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The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?

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Abstract

Between 1974 and 1990, over 30 countries in southern Europe, Latin America, some parts of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa made transitions to democracy, nearly doubling the number of democratic governments in the world. Samuel Huntington described this global shift as "Democracy's Third Wave" in an article published in 1991, which was later developed in a book titled *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. In these two works, he discusses the causes, features, and transition processes of the third wave of democracy and examines its prospects for sustainability and possible expansion in a nondemocratic world. He argues that the first and second democratic waves "were followed not merely by some backsliding but major reverse waves during which most regime changes throughout the world were from democracy to authoritarianism" (Huntington, 1991a). He also addresses the causative factors of this reverse wave in some countries, and he claims that the third wave of democratization that swept the world in the 1970s and 1980s might become a dominant feature of Middle Eastern and North African politics in the 1990s. The delay in this prophecy for two decades motivates us to question whether the Arab Spring is part of Huntington's third wave of democratization or a new fourth wave of democratization, or even a false start to democracy, as described by Larry Diamond (2011). The purpose of this article is to examine the causes, features, and transition processes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in correlation with Huntington's theorization on the third wave of democratization which, along with other available literature in the field, will be combined in a theoretical framework that will enable us to discuss the abovementioned elements of the Arab Spring through the lens of the third wave of democratization. Special attention is paid to the question of whether the Arab Spring falls into the framework of Huntington's theory, or whether it can be classified as a new fourth wave of democratization in countries that have unfavorable environments for democracy. The first part of this article highlights the causative factors that eased the emergence of the third wave of democratization in different parts of the world. The second part provides a historical overview of the major events of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, while the third and fourth parts analyze the causes,

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features, and transition processes of the Arab Spring from Huntington's third wave perspective.

Introduction

The series of mass protests which broke out in the Arab world in 2010 has become variously known as the "Arab Spring," "Arab Awakening," "Arab Uprisings," or "Arab Revolutions." In this article, I prefer to use the most popular one of these catchy phrases, Arab Spring, which was first coined by the *American Journal of Foreign Policy* and popularized by Western Media and later by Arab TV channels, labeling the antiregime protests that occurred in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria in 2011; and erupted on a smaller scale in Bahrain, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan. Their objectives and relative success remain debatable in academic circles, among foreign observers, and world powers that would like to cash in their outcomes to shape and reshape the political landscape of the Middle East. As mentioned above, the intention of this article is to examine the causes, features, and transition processes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in correlation with Huntington's theorization on the third wave of democratization.

Literature on the Third Wave of Democratization

Huntington describes the democratic transitions that occurred in the late twentieth century as "democracy's third wave," and he suggests that the first long wave of democratization began in the 1820s in Europe and North America (the United States), giving a large segment of the white male population the right to vote in public elections. A century later, the world witnessed the first reverse wave, which reduced the number of democratic states from 29 to 12. After the defeat of the fascist powers in World War II, the second wave came into existence and reached its zenith in 1962, raising the number of democratic states to 36. A second reversal occurred in the early 1960s through 1975, dropping the number of democratic states to 30. This second reverse was followed by a third wave of democratization in the 1970s and 1980s (Huntington, 1991a).

Some scholars reluctantly accept Huntington's three waves of democratization theory, criticizing its periodization of democratic transitions (Doorenspleet, 2000; McFaul, 2002) and applicability to regime changes in different parts of the world (McFaul, 2002). Philippe Schmitter (1993), for instance, considers the first wave (1810–1926) suggested by Huntington as too long and wide to accommodate a variety of democratic transitions that occurred in different parts of the world. He, therefore, suggests the division of the historical democratization processes into four waves: "1) the 'Springtime of Freedom' in 1848–49; 2) around the First World War and its aftermath (1910–1920); 3) the Second World War and its aftermath (1943–1948); and 4) the present (1974–) " Schmitter (1993:349). Furthermore, he claims that

certain countries such as "the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia [...] democratized according to another rhythm and [were] much less affected by what was going on in neighboring countries" (p. 349) In his article "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship," Michael McFaul separates postcommunist regime changes from Huntington's third wave of democracy, by arguing that the "transitions from communist rule to new regime types are so different from the third wave of democratic transitions in the 1970s and 1980s" and should not even to be grouped under the same rubric (McFaul, 2002:213). He classifies these postcommunist transitions as a new fourth wave of regime change, because their outcomes resulted in both new democratic and dictatorial regimes. McFaul's statement permits us to argue that the transition processes of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen can hardly be classified under Huntington's three waves theory, as their outcomes manifested themselves in different forms of governments lacking — with the exception of Tunisia — the three major requirements of any democratic system: competition, inclusiveness, and civil liberties.

Sharing McFaul's concern from a different perspective, Mustapha K. el-Sayyid suggests that the political history of the Arab world has parallels with Huntington's third wave theory, but these trends have neither the same intensity nor global latitude. For this reason, he calls the political transitions that took place in the Arab world in the last quarter of the twentieth century "the third wave of political liberalization in the Arab world" (el-Sayyid, 1994:178–189). As he argues, this wave began after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, when King Hasan of Morocco reconciled with opposition political parties in 1975, followed by Anwar al-Saddat of Egypt's return to multiparty politics in 1976. This process of political liberalization gradually took shape in Arab countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, and Jordan. In the aftermath of the first Gulf war, the emir of Kuwait held legislative elections in October 1992, a *shura council* was elected in Oman in 1991, and it was promised that a similar shura council would be established in Saudi Arabia. All of these top-down reforms did not produce democratic transformations in the region, but rather reshaped authoritarian regimes — an "up-grading of authoritarianism" — in response to external and internal challenges ("Arab Uprisings," 2012). With the onset of the Arab Spring, transition processes in Tunisia and Egypt took a bottom-up shift in momentum, because they were influenced by the protesters' demands. Thus, post-Arab Spring reforms paved the way for the emergence of a new fourth-regional wave of democratization in the Arab world (Schmitter, 1993).

The classification of the Arab Spring as a fourth regional wave of regime change (or democratization) does not deny that some aspects of Huntington's theory are pertinent to our discussion of the Arab uprisings that have taken place in the last 5 years. The five key factors which Huntington established to examine the rise and spread of the third wave of democratization in different parts of the world are highly relevant when discussing the Arab uprisings. These factors include the wide diffusion

of democratic values in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the expansion of an urban educated class, the promotion of democracy by external actors (the European Community and the United States), and snowballing of the democratization process, all of which are relevant approaches, and refine our assessment of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

In his theoretical and empirical analysis, Huntington goes beyond the causes and features of the third wave of democracy, by examining the transitional processes that manifest themselves in three forms, including "transformation," "replacement," and "transplacement" (Huntington, 1991b). These three phases of transition provide the present study with a theoretical framework with which to examine the transitions that occurred in the Arab world, and to analyze the major role played by both government and opposition front actors. The internal political mechanisms governing the political discourse of the Arab Spring and transition processes will be also discussed in this context.

For further details on literature that deal with the third wave of democratization, see: Lucan Way. (October, 2011). Comparing the Arab revolts: The lessons of 1989. *Journal of Democracy. 22*(4), 17–27; Eric Chaney. (Spring, 2012). Democratic change in the Arab world: Past and present. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activities*, 363–414; Richard Rose. (April, 2001). Democratization backwards: The problem of third wave democracies. *British Journal of Political Sciences*, *31*(2), 331–354; Richard Joseph. (1997). Democratization in Africa after 1989: Comparative and theoretical perspectives. *Comparative Politics*, *29*(3), 363–382; Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz. (April, 2013). Democratization theory and the Arab Spring. *Journal of Democracy*, *24*(2), 5–30; Ali Sarihan. (2012). Is the Arab Spring in the third wave of democratization? The case of Syria and Egypt. *Turkish Journal of Politics*, *33*(1), 67–85; Doh Chull Shin. (October, 1994). On the third wave of democratization: A synthesis and evolution of recent theory and research. *World Politics*, *47*(1), 135–170; Renske Doorenspleet. (April, 2000). Reassessing the three waves of democratization. *World Politics*, *52*(3), 384–406; Michael McFaul. (January, 2002). The fourth wave of democracy and dictatorship: Non-cooperative transitions in the post-Communist world. *World Politics*, *54*(2), 212–244; Joe and Foweraker and Roman Krznaric. (Autumn, 2002). The uneven performance of third wave democracies: Electoral politics and imperfect rule in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *44*(3), 29–60.

A Historical Overview of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring erupted in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when a policewoman confiscated the vegetable cart of a 26-year-old street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, in Sidi Buzid, 300 km south of Tunis. Bouazizi appealed to the provincial headquarters in Sidi Buzid, where his case was rejected. A few hours later Bouazizi doused himself with flammable liquid and set himself on fire. This incident sparked revolution in Tunisia and other Arab countries. Demonstrations and riots ignited throughout

the country, and police and security forces took serious measures against the protesters (Kerrou, 2013). Images of protests and brutal police action were featured on, and circulated through social media (i.e., Facebook and YouTube). The popular slogans of the demonstration across the country were "Jobs for all," "Down with the bribes and favouritism," "Tunisia free" and "Ben Ali get lost."[1] To restrain the rage of the youth protesters, and to maintain security and order in the country, President Ben Ali promised he would create 300,000 jobs in the next 2 years (al-Baik, 2011), albeit ironically shortly thereafter issuing a decision to close down schools and universities and branding the protesters as "terrorists." This self-contradicting message provoked the protesters and drove them to further confrontations with the police and security forces. Under this snowballing pressure, Ben Ali fired part of his ministerial cabinet, called for early parliamentary elections within six months, and promised the protesters that he would step down by the end of his presidential term in 2014. These promises did not calm down the protestors, who instead targeted replacing the incumbent regime with a democratic one. When Ben Ali realized that he had no more choices, he fled to Saudi Arabia along, with his family on January 14, 2011, marking the end of his 24 years of authoritarian rule in Tunisia (Walt, 2011).

Against this backdrop, Bouazizi was portrayed as a champion who had galvanized the frustrations of the region's youth against their dictatorial regimes into mass demonstrations, revolt, and revolution, all of which became known collectively as the "Arab Spring." On January 25, 2011, Egyptian activists protested against the poverty, unemployment, and corruption perpetrated by Mubarak's regime and his closest allies. The key movements that led protests include the following: 1) *Kefaya* is the unofficial name of the Egyptian Movement for Change and was established in 2004 with the objective of changing the political situation in Egypt. It gained wide support at the grassroots level when it criticized the 2005 constitutional referendum and presidential election campaigns. It also protested against the re-election of Hosni Mubarak in 2010 and the idea of transferring power to his son, Gamal. It was one of the key groups and movements that contributed to the success of the 25 January Revolution; 2) The *National Association for Change*, a loose political association that consists of activists from different sectors of Egyptian society. It was founded in 2010 with the objective of changing the political setting in Egypt via democracy, social justice, and free elections. It played a significant role in the protests of 2011 that ended the rule of Hosni Mubarak; 3) The *9 March Group for the Independence of Egypt's Universities* was founded in 2003. It took its name from March 9, 1932, when Lotfi el-Sayed, the first president of Cairo University, resigned in protest against the ministerial decision to fire Taha Hussien from the deanship of the Faculty of Arts. The group's primary objective was to assure the independence of Egyptian universities from security and government interference. It played a key role in the 2011 protests that led to the resignation of Hosni Mubarak; and 4) The *April 6 Youth Movement*, an Egyptian activist group established in 2008 to support workers in El-Mahalla El-Kubra — an industrial town — who were planning to strike on

April 6. The founders of April 6 ... used social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Flickr) to disseminate the workers' demands and grievances and to mobilize the public to support their strike. Khaled Mohamed Saeed was a young Egyptian man who died under disputed circumstances in Alexandria on June 6, 2010, after being arrested and beaten by Egyptian security forces. Images of his disfigured corpse were circulated via the Internet and smart phones, scandalizing Egyptian security forces and motivating the anger of the public against Mubarak's regime. A prominent Face Group was founded under his name ("We are all Khaled Said") and moderated by Wael Ghonim, a distinguished figure in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. (Yasin, 2013).

The protesters urged Mubarak to step down in favor of an elected democratic government that would address their demands. A day later the government banned all public gatherings and security forces dispersed a number of peaceful demonstrations. A curfew was set up, and all forms of communication were blocked. Revolts spread from the Liberation Square (*Midan al-Tahrir*) in Cairo to other squares in the country, calling for the departure of Mubarak and his undemocratic regime (Rutherford, 2013). The immediate reaction of the president was to dissolve his cabinet and form a new one chaired by Ahmed Shafik, the former Air Force Chief. He also appointed Omar Sulaiman, Egypt's intelligence chief, as vice president and delegated him to begin negotiations with the key figures of political parties (Mubarak's speech [February 1, 2011]). On February 4, 2011, thousands of protesters gathered at Tahrir Square in Cairo and other principal cities of Egypt, calling for Mubarak's departure and regime change.[2] No choice was left for President Mubarak except to leave his office before completing his presidential term in 2013. Under the mounting pressure of the protests, and in the face of external appeals for democratization, he stepped down on February 11, 2011, leaving the administration of the country to a military council headed by Mohamed Hussein Tantawi and a team of senior military officers (Ajami, 2011; Dehghanpisheh, Dickey & Giglio, 2011; Omar Sulaiman's speech [February 18, 2011]).

The snowballing of the Arab Spring forced Libyan dictator Muammar al-Gaddafi to take preventative measures, including the reduction of food prices, the dismissal of military officer defectors, and the release of several Islamist prisoners. However, these preventative measures seem not to have been effective because, on February 17, 2011, major protests erupted in Benghazi against al-Gaddafi's dictatorial regime. The growing dissatisfaction of the protesters was correlated with the corruption of al-Gaddafi's regime, deep-rooted systems of patronage, and widespread unemployment among the Libyan youth. In his first media appearance, al-Gaddafi accused the protestors of being "drugged" and cooperating with al-Qaeda in the region (al-Gaddafi's speech, 2011). As a result, he rejected their demands for regime change and proclaimed that he would prefer to die a martyr rather than leave Libya for the "drugged" and mercenaries of the West (al-Gaddafi's speech, 2011). The complexity of this situation led some diplomats at Libya's mission to the United Nations in New York to side with the revolt and urge

the Libyan army to support the protesters. By the end of February 2011, al-Gaddafi lost control of key cities of Libya, and the military confrontation between his loyalists and revolutionary forces gradually escalated into a full-scale civil war. The UN Security Council and EU governments imposed sanctions on al-Gaddafi and his family, and suspended Libya's membership in the UN. On March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council imposed a no-fly zone in the country's airspace and announced that "all necessary measures" should be taken to protect civilians against al-Gaddafi's forces (Security Council Resoultion, 2011). Supported by NATO air forces, the Libyan National Council in Benghazi declared itself the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. The declaration was recognized by Western and Arab countries that denounced the legitimacy of al-Gaddafi to lead his own nation. The military confrontation continued between the two parties for a couple of months until the forces of the revolutionaries entered Tripoli in the last week of August 2011, and al-Gaddafi and his forces left the city, taking their final refuge in Bani Walid, Sirte, and other cities. After the liberation of Tripoli, fighting continued for about two months until Colonel al-Gaddafi was captured on October 20, 2011, and killed in the city of Sirte. His death marked the end of his 42-year rule, and 3 days later the Libyan National Council declared the liberation of the country and started the process of drafting a new constitution and electing a new government (Noueihed & Warren, 2012b).

The events of Tunisia and Egypt also inspired prodemocratic reformers in Yemen to continue their struggle against the leadership of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who came to power in 1990. To curtail the political situation in Yemen, Saleh announced that he would neither run for the future presidential election in 2013 nor hand power over to his son, Ahmad (*Al Jazeera News* [February 2, 2011]). Opposition party leaders and political activists did not buy these promises and continued their pressure on Saleh to step down in favor of early presidential and parliamentary elections. In response, Saleh fired his entire cabinet and promised protestors a number of further reforms and regime change. During this stressful period, the Yemeni ambassador to the United Nations in New York resigned from his office and condemned the suppression of peaceful demonstrators by the regime's security forces. Several top military commanders defected (*Al Jazeera News* [March 21, 2011]), and Yemen's ambassador to Syria quit his post and joined the antigovernment movement that called for Saleh's resignation. When the situation became very complex and out of control in Yemen, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries mediated between the two disputing parties and submitted a proposal for a smooth transfer of power. The government arrogantly rejected the proposal. On June 7, 2011, Saleh was seriously injured in a rocket attack on Yemen's presidential compound in Sana'a and was flown to Saudi Arabia, where he received medical treatment (Noueihed & Warren, 2012a). The administration of the country was entrusted to his deputy, Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi. While Saleh was receiving medical treatment in Saudi Arabia, protestors formed a transition council on August 18, 2011, to pave the way for a power transfer. Under mounting internal and external pressure, Saleh signed the

Gulf-brokered accord on November 22, 2011, and agreed to hand over power to Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, on the condition that he would be given immunity from prosecution.[3] Hadi was then expected to form a national unity government and call for early presidential elections within 90 days. By signing the Gulf-brokered accord, Saleh ended his 33 years of authoritarian rule, albeit with the proviso that he would retain his title and certain privileges until the new presidential elections took place in February, 2012 (Khosrokhavar, 2012).

Apart from these four Arab countries, antigovernment demonstrations and demands for regime change spread to Bahrain, Algeria, and Syria. The protestors in Bahrain and Algeria were suppressed by security and police forces, while in Syria, military confrontation escalated into civil war between die-hard supporters of al-Assad's regime and their political opponents — a conflict that still rages to date.

The Arab Spring and the Third Wave of Democratization

The phrase "Arab exceptionalism" is used as a popular explanation for the lack of democracy in the Arab world which was excluded from the third wave of democratization that dominated in the late twentieth century. The sudden outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2010–2011, marking the end of four heads of state in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, captured the attention of news reporters, political analysts, and researchers studying the phenomenon, its causes, and anticipated consequences. Some of them labeled the Arab uprisings as a fourth wave of democratization in a region that did not have favorable conditions for democracy. The political changes, from their perspective, reflected some aspects of the third wave of democracy that took place in Latin America 1980s, when the prodemocratic protests in Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay, Honduras, and Ecuador put more pressure on their military and single-party regimes to give way to democratic regimes that would meet with the people's political expectations. These similar elements led Middle Eastern scholars to suggest that the features and outcomes of the Arab Spring would not be different from those of the third wave of democratization, in that their effect would be first confined to the Arab region and gradually inspire the reformers of undemocratic states to appeal for regime change in their own countries. But from another perspective, policymakers such as Henry Kissinger were very pessimistic in relation to the outcomes of the Arab Spring. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, for instance, he said: "I don't think that the Arab Spring is necessarily a democratic manifestation, I think it is a populist manifestation" (Stephens, 2011).

This background information leads us to inquire as to whether there were any similarities between the causes and transition processes of the third wave of democratization and that of the Arab Spring. If the answer is positive, the second question is why did the Arab Spring wait for two decades to ignite? The answer to this question can be found in an article written by Mustapha el-Sayyid, which describes what happened in the Arab World in the 1970s and 1980s as a third wave of

liberalization. El-Sayyid (1994) attributes the delay of democratization in the region to the predominant sway of dictatorial regimes that had no tolerance for granting civic freedoms to prodemocratic reformers on the grounds that such a move would undermine their power and change the power balance in favor of political rivals. This remark underlines the fact that the third wave of liberalization in the Arab world was one of the major factors that triggered the sudden rise of the Arab Spring in 2010, or the fourth wave of regime changes in the region.

Historical evidence emphasizes that there are some similarities between the causes behind the third wave of democratization in different parts of the world and the Arab Spring in the last four years. Huntington, for example, considers the modernization factor based on urbanization, high literacy rates, freedom of expression, accessibility to information sources, and technological advancements as decisive drivers that encouraged democratic reformers to move towards democratizing political systems. In the Arab world, this causative factor manifested itself in the rapid growth of educated youths living in urban centers, where economic growth and the job market did not meet their expectations (Arab Human Development Report, 2009*)*. The case of Mohamed Bouazizi is one of the many alarming instances seen in the Tunisian uprisings that show the frustration of youth in the Arab world, in that they could not find jobs to satisfy their ambitions (Ajami, 2011). The map below illustrates the distribution of youths under 25 years old and the gross domestic product per person in each Arab country (Fig. 1).

Based on the above statistics, the then U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, alerted the leaders of Arab countries to listen to their young people's demands, as the old foundations of the Arab world were "sinking into the sand" (Walt, 2011: 18). The response to their demands, from her perspective, should address hot issues such as democratization of the political system, the creation of new jobs, and the suppression of government corruption.

Social media (Facebook and Twitter) formed another dimension in the modernization process that provided a space for activists to talk, organize rallies against their authoritarian regimes, and call for the democratization of their political system. Their chats and discussions on these issues created wide awareness of democratic values in society and helped overcome the fear of security forces. Mobile phone videos posted and documented government reactions against peaceful protesters, showing police beatings and the shooting of peaceful protestors who challenged their autocratic leaders and asked them to depart their tenure (Dickey, 2012; Walt, 2011). In this context, Christopher Dickey and Babak Dehghanpisheh (2011) highlighted that the actual instigators of the revolt in Egypt were "a band of young techies who used their mass-communication skills to mobilize thousands of people from almost every stratum of Egyptian society in an uprising against Mubarak's reign — with the notable exception of the Brotherhood, which declined to join the first massive but peaceful demonstrations" (p. 26) on January 25, 2011. In Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, young protesters used their mobile phone cameras to record the brutal practices of

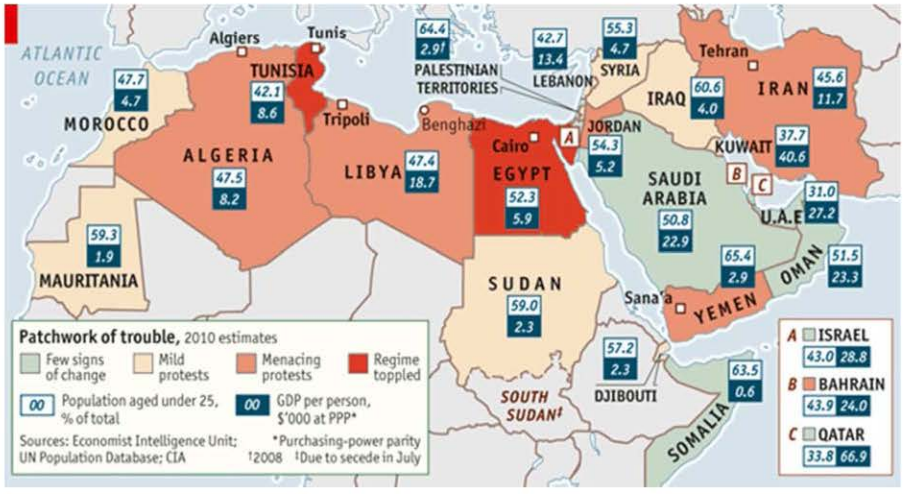

Figure 1: Distribution of youth and GDP/person in Arab countries. *Source.* Cultural Wizard, Retrieved from http://rw-3.com/tag/middle-east/.

security forces and then broadcast their images via the internet and then through international and regional news agencies. All these examples show how social media facilitated the dissemination of information and the organization of the Arab youths to rise up against their corrupt leaders and ask for regime change (Dickey & Dehghanpisheh, 2011; Filiu, 2011).

As a second causal factor, social inequality strengthened the trust in democracy of deprived social groups of the third wave countries as a means of fairly distributing resources and power; and it also encouraged them to stand firmly against their dictatorial regimes. In the Arab Spring countries, democratic reformers shared the same sentiment, in that they openly criticized their dictatorial and corrupt regimes and appealed for the democratization of political system. Thus, dictatorial practices and corruption were among the driving factors that led to the eruption of the revolution in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. In her essay "Deepening Divide," Aryn Baker interviewed Rami Nakhal, a Syrian cyber-activist working underground in Lebanon, about the main resons behind why he joined the anti-Syrian government campaign. He said, "We want what everyone in the region wants: an end to corruption, the ability to choose and dismiss our leaders, freedom of speech, and freedom of fear" (Baker, 2011:26). This statement reflects that corruption and dictatorship had deepened the state of social inequality in the Arab world and driven deprived social groups to call for the departure of their leaders and the replacement of their authoritarian regimes with democratic governance (Huntington, 1991b).

Transition Processes and the Arab Spring

Huntington (1991b) states that more than 60 countries throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa had gone through democratic transitions that manifested themselves in three processes, including "transformation," "replacement," and "transplacement." The internal dialectic of these processes is based on three crucial interactions between the government and the opposition, between reformers and standpatters in the governing coalition, and between moderates and extremists in the opposition. In all transition processes, these three central interactions play some form of role which may differ in accordance with the nature of each individual transition. In this section, I shall use this framework to discuss the transition processes that happened in the Arab Spring countries, and to investigate to what extent they are in harmony with those of "third wave countries."

Transformation Process

The democratic transformation process usually takes place when the democratic reformers in the governing coalition are stronger than the opposition and have the intention of democratizing the political establishment from within. This process occurred in 16 out of 35 third wave transitions, including 5 one-party systems, 3 personal dictatorships, and 8 military regimes. The evolution of the process passed through five major phases, four of them within the authoritarian system and the final one after its collapse (Huntington, 1991b). The first phase was associated with the emergence of a group of democratic reformers who struggled to democratize their authoritarian regime from within. The example cited by Huntington was that of Spain, where successors to the dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1937–1975) took a series of democratic measures, including the legalization of political parties, the election of a new assembly, and the promulgation of a new democratic constitution. Huntington noted that these measures gradually put Spain on the right democratic track and promoted its image as the most successful example of a third wave country. In the Arab world the process of transformation began when a cohort of democratic reformers appeared as agents of change during the third wave of liberalization and later spearheaded the Arab Spring by promoting democratic values and encouraging protesters to continue to struggle for regime change (Welzel, 2009). This liberalization process appeared in a very modest form, when some Arab governments released political prisoners, opened up certain issues for public debate, and loosened restrictions on the press. By doing so, they gave limited freedom and participation in political discourse, without exposing top policy and decisionmakers to any real electoral test (Sadiki, 2009). For example, in Tunisia, when Ben Ali came to office in 1988, he took some measures toward democratizing the political system which he had inherited from Habib Bourguiba's era (1957–1987), by loosening restrictions on the press, amending the constitution, and limiting the presidential term in office to three 5-year periods, to avoid any comparison with Bourguiba's life

presidency. Parliamentary elections were conducted in 1989 with fewer restrictions compared with Bourguiba's period, but the absolute majority of the parliamentary seats was controlled by the ruling party. Ben Ali himself was elected unopposed in Tunisia's first presidential election since 1972 (Filliu, 2011). In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak followed the same model, opening up an observed space to political parties and movements to express their opinion on certain matters and to participate in general elections at presidential and parliamentary levels. Furthermore, Ali Abdallah Saleh (r. 1990–2011) permitted political parties and civil soceity intitutions to participate in political dialogue and public elections, but only across a range of issues that would not affect his political power. In Libya, the situation was different, in that Colonel al-Gaddafi had no wish to share his power or reconcile with his political rivals. All these instances indicate that the pre-Arab Spring reforms were not meant to lead to full-scale democratization, as their initiators ("standpatters") were resistant to democratizing a political system in which they had built their political careers (Noueihed & Warren, 2012).

In the second phase, the democratic transformation process would take further steps when democratic reformers replaced standpatters in the authoritarian regime and succeeded in maintaining greater control over the process of decision-making and regime change. This shift would take place through three channels that would include the death of an authoritarian leader (i.e., Spain and Taiwan), the regular change of leadership within an authoritarian regime (i.e., Brazil and Mexico), or the instigation of a coup d'état against a nondemocratic leader (i.e., Peru and Nigeria). None of these changes took place in the Arab world in the two decades that preceded the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2010, as the dictatorial systems in the countries concerned did not allow regular changes in leadership, and there were no coup d'états that occurred in favor of the democratization process. Both Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali continued their predecessors' authoritarian policies and were not ready to take serious measures that would lead to the democratization of postindependence dictatorial systems in their countries. In fact, the modest reformist attempts initiated by them were highly cosmetic in nature and did not make a genuine move from authoritarianism to democracy.

The failure of liberalization is the third phase of transformation. It consists of democratic waves and their reversals which have occurred in countries like the Soviet Union, China, Burma, and South Africa (Huntington, 1991b). In Burma, the successors to General Sein Lwin proposed elections and began negotiations with opposition groups, but their attempts in this respect did not satisfy their political rivals who instigated a series of protests that paved the way for the intervention of military forces. As a result, the civilian president, Dr. Maung Maung, was deposed in 1988, and military forces controlled the government, cracked down on demonstrations, and ended the movement toward democratization. Huntington emphasized that the counter case is that of South Africa, where the successors to P. W. Botha — particularly F. W. De Klerk — drove the country forward toward full-scale democratization. In Arab countries, namely Egypt and Tunisia, the liberalization movement did

not lead to democratization, because the standpatters of the authoritarian regimes usually proposed reforms that would serve their own political agendas rather than democratizing the sytem in which they had built their policial images.

Backward legitimacy is the fourth phase of transformation, whereby democratic reformers attempt to neutralize the internal opposition of the regime's standpatters by weakening, reassuring, and coercing some of them to change sides. This scenario occurred in Egypt when democratic reformers collaborated with the Egyptian army to reinforce their efforts to overthrow Mubarak's dictatorial regime. They cheered the army in public squares and chanted slogans such as "The army and the people are one hand." Under the mounting pressure of the protests, the backwardness of Mubarak's administration at the national and international levels forced senior military officers to support the democratization tide of change, as they realized that Mubarak would not be in power much longer. As a result, Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the then commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces and the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, declared himself the *de facto* head of state after Mubarak tendered his resignation on February 11, 2011 (Omar Sulaiman's speech [February 18, 2011]).

The final phase of Huntington's transformation process is co-opting the opposition — a risky tactic of some significance, because the co-opted members of the opposition might claim power and accelerate the process of liberalization toward democracy. In contrast, the standpatters of the regime might use them as new supporters to weaken the stand of the opposition and prolong their stay in power. This form of divide and rule was also used by the Egyptian protesters when accepting the transitional leadership of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Replacement Process

The replacement process is different from the transformation discussed above, because the role of democratic reformers within the regime is either weak or nonexistent. In such a situation, as Huntington argues, the regime's standpatters will be not be interested in any form of democratization that might undermine their control over the apparatus of their authoritarian rule. If the democratic reformers of the opposition coalition succeeded in overthrowing the dictatorial regime, they would enter a new phase of internal struggle among themselves over "the distribution of power and the nature of the regime that must be established" (Huntington, 1991b: 148). The major impediment here is that the dictatorial leader would not be ready to step down until he died or until the regime itself came to an end. Thus, "The life of the regime [becomes] the life of the dictator" (p. 143). Authoritarian leaders who lost power through replacements would usually suffer an unhappy fate, such Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, who was forced into exile in 1986, and Nicolae Ceaușescu of Romania, who was summarily executed in 1989. The best Arab Spring

example that can be cited here is that of Colonel al-Gaddafi, who refused to step down as Libya's leader. He emphasized this point in a televised address when he said: "I am going to die here as a martyr." He then accused "forces affiliated with foreign forces" of seeking to "disfigure, undermine, and tarnish the reputation of the country" (*The Guardian* February 22, 2011). This fashion of dictatorial arrogance complicated the regime change process in Libya and led al-Gaddafi and his die-hard loyalists to fight for about two months after the liberation of Tripoli. They did not wave their white flags until their leader was captured and killed on October 20, 2011, in the city of Sirte.

Transplacement Process

The transplacement process is the third phase of transition in Huntington's third wave of democratization, and it combines government and opposition actions that lead to regime change. Transplacement occurs when the balance of power between standpatters and reformers within a governing coalition is relatively equal or uncertain. At the same time, the leaders of the opposition are divided between hardliners and democratic moderates who are strong enough to prevail over their radical fellows, but they are not quite strong enough to overthrow the regime (Huntington, 1991b). This standstill leads the two disputing parties to reach a consensus that the future of their country should be determined unilaterally, and so the only option is to explore the possibilities of a negotiated transition that will pave the way for the establishment of a democratic government. The best Arab Spring example is that of Yemen, where the situation became very complex and tumbled out of control after the government rejected the first Gulf countries' proposal of a power transfer in June 2011. Under mounting pressure exerted by protesters and external mediators (Gulf countries and the United States), Ali Abdallah Saleh and a number of revolutionary leaders finally agreed to sign an amended agreement of the Gulf countries in Riyadh on November 22, 2011. As a result of this action, Saleh became the fourth leader to be forced from power in 10 months of mass protests that had swept Yemen. The coalition opposition, consisting of Islamists, leftists, and Arab nationalists, accepted the political deal and agreed to participate in a transitional national unity government headed by Saleh's deputy, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi (Khosrokhavar, 2012).

The above examples reveal that those transitions that occurred in the Arab Spring countries shared similarities with those that took place in different countries in the third wave of democratization. However, their outputs in terms of regime change vary, as in the Arab Spring countries, with the exception of Tunisia, the situation today as a whole is very alarming and post-Arab Spring leaders face a series of challenges to establish democratic governments (Bellin, 2013) that will meet the expectations of protestors whose most popular slogan was "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice."

Conclusion

The above discussion classifies the Arab Spring as a fourth regional wave of democratization that shares some facets with the third global wave in terms of causative factors, features, and democratic transitions. In both experiences, the sequences of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy are incoherent, and many countries of the third wave of democratization have been able to settle into a "gray zone of diverse forms of government where autocratic and democratic features are combined" (Miller et al., 1202). Postrevolutionary countries in the Arab world also share the same experiences, because they currently face a series of challenges associated with the disputed agendas and priorities of post-revolutionary leaders, on the hand, and with standpatters of the old regimes on the other hand. Moreover, Islamist-oriented political parties want to establish Sharia-based regimes, ordinary citizens expect the rapid improvement of the economic situation, and liberal reformers intend to build democratic institutions founded on competition, inclusiveness, and civil liberties (Roy, 2012). On the other platform, the standpatters of the old regimes work to maintain their key positions in the process of decision making, because they have less faith in any democracy that might undermine their political influence and interests. According to a RAN Report, the changes underway in Arab Spring countries "may lead to various possible destinations that differ *both* from their points of departure and from liberal democracy." (Miller et al., 2012:xvii) Moreover, there are three major obstacles that may hinder the process of democratization: 1) the absence of cultural prerequisites for democracy; 2) the challenges of tribal and Islamic values that have fostered a culture of submission to authority; and 3) the conflict between secularists and Islamists, which is generating some doubt about the future course of democratic transitions in the Arab world.

Nonetheless, in spite of these challenges, postrevolutionary leaders in Tunisia have achieved a certain degree of success by entering into a political pact that has enabled them to move from authoritarianism to democracy. During this period, they have carefully identified their political agendas, shared power and resources, and restricted the participation of outsiders in decision making, and by doing so, they have made steady progress in establishing a liberal democratic government based on a sound degree of competition, inclusive suffrage in national elections, and a reasonable level of civil and political liberties. In Egypt, postrevolutionary developments produced a form of minimal democracy based on limited competition, inclusive suffrage, and restricted civil liberties. In contrast, the political situation in Libya and Yemen is very shaky, because the postrevolutionary administrations failed to move cleanly from authoritarianism to democracy, while their centralized authority is on the edge of collapse. This failure is associated ostensibly with a lack of democratic experience, in addition to historical hierarchical and authoritarian cultures that complicate the transition process from the current political situation to democracy and make the future course of change in the two countries unpredictable.

Notes

1. For this quotation consult "Timeline of the Tunisian Revolution," Bulletin of Mass Strike. Retrieved February 18, 2012 from http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article127
2. For further details, see "We are All Khaled Said." Retrieved February 2, 2015, from https://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk?fref=ts
3. Ali Abdallah Saleh's signing the transition of power agreement, Riyadh. Retrieved November 23, 2011 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_7qA_X3MF8; Ali Abdallah Saleh's speech after the transition of power agreement, Riyadh. Retrieved November 22, 2011, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GyFNp6o9OU

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The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?

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Abstract

Between 1974 and 1990, over 30 countries in southern Europe, Latin America, some parts of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa made transitions to democracy, nearly doubling the number of democratic governments in the world. Samuel Huntington described this global shift as "Democracy's Third Wave" in an article published in 1991, which was later developed in a book titled *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. In these two works, he discusses the causes, features, and transition processes of the third wave of democracy and examines its prospects for sustainability and possible expansion in a nondemocratic world. He argues that the first and second democratic waves "were followed not merely by some backsliding but major reverse waves during which most regime changes throughout the world were from democracy to authoritarianism" (Huntington, 1991a). He also addresses the causative factors of this reverse wave in some countries, and he claims that the third wave of democratization that swept the world in the 1970s and 1980s might become a dominant feature of Middle Eastern and North African politics in the 1990s. The delay in this prophecy for two decades motivates us to question whether the Arab Spring is part of Huntington's third wave of democratization or a new fourth wave of democratization, or even a false start to democracy, as described by Larry Diamond (2011). The purpose of this article is to examine the causes, features, and transition processes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in correlation with Huntington's theorization on the third wave of democratization which, along with other available literature in the field, will be combined in a theoretical framework that will enable us to discuss the abovementioned elements of the Arab Spring through the lens of the third wave of democratization. Special attention is paid to the question of whether the Arab Spring falls into the framework of Huntington's theory, or whether it can be classified as a new fourth wave of democratization in countries that have unfavorable environments for democracy. The first part of this article highlights the causative factors that eased the emergence of the third wave of democratization in different parts of the world. The second part provides a historical overview of the major events of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, while the third and fourth parts analyze the causes,

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features, and transition processes of the Arab Spring from Huntington's third wave perspective.

Introduction

The series of mass protests which broke out in the Arab world in 2010 has become variously known as the "Arab Spring," "Arab Awakening," "Arab Uprisings," or "Arab Revolutions." In this article, I prefer to use the most popular one of these catchy phrases, Arab Spring, which was first coined by the *American Journal of Foreign Policy* and popularized by Western Media and later by Arab TV channels, labeling the antiregime protests that occurred in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria in 2011; and erupted on a smaller scale in Bahrain, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan. Their objectives and relative success remain debatable in academic circles, among foreign observers, and world powers that would like to cash in their outcomes to shape and reshape the political landscape of the Middle East. As mentioned above, the intention of this article is to examine the causes, features, and transition processes of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in correlation with Huntington's theorization on the third wave of democratization.

Literature on the Third Wave of Democratization

Huntington describes the democratic transitions that occurred in the late twentieth century as "democracy's third wave," and he suggests that the first long wave of democratization began in the 1820s in Europe and North America (the United States), giving a large segment of the white male population the right to vote in public elections. A century later, the world witnessed the first reverse wave, which reduced the number of democratic states from 29 to 12. After the defeat of the fascist powers in World War II, the second wave came into existence and reached its zenith in 1962, raising the number of democratic states to 36. A second reversal occurred in the early 1960s through 1975, dropping the number of democratic states to 30. This second reverse was followed by a third wave of democratization in the 1970s and 1980s (Huntington, 1991a).

Some scholars reluctantly accept Huntington's three waves of democratization theory, criticizing its periodization of democratic transitions (Doorenspleet, 2000; McFaul, 2002) and applicability to regime changes in different parts of the world (McFaul, 2002). Philippe Schmitter (1993), for instance, considers the first wave (1810–1926) suggested by Huntington as too long and wide to accommodate a variety of democratic transitions that occurred in different parts of the world. He, therefore, suggests the division of the historical democratization processes into four waves: "1) the 'Springtime of Freedom' in 1848–49; 2) around the First World War and its aftermath (1910–1920); 3) the Second World War and its aftermath (1943–1948); and 4) the present (1974–) " Schmitter (1993:349). Furthermore, he claims that

certain countries such as "the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia [...] democratized according to another rhythm and [were] much less affected by what was going on in neighboring countries" (p. 349) In his article "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship," Michael McFaul separates postcommunist regime changes from Huntington's third wave of democracy, by arguing that the "transitions from communist rule to new regime types are so different from the third wave of democratic transitions in the 1970s and 1980s" and should not even to be grouped under the same rubric (McFaul, 2002:213). He classifies these postcommunist transitions as a new fourth wave of regime change, because their outcomes resulted in both new democratic and dictatorial regimes. McFaul's statement permits us to argue that the transition processes of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen can hardly be classified under Huntington's three waves theory, as their outcomes manifested themselves in different forms of governments lacking — with the exception of Tunisia — the three major requirements of any democratic system: competition, inclusiveness, and civil liberties.

Sharing McFaul's concern from a different perspective, Mustapha K. el-Sayyid suggests that the political history of the Arab world has parallels with Huntington's third wave theory, but these trends have neither the same intensity nor global latitude. For this reason, he calls the political transitions that took place in the Arab world in the last quarter of the twentieth century "the third wave of political liberalization in the Arab world" (el-Sayyid, 1994:178–189). As he argues, this wave began after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, when King Hasan of Morocco reconciled with opposition political parties in 1975, followed by Anwar al-Saddat of Egypt's return to multiparty politics in 1976. This process of political liberalization gradually took shape in Arab countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, and Jordan. In the aftermath of the first Gulf war, the emir of Kuwait held legislative elections in October 1992, a *shura council* was elected in Oman in 1991, and it was promised that a similar shura council would be established in Saudi Arabia. All of these top-down reforms did not produce democratic transformations in the region, but rather reshaped authoritarian regimes — an "up-grading of authoritarianism" — in response to external and internal challenges ("Arab Uprisings," 2012). With the onset of the Arab Spring, transition processes in Tunisia and Egypt took a bottom-up shift in momentum, because they were influenced by the protesters' demands. Thus, post-Arab Spring reforms paved the way for the emergence of a new fourth-regional wave of democratization in the Arab world (Schmitter, 1993).

The classification of the Arab Spring as a fourth regional wave of regime change (or democratization) does not deny that some aspects of Huntington's theory are pertinent to our discussion of the Arab uprisings that have taken place in the last 5 years. The five key factors which Huntington established to examine the rise and spread of the third wave of democratization in different parts of the world are highly relevant when discussing the Arab uprisings. These factors include the wide diffusion

of democratic values in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the expansion of an urban educated class, the promotion of democracy by external actors (the European Community and the United States), and snowballing of the democratization process, all of which are relevant approaches, and refine our assessment of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

In his theoretical and empirical analysis, Huntington goes beyond the causes and features of the third wave of democracy, by examining the transitional processes that manifest themselves in three forms, including "transformation," "replacement," and "transplacement" (Huntington, 1991b). These three phases of transition provide the present study with a theoretical framework with which to examine the transitions that occurred in the Arab world, and to analyze the major role played by both government and opposition front actors. The internal political mechanisms governing the political discourse of the Arab Spring and transition processes will be also discussed in this context.

For further details on literature that deal with the third wave of democratization, see: Lucan Way. (October, 2011). Comparing the Arab revolts: The lessons of 1989. *Journal of Democracy. 22*(4), 17–27; Eric Chaney. (Spring, 2012). Democratic change in the Arab world: Past and present. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activities*, 363–414; Richard Rose. (April, 2001). Democratization backwards: The problem of third wave democracies. *British Journal of Political Sciences*, *31*(2), 331–354; Richard Joseph. (1997). Democratization in Africa after 1989: Comparative and theoretical perspectives. *Comparative Politics*, *29*(3), 363–382; Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz. (April, 2013). Democratization theory and the Arab Spring. *Journal of Democracy*, *24*(2), 5–30; Ali Sarihan. (2012). Is the Arab Spring in the third wave of democratization? The case of Syria and Egypt. *Turkish Journal of Politics*, *33*(1), 67–85; Doh Chull Shin. (October, 1994). On the third wave of democratization: A synthesis and evolution of recent theory and research. *World Politics*, *47*(1), 135–170; Renske Doorenspleet. (April, 2000). Reassessing the three waves of democratization. *World Politics*, *52*(3), 384–406; Michael McFaul. (January, 2002). The fourth wave of democracy and dictatorship: Non-cooperative transitions in the post-Communist world. *World Politics*, *54*(2), 212–244; Joe and Foweraker and Roman Krznaric. (Autumn, 2002). The uneven performance of third wave democracies: Electoral politics and imperfect rule in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *44*(3), 29–60.

A Historical Overview of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring erupted in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when a policewoman confiscated the vegetable cart of a 26-year-old street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, in Sidi Buzid, 300 km south of Tunis. Bouazizi appealed to the provincial headquarters in Sidi Buzid, where his case was rejected. A few hours later Bouazizi doused himself with flammable liquid and set himself on fire. This incident sparked revolution in Tunisia and other Arab countries. Demonstrations and riots ignited throughout

the country, and police and security forces took serious measures against the protesters (Kerrou, 2013). Images of protests and brutal police action were featured on, and circulated through social media (i.e., Facebook and YouTube). The popular slogans of the demonstration across the country were "Jobs for all," "Down with the bribes and favouritism," "Tunisia free" and "Ben Ali get lost."[1] To restrain the rage of the youth protesters, and to maintain security and order in the country, President Ben Ali promised he would create 300,000 jobs in the next 2 years (al-Baik, 2011), albeit ironically shortly thereafter issuing a decision to close down schools and universities and branding the protesters as "terrorists." This self-contradicting message provoked the protesters and drove them to further confrontations with the police and security forces. Under this snowballing pressure, Ben Ali fired part of his ministerial cabinet, called for early parliamentary elections within six months, and promised the protesters that he would step down by the end of his presidential term in 2014. These promises did not calm down the protestors, who instead targeted replacing the incumbent regime with a democratic one. When Ben Ali realized that he had no more choices, he fled to Saudi Arabia along, with his family on January 14, 2011, marking the end of his 24 years of authoritarian rule in Tunisia (Walt, 2011).

Against this backdrop, Bouazizi was portrayed as a champion who had galvanized the frustrations of the region's youth against their dictatorial regimes into mass demonstrations, revolt, and revolution, all of which became known collectively as the "Arab Spring." On January 25, 2011, Egyptian activists protested against the poverty, unemployment, and corruption perpetrated by Mubarak's regime and his closest allies. The key movements that led protests include the following: 1) *Kefaya* is the unofficial name of the Egyptian Movement for Change and was established in 2004 with the objective of changing the political situation in Egypt. It gained wide support at the grassroots level when it criticized the 2005 constitutional referendum and presidential election campaigns. It also protested against the re-election of Hosni Mubarak in 2010 and the idea of transferring power to his son, Gamal. It was one of the key groups and movements that contributed to the success of the 25 January Revolution; 2) The *National Association for Change*, a loose political association that consists of activists from different sectors of Egyptian society. It was founded in 2010 with the objective of changing the political setting in Egypt via democracy, social justice, and free elections. It played a significant role in the protests of 2011 that ended the rule of Hosni Mubarak; 3) The *9 March Group for the Independence of Egypt's Universities* was founded in 2003. It took its name from March 9, 1932, when Lotfi el-Sayed, the first president of Cairo University, resigned in protest against the ministerial decision to fire Taha Hussien from the deanship of the Faculty of Arts. The group's primary objective was to assure the independence of Egyptian universities from security and government interference. It played a key role in the 2011 protests that led to the resignation of Hosni Mubarak; and 4) The *April 6 Youth Movement*, an Egyptian activist group established in 2008 to support workers in El-Mahalla El-Kubra — an industrial town — who were planning to strike on

April 6. The founders of April 6 ... used social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Flickr) to disseminate the workers' demands and grievances and to mobilize the public to support their strike. Khaled Mohamed Saeed was a young Egyptian man who died under disputed circumstances in Alexandria on June 6, 2010, after being arrested and beaten by Egyptian security forces. Images of his disfigured corpse were circulated via the Internet and smart phones, scandalizing Egyptian security forces and motivating the anger of the public against Mubarak's regime. A prominent Face Group was founded under his name ("We are all Khaled Said") and moderated by Wael Ghonim, a distinguished figure in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. (Yasin, 2013).

The protesters urged Mubarak to step down in favor of an elected democratic government that would address their demands. A day later the government banned all public gatherings and security forces dispersed a number of peaceful demonstrations. A curfew was set up, and all forms of communication were blocked. Revolts spread from the Liberation Square (*Midan al-Tahrir*) in Cairo to other squares in the country, calling for the departure of Mubarak and his undemocratic regime (Rutherford, 2013). The immediate reaction of the president was to dissolve his cabinet and form a new one chaired by Ahmed Shafik, the former Air Force Chief. He also appointed Omar Sulaiman, Egypt's intelligence chief, as vice president and delegated him to begin negotiations with the key figures of political parties (Mubarak's speech [February 1, 2011]). On February 4, 2011, thousands of protesters gathered at Tahrir Square in Cairo and other principal cities of Egypt, calling for Mubarak's departure and regime change.[2] No choice was left for President Mubarak except to leave his office before completing his presidential term in 2013. Under the mounting pressure of the protests, and in the face of external appeals for democratization, he stepped down on February 11, 2011, leaving the administration of the country to a military council headed by Mohamed Hussein Tantawi and a team of senior military officers (Ajami, 2011; Dehghanpisheh, Dickey & Giglio, 2011; Omar Sulaiman's speech [February 18, 2011]).

The snowballing of the Arab Spring forced Libyan dictator Muammar al-Gaddafi to take preventative measures, including the reduction of food prices, the dismissal of military officer defectors, and the release of several Islamist prisoners. However, these preventative measures seem not to have been effective because, on February 17, 2011, major protests erupted in Benghazi against al-Gaddafi's dictatorial regime. The growing dissatisfaction of the protesters was correlated with the corruption of al-Gaddafi's regime, deep-rooted systems of patronage, and widespread unemployment among the Libyan youth. In his first media appearance, al-Gaddafi accused the protestors of being "drugged" and cooperating with al-Qaeda in the region (al-Gaddafi's speech, 2011). As a result, he rejected their demands for regime change and proclaimed that he would prefer to die a martyr rather than leave Libya for the "drugged" and mercenaries of the West (al-Gaddafi's speech, 2011). The complexity of this situation led some diplomats at Libya's mission to the United Nations in New York to side with the revolt and urge

the Libyan army to support the protesters. By the end of February 2011, al-Gaddafi lost control of key cities of Libya, and the military confrontation between his loyalists and revolutionary forces gradually escalated into a full-scale civil war. The UN Security Council and EU governments imposed sanctions on al-Gaddafi and his family, and suspended Libya's membership in the UN. On March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council imposed a no-fly zone in the country's airspace and announced that "all necessary measures" should be taken to protect civilians against al-Gaddafi's forces (Security Council Resoultion, 2011). Supported by NATO air forces, the Libyan National Council in Benghazi declared itself the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. The declaration was recognized by Western and Arab countries that denounced the legitimacy of al-Gaddafi to lead his own nation. The military confrontation continued between the two parties for a couple of months until the forces of the revolutionaries entered Tripoli in the last week of August 2011, and al-Gaddafi and his forces left the city, taking their final refuge in Bani Walid, Sirte, and other cities. After the liberation of Tripoli, fighting continued for about two months until Colonel al-Gaddafi was captured on October 20, 2011, and killed in the city of Sirte. His death marked the end of his 42-year rule, and 3 days later the Libyan National Council declared the liberation of the country and started the process of drafting a new constitution and electing a new government (Noueihed & Warren, 2012b).

The events of Tunisia and Egypt also inspired prodemocratic reformers in Yemen to continue their struggle against the leadership of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who came to power in 1990. To curtail the political situation in Yemen, Saleh announced that he would neither run for the future presidential election in 2013 nor hand power over to his son, Ahmad (*Al Jazeera News* [February 2, 2011]). Opposition party leaders and political activists did not buy these promises and continued their pressure on Saleh to step down in favor of early presidential and parliamentary elections. In response, Saleh fired his entire cabinet and promised protestors a number of further reforms and regime change. During this stressful period, the Yemeni ambassador to the United Nations in New York resigned from his office and condemned the suppression of peaceful demonstrators by the regime's security forces. Several top military commanders defected (*Al Jazeera News* [March 21, 2011]), and Yemen's ambassador to Syria quit his post and joined the antigovernment movement that called for Saleh's resignation. When the situation became very complex and out of control in Yemen, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries mediated between the two disputing parties and submitted a proposal for a smooth transfer of power. The government arrogantly rejected the proposal. On June 7, 2011, Saleh was seriously injured in a rocket attack on Yemen's presidential compound in Sana'a and was flown to Saudi Arabia, where he received medical treatment (Noueihed & Warren, 2012a). The administration of the country was entrusted to his deputy, Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi. While Saleh was receiving medical treatment in Saudi Arabia, protestors formed a transition council on August 18, 2011, to pave the way for a power transfer. Under mounting internal and external pressure, Saleh signed the

Gulf-brokered accord on November 22, 2011, and agreed to hand over power to Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, on the condition that he would be given immunity from prosecution.[3] Hadi was then expected to form a national unity government and call for early presidential elections within 90 days. By signing the Gulf-brokered accord, Saleh ended his 33 years of authoritarian rule, albeit with the proviso that he would retain his title and certain privileges until the new presidential elections took place in February, 2012 (Khosrokhavar, 2012).

Apart from these four Arab countries, antigovernment demonstrations and demands for regime change spread to Bahrain, Algeria, and Syria. The protestors in Bahrain and Algeria were suppressed by security and police forces, while in Syria, military confrontation escalated into civil war between die-hard supporters of al-Assad's regime and their political opponents — a conflict that still rages to date.

The Arab Spring and the Third Wave of Democratization

The phrase "Arab exceptionalism" is used as a popular explanation for the lack of democracy in the Arab world which was excluded from the third wave of democratization that dominated in the late twentieth century. The sudden outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2010–2011, marking the end of four heads of state in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, captured the attention of news reporters, political analysts, and researchers studying the phenomenon, its causes, and anticipated consequences. Some of them labeled the Arab uprisings as a fourth wave of democratization in a region that did not have favorable conditions for democracy. The political changes, from their perspective, reflected some aspects of the third wave of democracy that took place in Latin America 1980s, when the prodemocratic protests in Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay, Honduras, and Ecuador put more pressure on their military and single-party regimes to give way to democratic regimes that would meet with the people's political expectations. These similar elements led Middle Eastern scholars to suggest that the features and outcomes of the Arab Spring would not be different from those of the third wave of democratization, in that their effect would be first confined to the Arab region and gradually inspire the reformers of undemocratic states to appeal for regime change in their own countries. But from another perspective, policymakers such as Henry Kissinger were very pessimistic in relation to the outcomes of the Arab Spring. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, for instance, he said: "I don't think that the Arab Spring is necessarily a democratic manifestation, I think it is a populist manifestation" (Stephens, 2011).

This background information leads us to inquire as to whether there were any similarities between the causes and transition processes of the third wave of democratization and that of the Arab Spring. If the answer is positive, the second question is why did the Arab Spring wait for two decades to ignite? The answer to this question can be found in an article written by Mustapha el-Sayyid, which describes what happened in the Arab World in the 1970s and 1980s as a third wave of

liberalization. El-Sayyid (1994) attributes the delay of democratization in the region to the predominant sway of dictatorial regimes that had no tolerance for granting civic freedoms to prodemocratic reformers on the grounds that such a move would undermine their power and change the power balance in favor of political rivals. This remark underlines the fact that the third wave of liberalization in the Arab world was one of the major factors that triggered the sudden rise of the Arab Spring in 2010, or the fourth wave of regime changes in the region.

Historical evidence emphasizes that there are some similarities between the causes behind the third wave of democratization in different parts of the world and the Arab Spring in the last four years. Huntington, for example, considers the modernization factor based on urbanization, high literacy rates, freedom of expression, accessibility to information sources, and technological advancements as decisive drivers that encouraged democratic reformers to move towards democratizing political systems. In the Arab world, this causative factor manifested itself in the rapid growth of educated youths living in urban centers, where economic growth and the job market did not meet their expectations (Arab Human Development Report, 2009*)*. The case of Mohamed Bouazizi is one of the many alarming instances seen in the Tunisian uprisings that show the frustration of youth in the Arab world, in that they could not find jobs to satisfy their ambitions (Ajami, 2011). The map below illustrates the distribution of youths under 25 years old and the gross domestic product per person in each Arab country (Fig. 1).

Based on the above statistics, the then U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, alerted the leaders of Arab countries to listen to their young people's demands, as the old foundations of the Arab world were "sinking into the sand" (Walt, 2011: 18). The response to their demands, from her perspective, should address hot issues such as democratization of the political system, the creation of new jobs, and the suppression of government corruption.

Social media (Facebook and Twitter) formed another dimension in the modernization process that provided a space for activists to talk, organize rallies against their authoritarian regimes, and call for the democratization of their political system. Their chats and discussions on these issues created wide awareness of democratic values in society and helped overcome the fear of security forces. Mobile phone videos posted and documented government reactions against peaceful protesters, showing police beatings and the shooting of peaceful protestors who challenged their autocratic leaders and asked them to depart their tenure (Dickey, 2012; Walt, 2011). In this context, Christopher Dickey and Babak Dehghanpisheh (2011) highlighted that the actual instigators of the revolt in Egypt were "a band of young techies who used their mass-communication skills to mobilize thousands of people from almost every stratum of Egyptian society in an uprising against Mubarak's reign — with the notable exception of the Brotherhood, which declined to join the first massive but peaceful demonstrations" (p. 26) on January 25, 2011. In Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, young protesters used their mobile phone cameras to record the brutal practices of

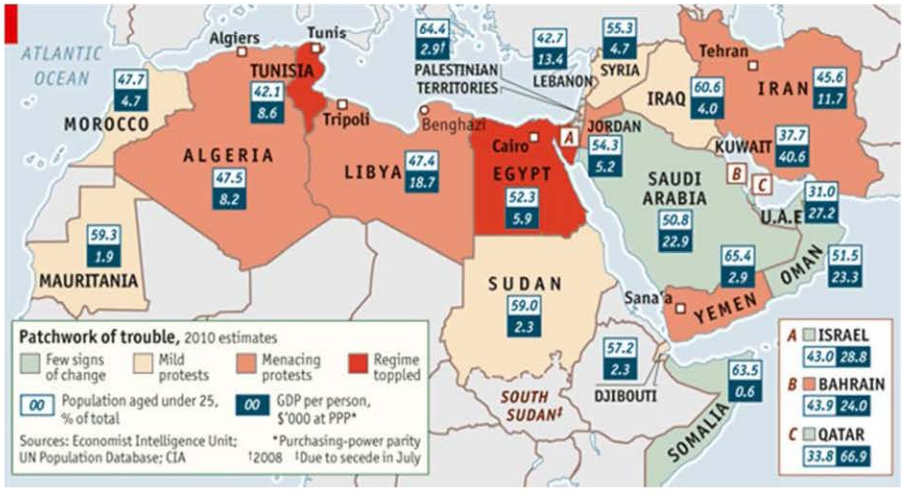

Figure 1: Distribution of youth and GDP/person in Arab countries. *Source.* Cultural Wizard, Retrieved from http://rw-3.com/tag/middle-east/.

security forces and then broadcast their images via the internet and then through international and regional news agencies. All these examples show how social media facilitated the dissemination of information and the organization of the Arab youths to rise up against their corrupt leaders and ask for regime change (Dickey & Dehghanpisheh, 2011; Filiu, 2011).

As a second causal factor, social inequality strengthened the trust in democracy of deprived social groups of the third wave countries as a means of fairly distributing resources and power; and it also encouraged them to stand firmly against their dictatorial regimes. In the Arab Spring countries, democratic reformers shared the same sentiment, in that they openly criticized their dictatorial and corrupt regimes and appealed for the democratization of political system. Thus, dictatorial practices and corruption were among the driving factors that led to the eruption of the revolution in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. In her essay "Deepening Divide," Aryn Baker interviewed Rami Nakhal, a Syrian cyber-activist working underground in Lebanon, about the main resons behind why he joined the anti-Syrian government campaign. He said, "We want what everyone in the region wants: an end to corruption, the ability to choose and dismiss our leaders, freedom of speech, and freedom of fear" (Baker, 2011:26). This statement reflects that corruption and dictatorship had deepened the state of social inequality in the Arab world and driven deprived social groups to call for the departure of their leaders and the replacement of their authoritarian regimes with democratic governance (Huntington, 1991b).

Transition Processes and the Arab Spring

Huntington (1991b) states that more than 60 countries throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa had gone through democratic transitions that manifested themselves in three processes, including "transformation," "replacement," and "transplacement." The internal dialectic of these processes is based on three crucial interactions between the government and the opposition, between reformers and standpatters in the governing coalition, and between moderates and extremists in the opposition. In all transition processes, these three central interactions play some form of role which may differ in accordance with the nature of each individual transition. In this section, I shall use this framework to discuss the transition processes that happened in the Arab Spring countries, and to investigate to what extent they are in harmony with those of "third wave countries."

Transformation Process

The democratic transformation process usually takes place when the democratic reformers in the governing coalition are stronger than the opposition and have the intention of democratizing the political establishment from within. This process occurred in 16 out of 35 third wave transitions, including 5 one-party systems, 3 personal dictatorships, and 8 military regimes. The evolution of the process passed through five major phases, four of them within the authoritarian system and the final one after its collapse (Huntington, 1991b). The first phase was associated with the emergence of a group of democratic reformers who struggled to democratize their authoritarian regime from within. The example cited by Huntington was that of Spain, where successors to the dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1937–1975) took a series of democratic measures, including the legalization of political parties, the election of a new assembly, and the promulgation of a new democratic constitution. Huntington noted that these measures gradually put Spain on the right democratic track and promoted its image as the most successful example of a third wave country. In the Arab world the process of transformation began when a cohort of democratic reformers appeared as agents of change during the third wave of liberalization and later spearheaded the Arab Spring by promoting democratic values and encouraging protesters to continue to struggle for regime change (Welzel, 2009). This liberalization process appeared in a very modest form, when some Arab governments released political prisoners, opened up certain issues for public debate, and loosened restrictions on the press. By doing so, they gave limited freedom and participation in political discourse, without exposing top policy and decisionmakers to any real electoral test (Sadiki, 2009). For example, in Tunisia, when Ben Ali came to office in 1988, he took some measures toward democratizing the political system which he had inherited from Habib Bourguiba's era (1957–1987), by loosening restrictions on the press, amending the constitution, and limiting the presidential term in office to three 5-year periods, to avoid any comparison with Bourguiba's life

presidency. Parliamentary elections were conducted in 1989 with fewer restrictions compared with Bourguiba's period, but the absolute majority of the parliamentary seats was controlled by the ruling party. Ben Ali himself was elected unopposed in Tunisia's first presidential election since 1972 (Filliu, 2011). In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak followed the same model, opening up an observed space to political parties and movements to express their opinion on certain matters and to participate in general elections at presidential and parliamentary levels. Furthermore, Ali Abdallah Saleh (r. 1990–2011) permitted political parties and civil soceity intitutions to participate in political dialogue and public elections, but only across a range of issues that would not affect his political power. In Libya, the situation was different, in that Colonel al-Gaddafi had no wish to share his power or reconcile with his political rivals. All these instances indicate that the pre-Arab Spring reforms were not meant to lead to full-scale democratization, as their initiators ("standpatters") were resistant to democratizing a political system in which they had built their political careers (Noueihed & Warren, 2012).

In the second phase, the democratic transformation process would take further steps when democratic reformers replaced standpatters in the authoritarian regime and succeeded in maintaining greater control over the process of decision-making and regime change. This shift would take place through three channels that would include the death of an authoritarian leader (i.e., Spain and Taiwan), the regular change of leadership within an authoritarian regime (i.e., Brazil and Mexico), or the instigation of a coup d'état against a nondemocratic leader (i.e., Peru and Nigeria). None of these changes took place in the Arab world in the two decades that preceded the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2010, as the dictatorial systems in the countries concerned did not allow regular changes in leadership, and there were no coup d'états that occurred in favor of the democratization process. Both Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali continued their predecessors' authoritarian policies and were not ready to take serious measures that would lead to the democratization of postindependence dictatorial systems in their countries. In fact, the modest reformist attempts initiated by them were highly cosmetic in nature and did not make a genuine move from authoritarianism to democracy.

The failure of liberalization is the third phase of transformation. It consists of democratic waves and their reversals which have occurred in countries like the Soviet Union, China, Burma, and South Africa (Huntington, 1991b). In Burma, the successors to General Sein Lwin proposed elections and began negotiations with opposition groups, but their attempts in this respect did not satisfy their political rivals who instigated a series of protests that paved the way for the intervention of military forces. As a result, the civilian president, Dr. Maung Maung, was deposed in 1988, and military forces controlled the government, cracked down on demonstrations, and ended the movement toward democratization. Huntington emphasized that the counter case is that of South Africa, where the successors to P. W. Botha — particularly F. W. De Klerk — drove the country forward toward full-scale democratization. In Arab countries, namely Egypt and Tunisia, the liberalization movement did

not lead to democratization, because the standpatters of the authoritarian regimes usually proposed reforms that would serve their own political agendas rather than democratizing the sytem in which they had built their policial images.

Backward legitimacy is the fourth phase of transformation, whereby democratic reformers attempt to neutralize the internal opposition of the regime's standpatters by weakening, reassuring, and coercing some of them to change sides. This scenario occurred in Egypt when democratic reformers collaborated with the Egyptian army to reinforce their efforts to overthrow Mubarak's dictatorial regime. They cheered the army in public squares and chanted slogans such as "The army and the people are one hand." Under the mounting pressure of the protests, the backwardness of Mubarak's administration at the national and international levels forced senior military officers to support the democratization tide of change, as they realized that Mubarak would not be in power much longer. As a result, Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the then commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces and the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, declared himself the *de facto* head of state after Mubarak tendered his resignation on February 11, 2011 (Omar Sulaiman's speech [February 18, 2011]).

The final phase of Huntington's transformation process is co-opting the opposition — a risky tactic of some significance, because the co-opted members of the opposition might claim power and accelerate the process of liberalization toward democracy. In contrast, the standpatters of the regime might use them as new supporters to weaken the stand of the opposition and prolong their stay in power. This form of divide and rule was also used by the Egyptian protesters when accepting the transitional leadership of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Replacement Process

The replacement process is different from the transformation discussed above, because the role of democratic reformers within the regime is either weak or nonexistent. In such a situation, as Huntington argues, the regime's standpatters will be not be interested in any form of democratization that might undermine their control over the apparatus of their authoritarian rule. If the democratic reformers of the opposition coalition succeeded in overthrowing the dictatorial regime, they would enter a new phase of internal struggle among themselves over "the distribution of power and the nature of the regime that must be established" (Huntington, 1991b: 148). The major impediment here is that the dictatorial leader would not be ready to step down until he died or until the regime itself came to an end. Thus, "The life of the regime [becomes] the life of the dictator" (p. 143). Authoritarian leaders who lost power through replacements would usually suffer an unhappy fate, such Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, who was forced into exile in 1986, and Nicolae Ceaușescu of Romania, who was summarily executed in 1989. The best Arab Spring

example that can be cited here is that of Colonel al-Gaddafi, who refused to step down as Libya's leader. He emphasized this point in a televised address when he said: "I am going to die here as a martyr." He then accused "forces affiliated with foreign forces" of seeking to "disfigure, undermine, and tarnish the reputation of the country" (*The Guardian* February 22, 2011). This fashion of dictatorial arrogance complicated the regime change process in Libya and led al-Gaddafi and his die-hard loyalists to fight for about two months after the liberation of Tripoli. They did not wave their white flags until their leader was captured and killed on October 20, 2011, in the city of Sirte.

Transplacement Process

The transplacement process is the third phase of transition in Huntington's third wave of democratization, and it combines government and opposition actions that lead to regime change. Transplacement occurs when the balance of power between standpatters and reformers within a governing coalition is relatively equal or uncertain. At the same time, the leaders of the opposition are divided between hardliners and democratic moderates who are strong enough to prevail over their radical fellows, but they are not quite strong enough to overthrow the regime (Huntington, 1991b). This standstill leads the two disputing parties to reach a consensus that the future of their country should be determined unilaterally, and so the only option is to explore the possibilities of a negotiated transition that will pave the way for the establishment of a democratic government. The best Arab Spring example is that of Yemen, where the situation became very complex and tumbled out of control after the government rejected the first Gulf countries' proposal of a power transfer in June 2011. Under mounting pressure exerted by protesters and external mediators (Gulf countries and the United States), Ali Abdallah Saleh and a number of revolutionary leaders finally agreed to sign an amended agreement of the Gulf countries in Riyadh on November 22, 2011. As a result of this action, Saleh became the fourth leader to be forced from power in 10 months of mass protests that had swept Yemen. The coalition opposition, consisting of Islamists, leftists, and Arab nationalists, accepted the political deal and agreed to participate in a transitional national unity government headed by Saleh's deputy, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi (Khosrokhavar, 2012).

The above examples reveal that those transitions that occurred in the Arab Spring countries shared similarities with those that took place in different countries in the third wave of democratization. However, their outputs in terms of regime change vary, as in the Arab Spring countries, with the exception of Tunisia, the situation today as a whole is very alarming and post-Arab Spring leaders face a series of challenges to establish democratic governments (Bellin, 2013) that will meet the expectations of protestors whose most popular slogan was "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice."

Conclusion

The above discussion classifies the Arab Spring as a fourth regional wave of democratization that shares some facets with the third global wave in terms of causative factors, features, and democratic transitions. In both experiences, the sequences of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy are incoherent, and many countries of the third wave of democratization have been able to settle into a "gray zone of diverse forms of government where autocratic and democratic features are combined" (Miller et al., 1202). Postrevolutionary countries in the Arab world also share the same experiences, because they currently face a series of challenges associated with the disputed agendas and priorities of post-revolutionary leaders, on the hand, and with standpatters of the old regimes on the other hand. Moreover, Islamist-oriented political parties want to establish Sharia-based regimes, ordinary citizens expect the rapid improvement of the economic situation, and liberal reformers intend to build democratic institutions founded on competition, inclusiveness, and civil liberties (Roy, 2012). On the other platform, the standpatters of the old regimes work to maintain their key positions in the process of decision making, because they have less faith in any democracy that might undermine their political influence and interests. According to a RAN Report, the changes underway in Arab Spring countries "may lead to various possible destinations that differ *both* from their points of departure and from liberal democracy." (Miller et al., 2012:xvii) Moreover, there are three major obstacles that may hinder the process of democratization: 1) the absence of cultural prerequisites for democracy; 2) the challenges of tribal and Islamic values that have fostered a culture of submission to authority; and 3) the conflict between secularists and Islamists, which is generating some doubt about the future course of democratic transitions in the Arab world.

Nonetheless, in spite of these challenges, postrevolutionary leaders in Tunisia have achieved a certain degree of success by entering into a political pact that has enabled them to move from authoritarianism to democracy. During this period, they have carefully identified their political agendas, shared power and resources, and restricted the participation of outsiders in decision making, and by doing so, they have made steady progress in establishing a liberal democratic government based on a sound degree of competition, inclusive suffrage in national elections, and a reasonable level of civil and political liberties. In Egypt, postrevolutionary developments produced a form of minimal democracy based on limited competition, inclusive suffrage, and restricted civil liberties. In contrast, the political situation in Libya and Yemen is very shaky, because the postrevolutionary administrations failed to move cleanly from authoritarianism to democracy, while their centralized authority is on the edge of collapse. This failure is associated ostensibly with a lack of democratic experience, in addition to historical hierarchical and authoritarian cultures that complicate the transition process from the current political situation to democracy and make the future course of change in the two countries unpredictable.

Notes

1. For this quotation consult "Timeline of the Tunisian Revolution," Bulletin of Mass Strike. Retrieved February 18, 2012 from http://www.luxemburgism.lautre.net/spip.php?article127
2. For further details, see "We are All Khaled Said." Retrieved February 2, 2015, from https://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk?fref=ts
3. Ali Abdallah Saleh's signing the transition of power agreement, Riyadh. Retrieved November 23, 2011 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_7qA_X3MF8; Ali Abdallah Saleh's speech after the transition of power agreement, Riyadh. Retrieved November 22, 2011, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GyFNp6o9OU

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