies or parliamentary deputies — continued to engage in anti-regime opposition, leaving the pro-democracy movement in Morocco fragmented and severely weakened. In the words of one political observer, "the most decisive and determinative act of the Moroccan Arab spring was when the UMT decided to remain with the reformist, negotiated option and refused to continue to participate in sit-ins and demonstrations in the streets" (Appendix B: MU-8, 3/19/2014). Although this is likely overstated, it is clear that labor passivity had a significant impact

of the success of the opposition movement and the ultimate survival of the regime. In choosing to moderate its behavior and support the monarchy's proposals for reform, organized labor helped to form the type of "cross-cutting coalition" that has been seen as critical to the endurance of Arab monarchies.

Conclusion

As the previous discussion highlights, labor passivity in Morocco cannot be merely understood as a consequence of unions' organizational weakness or their economic conditions. Although workers fared relatively better in Morocco than they did in Tunisia, labor grievances among Moroccan workers and unions were substantial and generated a growing amount of militancy in the late 2000s. To understand both quantitative and qualitative trends in Moroccan labor mobilization, I have argued it is necessary to examine how these grievances were mediated within formal institutions. Indeed, as we have seen, the establishment of a new corporatist arrangement helps to explain why labor mobilization in the first half of the 2000s was lackluster, while the demise of this institution explains the rise in militancy after 2008. Similarly, the formation of new political institutions which incorporated unions and parties more tightly into the regime's ruling coalition helps to account for the apolitical nature of Moroccan labor protest. Particularly during the events of the Arab Spring, partisan coalitions and legislative institutions helped to moderate labor behavior and reduce unions' support for radical reforms. Consequently, Moroccan unions remained divided in their levels of engagement with political protests and failed to galvanize broad-based opposition to the regime. Ultimately, this passivity helped to stabilize authoritarian rule in Morocco, allowing the monarchy to survive with only limited reforms.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has employed a comparison of Tunisia and Morocco to explore important questions about unions' political behavior in authoritarian contexts. Throughout its various chapters, it has attempted to address one central question, "Why, in authoritarian regimes, do some unions choose to engage in politically motivated protests while others do not?" Using novel empirical data, I have shown that unions in Tunisia and Morocco have displayed divergent levels of political protest mobilization across time — while Tunisian unions routinely engage in politicized and militant protest behavior their Moroccan counterparts more frequently pursue limited economic agendas through moderate methods like negotiation and reform.

Exploring such divergence is interesting in its own right, but this project has been about much more than illuminating empirical trends. On the one hand, this study has tried to fill in theoretical gaps in the literature concerning labor's political behavior. Indeed, although organized labor has been studied as an important political actor in democratic or transitioning countries in Europe and Latin America, its political behavior in persistently authoritarian contexts has received relatively scant focus. In the Middle East and North Africa in particular, labor's ability to act as a force for political change has been woefully under-appreciated. Given unions' organizational weakness and embeddedness in corporatist relations with the state, most scholars have assumed that labor is simply too weak or too co-opted to mobilize. However, as we have seen, this assumption masks considerable diversity in unions' levels of militancy and political engagement. While some unions choose to moderate their tactics and demands, others have acted as forceful opponents to the authoritarian state. Thus, in part, this study attempts to reconcile the dichotomy between politicized labor in the West and depoliticized unions in the Middle East. Although labor mobilization in

Tunisia and Morocco may not have been as massive as that observed in Latin America and Europe, unions have still become important political actors in their own right and their behaviors have important consequences for the survival of authoritarian regimes.

This study has further tried to refute the assumption that unions' motivations for protest are intrinsic or universal. In most studies, labor's political behavior is considered to be driven by organizational or economic concerns. However, comparative studies have demonstrated that unions' protest actions can be motivated by a wider variety of factors. In addition to their economic and organizational conditions, unions' interests can be shaped by their institutional environment and interactions with other collective actors. Depending on how authoritarians subjugated or incorporated unions and workers, they have been able to form divergent coalitions and their interests and identities have taken on different terms. This, in turn, has shaped the way that unions choose to interact with the authoritarian state, generating lasting effects on their modes of mobilization.

Drawing from this perspective, this study has offered an institutional explanation for the divergent protest patterns witnessed among Tunisian and Moroccan unions. Focusing on two main sets of representative institutions — corporatist labor arrangements and formal political institutions — I have argued that the political militancy of Tunisian unions originates from authoritarian exclusion and the relative absence of institutional avenues through which they can express their interests. The exclusionary control strategies employed by autocrats to contain labor and political opposition radicalized workers and opposition movements, driving these groups together in an alliance against the authoritarian state. Additionally, state exclusion fostered autonomy and internal democracy within the labor union which at critical moments helped to politicize Tunisia's labor elites. Consequently, labor politics in Tunisia has frequently been a highly confrontational process, particularly in the context of neoliberal reforms.

By contrast in Morocco, the selective incorporation of union and partisan elites into formal institutions divided the working-class and largely moderated labor militancy. Particularly as political

pluralism fostered the fragmentation of the labor movement and the development of alliances between unions and partisan elites, unions came to rely heavily on their partisan partners to exert influence over public policies and learned to resolve their grievances through institutional channels. Only during a brief period in which opposition parties were excluded from the government did labor politics become a more militant and politicized affair. However, soon thereafter, labor was once again induced into the formal political process along with its partisan partners, thus incentivizing unions to advance their interests through moderate strategies like negotiation and reform.

Thus, the central assertion of this comparative study is that the most critical factor in shaping labor militancy is unions' level of institutional incorporation. While organizational and economic conditions are important for understanding labor grievances and gauging unions' potential capacity for collective action, ultimately these potentials are actualized within an institutional environment, which provides important constraints on and opportunities for labor behavior. Where unions are provided institutional avenues to express their interests, they learn to moderate their behavior and work within the formal political system to levy demands. In contrast, unions denied this access seek alternative methods to promote power and influence, relying on militant protest and "street politics" to give voice to their concerns. Thus, labor moderation in Morocco has emerged because the monarchy's system of corporatist and political institutions incentivized most labor unions to opt for within-system responses to reforms, while that in Tunisia has led workers to seek alternatives outside of the system, generating a recurrent pattern of militant protest.

Moreover, this dissertation has placed significant focus on how institutions shape the types of coalitions that unions develop to promote their interests, which in turn, affects their capacities and willingness to engage in political protests. Specifically, I argued that unions incorporated into formal institutions forge alliances with established parties which curb political militancy and diminish unions' mobilizational strength by weakening ties between labor elites and the rank-and-file. By contrast, unions excluded from representative structures were expected to develop ties with

marginalized social actors and rank-and-file workers, which in turn, would radicalize labor agendas and endow unions with the organizational capacity necessary to challenge authoritarian rule. Indeed in Morocco and Tunisia this expectation has largely been borne out — while Moroccan unions' reliance on elite negotiations has led to the marginalization of the rank-and-file and the loss of base support, state exclusion in Tunisia linked labor leaders to rank-and-file workers and opposition elites, who provided the impetus for most of organized labor's political militancy.

Finally, this dissertation has taken tentative steps to explore the consequences of labor's political mobilization on the durability of authoritarian regimes. Although I do not assert that political labor militancy necessarily results in the breakdown of authoritarian rule, it is clear that labor mobilization affects regime stability and can contribute to the success of anti-government opposition. As the cases of Tunisia and Morocco have shown, where labor unions directly oppose authoritarian rulers, these regimes are often pressured to make radical changes to appease protest demands. Where this is not the case, limited reforms or political stasis is much more likely. Thus, this study highlights the need for continued and more systematic comparative research on labor's political behavior in authoritarian regimes. Only with a clear view of the different variants of labor politics that exist can we appreciate unions' roles as political actors and their potential to affect change in politically closed environments.

APPENDIX A

Labor Conflict in the Middle East/North Africa Database Codebook and coding procedures

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Introduction and Overview

The Labor Conflict in Middle East/North Africa (MENALC) Database contains information on protests, sit-ins, strikes, and other public demonstrations perpetrated by unions and union affiliates in the MENA region. While other protest datasets focus on social conflict more generally, the purpose of this dataset is to gather information specifically related to labor movements in order to catalogue their protest activities and collective mobilization efforts.

Every independent, autocratic nation in the Middle East/North Africa with a legal, operative labor union (a total of 13 countries) is covered beginning in 1975⁸⁸. Unlike other datasets which draw from a limited number of sources, the primary information from this dataset is compiled from a comprehensive list of over 300 sources in English, French and Arabic as compiled by the LexisNexis Academic, Factiva, and World News Connection news sources as well as archival materials from the Harvard Library and Library of Congress.

MENALC is directed by Ashley Anderson (Harvard University) and has been funded by generous grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Harvard University Weatherhead Center, Harvard University Institute for Quantitative Social Science (IQSS), and the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS).

Inclusion Criteria

To be included in the MENALC dataset, country cases needed to met a set of specific criterion. They are as follows:

- The country must be an independent state
- The country must be considered an autocratic government (score of less than zero for the POLITY variable as listed in the Polity IV database)
- The country must provide legal protection of union associational rights
- The country must have at least one operational union body

⁸⁸ In two of the countries included in the dataset -- Bahrain and Qatar -- unions were not legalized until after 1975. Thus these countries are coded from the date that unions were first made legal, 2002 and 2004 respectively.

Data are country specific, and a different time-series is maintained for each country in the dataset. A full listing of countries included in this project is listed below:

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen

Search Methodology

This section describes the search procedure for LexisNexis and Factiva. Users wanting more information about particular events in the database can replicate the search methodology to find the original story.

Search Procedure - LexisNexis Academic (English)

1. Using the advanced search interface, search for the country name (e.g. “Tunisia”) and the listed protest terms in the headline and lead paragraphs by searching for HLEAD((CountryName) AND protest! OR demonstrat! OR rall!) in the “Search Terms” tab.
2. In the sources field, choose “Find Sources” and enter the individual sources for 2011-2012) listed in the Source List spreadsheet.
3. Select appropriate date range⁸⁹.
4. Once articles have been found, download articles in .txt format by clicking the Save button (indicated by a floppy disk symbol) and specifying in the “Format” option that a “Text” file is requested.
5. Download document and re-title according to the following formula:
CountryName-LE_Year - Document Number (i.e. 01, 02, etc)

Search Procedure - LexisNexis Academic (French)

1. Using the advanced search interface use the HLEAD option in the “Add Section Search” option to search for the country name and protest **in French** (e.g. “Tunisie”, “Maroc” and “demonstrat!”, “rassemble!”) in the headline and lead paragraphs.
2. In the sources field, choose “Find Sources” and enter the individual sources listed in the Source List spreadsheet.
3. Select appropriate date range.
4. Once articles have been found, download articles in .txt format by clicking the Save button (indicated by a floppy disk symbol) and specifying in the “Format” option that a “Text” file is requested.
5. Download document and re-title according to the following formula:
CountryName-LF_Year - Document Number (i.e. 01, 02, etc)

Search Procedure - Factiva (English)

⁸⁹ Because LexisNexis only allows downloads of approximately 500 articles, a two-week time interval (i.e. 01/01/2000 - 01/15/2000) is recommended

1. Using the advanced search interface, in the “More Options” tab select “Headline and Lead Paragraphs” under the “Search for free-text terms in:” option to search for the country name (e.g. “Tunisia”) in the headline and lead paragraphs.
2. In the same “More Options Tab” be sure to have all options under the “Exclude:” category checked and select to sort results by “Oldest First”
3. In the source field, remove the “All Publications” selection and enter the individual sources (30 English), listed in the Source List spreadsheet.
4. Select appropriate date range⁹⁰.
5. Once articles have been found, download articles in .pdf format by clicking the “Headlines 1-100” option and selecting the articles (100 at a time)⁹¹. Then click the Adobe Acrobat symbol to download articles.
6. Download document and re-title according to the following formula:
CountryName-FE_Year - Document Number (i.e. 01, 02, etc)

Search Procedure - Factiva (French)

1. Using the advanced search interface, in the “More Options” tab select “Headline and Lead Paragraphs” under the “Search for free-text terms in:” option to search for the country name **in French** (e.g. “Tunisie”, “Maroc”) in the headline and lead paragraphs.
2. In the same “More Options Tab” be sure to have all options under the “Exclude:” category checked and select to sort results by “Oldest First”
3. In the source field, remove the “All Publications” selection and enter the individual sources (7 French), listed in the Source List spreadsheet.
4. Select appropriate date range.
5. Once articles have been found, download articles in .pdf format by clicking the “Headlines 1-100” option and selecting the articles (100 at a time). Then click the Adobe Acrobat symbol to download articles.
6. Download document and re-title according to the following formula:
CountryName-FF_Year - Document Number (i.e. 01, 02, etc)

Coding Procedure

This section describes the process for identification and coding of events included in the database as well as methods for coding individual variables in the data.

Sorting Procedure

1. Begin with the oldest listed article and proceed chronologically. For each article, determine whether this information contains an event (as described in “Coding Procedures” below). If not, discard the story.

⁹⁰ Because Factiva has no limit on the articles available for download, you can search for an entire year at once.

⁹¹ To download all articles, you will need to progress through each individual page listing of 100 articles, and download the articles 100 at a time.

2. Sometimes, many articles will cover a single news story or event. In these cases, group these articles together as a single event. Avoid double- or triple-counting a single event even if there are multiple articles chronicling a story. However use the most common and/or most recently cited estimates for disputed information, such as the number of participants.
3. Sometimes, a single article will cover multiple events. Determine if the main actor(s), target(s), and issue(s) are different for these events and, if so, code these as distinct events.
4. Code a new event if the actor(s), target(s), and issue(s) are different or if there is substantial time (more than 24 hours) that elapses between one event and another. If the actors, targets and issues are the same, but there is a brief lull in activity, code it as the same event, so long as there is specific momentum linking the time periods.

Coding Conventions

What is an event?

The MENALC dataset codes all reported protest events undertaken by labor groups defined as workers, labor organizations, or unions. No event is considered too small. Ongoing events, such as strikes, occupations, lockouts, and hunger strikes are coded each day as a separate event. All reports of future plans for actions are ignore as are all threats to engage in protest actions. Only events for which we could identify a credible start date were include in the dataset.

Context Coding

To ensure accuracy and validity of coding, we use only one coder per country. To the greatest extent possible, coders are made familiar with country dynamics by reading both general historical literature on the country as well as more specific pieces regarding labor organization. Through this process coders gain an intimate knowledge of the relevant actors and issues in the country, which is invaluable in assisting coders with making the inevitable judgments that must be made when coding data.

Coding Variables

This section describes the particular variables in the database

CCODE

The “country code” column provides the Correlates of War numeric designation of the country.

ID

The “id” column lists the event number within a given country. The first event recorded receives a code of 00001.

EVENTID

This column combines the fields CCODE and ID to generate a single, unique event id code.

YEAR

Lists the year in which the event began.

STDATE

Lists the day, month, and year in MM/DD/YYYY format of the date on which the event began. If the exact date cannot be identified, this is the best approximation of the start date. In this case, approximation usage is indicated by placing a positive code (“1”) in the STAPPROX column.

STAPPROX

Binary indicator of whether coders approximated the start date (thereby warranting a code of “1”) or not (code “0”).

LINKEVENT

Binary indicator of whether the event was “linked to”, i.e. a continuation of an event that occurred the previous day (thereby warranting a code of “1”) or not (code “0”). Only events that span over multiple days can be considered continuous.

LINKID

The “link id” column lists the unique identifier for the linked group of events within the given country.

DUR

Records, in minutes, the length of the duration of the event. Strikes reported as lasting “one day” would be recorded as “480” to reflect the typical 8-hour workday instituted in most countries.

ETYPE

Indicates the type of event according to the following code scheme:

1 = Organized Demonstration

Largely peaceful action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **can** be identified.

2 = Spontaneous Demonstration

Largely peaceful action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **cannot** be identified.

3 = Organized Violent Riot

Violent action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. To be considered a violent action, the participants in the action must have intent to cause injury/physical harm or property damage. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **can** be identified.

4 = Spontaneous Violent Riot

Violent action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. To be considered a violent action, the participants in the action must have intent to cause injury/physical harm or property damage. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **cannot** be identified.

5 = General Strike

Largely peaceful action in which workers, unions, or members of a labor organization engage in a total abandonment of workplaces across multiple sectors or industries.

6 = Limited Strike

Largely peaceful action in which workers, unions, or members of a labor organization engage in the abandonment of workplaces in limited sectors or industries.

7 = Hunger Strike

Non-violent action in which participants fast as an act of protest.

8 = Economic boycott

Largely peaceful action in which participants engage in a concerted refusal to buy, use or patronize the goods or services of a company or state enterprise as a means of expressing disapproval or force acceptance of certain conditions.

9 = Political boycott

Largely peaceful action in which participants engage in a concerted refusal to participate in an electoral vote or political deliberation on policy issues as a means of expressing disapproval or force acceptance of certain conditions.

EESCALATE

Did the nature of the event change during its duration?

0 = No escalation

1 = Organized Demonstration

Largely peaceful action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **can** be identified.

2 = Spontaneous Demonstration

Largely peaceful action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **cannot** be identified.

3 = Organized Violent Riot

Violent action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. To be considered a violent action, the participants in the action must have intent to cause injury/physical harm or property damage. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **can** be identified.

4 = Spontaneous Violent Riot

Violent action directed towards members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities. To be considered a violent action, the participants in the action must have intent to cause injury/physical harm or property damage. In this event a clear group (i.e. “dock workers”) or organization **cannot** be identified.

5 = General Strike

Largely peaceful action in which workers, unions, or members of an organization engage in a total abandonment of workplaces across multiple sectors or industries.

6 = Limited Strike

Largely peaceful action in which workers, unions, or members of an organization engage in the abandonment of workplaces in limited sectors or industries.

7 = Hunger Strike

Non-violent action in which participants fast as an act of protest.

8 = Economic boycott

Largely peaceful action in which participants engage in a concerted refusal to buy, use or patronize the goods or services of a company or state enterprise as a means of expressing disapproval or force acceptance of certain conditions.

9 = Political boycott

Largely peaceful action in which participants engage in a concerted refusal to participate in an electoral vote or political deliberation on policy issues as a means of expressing disapproval or force acceptance of certain conditions.

EDESC (text)

Records, in the coder’s words, a basic description of the protest event and related circumstances. For example, a coder may write, “UGTT members strike against Tunisian oil company, lighting offices on fire in the process.”

APPROV

Binary indicator of whether the strike was approved (thereby warranting a code of “1”) or not (code “0”).

ACTOR1 (text)

Records the social, political or identity group (i.e. actor) directly involved in the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “dock workers” code the full description.

ACTOR2 (text)

Records the social, political or identity group (i.e. actor) directly involved in the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “dock workers” code the full description.

ACTOR3 (text)

Records the social, political or identity group (i.e. actor) directly involved in the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “dock workers”, code the full description.

ACTOR4 (text)

Records the social, political or identity group (i.e. actor) directly involved in the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “dock workers”, code the full description.

ACTOR5 (text)

Records the social, political or identity group (i.e. actor) directly involved in the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “dock workers”, code the full description.

TARGET1 (text)

Records the social, political, or identity group targeted by the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “Ministry of Interior”, code the full description.

TARGET2 (text)

Records the social, political, or identity group targeted by the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “Ministry of Interior”, code the full description.

TARGET3 (text)

Records the social, political, or identity group targeted by the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “Ministry of Interior”, code the full description.

TARGET4 (text)

Records the social, political, or identity group targeted by the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “Ministry of Interior”, code the full description.

TARGET5 (text)

Records the social, political, or identity group targeted by the event. When descriptive adjectives are included in the article, for example “Ministry of Interior”, code the full description.

CGOVTARG

Was the central government the target of the event?

Value	Label
0	No
1	Yes
-99	Unknown

RGOVTARG

Was a regional or local government the target of the event?

Value	Label
0	No
1	Yes
-99	Unknown

ISSUE1 (text)

What was the first issue/demand that was mentioned as a source of the tension which precipitated the event? If a list of demands is present in the article, list the top ranked demand in the list.

ISSUE2 (text)

What was the second issue/demand that was mentioned as a source of the tension which precipitated the event? If a list of demands is present in the article, list the top ranked demand in the list. If no second demand is present, leave this field blank.

ISSUE3 (text)

What was the third issue/demand that was mentioned as a source of the tension which precipitated the event? If a list of demands is present in the article, list the top ranked demand in the list. If no third demand is present, leave this field blank.

ISSUE4 (text)

What was the fourth issue/demand that was mentioned as a source of the tension which precipitated the event? If a list of demands is present in the article, list the top ranked demand in the list. If no fourth demand is present, leave this field blank.

ISSUE5 (text)

What was the fifth issue/demand that was mentioned as a source of the tension which precipitated the event? If a list of demands is present in the article, list the top ranked demand in the list. If no fifth demand is present, leave this field blank.

NPART (text)

Records the number of persons participating in the event¹. If multiple estimates are given, use the mean number of participants or the most recent figure. If the exact number is not given use the following codes:

Value	Label
-99	Unknown
-88	Unknown, but probably small (less than 100)
-77	Unknown, but probably large (more than 100)

¹Inferential coding conventions

In describing protest events, journalists often use terms such as “scores”, “hundreds”, “crowds”, etc. instead of definite numbers. In such cases it has been found that three of whatever unit described is the best conservative inference for the real number; e.g. “hundreds” would be coded as “300”, “hundreds of thousands” as “300,000”, and so on. Additionally, for the purposes of this project the term “many” is to be coded as “20” and “crowds” to be coded as “200”. In cases where an estimation is made, signal these inferences by placing a code of “1” in the **NPARTAPPROX** column. Finally,

when journalists write that “about 5,000 demonstrators were protesting”, we code 5001 to indicate that it is a reporter’s estimate. A report that “almost 5,000 protested” would be coded as 4,999.

NPARTAPPROX

Binary indicator of whether coders approximated the number of participants (thereby warranting a code of “1”) or not (code “0”).

REPRESS

Did the government use repression or violence against participants in the event?

Value	Label
0	No
1	Yes
-99	Unknown

NARREST (text)

Records the number of **participants** (state forces should not be counted) arrested in the event. If multiple estimates are given, use the mean number of participants or the most recent figure. If the exact number is not given use the following codes:

Value	Label
-99	Unknown
-88	Unknown, but probably small (less than 10)
-77	Unknown, but probably large (more than 10)

NINJURE (text)

Records the number of **participants** (state forces should not be counted) injured in the event. If multiple estimates are given, use the mean number of participants or the most recent figure. If the exact number is not given use the following codes:

Value	Label
-99	Unknown
-88	Unknown, but probably small (less than 10)
-77	Unknown, but probably large (more than 10)

NKILL (text)

Records the number of **participants** (state forces should not be counted) injured in the event. If multiple estimates are given, use the mean number of participants or the most recent figure. If the exact number is not given use the following codes:

Value	Label
-99	Unknown
-88	Unknown, but probably small (less than 10)
-77	Unknown, but probably large (more than 10)

ELOC1 (text)

Records the name of the locality (region, city, etc.) where the event occurred.

LOCCAT

Categorical identifier for the event locality. Event localities are categorized according to the following scheme:

- 1 = Capital city
- 2 = Other major urban area (population greater than 100,000)
- 3 = Rural (population less than 100,000)
- 4 = Multiple urban areas
- 5 = Multiple rural areas
- 6 = Province/region listed, exact location unknown
- 7 = Nationwide. Effects more than four major cities and/or rural areas
- 99 = location unknown

NSOURCE

Did more than one article give information on the event?

Value	Label
0	No
1	Yes

SOURCE

Records the name of **all** sources used to gather information about the event. If multiple sources have been used, list all sources, separated by a semi-colon.

DATE

Records the date on which the source article used to gather information about the event was written. If multiple source articles have been used, list all dates (in the same order used in the "SOURCE" list above), separated by a semi-colon.

APPENDIX B

Interview Procedure

A substantial portion of the data utilized in this dissertation was collected during 18 months of field research conducted in Tunisia and Morocco on intermittent trips taken from June 2012-February 2015. During these field visits, I carried out semi-structured interviews based on a uniform set of question in either English, French, Spanish or Arabic depending on the preference of the interviewee. Each interview, except in a few exceptional cases, lasted roughly one hour. In some cases, initial interviews were supplemented with secondary interviews or email-correspondence for follow-up questions.

Depending on the preference of the interviewee, some of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. For interviewees who declined being recorded I took extensive notes on the conversation. In quoting the interviews in this study whether recorded or transcribed, I presented, to the best of my ability, the originality of the sentences as they were conveyed by the interviewees through the English translations of their statements.

Interview Coding

Because research on contentious politics and labor organization can be sensitive in some authoritarian contexts, interviewees' names are cited by codes rather than the real names of the interviewees. Each code for an interview consists of two parts. The first part of the code denotes the interviewee's nationality, occupation, and assigned number. The first letter for nationality is either T (Tunisia) or M (Morocco). The second letter is the interviewee's occupation coded in the following way: W for worker or union cadre, A for labor activist, S for scholar, E for employer or manager, B for bureaucrat, and P for politician. The last number in the first part of the code is a two-digit number created as part of my own reference system to keep count of the number of interviewees.

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