An Oasis of Democracy:

Tunisian Democratization and its Western Influences

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Abstract

10 Years on from the Arab Spring, Tunisia is positioned to show how democracy can be successful in the Arab World. Tunisia had significant international influence on this possible success from various actors with their own agendas. This paper examines how international actors influenced the success of democracy in Tunisia by examining historical context and a variety of factors that contribute to successful democracy. The unique case that Tunisia presents highlights how Western actors such as the United States, Germany, and others, have reacted to democratization efforts by the citizens of Tunisia. This paper details each of these international actors and their impact in Tunisia, including financial and diplomatic aid. This study can focus on the international impact in an effort to outline how and where democratization efforts were successful, and where they were not. By studying these factors in Tunisia, patterns for successful democratization can be focused on and applied to the other unique situations in other fledgling democracies, in addition to strategies that have not been as successful.
Frontispiece
Dedication

Dedicated to everyone who helped me become who I am.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my parents, John and Carolyn Millett for their work and care through many years. This would not have been possible without their support.

I would like to thank my Research Advisor Dr. Ariane Liazos and my Thesis Director Dr. Asher Orkaby for their guidance, ideas, feedback, and patience throughout the process of finishing this paper.
# Table of Contents

Frontispiece ................................................................................................................ iv
Dedication ......................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ vi
Chapter I. Introduction .................................................................................................. 1
Chapter II. Background .................................................................................................. 9
Chapter III. Research Methods ..................................................................................... 24
Chapter IV. Impact of the United States ........................................................................ 30
Chapter V. France ......................................................................................................... 40
Chapter VI. Germany ...................................................................................................... 45
Chapter VII. European Union ......................................................................................... 51
Chapter VIII. Turkey ...................................................................................................... 54
Chapter IX. NGOs .......................................................................................................... 57
Chapter X. Research Analysis ...................................................................................... 63
Chapter XI. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 68
Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 71
Chapter I.
Introduction

10 Years since the Arab Spring, Tunisia is the only democracy in the Arab World. The small country on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea in North Africa has become a hotbed of debate concerning the future of the region, as the Arab Spring in 2011 began in Tunisia and quickly spread throughout the rest of the Arab World. With a unique culture and vast history linked to much of Europe and the West, the Arab World has once again become a critical piece of the developing modern world, and its future is not being left up to chance.\(^1\) Tunisia and its successful implementation of democracy has been aided by various outside influences, including the governments of the United States, Germany, and some influential non-governmental organizations. In the passages ahead, we will look at these internal and external factors that contributed to democracy in Tunisia highlighting specifically the role played by foreign think tanks, democracy promotion organizations, and government-sponsored interventions.

The Arab World consists of 22 Arabic speaking countries, ranging across Asia and Africa.\(^2\) While much of the world has progressed into the Post-Soviet era by embracing democratic principles, the Arab World has been frustratingly unsuccessful

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with this form of government taking a strong hold. Many “Western” countries, led primarily by the United States, have a vested interest in the spread of democracy to the region, as peace in the region is beneficial to their own economic interests, along with strategic military importance, religious importance, and the ultimate goal of world peace interwoven with morality. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the overthrow of a generation of authoritarian leaders, and the demands of a new generation of Arab youth, democracy promotion was and still remains an important area of investment. Israel, until recently the Middle East’s only democracy, has long been viewed as the one major democratic ally for the West in the region. Tensions between Israel and surrounding Arab states, however, have not historically promoted the spread of democracy across the region. The recent Abraham Accords have significantly improved relations within the region between Israel and some of their neighbors, however the full impact of these

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6 Powalski, *The Cold War*. 
improvements will need to be studied in much greater detail than can be done here in the context of Tunisia and democracy in the greater MENA region.7

The beginning of the Arab Spring sprung debate among many academics about the future of democracy in the Arab World. Since 2011, Bellin, Boubekeur, Fraihat, Netterstrøm, Ottoway, Schwedler and other political scientists and historians have argued that democracy is not far away from taking a strong hold in the region and that many of the countries undergoing regime changes have been taking real steps towards democracy.8 In contrast, Masoud, Macdonald, and Waggoner have argued that this turmoil is more of the same, with countries that have a long history of failed revolutions and authoritarian governments are just in another part of the cycle in their failed systems.9 Whether this turmoil is a chrysalis to full democracy has varied between states, with several states, like Libya, Syria and Yemen erupting into civil war. Gulf monarchies


have, in turn, exerted financial muscle to quell public protests in an effort to stabilize their regimes. Tunisia remains the outlier in its ability to both avoid an internal civil war and promote democracy.

To put it simply, Tunisia has had a successful transition to democracy, and other Arab states, such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya have not. So why has Tunisia been successful? Why in this desert of democracy has the country on the Northern Coast of Africa been able to maintain democratic principles in the midst of revolution and a deep divide between ultra-conservative Islamists and a significant liberal population? What significant international involvement from the United States and others international actors helped to ensure the revolution would be successful in Tunisia to the point that a real democracy could take hold? How have the democratic promotional efforts in Tunisia been effective, and why have they not been effective elsewhere? What democratic promotion efforts by what countries have been effective, and what have not?

This paper does not seek to dismiss Tunisian agency in its own political development or argue that they were a pawn of a larger game played by Western nations with international agendas. Tunisia has significant domestic factors that contributed to the rise of democracy there. This paper will seek to answer these questions asked in a format that isolates the efforts of external actors in a way that proves their efficacy in Tunisia, and will provide some comparison with other countries in the Arab World that have had similar international involvement with different results, thereby showing what effect their efforts have had in helping the people of Tunisia secure their democracy.

\[^{10}\text{Fraihat, } Unfinished Revolutions.\]
Political scientists have primarily focused on domestic factors leading towards democracy in Tunisia and failed democracy in Egypt and other places. Tunisia’s success has been argued to be attributed to uniquely moderate political groups in power, counter to Egypt’s example of failure having been attributed to a power-void taken advantage of by extremists in power. Egyptian politics were unipolar, centered around Hosni Mubarak’s administration and political party. The dismantling of Mubarak’s political party left the Egyptian government devoid of any unifying political institution. The only place the state could not tread was the mosque and other religious institutions, giving the Muslim Brotherhood a solid base upon which to build a new national political constituency to replace Mubarak.\textsuperscript{11} Tunisia is 98.1\% Sunni, creating a society of like-minded individuals and religious homogeneity critical to harmonious integration of new ideas. This environment has represented a political state that does not have especially polarized groups, all of whom had common issues with the incumbent regime of Ben Ali. The country has also a significant disposition towards secular leadership, where their religious differences could be put aside for the common goals of democracy. These factors have all led to the situation we have, where Tunisia is at a critical point of democratic transition that could prove to be a decisive moment in the history of the country.\textsuperscript{12}

This success of Tunisia has been studied repeatedly by many political scientists, attributing their success to many domestic factors, much of the existing scholarship

\textsuperscript{11} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.

\textsuperscript{12} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}; Schwedler, “Can Islamists Become Moderates?”
leaves out or glosses over international involvement in Tunisia. This paper seeks to fill in the information gaps where international involvement in Tunisia is concerned and measured since just prior to the fall of Ben Ali’s regime.

Tunisia is the first country in the Arab World to accept and work with democratic principles successfully. As such, scholars have argued that this is could be the model way democracy can spread to the rest of the Arab World. With this immense importance that the democracy in Tunisia survives, and the aggressive modern campaigns for democracy in the Arab World by the west, many international actors with vested interests in the region are uncharacteristically quiet in the scholarship on how Tunisia turns out.

Tunisia’s success has been theorized and explained, yet the level of international involvement in that success is unclear. The purpose of this paper is to clarify and organize the international involvement in Tunisia in a way that breaks down each actor’s intent and actions to determine if significant impact on successful democratization has occurred. I hypothesize that the United States and other international players have spent a great deal of time and resources in Tunisia, and this international involvement significantly impacted the success of the fledgling democracy. I expect that the involvement of these international actors was not on a military level, therefore allowed democratic society to thrive in the absence of violence.

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13 Schwedler, “Can Islamists Become Moderates?”

Among the state actors with ties to Tunisia, the most prominent are the United States, Germany, France, Turkey, and the European Union. There is also interest from and ongoing involvement from various NGO’s including the National Democratic Institute and Transitional Governance Project, the International Republican Institute, National Endowment for Democracy, and the Overseas Development Institute. By breaking down each of these international actor’s efforts and successes one by one from before the revolution and after the revolution, I hypothesize that democracy in Tunisia was substantially helped by various international actors with missions to supplement an already ripe environment for democracy. To prove my hypothesis, I intend to compare Tunisia’s international profile from before and after the revolution and pit the variables against what has and has not succeeded in each of these countries. These variables could include domestic factors such as those described by Linz and Stepan, but also the presence and influence of international actor’s funding, aid, and covert operations to instill democratic values in local political parties and citizens. Taking into account the scholarship over the last several decades on the efficacy of democratization movements, Linz and Stepan’s five arenas of democratic development breakdown the arguments into areas that make a detailed analysis of each arena viable.\textsuperscript{15} The five arenas of a modern consolidated democracy are civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, and economic society.\textsuperscript{16} Each of these arenas can be used as a wide net to cast over how international actors react to the budding democracy in Tunisia, and by hitting on all areas

\textsuperscript{15} Linz and Stepan, \textit{Problems of Democratic Transition}.

\textsuperscript{16} Linz and Stepan, \textit{Problems of Democratic Transition}.
of the five arenas, a comprehensive plan ensure the survival of the democracy can be studied and accounted for from those actors.\textsuperscript{17} This paper will define significant impact on democracy’s success in Tunisia based on statistics and subsequent changes in these five arenas. This impact could include increases in numbers of voters and political involvement, monetary contributions on a macroeconomic level, academic publications designed to empower the populace with governmental transparency, economic growth across all segments of the population, stability of government, and successful free and fair elections.

By studying Tunisia’s international relations prior to and since the revolution, the impact of international actors can be measured to show what has worked, and what has not. This realization can begin to unravel a potential plan of action for the United States and other international actors for the spread of democracy into the Arab world. By testing the presence of international involvement and showing the effectiveness of that involvement, the deciding variable can be determined from which programs and methods were important to the continued success of Tunisia’s economy and civil society. Tunisia’s democracy in the Arab world may be unique to Tunisia alone, yet their success will be critical to the crucial mission of spreading democracy to countries that have never before considered such a governmental system. Tunisia’s example of success for these countries could be a harbinger of democratic spread throughout the rest of the Arab World.

\textsuperscript{17} Linz and Stepan, \textit{Problems of Democratic Transition}.  

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Tunisia is a country with a long history of colonization and international alliances. In the late 18th Century, Tunisia was one of the first countries to recognize the sovereignty of the United States, and one of the first to have a formal alliance with them.\textsuperscript{18} France has a long relationship with Tunisia as well, including the colonization of the territory throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries. France’s linkage to the country is represented by the presence of French language in Tunisian schools and economic society, including an estimated 30% to 40% of the population that use the French language on a regular basis in addition to the French influenced Arabic dialect of the country.\textsuperscript{19} Tunisia negotiated its independence from France in 1956 and resulted in a long reign of the Tunisian founding father, Habib Bourguiba.\textsuperscript{20} In 1975 during his 4th five-year term, Bourguiba declared himself President for Life. After 31 years of Bourguiba’s authoritarian rule, Tunisia forcibly moved on from Bourguiba in 1987, and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali rose to the presidency of the country.\textsuperscript{21} Ben Ali rose to prominence in Tunisia amid the last few years of Bourguiba’s regime becoming Prime

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\textsuperscript{19} Caroline Veltcheff, “French in Tunisia: A Living Language or a Dead One?” \textit{Le Français aujourd'hui} 154 (2006): 83-92.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{20} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.
\end{quote}

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Minister in the last month of Bourguiba’s reign as President. Lack of response to the growing economic concerns of the country led to the bloodless coup when Ben Ali declared Bourguiba to be incompetent. Murphy explains the lack of action toward the economic difficulties as “political immobility,” which prevented appropriate responses to problems between 1984 and 1987. What responses Bourguiba did have were to pit existing political groups against one another in order to keep his own power intact, by distracting groups that otherwise would have targeted his own inaction.

What initially began as a hopeful liberalization process based in economic growth, eventually turned into an authoritarian state run by the intelligence-based police force and often violent oppression of the Tunisian people. The economic hopes laid upon Ben Ali’s shoulders were put off in years after the ouster of Bourguiba. Ben Ali stabilized the economy on a macroeconomic level by removing barriers in the existing structure of government. The first few years of his rule, Ben Ali was praised by many in his country and from the west for his reforms, even calling them enviable. In the late 90’s however, his regime began to consolidate its power through corruption and empowering the people close to him that would keep him in power. By the end of 2010, tensions were about to boil over, yet many experts did not see a revolution coming.

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22 Emma C. Murphy, Economic and political change in Tunisia: From Bourguiba to Ben Ali (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 1999), 100.

23 Macdonald and Waggoner, “Dashed Hopes and Extremism in Tunisia.”

24 Murphy, Economic and political change in Tunisia.

As Gobe put it in 2010, “In Ben Ali’s Tunisia, ‘conflict situations and manifestation of discontent have given rise only to limited movements.’”\textsuperscript{26} Ben Ali’s hold on the country seemingly was tightly grasped under his oppressive finger, based in corruption of those close to him, and with support from groups who remembered his economic stability of the 90s and 2000s. However, the economic situation was dire for the young people especially. Unemployment reached as high as 14 percent and was as high as 30 percent in the 15-24 age group.\textsuperscript{27} Notably, in the case of college educated Tunisians, as many as 45 percent could not find work.\textsuperscript{28} On December 17\textsuperscript{th} 2010, a 26 year old street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest to the government’s oppression and socioeconomic ineptitude.\textsuperscript{29} The resulting protests resulted in a crackdown on the people, which only exasperated the protests. The Jasmine Revolution was quick, with just 28 days passing between Bouazizi’s protest and the exile of President Ben Ali. The government of Ben Ali was unable to react in real time fast enough to the protests and responses of the people given their ability to organize via social media, especially Facebook. Ben Ali could not respond other than by resigning his presidency after weeks of widespread protest. With his resignation in mid-January, the people of Tunisia then


\textsuperscript{27} Schraeder and Redissi, “Ben Ali’s Fall.”

\textsuperscript{28} Schraeder and Redissi, “Ben Ali's Fall.”

\textsuperscript{29} Schraeder and Redissi, “Ben Ali's Fall.”
began the process of creating a new system of government that reflected the nation’s democratic aspirations.\(^{30}\)

What followed was the process of creating a government that reflected both democratic values, and the Islamist traditions that many of the people wished to see, led by members of the previous regime, including Prime Minister Béji Caïd Essebsi, and President of the Congress for the Republic Party (CPR) Moncef Marzouki, acting on the will of the people rather than the interests of self-preservation. The battle between the powerful Islamist Party Ennahda, and the varying moderate secularist parties were the key to creating a modern liberalized society.\(^{31}\) The militant Islamist Salafis are at times credited with many protests that have resulted in violence, including the one which left five protesters killed, leading to Prime Minister Ghannouchi’s resignation in favor of Essebsi. This violence has also resulted in the terrorist attack on the US Embassy in Tunis in 2012. Although the Salafis have been violent at times they have not been at the heart of the decision making by the two primary factions in the creation of the government, the CPR and the Ennahda party.\(^{32}\)

Unique to the Arab world and to the events that followed the Arab Spring, the Ennahda party, although very conservative and not lacking ties to the militant Salafis, was critically respective of democratic ideals. In Tunisia, the arenas that have been most successful to the success of their democracy have been bolstered by the emergence of the

\(^{30}\) Fraihat, *Unfinished Revolutions*.

\(^{31}\) Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*.

\(^{32}\) Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*. 
Ennahda movement.\textsuperscript{33} Ennahda’s willingness to accept Democratic principles, and abiding by the rule of law, especially in situations where they were on the losing side on an issue. They represent the civil and political society’s middle ground, they stabilize the economic society, and the state apparatus already in place are allowed to maintain themselves.\textsuperscript{34} They have not used their power to influence beyond the laws set by the government in power, and have allowed the people on the fringes of society to have their voice heard.\textsuperscript{35} The Arab Spring itself has largely been a mixed bag of revolutions and uprisings, with many turning tragically violent and as yet unresolved. Notable cases of ousted authoritarian regimes have taken place in Yemen, Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, with an attempt in Syria as well.\textsuperscript{36} Syria and Yemen have erupted into bloody international conflicts, and Libya has fallen into civil war as well.\textsuperscript{37} Egypt had graduated to a disputed democracy from the authoritarian reign of Hosni Mubarak, yet plunged backward later on into another authoritarian regime.\textsuperscript{38} Initially under the newly elected president and member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Morsi, the Egyptian government looked poised for new democratic tendencies. Morsi however used his power to garner more

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\item \textsuperscript{33} Fraihat, \textit{Unfinished Revolutions}.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Netterstrøm, “After the Arab Spring.”
\item \textsuperscript{35} Fraihat, \textit{Unfinished Revolutions}.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Fraihat, \textit{Unfinished Revolutions}.
\item \textsuperscript{38} S. Levitsky and L.A. Way, \textit{Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War} (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
power through executive action and corruption. The military then orchestrated a coup and violent crackdowns on Morsi supporters, and held new elections.\textsuperscript{39} The new president of Egypt, former General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, has had international and domestic doubts about the legitimacy of his presidency since his election in 2014.\textsuperscript{40} Egypt has a higher international profile based on economic and political power, and thus has a greater level of international involvement. As such its domestic affairs have thus taken a greater share of international meddling.\textsuperscript{41} In Tunisia, however, democracy has taken a strong hold, resulting in a fledgling democracy with promises of a truly free country, as rated by Freedom House, a U.S. funded, independent, non-profit organization that researched and advocates on behalf of democracy, political freedom, and human rights.\textsuperscript{42} Freedom House releases ratings on every country they have data on throughout the world on three indications of democratic ratings: Free, Partly Free, and Not Free.\textsuperscript{43} These determinations are made on scores on political rights, civil liberties, and freedom of the press and internet, yielding an overall score that indicates democracy and freedom. As described by Freedom House, “the combination of the overall score awarded for political

\textsuperscript{39} Fraihat, \textit{Unfinished Revolutions}.

\textsuperscript{40} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.

\textsuperscript{41} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.


\textsuperscript{43} “Freedom House Tunisia.”
rights and the overall score awarded for civil liberties, after being equally weighted, determines the status of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.”

Tunisia had a rating from Freedom House in 2010, just prior to the revolution, of “Not Free,” including low ratings in civil liberties and political rights. After the revolution, Tunisia had transitioned from those ratings to “Partly Free” ratings in 2012, and by 2015, had a rating of “Free,” with strong scores in civil liberties and political rights. Tunisia has since shown the only “Free” in the Middle East and North Africa region, and has done so each year since 2015. These are representative of Tunisia’s changes in the arenas that link to strong democratic showings.

Egypt has had a more difficult road towards freedom, and Freedom House does not pull its punches in its ratings. Prior to their revolution, Egypt had strong “Not Free” ratings year after year. Immediately after their Arab Spring revolution, Egypt scores as “Partly Free” in 2013, similar to Tunisia’s rating in 2012. Yet the year after, Egypt had fallen back down to “Not Free,” and has continued to put up such scores every year since. Libya, Yemen, and Syria, all counties that had similar Arab Spring revolutions at

44 “Freedom House Tunisia.”
45 “Freedom House Tunisia.”
46 “Freedom House Tunisia.”
47 “Freedom House Tunisia.”
48 Linz and Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition.
50 “Freedom House Egypt.”
the time, have continued to put up scores consistent with not free countries. The Tunisia is the outlier, and Egypt had the strongest failed push to freedom. Civil liberties and political rights as rated Freedom house, have outlined these changes, and the authors previously mentioned have delved into greater detail as to what best sets a country up for successful democracy. This research contends that the best way to approach this question is to study Tunisia’s success with freedom and democracy, while looking at international involvement by the United States the European Union, and other international actors as the isolated variable to determine how and why this country has resulted in such successful results.

The literature on what makes a successful democratic transition has been argued for centuries. Consensus on this is difficult to attain, certain trends and factors that are critical to success of democracy have been observed time and again. Since the end of the second World War, scholars have sought to consolidate these arguments. According to Linz and Stepan’s classic work on democratization, this consolidation is in the five key arenas that bolster a government’s chance of being a successful democracy civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, and economic society. Freedom House’s ratings are largely based in these same arenas, without the same organization, as their rating quantify these arenas. Linz and Stepan break down and organize these factors in

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51 “Freedom House Egypt.”


53 Linz and Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition.

54 Linz and Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition.
their own way which makes it easy to read and apply to specific cases of democratization, yet these five areas are argued by many of the classic scholars, historians and political scientists over the last half century in a variety of differing methods essentially coming to a consensus of what is crucial to successful democracy. Robert Dahl, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Dankwor Rostow are among those who argue for the successful long-term chances of a democracy to stay in place regardless of what region the country may lie in.

The consensus difference between Egypt and Tunisia’s fates is a difference seemingly based on the factors described by Linz and Stepan. Egypt had a similar revolution during the Arab Spring, and had similar socio-economic conditions present prior to the revolution as Tunisia. These two scenarios in Tunisia and in Egypt are similar, so why has Egyptian democracy failed while Tunisia’s is succeeding? Ottoway describes the difference in Tunisia and Egypt as a political one, as Tunisia’s divide between the Ennahda and the secularists resulted in cooperation, Egypt’s resulted in conflict. Egypt’s secularists painted the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood as extremists who wished for total theocracy, and the secularists were not amenable to their democratic

55 Linz and Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition.


57 Gelvin, The Arab Uprisings.

58 Ottoway, The Arab World Upended.
This inability to cooperate resulted in a more violent approach from extremist groups to maintain control of a possible theocracy in Egypt. The rise of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Egypt was characterized by preying on the villainized Muslim Brotherhood and led to military control of Egypt. Brown attributes Egypt’s failure to the state’s lack of democratic legitimacy in its leaders, and those with power using that to villainize the electoral process and return to what had been. Turan attributes a lack of action from foreign actors in Egypt, even going so far as to explain that democracy in Egypt was not desirable for western actors including the United States at the time of Morsi’s ouster and the rise of El-Sisi. Egypt’s attempted democracy lacked the support necessary to maintain its democratic system after it had been put into place, and the lack of help and legitimacy led to its ultimate failure.

Tunisia has had the only remotely successful democratic transition so far in the Arab World, thus far, and although this transition has been promising, it is not yet complete. Ottoway’s book describes Tunisia’s post-revolutionary state as a struggle between the Islamists who want a government confining to traditional Islamic values, and the secularists that wish for lesser influence from religion. The Islamist Ennahda and the secularists were both challenged by extremist militant forces such as the Salafis, yet

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59 Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*.

60 Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*.


63 Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*. 
the government has been balanced by the willingness for the secularists and Ennahda to respect the process of democracy and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{64} This key divide between the Ennahda and the secularists has been noted as key for democracy’s success in Tunisia by several sources, including Fraihat, and Schwedler.\textsuperscript{65} Additionally, Boubekeur argues that this new Tunisia is in a state of “bargained competition,” where old regime elites are reintegrating themselves into a post-authoritarian state, where their monopolies are now challenged more than they had been.\textsuperscript{66} Netterstrøm noted this same phenomenon, where theIslamists formerly in power are adaptable to their new more democratic state.\textsuperscript{67} This case of clear political, civil and economic society upheaval, adhering to the rule of law within the new state apparatus is important for the survival of democracy in Tunisia, hitting on all five arenas of Linz and Stepan’s assessment of what five arenas are key for democracy.\textsuperscript{68}

Bellin, Fraihat, Schwedler, Ottoway, Boubekeur and Netterstrøm all focus on domestic factors to the success of Tunisia’s democracy, yet with the importance of Tunisia’s democracy to the western world, these authors do not overtly state the level of international involvement in Tunisia. Their assessment for what makes Tunisia successful is accurate, yet it may not be the whole truth, and I do not think international

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.
\item Fraihat, \textit{Unfinished Revolutions}; Schwedler, “Can Islamists Become Moderates?”
\item Boubekeur, “Islamists Secularists and Old Regime Elites.”
\item Netterstrøm, “After the Arab Spring.”
\item Linz and Stepan, \textit{Problems of Democratic Transition}.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
involvement was not a factor. International actors such as the United States have invested heavily in nascent democracies in the Arab World, and Tunisia would present a unique opportunity for a successful transition. The level of international involvement in Tunisia is important to the way western actors like the United States move forward with their efforts to reform countries in the Arab world into democracies, as many previous democracy promotion efforts have been inconsistent. Over the last 16 years, since the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has invested trillions of dollars into the democratization of the region, and thus far, the venture has not been as successful as had been hoped.69 Political scientists, including Bellin, argue that nation building the way the United States has tried in Iraq and Afghanistan may have worked in the war torn aftermath of Germany and Japan, yet in the Arab world, there are several other factors that are were not present in Germany and Japan in the aftermath of World War II, such as a lack of global economic infrastructure, and few cultural and religious obstacles.70 Other political scientists argue that war ravaged areas like the Arab world may in fact be primed for democratization over the next several decades and centuries if they are allowed room to grow on their own without international involvement of any kind.71 This approach is not realistic, as letting things develop as they are leads to a more hands-off approach from international entities, and in today’s global economy and necessity for

69 Diamond, “Facing Up to the Democratic Recession.”


71 Teorell, Determinants of Democratization.
peace, that cannot be a realistic option, especially given the level of threats to the developed parts of the world that these underdeveloped areas can incubate. The modern world is a global world and ignoring a certain area of it is not a strategy that would benefit international security. Additionally, there is no data to support that by leaving these areas alone, worse conditions for worse styles of government could be allowed to thrive unchecked by the international community. By researching what went right in Tunisia, we can begin to build a new approach where others have been so unsuccessful, and therefore more successfully promote democracy.

This research hypothesizes that the level of international involvement that helped certain leaders of groups maintain themselves even amongst the stress of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s regime may be the primary reason for the success of the Jasmine Revolution. According to Turan, Egypt’s transition may have been indirectly sabotaged by willful abandonment during their revolution by the west, including the United States, as a more desirable oasis for democracy in the Arab World would be Tunisia.  

This suggestion by Turan does not indicate Tunisia as the primary democratic beneficiary of this willful abandonment, yet the lack of attention Egypt allowed for resources to be diverted by other countries foreign aid budgets into Tunisia and therefore having a more profound effect. Tunisia’s successful democracy has been the subject of many political scientist’s works, yet many sources that researched for this paper have not spoken in great detail on the international community’s involvement in Tunisia, save for Van

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72 Turan, “The Role of Global Actors.”

73 Turan, “The Role of Global Actors.”
Hüllen’s mentions of EU involvement. Van Hüllen’s article expresses how the EU has had difficulty in democracy promotion efforts in the country due to Ben Ali’s regime closing off from external influence due to an internal propagandized dialogue that political reform is not necessary.

The relationships that Tunisia has with the United States and France effected the revolution in some seemingly inadvertent ways, as Tunisia even prior to the revolution was a full-fledged NATO member. Following the Wikileaks release of many classified documents in November of 2010, a cable written in 2008 by the U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia from 2007 to 2009, Robert F. Godec mentioned the widespread corruption and oppression of the Tunisian Government. The Tunisian people at this time viewed this document as validation that their government was in as bad a way as it was. The realization that the United States, even given their good working relationship with Ben Ali’s government, was highly critical of the methods used there, allowed the people to understand the nature of their plight. The revolution began shortly thereafter, and the online aspect of the revolution allowed the young people of the country to coordinated

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75 Van Hüllen, “Europeanisation through Cooperation.”

76 Czornik, “The Foreign Policy of the United States Towards Tunisia.”


78 Schraeder and Redissi, “Ben Ali’s Fall.”

79 Czornik, “The Foreign Policy of the United States Towards Tunisia.”
their ideas and organizations. One study showed that in Early 2011, more than 90 percent of the Tunisian people used Facebook or Twitter on any given day.\textsuperscript{80} The emergence of Tunileaks provided an additional source of information, as the country’s shortcomings could be showcased in such an intelligence controlling Mukhabarat state.\textsuperscript{81}

In short, more research is needed on international influences of leaders of the Ennahda party and personnel working within Ben Ali’s regime, as well as possible covert operations conducted by foreign actors in Tunisia. Tunisia’s domestic socio-economic factors that play into Linz and Stepan’s five arenas may have had significant influence from individuals under the influence of foreign actors, leading to a more stable political, economic and civic society, with powerful groups abiding by the rule of law set by the state.

\textsuperscript{80} Schraeder and Redissi, “Ben Ali’s Fall.”

\textsuperscript{81} Schraeder and Redissi, “Ben Ali’s Fall.”
Chapter III.

Research Methods

This research will focus on the international involvement that impacted the revolutionary movement domestically in Tunisia. By answering the questions of what programs were successful with which foreign actors with their own certain goals in Tunisia, the motivations these actors can be assessed and measured. Each foreign actor in Tunisia has their own agenda to conform to, and these actors may not always be acting with multilateral means. Actors at times have acted alone in their own self-interest to influence the outcome in Tunisia. These actions have been at times at odds with one another and become a microcosm of relations between nations with conflicting interests. Many western countries and organizations have an interest in Tunisia due to its precedent setting revolution’s experiment in viability of democracy in an increasingly authoritarian Arab world.\(^{82}\) Non-western actors have their own agenda that thwarts the spread of democracy and the increase of viable authoritarian regimes.\(^{83}\)

With such massive international impact of what happens in Tunisia, researching these motivations and goals of possibly nefarious actors become necessary to explain the threats and concerns of those in conflict with the democracy promotion efforts of the west. How much influence does the ongoing Arab Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran have on the bearings of the region? What sorts of influences do the allies of those

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\(^{82}\) Judy Bachrach, “WikiHistory: Did the Leaks Inspire the Arab Spring?” *World Affairs* 174, no. 2 (2011): 35-44.

\(^{83}\) Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*. 

24
countries involved in the Arab cold war have on their democratic promotion efforts or their efforts to thwart them? Tunisia’s international profile has risen significantly since their revolution and breaking down those questions promises to be an excellent way of further breaking down the specifics of how things went so right for democracy.

By researching each key actor with major ties to Tunisia in the years prior to the revolution and comparing those actors’ actions with those in the years after the revolution, a roster of countries and actors with ties can be built and analyzed. This will range from already significant involvement to nearly none at all. Each of these countries has a variety of reasons to be in Tunisia for their own selfish reasons, but many of the reasons have basis in the promotion of democracy and freedom throughout the world, especially into the traditionally vulnerable Arab world. By methodically breaking down each of these actor’s involvement, the picture will become clear as to what actors had significant involvement in Tunisia, and which actors had withering involvement. Each of these countries will need to have an additional breakdown of their own motivations, as any research dedicated towards the international profile of Tunisia would be incomplete without a study of the motivations involved.

Tunisia had a successful transition to democracy on its own merits, a massive political movement that spanned all classes, religions, and ethnic groups.84 These factors all worked together in conjunction to produce the democracy Tunisia is today. The level of international involvement was predicated on the positive feedback loop of success and resolve to become a democracy. If a western country like the United States feels that a

84 Tasnim Abderrahim et al., *Tunisia's International Relations Since the 'Arab Spring,'* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2018).
country in transition will become a democracy, the people of the United States have historically felt the need to intervene and help that fledgling democracy along. By allowing certain factors in Tunisia on the surface appear that the democratic system is successful, those countries with interest in that democracy will be more forthright in their aid to that country to ensure democratic success. As Tunisia continued throughout its revolutionary process, the people of western actors begun to believe a stable democratic government could take place, leading to more international involvement on various levels. Economic ties were brought into the country, military aid and advisors were brought in to ensure as peaceful transition as possible. Non-governmental organizations begun missions to feed, cloth, house and nurse the people back to an acceptable level. All of these factors led to a significantly better quality of life, and therefore a safe system of government with the people confident in the system of government that they chose.

The bulk of this paper will focus on the specific aid packages, programs, and economic ties a variety of actors had in Tunisia in the years leading up to and year after the revolution. The largest actors include the United States, France, Germany, the European Union, and Turkey, along with a variety of other smaller non-governmental actors with donor intent. Among those with vested interests in Tunisia included the

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85 Abderrahim et al., *Tunisia's International Relations Since the 'Arab Spring.'*

86 Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended.*

87 Abderrahim et al., *Tunisia's International Relations Since the 'Arab Spring.'*

88 Abderrahim et al., *Tunisia's International Relations Since the 'Arab Spring.'*

89 Salma Besbes and Tasnim Abderrahim, “The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation,” in *Tunisia's International Relations*
Arab Maghreb Union and Egypt, however their contributions towards Tunisian
democratic success or failure are more along the lines of normalized relations rather than
democratic promotion. After running through each of these country’s involvements, we
can begin to look into the non-governmental organization’s efforts in Tunisia. These will
include the U.S. based National Democratic Institute, Transitional Governance Project,
the International Republican Institute, National Endowment for Democracy, and the
Overseas Development Institute. Additionally, the International Federation of Red

90 Laura-Theresa Krueger and Mohamed Nidhal Zaier, “The Arab Maghreb
Union: A New Quality of Foreign Policy Cooperation,” in *Tunisia's
International Relations Since the 'Arab Spring'*, by Tasnim Abderrahim, Laura-Theresa

91 NDI, “Tunisia Overview,” accessed January 16, 2021,
https://www.ndi.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/tunisia; TGP, “TUNISIAN POST-
eLECTION SURVEY (TPES),” accessed January 16, 2021,
http://transitionalgovernanceproject.org/tunisia/; IRI, “IRI International Republican
poll-shows-bump-optimism-continued-distrust-government; NED, “National Endowment
Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Switzerland, the AFD of France and the DAAD of Germany have had significant impact in the country. These organizations had a profound effect on the nature of democracy in Tunisia, and in other countries. By breaking down many of their projects, the argument can be made that they had a significant effect on the population of Tunisia and could have had a major impact on its transition into democracy and their sustenance of it.

By taking a detailed look at each of these actor’s and their influences on the people of Tunisia, we can begin to unravel what successes meant more to the country’s fledging democratic system, and possibly which of these programs and efforts could possibly work in other countries with similar systems. Many of these countries, such as the United States and France, have an imperfect track record or influencing democracy in foreign countries such as Tunisia. They have had plenty of misfortune in attempts to help democracy grow in other countries, and the progress in Tunisia is indicative of their larger goals of a peaceful world and the spread of democracy.

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The following sections will begin by looking at each of these specific countries, including the United States, Germany, France and Turkey, and their specific contributions, a narrative of what historical democratic indicators can be constructed by consolidating the information and applying it to a unified effort for democracy promotion in Tunisia. Each of these countries will have their own gains and benefits, yet by showing that these efforts in confluence with each other act as the necessary outward part of what Dahl, Linz, Stepan, and others have illustrated as the keys to successful democracy and democratic transition. This section will appear after all of the countries and actors involved in the transition process have been extensively looked at, and appropriately considered for specific democratic consolidation and success.

This research hopes to form a consolidated, methodical approach to the variety of aid and assistance in Tunisia that contributed to the success of its democracy. There should be significant additional research into each of the factors discussed here in the hope that the trends that worked in Tunisia can be applied towards other fledgling democracies with similar socio-economic status. Tunisia’s unique situation does not mean it cannot be projected into other nations’ democratization efforts. What can be learned in such a unique situation is how to behave in the event of a rise domestic calls for democratic solutions. The overly aggressive nature of nation building from a western perspective can no longer be the norm. Finesse must lead the charge towards helping nations evolve in

Chapter IV.

Impact of the United States

The largest influence on the world’s democracies has been the United States. It is no accident that the largest influencer of action from an international level on Tunisia’s revolution towards democracy is also the United States. The United States’ interest in Tunisia is a logical one that points toward several key traits of American foreign policy and international interest. Tunisia represents one of the best chance the United States has had in building a major ally in a region devoid of pro-American sentiment. American involvement in Tunisia can be stretched backward all the way to the American Revolution. Tunisia was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the United States and was one of the first to have normalized relations.

The United States’ international relations have traditionally been defined by three focuses. Exceptionalism, morality, and reluctance. These three personality traits of American diplomacy have taken different forms over the years of American dominance on the international stage. After World War II, it has been argued that the United States was forced into its role as a superpower against the forces of communism. The Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union greatly influenced American desire for democracy

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throughout the world. During this time period, American foreign policy was dominated by exceptionalism and morality, and their reluctance fell to the waste side over time.\textsuperscript{98} Since the fall of their great adversary, democracy promotion has been a key part of contemporary American foreign policy, and although the dialogue towards isolationism has become more prevalent once again in American life, American foreign policy has become far too critical throughout the world to ever return to historical reluctance.\textsuperscript{99}  

Since the early 90s, many countries under the American sphere of influence have transitioned into a democracy successfully, and several others have not been successful. Notably, the recent attempts to manufacture democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan have been costly, ineffective, and as a whole, counterproductive to their end goal of democratizing the region and rendering support for terrorist organizations moot.\textsuperscript{100} The United States’ interest in the region goes far beyond democratic goals as well, as the oil production of several countries, including Iraq, region has been critical to the stability of the American economy, and the interest in creating a stable region from which to ship the critical fuel from has become a massive key to understanding American international goals. Through years of less than effective plans and inefficient gains in the democratic promotion efforts in the Arab world, the United States has a vested interest in the stability of a fledgling democracy.\textsuperscript{101}  

\textsuperscript{98}  Powalski, \textit{The Cold War}.  

\textsuperscript{99}  Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.  

\textsuperscript{100}  Bellin, \textit{The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Perspective}.  

\textsuperscript{101}  Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.  

31
Enter Tunisia and their successful democratic transition in 2011 during the Arab Spring. President Barack Obama recognizes the importance of Tunisia’s example for the rest of the Arab world and expresses significant support to the democratically inclined people of Tunisia. Thus, American interests in Tunisia transition from under the radar democratic promotion, to widely public democratic stability and longevity.\textsuperscript{102}

Tunisia was not considered an important economic partner for the United States. Although a diversified economy with a variety of exports along the northern coast of Africa into the Mediterranean sea to the rest of the world, the size of the market did not interest American businesses to the extent that they were spending time and resources to improve the market. American businesses could achieve those same financial goals in less risky and more profitable areas of the world. When the interests were high risk, the rewards would have had to be equally high reward. The United States’ foreign policy towards Tunisia was not critical to their economic interests, and therefore often fell by the waist side.\textsuperscript{103}

During the Gulf war, Tunisia’s intent to stay neutral and not anger other Arab nations in favor of Israel resulted in the US cutting its aid by 75%. During the rest of the 90s under Ben Ali, Tunisia was considered by the US a potential long-term problem state, as the economic and social situation was not considered to be sustainable.\textsuperscript{104} The United

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\textsuperscript{102} Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Events in Tunisia," US State Department, January 14, 2011.
\textsuperscript{103} Besbes and Abderrahim, The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation.
\textsuperscript{104} Besbes and Abderrahim, The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation.
\end{flushright}
States continued to monitor Tunisia, and focused on the stability of the region as a whole rather than any individual risk state. The United States put itself in position to hedge an effective relationship with Tunisia regardless of its long-term governmental prospects through a cooperative program with NATO called Eizenstat.\textsuperscript{105} Launched by the US Deputy Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and Agriculture in 1998, the program allowed long term economic cooperation with Maghreb nations including Tunisia.\textsuperscript{106} The program allowed for increased regional integration on the political level and allowed for increased commercial and financial dialogues.

After 9/11, United States foreign policy shifted once again towards more security-based interest. Stability in the Middle East became an important selling point to the American public, and although growing in authoritarian nature, Tunisia instituted many anti-terrorist policies that appeased the interests of the United States. Questions against Tunisia’s democratic and human right violations became secondary to the global war on terror. During this time, US financial support to the government of Tunisia took the forefront ahead of funding non-governmental organizations focused on human rights and democratic development.\textsuperscript{107}


\textsuperscript{107} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}. 
Leading up to the years prior to the Arab Spring, the United States’ relationship with the Tunisia was similarly complicated as many of their other middle eastern ties. Although Tunisia was not a democracy, the United States had an official position highlighted through several presidential administrations towards stability in the region. Ben Ali’s ties to the west allowed him to be seen as a stable albeit imperfect ally a region devoid of options. Tunisia’s attitudes towards democracy and human rights took a backseat to any military and security concerns the United States had in the region.\footnote{Besbes and Abderrahim, The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation, 194.}

In 2009 describing a trip to Tunisia in 2008, then US Ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Godec sent a wire back to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, detailing the failures of the Ben Ali government to the people of Tunisia. This wire was a classified document meant to shape the internal foreign policy decisions the new Obama administration towards Tunisia. The wire detailed a lavish lifestyle enjoyed by the ruling regime, with a disregard for the people of their own country.\footnote{Godec, Tunisian Corruption and President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.} This wire was leaked in late 2010 among the significant trove of classified documents obtained by the website, Wikileaks. The release of this classified information had put to the public many different government secrets and private conversations of high-ranking officials. Wikileaks and its founder Julian Assange have been the subject of a decades long international battle over the political ramifications of these leaks. As many of the documents were leaked
illegally across various borders, the impact of them has yet to be fully understood and is surly in need of significant research in its own right.\textsuperscript{110}

In Tunisia in 2010, the population of the country had among the highest rate of Facebook users of any nation in the world. Ben Ali’s regime was not capable to quelling the information being spread within his own country due to this massive number of Tunisian users.\textsuperscript{111} When Wikileaks leaked the Godec wire describing the corruption and mismanagement in Tunisia, the Tunisia people responded on social media with their own trove of classified information called TuniLeaks. This brought to the table all of the misinformation cast by the incumbent regime and the details of the various problems the other nations of the world had with how the Tunisian government dealt with its own people.\textsuperscript{112}

The Godec wire was a catalytic moment in the revolutionary process of Tunisia. Bringing to light the information of a failed regime galvanized the populace of Tunisia against the Ben Ali government. What followed was the spread of information that came to a head after the suicide of Mohammed Bouazizi, leading to the month-long united effort to oust the Ben Ali government and replace it with a new one.\textsuperscript{113}

Everything changed for the United States upon the beginnings of revolution in Tunisia. Before the month-long revolution was complete, President Barack Obama

\textsuperscript{110} Bachrach, \textit{WikiHistory: Did the Leaks Inspire the Arab Spring}.

\textsuperscript{111} Kalai and Skhiri, \textit{The Polity of Tunisia's External Relations Before and After 2011}.

\textsuperscript{112} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.

\textsuperscript{113} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.
expressed interest in working with Tunisia in their people’s quest for a free and fair
government, and even included these interests in the State of the Union address at the
beginning of 2011. These interests were vocally reiterated by Secretary of State Hillary
Clinton in additional declarations.\textsuperscript{114}

The coming months were a trying time for Tunisia, yet their support from the
United States came in various forms in an attempt to consolidate democracy and security.
In the five years prior to 2011, United States development assistance in Tunisia focused
mainly on military and police aid approximating between $10 and $25 million dollars
each year, presumably in an effort to maintain the security of the region amidst the global
war on terror. Between 2011 and 2015, that assistance grew to range into an average of
approximately $60 million per year, including a jump into $100 million in 2015 alone.\textsuperscript{115}

The United States Official Development Assistance budget jumped from less than $1
million dollars annually in Tunisia prior to 2011, into $120 million in 2012 alone,
focusing on various new programs dedicated towards education, security, medical, and
food-based assistance.\textsuperscript{116}

In 2014, USAID reopened its office in Tunisia in 2014 after having been closed
since 1993 due to the Ben Ali regime’s failure to meet US standards on human rights,
freedom, and other factors. The reopening signaled a move towards the promising

\textsuperscript{114} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}; Obama, \textit{Statement by the President on Events in Tunisia}.

\textsuperscript{115} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.

\textsuperscript{116} USAID, \textit{U.S. Foreign Aid by Country: Tunisia}. 
rhetoric laid out by the Obama Administration in the wake of the revolution and in the years after. USAID also increased their spending on projects in Tunisia, totaling more than $300 million in investments in projects as of 2016.117

In supporting the political transition process, the United States was active in Tunisia through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and had been present since before the revolution. MEPI programming prior to 2011 was minimal however, and did not represent a significant amount of change.118 The United States also began sending emissaries and representatives, including Ambassador William Taylor to Tunisia to show the people that the commitment of the United States was more than just rhetorical. In the transition period for Tunisia, 25 official state visits were recorded by the US State Department, displaying the special attention the Obama Administration was giving to the stability of democracy in Tunisia.119

The United States focused on the economic stability of Tunisia through a multitude of programs dedicated to building up the stability of the country. The four-pronged approach focused on economic management, modernization, development of trade, and the overall stability of the economy. In 2012, the G8 countries and several international organizations undertook a joint effort to help bring about a stable economy in Tunisia. The hope for this partnership was to underline the possibilities for private


sector involvement in Tunisia and bring about more linkages to the rest of the western world through economic partnership.\textsuperscript{120}

During the Obama Administration, further efforts to ensure the security of Tunisia were taken to ensure these democratic consolidation efforts were not in vain. The visits of the US State Department envoys during this time focused on the wish to fight Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb. These concerns were put to the forefront after a terrorist attack on the US embassy in the capital city of Tunis on September 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2012. Compounded by the growth of terrorism in the region, including the attack on the US embassy in Benghazi, Libya, the US security concerns were not being alleviated by the Tunisian cooperation with their security efforts.\textsuperscript{121} The failings of the Tunisian government to protect the US embassy and to quell the growing terror threat represented a necessity for the US to intensify its security mission in Tunisia, lest the democratic transition in the country could fail altogether.\textsuperscript{122}

This security enhancement operation in Tunisia included bolstering the number of vehicles and ships in the region. A total of 14 ships were given to the marine support program and assisted in the management of training the Tunisian army in any potential intelligence operations.\textsuperscript{123} This deepened military partnership was critical to the common

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{120} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.
  
  \item \textbf{121} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}; Fraihat, \textit{Unfinished Revolutions}.
  
  \item \textbf{122} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.
  
  \item \textbf{123} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.
\end{itemize}
threat the Tunisian government and US forces faced. The necessity of this partnership for the mutually beneficial outcomes strengthened the relationship between US and Tunisia, and exacerbated the need for a stable government.

The change between the security focused Bush Administration to the Obama Administrations goals of building up such areas of the world played enough of a factor to adhere to the domestic goals of Tunisia. Ambassador Godec’s wire was critical to the validation of the Tunisia people’s movement and showed just how the appeasement of Ben Ali’s regime towards the Bush Administration’s security concerns were superficial attempts to dispel support for such a movement. The United States efforts in Tunisia represent the most involved unilateral involvement of any individual country involved in Tunisia. The country’s democratic success could be said to be contingent on the effort the United States has put into the nation and remains a critical lifeblood for successful democracy in the region.

\[124\] Besbes and Abderrahim, *The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation*. 
Chapter V.

France

France has long had a relationship with Tunisia amplified by proximity, colonialism, and a common language among all segments of the Tunisian people. France’s influence in Northern Africa has long been an important factor in the stability of the region. France is the most important international economic partner for Tunisia, including a significant commercial industry and tourism.  

Even with Tunisia’s relationship with France having stagnated in the years since the revolution, the country remains one of the strongest links to the western world that the Tunisian people have. As such, their relationship has changed and become more focused on economic partnership and democratic promotion. France’s diplomatic rhetoric has been inconsistent with its actions, yet Tunisia’s success still remains an important goal for the French government.

During Ben Ali’s regime, France maintained close relations with Tunisia. With various cultural and economic ties between the countries, and residual effects of French decolonization, the French language remains important to the well-educated within Tunisia. Prior to the Arab Spring, Ben Ali sought to appease French security concerns in the region by maintaining superficial French interests, specifically by “banning political Islam, and oppressing its followers,” and by managing the levels of immigration from

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125 Kalai and Skhiri, *The Polity of Tunisia’s External Relations Before and After 2011*.

126 Krueger, *France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated*?
Tunisia to France.\textsuperscript{127} France maintains a significant diaspora for Tunisian people as well, and Ben Ali’s political opponents even sought refuge in French territories.\textsuperscript{128}

Leading up to the revolution, French policy towards Tunisia was a double-edged sword of promising rhetoric and underwhelming actual linkages. France treated Tunisia as a reluctant business partner with necessity of working together in order to maintain security and economic stability. Leading up to the revolution, French President Sarkozy was repeatedly chided as not living up to the promising rhetoric. France avoided wherever possible the ties to the authoritarian regime while attempting to maintain an outward appearance of friendship and cooperation.\textsuperscript{129}

The revolution came as a surprise for the French government, and although the close proximity and clear linkages existed superficially, they seemed to not provide the French with appropriate forewarning of the events of the Arab spring. Initially, the French government backed Ben Ali’s incumbent regime against the protesters and revolutionaries, including then Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie offering police assistance and knowhow to deal with the current “security situation.” The initial hesitation to the events in Tunisia was followed up by a weak message of support for the Tunisian people about a week after Ben Ali had fled the country. French President Sarkozy attempted to explain his paralysis in a press conference ten days after the ouster:

\textsuperscript{127} Krueger, \textit{France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated}? 105.
\textsuperscript{128} Krueger, \textit{France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated}?
\textsuperscript{129} Krueger, \textit{France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated}?
“The colonial power … is always illegitimate to express a judgement on an interior affair of a former colony.”

The statement was met with harsh criticism, damaging the French legitimacy among human rights activists and international allies. Several of these critics accused French foreign policy of being based on private interests and lacking a long-term vision. The failures of President Sarkozy and Foreign Minister Alliot-Marie represented a changing of the guard in Franco-Tunisian relations, and a new French strategy was employed to ensure the success of democracy in Tunisia.

The failure of French relations with Tunisia prior to the revolution represented a failure to ingratiate their relations with the Tunisian civil society. Their relationship with Tunisia was with its government, and it did not give enough to the actual people of the country. Sarkozy sought to change this in the aftermath of the revolution, focusing instead on a new plan that involved changing the ambassador, travel diplomacy and new financial commitments to stabilize the economy of Tunisia. This began with a change in the overall rhetoric towards Tunisia, using various key words to amplify the newfound respect and friendship.

France changed its rhetoric on security concerns and changed its stance from being a teacher into being a friend. New Foreign Minister announced an economic plan that allocated a loan of 350 Million euros through the Agence Francaise de

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130 Krueger, *France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?*


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Developpement (AFD) and invited the Tunisian president to participate in the G8 summit later in 2011. The newfound partnership included frequent trips to each other’s nations to tour and build relationships between state officials new to their positions. Yet many of these superficial measures were not to be followed up with, and a further change to the French leadership at its highest level would prove to be necessary to improve Franco-Tunisian relations.

In 2012, newly elected French President Francois Hollande changed the tone of Tunisian relations. In several visits to Tunisia in the first two years of his presidency, Hollande emphasized the compatibility of Islam and Democracy, hoping to further bolster the confidence in the system of government now chosen by the people of Tunisia. Under Hollande, more than 2 billion Euros were promised for investments in Tunisia, including 345 million in loans for infrastructure development. This money being dedicated towards rural development, employment, and forgiving loans and debts. By 2015, approximately 25% of all allocated funds from the AFD was being put towards Tunisia.

These economic promises sound excellent, yet the slow nature of their commitment has yet to be fulfilled, and Tunisia has still not received all the benefits of these promised programs. French international involvement in Tunisia represents an important connection to the western world, yet much of the commitment has not been

133 Krueger, *France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?*

134 Krueger, *France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?*

135 Krueger, *France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?*
met, and fails to live up to the promising rhetoric of the time. The increased intensity of
dialogue between the nations is encouraging for the future of Franco-Tunisian relations,
yet still remains open ended with actual commitments. This change has really not
represented a significant change whatsoever, and French stagnation in the face of
political upheaval remains the norm from prior to the revolution. The Tunisian
people’s history with France allows them to take this into account when looking for
democratic examples to model themselves after and they remain focused on the success
of their democracy. This shows the resilience of the Tunisian system but emphasizes the
need for stronger, better allies in the fight for democracy.

136 Krueger, France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?
In the general absence of significant French support, Germany has become one of the most important friends to Tunisia since the revolution. Since 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany has become one of the finest examples of transitions into a full-fledged democracy. That dates back to the time when they were perhaps the greatest threat to it in history. For such a turnaround to happen so quickly and effectively, Germany can be the greatest bastion of hope for the people who strive for democracy anywhere. As they became more involved in international affairs since their reunification, Germany has also been growing in importance among international partners in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. As one of the first countries to formally recognize the revolution and transition governments in Tunisia, Germany has been pushed into a critical leadership position in the international community regarding the levels of international aid and support for democracy in the country.

Prior to the revolution, the relationship between Tunisia and Germany was that of indifference and minimal involvement. Involved with the European Union’s Mediterranean policies, Germany took a backseat with specific trade deals and partnerships with Tunisia to the traditional and formerly colonial power of France in the Maghreb region. In more ways than one, the failures of French action to back up their

137 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*

138 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*
rhetoric opened the door for a new primary European partner. Meanwhile, the revolution and civil unrest in the Maghreb region opened Germany up to the importance of Northern Africa to their own domestic security and economic interests.

Just weeks after the first free elections in Tunisia following the revolution, Germany had extended an offer of “Transformation Partnership,” quickly accepted and built upon by both nations. Since 2011, German projects involving economic cooperation, civil society, establishing a strong state, and strong education have been numbered into the hundreds. There have been large amounts of unifying rhetoric from leaders of both countries acted upon and backed up by hundreds of programs and numerous travel diplomacy trips. Germany cancelled all debt incurred by Tunisia from prior to the revolution in order to alleviate the financial burden of the regime change. These initial steps taken by Germany allowed for the foundation of what some political scientists call a “friendship spiral,” where the two countries created a positive feedback loop of mutual trust and cooperation. This spiral became a critical link to the emergence of Germany as a world power seemingly poised to replace the democratic hegemon dominated previously by the United States in the late 20th century into the 21st century.

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139 Krueger, *France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?*

140 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*

141 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*

142 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*

143 Powalski, *The Cold War.*
democracy to be shown outside of an American model fraught with historical inadequacies and hypocrisy in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{144}

Much of the friendship between the two countries can be traced to similar challenges with identity prior to their regime change. The common authoritarian past allowed Germany to treat Tunisia with more empathy than other western nations, such as the France or the United States could possibly have done. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier delivered this attitude in his inauguration speech in 2014, “We know from our own history that the democratic transition of a state, of a society, takes time and requires patience, endurance, and tolerance.”\textsuperscript{145} Further support from German politicians included Tunisian self-image rhetoric, emphasizing the role Tunisia now played as a model for other would-be democratic transitions in that region of the world.

Tunisia’s people have acknowledged the helpful nature of German actions and rhetoric. During a visit to Germany in 2013, President Moncef Marzouki likened several challenges to Tunisia’s success to Germany’s experience. This included a comparison between the reunification of East and West Germany, to the economic strife between the wealthy coastal cities and rural outskirts of the country. Marzouki was quoted by Tunisian press on this trip after his meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, specifically Germany’s total support of the Tunisian transformation and the qualitative shift in the German-Tunisian relations since the revolution.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}.

\textsuperscript{145} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making}? 133.

\textsuperscript{146} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making}? 47
Germany’s rhetoric differed from that of France in varying ways that helps strengthen their relations. When Paris sent warnings to the Ennahda party in the aftermath of the revolution, Germany reinforced the idea that an Islamic-democratic party was valid, likening conservative-Islamist parties to the conservative-Christian parties of Europe and the United States.147 This rhetorical belief was exacerbated by Germany’s willingness to continue funding major aid programs despite the political differences between the German political powers and the ruling Tunisian Ennahda party, showing that even though there were significant ideological differences, the varying sides could work together in the interest of both as long as democratic principles are both honored and enforced.148

The promising rhetoric was backed up by significant action. In the first three years after the revolution, over 250 million euros of aid from Germany was applied in Tunisia. When Germany cancelled Tunisia’s debts, and additional 60 million euros, the new government of applied the newfound resources to develop programs in the rural and less developed cities in the country. German political foundations funded by the German Foreign Ministry including the Goethe Institute and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) have additionally set up significant programs in Tunisia often through a variety of third parties with projects and goals of their own that line up with German governmental interest. Additional programs funded by the Ministry for Cooperation and Development were allowed to proceed in Tunisia. Originally these programs were

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147 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*

148 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*
funded for the entire North Africa region, intended to help develop democracy in Libya and Egypt as well, but with those nations falling back towards authoritarianism and civil war, the bulk of the funding has gone to Tunisia.\textsuperscript{149}

These promises to back Tunisia came to a test in 2012 after the political assassinations of two leftist politicians in Tunisia. Protests broke out in early 2013 against the conservative rhetoric and actions of the Ennahda party and their distant ideologic yet militant cousins the Salafists. German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, whose efforts were critical to the aid programs sponsored by Germany in Tunisia, took the opportunity to fly to Tunis and reassure the population that the government was still headed in the right direction.\textsuperscript{150} Westerwelle praised the new Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh, seen by many as responsible, and reassured the public that the democratic process takes time, and no one can deliver on their promises immediately after coming into power. President Marzouki also advocated for continued support, and the Ennahda party used Germany’s support as an example that they are still doing the right thing despite the religious differences.\textsuperscript{151} When the protests and calls for change continued to escalate, Westerwelle played the role of mediator to the domestic political strife and was recognized along with German ambassador Ploetner as critical to keeping the crisis from getting out of hand. The Tunisian press noted the peaceful resolution to the crisis highlighted by the German example and help.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{149} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?}

\textsuperscript{150} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?}

\textsuperscript{151} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?}

\textsuperscript{152} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?}
The German help so early on in the democratic transition could be characterized as essential to the survival of Tunisian democracy, but it is important to note that at no time were the German influencers anything but mediators and friends. Tunisian people in Tunisian government positions, met with opposition of other Tunisian parties to discuss resolutions of Tunisian problems by Tunisian means. German influence on the peace can be measured in the example they set for Tunisia, rather than simply going in and fixing their problems for them in hope that the stability will hold, only to have those fixes come apart at the seams. The importance of such a friend on the international level where none had existed in the position prior was critical to the foundations of democracy in a time where the traditional examples the people had looked to were lacking in their responses. France had yet to come through on its aid promises, and the United States did not have a close enough ideological or historical common ground to work upon. That is not to say the United States did not succeed in its interests in Tunisia nor to say that they were not important. The Tunisian people simply did not relate on a fundamental level that would allow them to look at the United States as something other than a hegemonic influence. Germany was viewed by the Tunisian people more as an ‘older sibling’ who had been through similar circumstance and could teach the ‘younger sibling’ how they got through their own situation. The commonalities shared by the Tunisian and German people allowed for the relationship to grow and flourish amidst a backdrop of political strife and potentially derailing conflicts.
Chapter VII.

European Union

The European Union as a whole is mainly an economic arrangement for the betterment and stability of Europe and their metaphoric neighborhood. France and Germany as individual states have been detailed in their contributions, the contributions of the European Union must be primarily viewed as separate from those countries. Much of the contribution towards democracy in Tunisia comes from rhetoric aimed at increasing security for the economic programs aimed at democracy promotion and stability. Krueger, Ratka and Ouji argue that the scholarly assessment of the European response at the beginning of the transition in Tunisia was “respectable,” but not adequate.\textsuperscript{153} The rhetoric from EU leaders and nations has been described as too dependent on tools and framework already established in other countries and their attempts to democratize, and not enough of a response tailor made for Tunisia’s benefit and successful transition.

Prior to the revolution, the EU had a close relationship with Northern Africa in primarily economic and financial situations, including the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements involving 27 separate countries. Additionally, criticism of Ben Ali’s regime was rare in the EU, regardless of their clear ideological differences, as such

\textsuperscript{153} Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, \textit{Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?}
rhetoric in a seemingly stable authoritarian regime would be counterproductive to the security situation in Northern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea.\textsuperscript{154}

During the revolution, the EU response was slow, but not misaligned with the people’s intentions of becoming a full-fledged and stable democracy. The EU expressed interest in helping Tunisia become the democracy it wanted to be. In its efforts, to support its neighbor Tunisia, the EU defined what it called five key parts that make up “deep democracy criteria” aimed at promoting the efforts to achieve them:

1. Free and Fair Elections
2. Freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media
3. The rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial
4. Fighting against corruption
5. Security and law enforcement sector reform (including the police) and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces\textsuperscript{155}

Amidst this rhetoric for a stable partnership with Tunisia, the EU allocated aid and grants in the amount 445 million euros dispersed through the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) to the Support for Partnership, Reforms, and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) program. The SPRING program funded by the EU was built to allocate the funds accordingly among country that have shown

\textsuperscript{154} Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, \textit{Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?}

\textsuperscript{155} Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, \textit{Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?} 150.
promise in the five key areas of deep democracy criteria. These programs evolved after 2014, and the funding in the amount of 1.4 billion euros was allocated for the program through the year 2020. Additionally, the stability of the Tunisian economy was fortified through trade deals including the signing of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), that favored partner countries meeting the five established criteria.  

These agreements and criteria met were important to the overall economic health of Tunisia, yet where Tunisia itself was concerned and among its citizens, these measures were not the sort of specific support tailored to their interests and concerns that would effectively promote democratic interests at home. These measures put into place by the EU were an important macroeconomic stabilization effect that may have influenced some to the intentions of Europe yet left of the focused attention countries like Germany was providing for them. Albeit with necessary criticism and skepticism of motive, in the eyes of Tunisian civil society activists, Europe has lived up to its promises in Tunisia. Several interviewed activists of the country have described Europe as a ‘very visible actor’ that has substantially influenced policy on the right levels.

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156 Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, *Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?*

157 Ratka and Stahl, *Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?*

158 Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, *Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?*
Chapter VIII.

Turkey

Outside of the Maghreb Union and the rest of peer countries, a key influence among Tunisian democratic hopes resided with Turkey. Hardly an example of democracy within the last few years, in the beginning of the Arab spring, Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan managed to avoid the domestic disturbances of the Arab spring by appearing to support the democratic movements in Tunisia and the other countries with unrest. Earning praise at the time from US President Obama, Erdoğan deftly maneuvered his authoritarian leanings to still be considered a friend of democracy.\textsuperscript{159} Additionally, Tunisian democratic supporters saw Turkey as an example of conservative-Islamist parties working successfully with a democratic system of governance. The Ennahda party was especially impressed by Turkey’s model and wished to work together closely with Turkey to create a system similar to theirs.\textsuperscript{160} This example became a warning with the events later in the decade in Turkey, as Erdoğan’s regime survived a coup attempt in 2016, only to crackdown hard on various political adversaries and citizens, sometimes violently.\textsuperscript{161} The attempted coup drastically impacted how Turkish-Tunisian relations played out, impacting the role that Turkey had in Tunisia.

\textsuperscript{159} Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey Before Bilateral Meeting," Office of the President of the United States, September 20, 2011.

\textsuperscript{160} Dueck and Kordi, \textit{Turkey and Tunisia: Building Bridges in Stormy Times}?

Erdoğan’s crackdown resulted in a foreign policy shift away from helping democratize the region, into a policy of backing authoritarian regimes in several neighboring countries, including Bashar Al-Assad in Syria. This shift resulted in pulled support for Tunisian programs designed to bolster democratization efforts.  

Prior to the revolution in Tunisia, Turkey’s influence was present but not especially important. Most of the ties were related to economic and financial deals and linkages with the Ben Ali regime. Turkish-Tunisian cooperation was looked forward to by the new governments of Tunisia, yet these hopes were eventually dashed by the seemingly one-sided nature of the friendship between the countries. The hopes for economic, political, and cultural aspects of influence and help in Tunisian democracy have been slowed in the aftermath of the revolution as the people of Tunisia begin to realize that Turkey was not a stellar model for them to recreate in their own country. Bízik’s research into democratic stability shows that corruption levels in Turkey have risen significantly over the last decade, and have far surpassed acceptable levels for a country associated with NATO. Bízik also highlights the rising income inequality and unemployment figures in Turkey, displaying how under Erdogan’s regime, the country has been failing to live up to democratic standards. Increasingly troubling is the rise in ‘political terror’ in the country, where Turkish politicians use their power to the point of physical violence.

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163 Dueck and Kordi, Turkey and Tunisia: Building Bridges in Stormy Times?

164 Bízik, Discord at Home, Discord in the World.
The more recent authoritarian tendencies of Turkey and President Erdoğan has thankfully not had a major detrimental effect on the Tunisian system. Turkey’s similarities to Tunisia show the caution the Tunisian people should have with future leaders in positions of power, but that is for the Tunisian people to realize on their own. In 2015, this realization came to the forefront from Tunisian Foreign minister Taieb Baccouche’s criticism of Turkey for their facilitation of fighters in Iraq and Syria, and thus supporting terrorist activities in their neighbor Libya in the aftermath of attacks in Tunisia. These criticisms were later validated by the crackdown on domestic political adversaries in the wake of the July 2016 coup attempt, and by the open backing of authoritarian fighters in neighboring MENA states. The primarily economic and cultural linkages and influence still exist with Turkey and Tunisia, yet their newfound ideologic incompatibility renders the Turkish “model” obsolete.\textsuperscript{165}

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\textsuperscript{165} Dueck and Kordi, \textit{Turkey and Tunisia: Building Bridges in Stormy Times}?
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Chapter IX.

NGOs

Tunisia’s successful transition to democracy became a critical mission for various non-governmental organizations throughout the globe. In the United States, several of the biggest, funded by the US government, had a significant impact on the democratization process in Tunisia. Many of these NGO’s can trace their involvement in Tunisia prior to the revolution, and their democratization efforts having been rewarded now pivot to a new mission: the stability of that democracy. Each of these actors had subtly different goals in Tunisia and have various reasons for wanting the successful transition. The US based NGOs included, the National Democratic Institute, the Transitional Governance Project, International Republican Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Overseas Development Institute. Additional NGOs based in other countries include the International Red Cross, the AFD, and the DAAD. By looking at a brief synopsis of their contributions to democratic stability in Tunisia, the basis of democratic promotion, including the aid provided by the governments of those nations previously detailed, can provide an overview of how International actors working in Tunisia helped to bolster the country’s democratic prospects.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI), has worked in Tunisia since the revolution in 2011, including opening an office in Tunis. Their funding coming partially from the US Federal Government, the NDI works in Tunisia to safeguard the elections

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166 IFRC, Tunisian Red Crescent; AFD, AFD AND TUNISIA: SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT; DAAD, DAAD Tunisia.
and bolster the local population’s confidence in the democratic system. By providing support to local political groups and citizens, transparency of the election process can be attained for all in the country. The neutral organization conducted advanced statistically based observation of the Presidential elections in 2014 and in 2019. The NDI’s reports, press releases and surveys on the will of the people allowed the people of Tunisia to have confidence in their democratic system. One of their reports from 2012, cataloged the priorities of citizens of Tunisia one year out from the first National Constituent Assembly Elections. The report, put together by Rowsell and Ben Yahia, expressed citizen’s concerns for economic instability, but that the transparency helped the people have confidence in where the government would be able to make strides and bolster the economy. Additional reports included election surveys, measurements of growing participation of minority groups and women, and checks on the elections.

The Transitional Governance Project, funded by various intellectual institutions, the NDI, and the US Government, focuses on issues in Tunisia related to scholarly insight into the community and a free market of democratic ideas. The TGP’s surveys detailed focus on political processes, identities and ideologies, and people including women, youth, and minorities. With various publications on events in Tunisia since 2007 including significant data collection, the TGP helped spread democratic principles among

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167 NDI, National Endowment for Democracy: Tunisia.

the local population and helps maintain the civil society through academic means.\textsuperscript{169} The TGP’s publications, including their ‘Tunisian Post-Election Survey’ numbers have been attributed to narrowing the focus on issues in Tunisia to empower those who have been on the sideline, such as women and youth.\textsuperscript{170}

The International Republican Institute is a large international democracy-development organization working in over 100 countries since 1983. Their work in Tunisia both prior to and after the election involved polling and other data collection across a variety of topics related to democracy and the democratization efforts in Tunisia. Their educational campaign in Tunisia since 2011 has helped to build up political platforms across a variety of demographics and people willing to get involved in Tunisian governance. These include a National Youth Congress, Arab Women’s Leadership Institute (AWLI), and Women’s Democracy Network (WDN). Perhaps most critically, the IRI provides transparency of the political process through their Min Haqi Nsaaalek (I Have the Right to Hold You Accountable) network. Additionally, though public opinion polls and outreach programs, the IRI works a great deal on ensuring the longevity of a free and fair political process in Tunisia.\textsuperscript{171}

The National Endowment for Democracy has provided a significant amount of funding for support of the projects of non-governmental groups abroad who are working

\textsuperscript{169} TGP, \textit{TUNISIAN POST-ELECTION SURVEY (TPES)}.

\textsuperscript{170} Lindsay J. Benstead et al., \textit{Winners and Losers After Arab Spring}, August 27, 2013, accessed February 16, 2021, https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/winners-and-losers-after-arab-spring.

\textsuperscript{171} IRI, \textit{IRI International Republican Institute}. 
for democratic goals. Their grants have allowed many differing projects to continue with their missions to support the Tunisian people. In 2019, some programs funded by the NED include $27,000 to the Tunisian Youth Leaders, $647,661 to the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), $25,000 to the Maghreb Institute for Sustainable Development, and $20,000 for Al-Jahedh Forum for Free Thought. These grants have also provided funding for the IRI in 2019 in the amount of $470,000 to work on their projects. There are many more programs funded by the NED on a yearly basis that span across years. An entire additional research project could be needed to underscore the number of programs and money the NED have provided funding for. In Tunisia, their efforts have funded projects ranging from small business development to youth engagement and defense of human rights. The NED has long been a major American development organization that has worked in over 90 countries, and their contributions in Tunisia could spark a significant amount of research that could fill various academic papers. Their efforts in Tunisia have provided more than $2.6 million dollars annually since the revolution.172

The Overseas Development Institute is a think tank designed to promote new ideas and new conversations to ensure a peaceful world. In Tunisia, the ODI has worked since 2011 on a variety of projects including focus on economic development, gender equality and social inclusion, humanitarian aid, equity and social policy, and politics and governance. One of their reports, compiled by Chambers and Cummings, detailed how women’s representation in Tunisian government has risen from 4% in 1990, to 31% in

172 NED, National Endowment for Democracy.
2014, and how 94% of girls were enrolled in secondary education programs. Their data collection and distribution has impacted Tunisian society in a way that maintains a strong economic and social society through the sharing of ideas.

Uniquely among international actors in Tunisia, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has a major branch headquartered in Tunis and is one of the biggest providers of humanitarian aid and support to the region. While not explicitly a democracy promotion effort, the Swiss based organization serves to bolster the access to clean food, water and shelter that the government is unable to provide in times of great demand, especially in the aftermath of the revolution and during the transitional governments. Their impact in the region has significant impact on the economic society and civil society, two of the key arenas of democratic growth established earlier, and an omission here would be counter to this paper’s goal of identifying international support in the country. With millions of donors around the world, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent is a massive boost to the local population including in the neighboring Maghreb region. Tunisia’s leadership in democracy has allowed the spread of the IFRC throughout the MENA region, and is an example of how Tunisian democracy serves to better the rest of the world.

The AFD, or Agence Francaise de Developpement, is the French government agency devoted to the development of other countries, including Tunisia. Committing of

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174 ODI, Overseas Development Institute.

175 IRFC, Tunisian Red Crescent.
1 Billion Euros in Tunisia since 2016, the French involvement in Tunisia on the ground level is apparent. Projects including the development of clean water and irrigation have been funded to ensure the needs of the lower class are being met. Additional projects centering on economic development and jobs programs have been instituted through the AFD as well.176

As detailed previously, the German, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) has become a region power for development in Tunisia. The German programs spread across a variety of different civil, economic, and political development. Translated as the German Academic Exchange Service, their office opened in Tunis serves the greater MENA region, and has allowed Germany to continue to build its partnership with the fledgling democracy. Through language programs, academic exchange programs, data collection, development of higher education facilities and various other educational programs, the German agency has made a tremendous impact on the Tunisian people. The validation that Germany shows to the Tunisian people has allowed the government to be seen as legitimate in eyes of its people, proving that their actions were not in vain and could in fact be a sustainable growth towards a more successful and peaceful nation.177

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176 AFD, AFD AND TUNISIA: SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT.

177 DAAD, DAAD Tunisia.
Each of the actors studied here have had a significant impact on Tunisia’s democratic transition and have been critical to the stability of the region. This section will examine this significant impact of statistics and subsequent changes in the five arenas of democratic success. By breaking each arena down to where international actors made their contributions, this impact can be measured. Each actor has their own reasons and their own agendas to be met in Tunisia, and the democracy of the country has been the primary beneficiary of this aid. Tunisia’s transition may have happened on its own, as the country was ripe for a new form of government for all of those domestic factors mentioned earlier. However, the bolstering by the western actors in the country helped to validate, legitimize, and strengthen all of the goals set by the democratic government in Tunisia. By breaking down each of these contributions by international actors, each of the five arenas of democratic consolidation can be hit upon by each of these actors, and all together have created a strengthened society better equipped to build upon their new democracy.\footnote{Linz and Stepan, \textit{Problems of Democratic Transition}.}

The five arenas of democracy were not all hit by a single international actor, nor were they all hit at the same time. Tunisia’s ripe transition was built upon strong domestic factors. Civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, and economic society were all critical to the foundations of democracy in Tunisia prior to the
revolution. The establishment of a new government greatly benefited from the existing state. Tunisia’s political society led by the Ennahda party relied heavily on the new rule of law set by the new constitution.\textsuperscript{179} The economic and civil society were stabilized by the new government and allowed to remain free and fair. International actors could see this ripening of democratic conditions as well and did what they could to bolster the arenas to the benefit of the country.

1. Civil Society

Tunisian civil society was benefitted by significant contributions detailed earlier from international actors including the United States, Germany, and several aid organizations including the IRFC, TGP, and the IRI. The programs detailed earlier from these actors worked to benefit a free society where women, children, and minorities, along with the rest of the population could become active in their society, build themselves through comprehensive education programs, and learn to become leaders in their new democracy. This was aided by the ties to the west from the French speaking elites of the nation and provided a strong boost to the overall health of civil society in Tunisia.\textsuperscript{180}

2. Political Society

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\textsuperscript{179} Ottoway, \textit{The Arab World Upended}.
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The Political society of Tunisia was bolstered by a variety of programs and existing domestic factors that became a major factor in the democratic success. The United States’ validation of the plight of the Tunisian people was brought to the forefront by Ambassador Godec’s wire to Washington. Programs from France, Germany, the NDI, the TGP, the NED, and the government of the United States all proved to have an interest in Tunisian political society and have been impressed with the results shown there. The example of Turkey proved to be a significant political jumping off point for Tunisia, as they now realized that Turkey was not an effective democracy and could not serve as a good example for themselves. This created a strong independent political society not driven to emulate elsewhere, but encouraged by Germany especially, could become their own strong political society.  

3. Rule of Law

Rule of law is critical to any truly democratic society, and those with the power to affect that can be instrumental to the success of the democracy. The United States and Germany were proven to be key contributors to the Tunisian mindset in establishing and maintaining rule of law. The United States’ example came in the form of security consolidation of the area. Germany, in congruence with programs from the rest of the EU, some residual French support, and contributions by the NGOs such as the NDI and IRI, helped established a society in Tunisia that abided by the rules and laws set by the

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new government. Tunisia’s Ennahda party as well showed significant leadership in the country by abiding by the democratic results of the elections.\textsuperscript{182}

4. State Apparatus

By building on the ruins of the Ben Ali regime, with a recipe that involved significant reform, the revolution was able to maintain relative normalcy through the existing state bureaucracy already in place. Leaders chosen from the prior regime, such as Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi, could create with the help of international actors a stable transition that would not neglect minority groups in Tunisia. This was further helped by the French integration within Tunisian society, and the programs to develop young leadership later by the US, Germany, EU, and NGOs in the country.\textsuperscript{183}

5. Economic Society

Perhaps the single largest influx of international help towards the Tunisian democratic transition, the bolstering of Tunisian economic society by international actors was critical to the long-term success of the country. The United States and USAID, Germany’s DAAD, France’s AFD, the EU, the IFRC, NDI, IRI and every other NGO involved with the country had some form of economic stimulus or aid package.\textsuperscript{184}


\textsuperscript{183} Ratka and Stahl, \textit{Germany and Tunisia: Friendship in the Making?}; Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, \textit{Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?}

\textsuperscript{184} Besbes and Abderrahim, \textit{The U.S. and Tunisia: From Democracy Promotion to Security Consolidation}; Krueger, Ratka and Ouji, \textit{Tunisia and the EU: 'More of the Same' or Starting Anew?}; Krueger, \textit{France and Tunisia: Friendship Reactivated?}; NDI,
came in many forms, including direct funding to maintain a strong economy, but also in humanitarian programs to feed those who could not feed themselves in the current economic climate. The very start of the revolution in Tunisia began with Mohammed Bouazizi lighting himself on fire in protest of the economic situation of the country. The failing economic society was perhaps the largest single factor in the revolution, and its success the single most important factor in the revolution’s success. This made international aid absolutely critical to the economic society and the survival of democracy. This economic revival of international actors made democracy not just possible by truly attainable for Tunisia, and it has continued to be a major part of the Tunisian economy.

National Endowment for Democracy: Tunisia; IRI, IRI International Republican Institute; NED, National Endowment for Democracy.
Chapter XI.

Conclusion

Tunisia’s revolution prompted a lowkey but effective response from the international community to maintain its democracy. The world recognized the importance of finally having a stable democracy thrive in the region, and the value of the oasis amidst a sea of barren hope for democracy. Call it a beachhead, an oasis, or a staging area, but Tunisia represents a critical first major successful step for democracy into the Arab world.

Of course, other attempts have been made over the last several decades, most notably in Iraq and Afghanistan to forcibly coerce the local populace into democracy, yet this has never truly taken hold for one simple and unavoidable reason. The people of those countries have not been receptive to western countries telling them what their governments should be. It is a natural human reaction when the perception of the people is being forced to see a certain way. The failures of Iraq and Afghanistan have been compounded by significant groups of people fighting against democratic principles. There has been significant academic research into why these attempts at democracy have fail in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this paper is not intended to delve into those detail. Tunisia is the best example of successful democratic transition in the Arab world, and the integral part the western world played in this success must be studied extensively in order to be understood and projectable onto future democratic transition plans. There is an argument to be had that Tunisia’s example is the best example for only Tunisia, and to some degree that can be an overblown and ununderestimated statement. The context of
such a statement is important. Tunisia is unique among the countries of the Arab World for more reasons than one paper can elaborate upon, and these unique factors cannot be projected onto other country’s transitions as a template. The argument for Tunisia as an example is not so the democratic transition can be repeated in a cookie-cutter way that the west can apply the same plan to separate countries. Democratic transition is not a cooking recipe to follow certain steps and bake for 3 to 5 to 50 years and poof there is a fresh democracy coming out of the oven. Tunisia’s example is not for the people of the west to analyze and repeat. Tunisia must be the example for the people of the Arab world to know that such a transition is possible for them. The example set can show the people that authoritarian and theological governments are not the only answer conducive to their beliefs, practices, and culture. The process may take a long time, spanning decades to ingratiate an articulable belief in democracy in the region.

Tunisia’s success can only be attributed to Tunisia and its citizens, yet the importance of strong international partners in an increasingly globalized world can be viewed as an important part of that success. The democracy has become an example for other countries to follow not because of international meddling, but because of various factors that are not always apparent to a casual viewer. Tunisia’s successful transition can be viewed by future generations as a significant success story that helps give hope for other democratic transitions still to come. The international support from the United States, France, Germany, the EU and all the other actors involved is not a small one nor is it an insignificant one. These actors can learn from what went right in Tunisia, and they can continue to learn about how it went wrong in other areas only by further scholastic
analysis. Each of these actors can continue to grow as a world power and Tunisia can grow in its own right to continue the spread of democracy throughout the region.
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