

# The Arab Uprisings

## Cyberactivism in Tunisia and Egypt

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"I confirm that the work presented in this essay is my own and that I have written everything  
by myself."

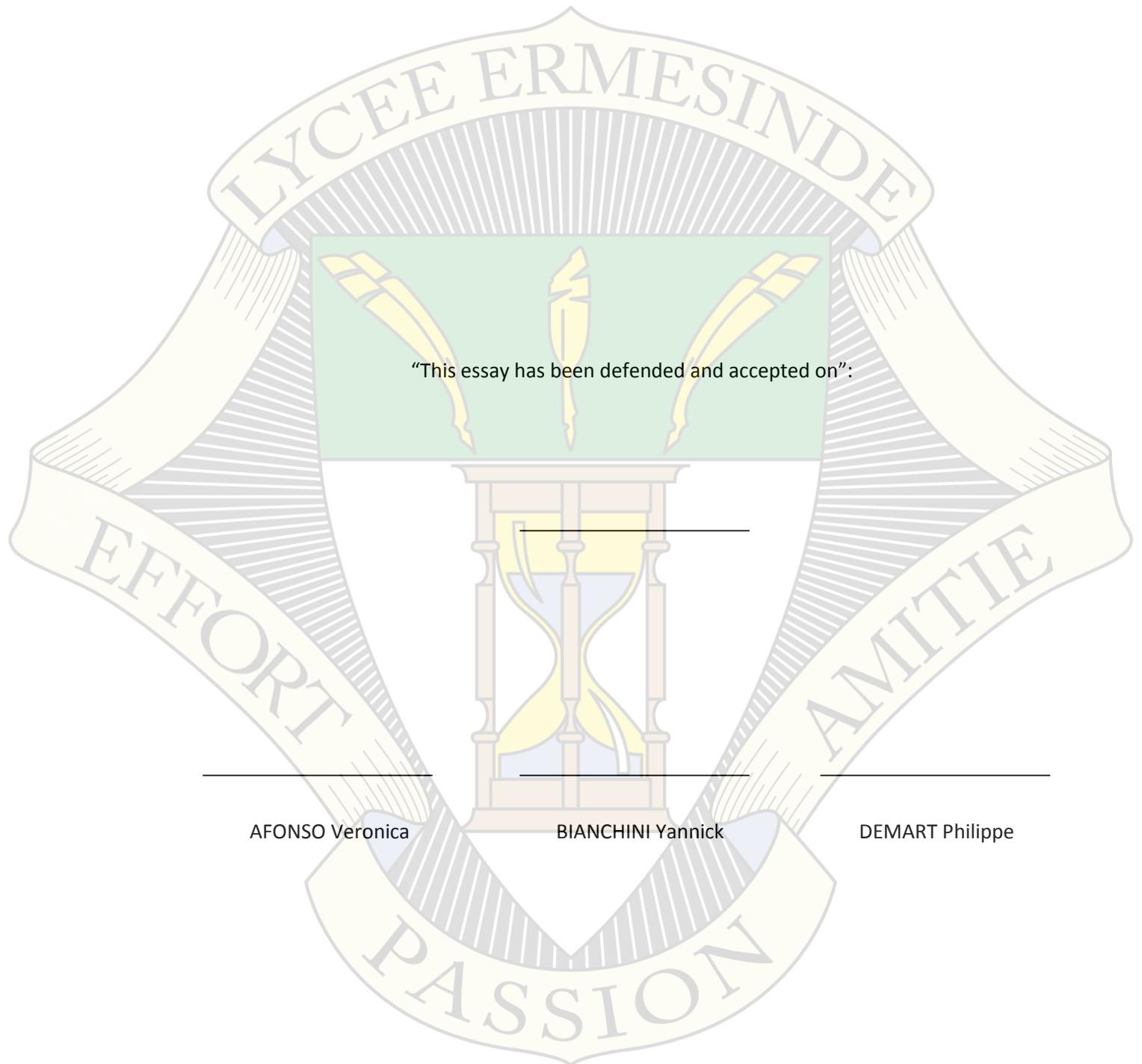
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## **Descriptif**

With this “mémoire collectif” 2014-2015, we want to analyze the role social media played in bringing up political changes in Tunisia and Egypt during the so-called “Arab Spring”. By analyzing and explaining cyberactivism and social media, we try to develop our opinion of their impact on the uprisings in both countries and how far they influenced each other.

Since the Arab Uprising is still a current subject, we'd like to give our readers a general view about the happenings in the Middle East. By focusing exclusively on Tunisia and Egypt, we hope to provide an engaging discussion on the topic.

After having given an historical, political and economic overview of the region, we will address the following questions:

- What is actually meant by the Arab World? Which countries are parts of this?
- How important was the relation between the Tunisian and Egyptian population in the uprisings?
- What role did the social media play during the 2011 uprisings? To what extent did social media actually play a major role? How did social media become a virtual space for assembly? How did it support the protesters to plan, organize and execute their protests?
- Who were the actors of these protests?
- Can social media ever be a tool for democratisation?

## **The Arab Uprisings: Cyberactivism in Tunisia and Egypt**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Arab uprisings are a series of protests that swept through the Arab world in 2011. A part of these protests led to the overthrow of authoritarian secular<sup>1</sup> republican regimes which had been in place for decades. One could say that these revolts were initiated by various activists who spread their opinions and political ideas through the Internet and especially through social media. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social media and cyberactivism were more and more used by activists to mobilize masses. Instead of using posters, flyers, letters, etc. which reach only a small part of the population, activists started using networks such as Facebook or Twitter to gain a larger audience.

In our work, we are going to analyse the Arab uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt and the impact of social media and cyberactivism in the demonstrations that took place in 2011. By showing both the uprisings in Egypt and those in Tunisia, we want to compare two situations. Moreover, our goal is to find out whether social media and cyberactivism can be a tool for democratisation. For us, democratisation is the process of establishing democratic institutions and political freedom for the population.

To do so, we are firstly going to give a general overview of the Arab world, before going into further detail about the economic and political situation before the uprisings in both analysed countries. Furthermore, we are going to inspect the uprisings as well as its chronological progress. Thirdly, it's important for us to find out the role of the different actors in the protests.

By defining social media and cyberactivism, we can analyse the actual impact both tools had on the uprisings in 2011, a focal point of our research. The next chapter will be focussing and examining the aftermath of the revolutions in both countries in order to see if there even was a process of democratization.

The present research is based on a well-selected range of books, newspapers and articles. Furthermore we were in contact, via Facebook and Skype with a young Egyptian girl, Pakinam Magdy El-Gohary. Pakinam Magdy El-Gohary is 18 years old and studies *Mass Communication* at the *American University of Cairo*. She participated in the World Peace Forum in Luxembourg in May 2011 where she represented the Egyptian youth. The starting day of the uprisings was the last day of her exams. She was at the cinema when her mother called her to come home immediately.

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<sup>1</sup> Secular: that is not based on religion

## 2. Arab “Spring”

The term “spring” is mostly associated with a renewal or a period of great changes. It is not the first time that the metaphor of springtime is used to name a revolution. The revolution wave that swept through Europe in 1848, earned the name of “Springtime of Nations”. When Czechoslovakia raised its voice for liberal reforms in 1968 it stayed in the minds as the “Prague Spring”.

The term “Arab Spring” isn’t an innovation either. The media used it in 2005 to describe the events in the aftermath of America’s invasion of Iraq in 2003. These events include the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s government and Iraq’s first real elections, Lebanon’s Cedar Revolution, when the population put down a pro-Syrian government and forced Syria’s troops off their country. Moreover, women in Kuwait marched for the right to vote and Hosni Mubarak promised free presidential elections. However this Arab Spring wasn’t a successful one. Except for women’s right to vote in Kuwait, none of the promises were held and politics in Lebanon and Iraq grew worse.



Figure 1: Supporting the Arab "Spring"

It is probably Marc Lynch, an American professor at the George Washington University who introduced the term to name the events of 2010-2011 in an article published on January 6, 2011 in the political journal *Foreign Policy*, an American publication focusing on global affairs and international policy.

There are three reasons why calling the uprisings that occurred in the Arab world in 2010-2011 “Arab Spring” is not appropriate: First of all, the first uprisings took place between December 2010 and February 2011. Secondly, this name was given at the beginning of the uprising wave. However after taking a look at the previous Arab Spring and at its outcome, why would anyone want to burden the hopeful beginning of the uprisings of 2011 with a name with such a disastrous past? Finally “spring” is a metaphor to describe positive renewal. However at the time when it was first used in the media, nobody knew if the uprisings were actually going

to have a positive outcome. Now that we know the outcome of the uprisings of 2011, the term “spring” is still not 100 percent appropriate. Indeed there is only one “Arab Spring country” that has partly succeeded in building up a democracy, Tunisia, and this development has still to be tested over time. As for Egypt, the country is back under military rule, with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as the new dictator.

Other terms such as “Arab Awakening” or “Arab uprisings” are far more appropriate. One could say that this period was an “Awakening”, since part of the Arab population woke up and decided to rise against its ruler. The term “Arab uprisings” is the most appropriate, since it is exactly what it says: The Arab world rose up.

“[...] there are two reasons to discourage [this title’s] use. First, the term spring implies a positive outcome for the uprisings, which has yet to be achieved. Second, only one of the uprisings-in Syria- actually broke out in that season (if one includes all of March in spring). The others began in the dead of winter, a season hardly appropriate for an uplifting title.” <sup>2</sup>

This quote by James Gelvin, an American scholar of Middle Eastern history, underscores the argument that firstly, one cannot call an event “spring” without knowing if the outcome will be positive. When the book was written, it was still uncertain how the uprisings would end; now we know that the development turned out to be not as bright as the Arab population could have hoped for four years ago. Secondly, Gelvin argues that it is absurd to call an event “spring” that happened in the dead of winter.

“Joseph Massad<sup>3</sup> on *Al Jazeera* said the term was “part of a US strategy of controlling [the movement’s] aims and goals” and directing it towards American-style liberal democracy. Due to the electoral success of Islamist parties following the protests in many Arab countries, the events have also come to be known as “Islamist Spring” or “Islamist Winter “.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Source: *The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know*, James L. Gelvin, Oxford

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Massad is a professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University

<sup>4</sup> Source: Wikipedia, Article “Arab Spring”; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab\\_Spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring)



What Joseph Massad thinks about this term, is rather controversial. Since an American professor started using this term, it is indeed possible that it was an attempt to “Americanise” the uprisings. By being the one who named these events, Marc Lynch seems like he is a part of it and it brings you nearer to it. Also, the audience links the events happening far away from it with the term that was used by an American journalist. As a result, it links the events with America, which can be followed by an “Americanisation” of the uprisings. On the other hand, it is also possible that journalists used this term, because it is easy and they just quickly needed a name for the uprisings in order to vulgarize them thus making them tangible. Indeed, as soon as something has a name, it is easier to understand it and to talk about it. That is why every event in the world earns a name as soon as it happened.

As to the term “Islamic Spring” or “Islamic Winter”, one could wonder if it is to be used at all. There was indeed a period after the uprisings where Islamist parties gained popularity and power, but very soon, Islamist parties were removed from power by the army which was largely supported by the population. Therefore it would be unfair for the population that fought for its liberty and rights, to summarise the whole process of the uprisings to the term “Islamist Spring/Winter”. In the first place it was surely not about Islamists, even though they did play a role in the uprisings. The foreground of the uprisings was and is the mass of people who decided that the autocratic rule had to come to an end and who fought for it peacefully as long as it was possible.

“The term [Arab Spring] was a reference to the turmoil in Eastern Europe in 1989, when seemingly impregnable Communist regimes began falling down under pressure from mass popular protests in a domino effect. In a short period of time, most countries in the former Communist bloc adopted democratic political systems with a market economy.”<sup>5</sup>

The period of turmoil in Eastern Europe in 1989, is actually sometimes called Autumn of Nations, an allusion to the term « Springtime of Nations » used to describe the revolutions of 1848. Therefore the term “Arab Spring” is more likely inspired from the latter. Nonetheless what could explain that the revolutions of 2011 are called Arab Spring as a play on the term of the 1989 revolutions is that both waves were quite similar in means and goals. Indeed, in 1989 the population of some Eastern Europe countries stood up against oppressive dictators and ended one-party rules peacefully (except for Romania, whose population overthrew the

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Primoz Manfreda; Definition of the Arab Spring: Middle East Uprisings in 2011

regime violently) and these regimes answered with violence inflicted upon the population. However, the revolutions of 1989 were far more successful as the ones from 2011. The term Arab Spring may have seemed like an encouraging term at the beginning (still then, we should not forget the Arab Spring of 2005), but as time went by, it became more and more inappropriate. Indeed, as already pointed out before, most revolutions were not successful. Even Tunisia, whose revolution is seen as the most successful one, is still only on an unsure path to democracy. The wave did not reach every country of the Arab world. The Persian gulf monarchies, for example, may offer great economic opportunities<sup>6</sup> (for their male citizens) but still have closed politics. For the Arab Uprisings to be as successful as the "Autumn of Nations", every oppressive regime of the Arab world should have been overthrown, which is surely not the case, since a great part of the Syrian population still fights against Bashar al-Hassad and many countries were not even touched by the "wave".

"If these protests continue to spread, both inside of countries and across to other Arab countries, then we really could talk about this being Obama's "Arab Spring," only with the extra intensity associated with climate change."<sup>7</sup>

Here, Marc Lynch is clearly referring to the Arab Spring of 2005, which was the peak of Bush's mandate regarding foreign policy. Indeed, all the events composing the Arab Spring of 2005 happened in the aftermath of America's invasion of Iraq and can therefore be seen as an "American achievement". Marc Lynch says that if the protests of 2011 reach other Arab countries and set the Arab world on fire, we could talk about Obama's Arab Spring, like we talked about Bush's Arab Spring. However, what would be the American trigger for the Arab Spring? Osama Bin Laden's assassination? No, Bin Laden was the head of Al-Qaeda, an Islamist movement and the protests had little to do with fighting Islamists. Furthermore, as Fawaz A. Gerges says in his article « Obama & the Arab World: Continuity and Change »<sup>8</sup>, « The 2011 uprisings came as a surprise for American policymakers. ». Obama had sent a memo to urge his top advisers to change the idea that stability in the Arab world profited America best, but the US foreign policy establishment « dismissed warnings about popular dissent as a domestic problem that the region's security services could contain. » Therefore calling these protests « Obama's Arab Spring » would be giving credits to Obama's administration, even though they did not see it coming.

<sup>6</sup> Source: The Economist, The tragedy of the Arabs, a poisoned history ; Tethered by history

<sup>7</sup> Source: Marc Lynch ; Obama's Arab Spring? ; Foreign Policy ; January 6, 2011

<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/01/201313195532579566.htm>

« The irony of the Western invention of the "Arab Spring" is that regardless of citizenry remonstrations for "self-determination," we still continue to see the Arab region in our eyes and not through theirs. What is going on in the MENA is something deeper than a democratic transformation, it is what democracy is predicated on -- a demand for recognizing the right to human dignity.”<sup>9</sup>

Maytha Alhassen, a University of Southern California Provost Ph.D. Fellow who has been conducting research on the revolutions of the Arab world, is clearly reticent to the name “Arab Spring”. She says that this name reduces the revolutions to what Western countries think it is, a simple “democratic transformation”. For her, the revolutions are far more than just that, it is a demand for human rights and dignity. That is also what many participants of the revolutions think. The terms “karama », « thawra » and « haqooq » (dignity, revolution and rights) are the most popular terms used by participants on Twitter and Facebook to describe the uprisings. This shows that protesters did not adopt the term that Western media gave their protests, which again shows that the protesters did not need the help (and maybe even support) of Western countries. As Wael Ghonim put it talking about Obama « You have supported the regime that oppressed us for 30 years, please don’t get involved now. »

In general, I think we can say that there are far more appropriate and relevant terms to name the events that shook the Arab world in 2011 than the basic « Arab Spring ». It is partly wrong and just does not fit the image that the protesters themselves had of the uprisings. It is a Western invention, a way to make the uprisings fit into Western ideals and imagination. It is not possible that we use such an easy and banal word to describe these complex and unexpected events. Furthermore, instead of using a term made up by Western media, we should use the term(s) that the protesters themselves use(d), which would make it less (western-)subjective and therefore less wrong.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Maytha Alhassen (Provost Ph.D. Fellow in American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California) ; “Please Reconsider the Term "Arab Spring"” ; Huffington Post



### 3. Arab World

#### 3.1. What is the Arab World?

A thousand years ago, the Arab world was a highly developed region. Tolerance, innovation and trade were its strength. The Islam Golden Age, during the reign of the Abbasids (750 to 1517) and of the Fatimids (909–1171), was a time of great development in the Arab world. The Abbasids ruled as caliphs from the city of Baghdad (in modern Iraq) after they took back the authority of the Muslim Empire from the Umayyad's. The Abbasid Caliphate was the third caliphate to succeed the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The Fatimid ruled over North Africa, Sicily, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Red Sea coast of Africa, Tihamah, Hejaz and Yemen. During that age, the capitals of Baghdad, Cairo and Cordoba evolved into intellectual centres for science, philosophy, medicine, trade and education. Instead of eradicating knowledge of the people they conquered, Muslims tried to assimilate this knowledge. They advanced the knowledge they learned from the ancient Hellenistic, Roman, Parthia Indian, Egyptian and Phoenician civilizations. By 1000 AC, the Muslims had conquered the entire Middle East, North Africa, Persia and parts of Southern Europe. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople, which became Istanbul. When the Ottoman Empire became the dominant force in the Muslim world, Istanbul became the new capital of the Islamic world. A great part of MENA<sup>10</sup> was then more or less controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Even though under Ottoman rule, most countries in North Africa had a large autonomy. However since 1683, when the Turks failed to conquer Vienna a second time, the Muslim powers have declined while European powers gained more importance on the world stage.

When the Ottoman Empire fell as a result of World War I and various uprisings, most of today's Arab world came under European control, mainly British and French. "The dead hand of the Turk's declining Ottoman Empire was followed [...] by the humiliation of British and French rule."<sup>11</sup> Palestine, Iraq and Egypt were under British administration, while Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria and Lebanon were controlled by the French. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Yemen became independent almost directly after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the House of Saud concluding an alliance with the USA.

Most of the Arab countries gained their independence during the cold war. This led to the fact that the emerging countries were almost forced to join one camp or the other, because

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<sup>10</sup> MENA : Middle East and North Africa, a region extending from Morocco to Iran, including all Middle Eastern and Maghreb countries

<sup>11</sup> Source: *The tragedy of the Arabs*, The Economist



without support it would have been near impossible to build up a nation state. On the one hand the nationalist and socialist countries (Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen) tended to the Soviet Union and on the other hand the monarchist and traditionalist regimes (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco) decided to side with the West. Of course, both parties were eager to protect their interests in this region. The United States throughout the cold war had six official goals in the Arab world: "prevent the expansion of Soviet influence; ensure Western access to oil; secure the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of a regional balance of power; promote stable, pro-Western states in the region; preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the state of Israel; and protect the sea lanes, lines of communications, and the like connecting the United States and Europe with Asia." <sup>12</sup> As one can see, most of these goals (apart from the preservation of Israel) were purely selfish. The United States tried to regain everything they had "lost" as a cause of the Cold War through the Arab world (access to oil, connection with Asia...). Before the cold war, the United States could geographically profit from Russia by crossing their territory to reach Asia and they were supplied with oil from Russia. The West was "not about to jeopardize this allegiance by urging democratization."<sup>13</sup> This was the start of the American influence in the Arab world. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States gained control and influence over the whole Arab world. Still, the Arab world remained divided into two camps: one that was near to America and the other one who defended itself against American influence.

Furthermore, after they gained independence, the emerging Arab countries had to build a new state and most of them decided to copy the European system, with institutions, parties, elections, presidents and ministers. However, it was not the population who decided this, but the people in power at that moment. These decisions were top-down decisions and supported by foreign governments for their personal interests. The problem is that in Europe and America, this system is a result of a long development. However, in the Arab world this system was "imposed" and did not fit with the social structures and culture at that moment. Thus, the president is seen as the absolute leader and not as a Head of State. This leader has almost absolute power over the population, which is often not taken into account. Even though most of the countries have a democratic façade, democracy as we know it, is something that the Arab world has not experienced. The democratic façade has led to the fact that the common citizen start to doubt the democratic interests. This concept of "power from above" has supported the autocracies and the one-party rule throughout the Arab world for decades.

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<sup>12</sup> Source: *The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know*, James L. Gelvin, Oxford

<sup>13</sup> Source: *Tethered by history*, The Economist

Geographically, the Arab world is the territory that extends from North Africa to the western border of Iran and from the southern border of Turkey to the Horn of Africa. It comprises 21 states (Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, Yemen) and the predominant language is Arabic.

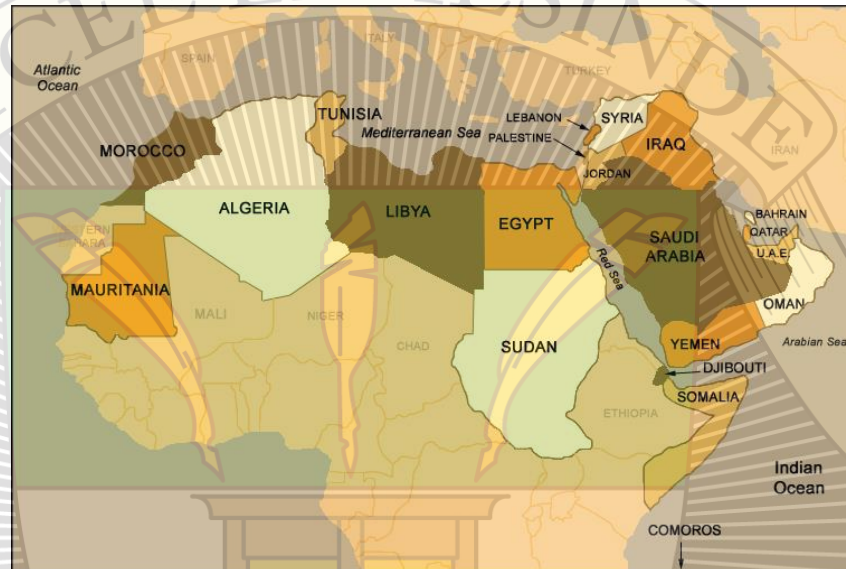


Figure 2: Map of the Arab World

It has a population of 422 Million people with over the half under 25 years of age. Most inhabitants are Arab-speaking Muslims. The rest of the population is mostly Berber or Kurd and many have the Christian faith. The Muslims are divided into several groups. The two main divides are Shia and Sunni, which make up the greatest part of the Muslim population. There are and have been many sectarian divides between Sunni and Shia which were often used by rulers and opponents to their own advantages. Generally, the religious divides were used by rulers to maintain their power. Arab rulers have portrayed themselves as “protectors of women and Christians”<sup>14</sup>. They argued that the latter suffered from discrimination if the opposition, portrayed as Islamist and extremists, was in power. The population felt as though it was “caught between rotten governments and even more rotten and often violent opposition.”<sup>15</sup> They used this tactic mainly to gain support from the Western public opinion, especially in the USA. No population would have accepted that their government traded with discriminating and authoritarian governments, so these authoritarian governments had to legitimate their ruling fashion, to keep the support they had.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Fawaz A.Gerges ; *A Rupture*

<sup>15</sup> Source: *Tethered by history*, The Economist

Why do Arabs identify with each other? To start with there is a shared language, Arabic and a shared history, encouraged by schools and intellectuals. There is also “poetry, (Egyptian) soap operas, and movies that Arabs throughout the region, and throughout the world, share.”<sup>16</sup> There are also associations like the Arab League that support a common identity. Founded in Cairo on March, 22 1945, the Arab League aims to “strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programs of its members and to mediate disputes among them or between them and third parties.”<sup>17</sup> Even though it concentrated on cultural, economic and social programs in its early years, later its political activity increased, under the secretary-general Mahmoud Riad. However, the Arab League was weakened by internal conflicts about international topics, mainly the israelo-palestinian conflict. When Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the other members voted for the exclusion of Egypt from the Arab League and the transfer of its headquarters from Cairo to Tunis. Egypt became a member again in 1989. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 also left a deep divide between members. The Arab League also played a role in the so-called Arab Spring. For example, it voted for the imposition of the no-flyer-zone over Libya to protect opponents of the regime from air attacks and in early November, it announced that it had reached an agreement with the Syrian government to end the massacre of peaceful protesters. When Syria broke this agreement, the other countries voted for its exclusion.

This feeling of Arab identity must be differentiated from the Arab nationalism. The main goal of Arab nationalism was to achieve independence for all Arab countries from European colonial power. Its ideology was to create equality and compatibility in the Arab countries by inspiring clauses of constitutions. These constitutions state that Arabic is the official language of Arab nations and Islam has to be the source of all law in the Arab world. The premise for an Arab nationalism was a political, cultural, religious and historical unity among the people of the entire Arab nation. However since the 1950s, when it was a widespread ideal, mainly for strategic purposes, Arab nationalism has dissipated and people have started to identify themselves with the state in which they live. Inhabitants of the Arab world might identify themselves as Arabs and share a common identity with their neighbors without wanting to be part of one Arab state. It is similar to a German, for example, who might feel European and who shares a sense of similarity with his French neighbor, but who does not want to give up his German nationality for a European one.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford

<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31483/Arab-League>



Still, a widespread feeling of Arab identity is present in the Arab world, which explains why inhabitants of the region have followed the uprisings of their neighbors with such interest and why the initiators have helped their followers and shared their experience and knowledge, like Tunisia did for Egypt. This concern might also be explained by the fact that these countries being neighbors suggested that the fire would spread over to the next country very quickly.

Arab identity is not only a feeling; the inhabitants of the region also face the same or similar problems when it comes to politics and economy. The Regional Bureau for Arab States of the United Nations Development Program has published in 2002 the first *Arab Human Development Report*, which has been followed by four others. These reports cite some characteristics of the Arab world that are miles away from positive. The 2004 report describes almost all the Arab states as states in which the government has so much power that it “converts the surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes”.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in countries without dynastic successions, presidents often modified the constitution so they could be reelected several times. A reason why the autocratic rulers had so few difficulties to win the elections every time is that the formation of political parties is restricted in most of the countries. The formation of such a party needs to be allowed by the interior minister or by government committees, in other cases, such as in the Gulf states, the government eliminated the problem by banning them.

Furthermore, when it came to civil liberties, political rights and the independence of the media, only Jordan ranked above the international mean. As Pakinam puts it, “If someone talked about politics, he would disappear in a second.” Seventeen out of nineteen states surveyed by the Regional Bureau for Arab States of the United Nations Development Program require the newspaper to be licensed and eleven allow pre-censorship. This means that the media is not allowed to show or report what it wants, which demonstrates the oppression of the population. However in the last decade, the evolution of Satellite TV and international Arabic TV channels, like Al Jazeera, allowed an easier access to information.

Moreover, Arab states are considered as the “most food insecure in the world and also suffer from the highest land inequality”<sup>19</sup>. Egypt is the world’s largest grain importer and Yemen imports the greatest part of its wheat. Even the Fertile Crescent, which was historically the most fertile part of this region, suffers from similar problems, mainly because of the war since the late 1980’s and bad resource management.

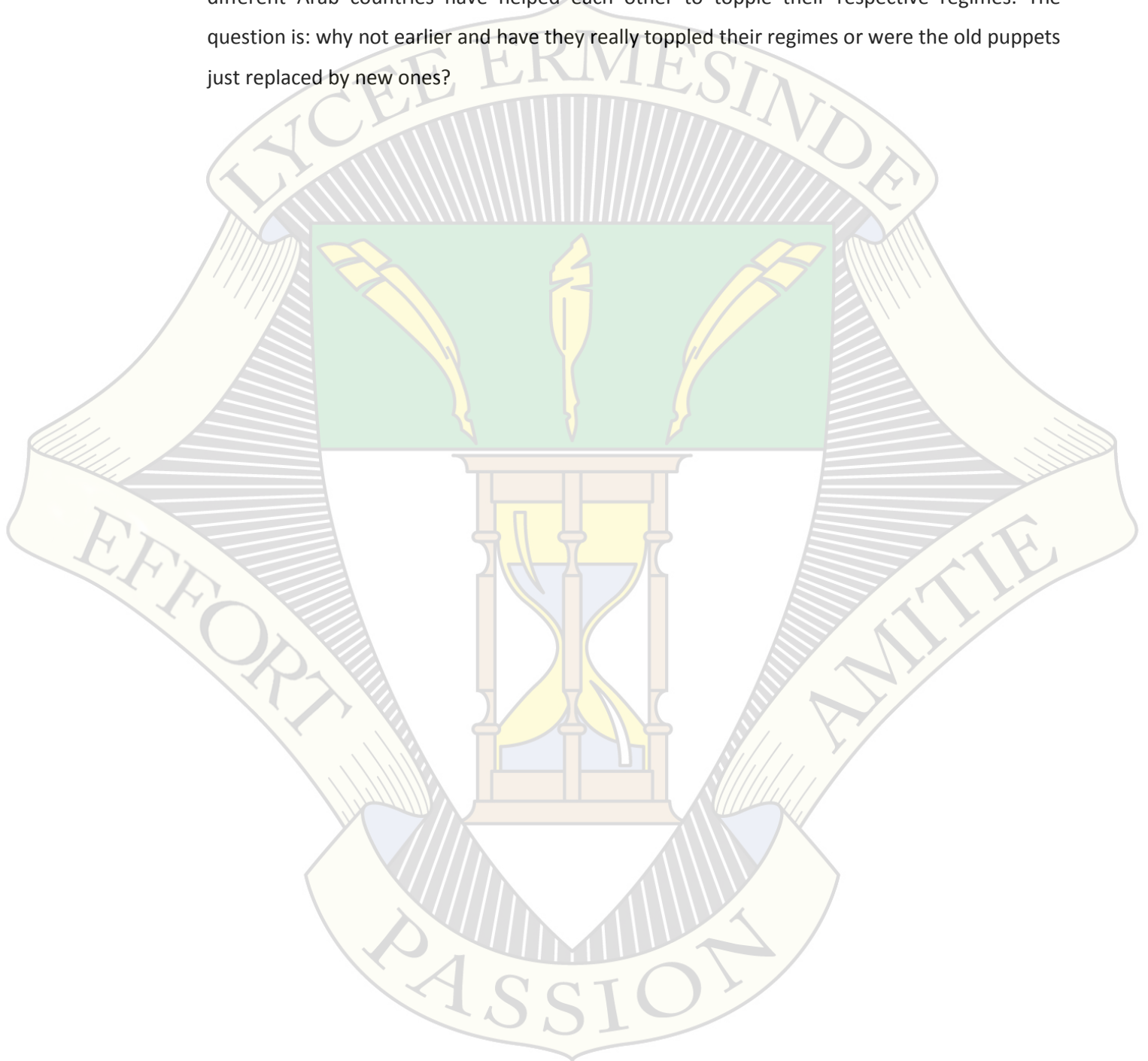
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<sup>18</sup> Source: *The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know*, James L. Gelvin, Oxford

<sup>19</sup> Source: Fawaz A. Gerges, *A Rupture*



Today, the Arab world is “held back by despotism and convulsed by war”<sup>20</sup> Taking into account the dreadful living conditions and the political situation of the Arab world since 1950’s, it is no wonder that the population has had enough. Furthermore, it is comprehensible that the different Arab countries have helped each other to topple their respective regimes. The question is: why not earlier and have they really toppled their regimes or were the old puppets just replaced by new ones?



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<sup>20</sup>Source: *The tragedy of the Arabs*, The Economist

# TUNISIA

Capital: Tunis

Area: 153 610 km<sup>2</sup>

Official language: Tunisian Arabic

State Religion: Islam

Religions in Tunisia: -Islam (95%)

-Christianity

-Judaism

Currency: Tunisian dinar

2011

Mohammed  
Bouazizi sets  
himself on fire  
--> UPRISINGS

2002: "referendum" making  
him eligible for more terms  
-"won" elections three times  
with 88-98% of votes  
-security forces for private  
use  
-wife, Leila Trabelsi: symbol  
of corruption in Tunisia

1881

French make Tunisia a  
protectorate

1956

Tunisia becomes  
independent

BEN ALI

-becomes president  
-abolishes presidency for life  
-limitation of terms for one  
president  
-amends constitution:  
president has to be >75 when  
he takes office

leader of independence  
movement

HABIB BOURGUIBA

-proclaims Tunisia a  
republic  
- "wins" elections three  
times, then abolishes  
elections

1987

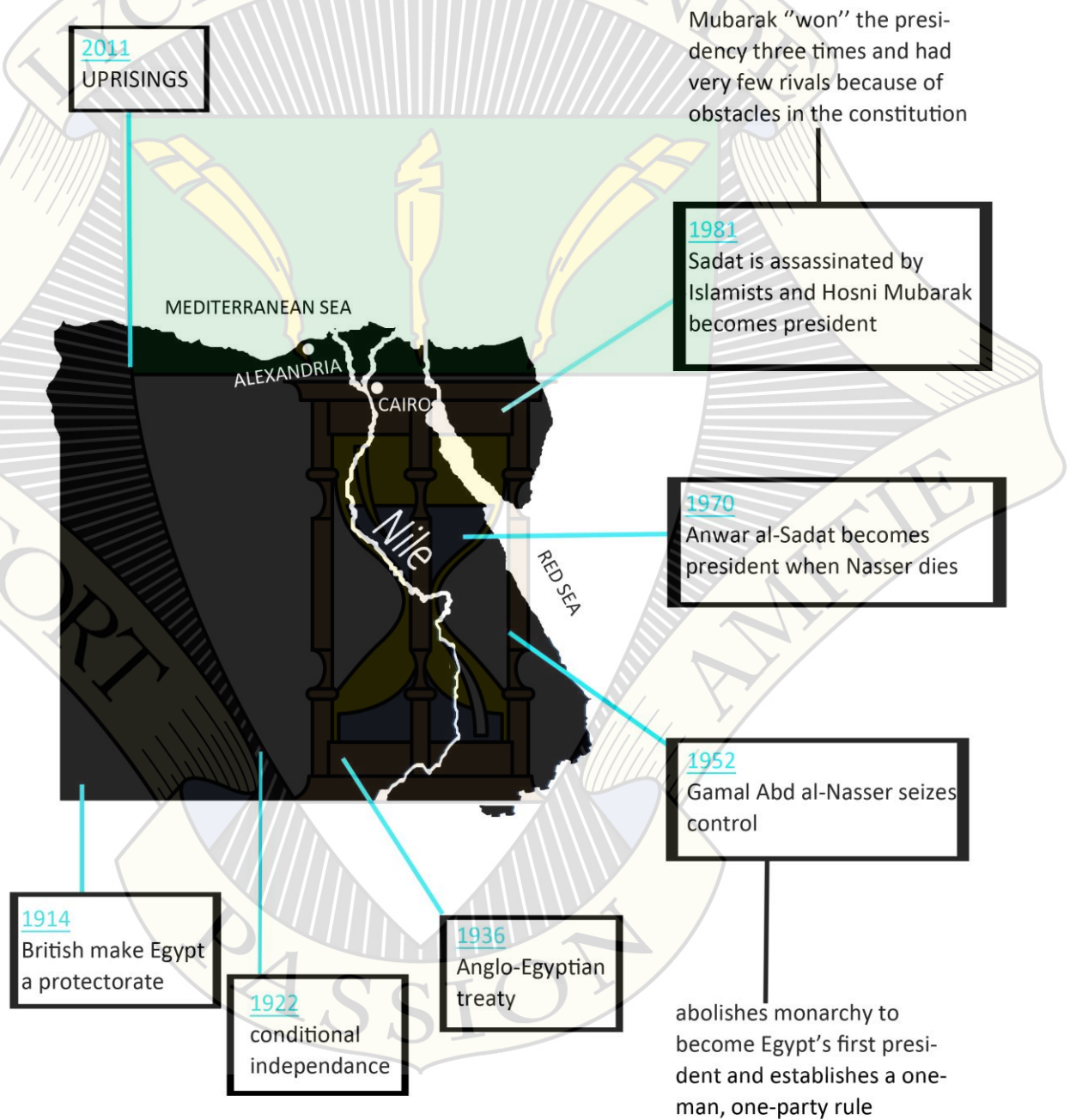
Prime Minister Ben Ali has doctors  
proclaim Bourguiba mentally  
incompetent

1974: he amends the  
constitution to make himself  
president for life

## 3.2. Economic and political situation before the uprisings

# Egypt

Capital: Cairo  
Area: 1 002 450 km<sup>2</sup>  
Official language: Egyptian Arabic  
State Religion: Islam  
Religions in Egypt: -Islam (90%)  
-Orthodox Christian  
Currency: Egyptian Pound  
Current president: Abdel Fattah El-Sisi  
Population: 88 000 000





As already pointed out before, the economic and political situation in the Arab world was one of the main reasons for the uprisings. Since the post-colonial era, when Tunisia and Egypt gained their respective independence, the situation has become worse. In both countries, presidents raised hope at the beginning, gaining the support of the population. After a time however, they wouldn't let go of the power and eventually changed the constitution in their favour. Over the years an elitist business class emerged, formed by friends and relatives of the head of State. In Tunisia and Egypt, the country was not build around democratic institutions, but rather around the will of the President and his clique.

Tunisia was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1881, when it was annexed as a protectorate by the French. In 1956, the independence movement seized control, led by Habib Bourguiba who became Tunisia's first president. Even though he was widely respected by his people for a very long time, he later amended the constitution to make him president for life. In 1987 however, his Prime Minister, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali had doctors proclaim him mentally incompetent and became president. In some of his first actions, he raised hope of the Tunisian population. Among others, he abolished the presidency for life and amended the constitution to limit the number of terms a president could serve in office to three. However, in 2002, a constitutional referendum allowed the president to be eligible for more than three terms. Ben Ali "won" the elections five times, always with 89-98 percent of the votes. He did have a political party, the Neo-Destour party, but it had no representative purpose and no ideology. It was more like a club for the political and economic elite, the "fat cats" of the Tunisian population. His security apparatus was hired to "monitor, frighten and repress the population".<sup>21</sup> In addition to that, he hired his personal security forces over which he had direct control. These security forces were allowed to arrest people at will and were accused of torturing detainees by human right organizations. "People have suffered because of them. They wrecked politics, the media and the judiciary in this country."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford

<sup>22</sup> Source: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/03/2011382051641249.html>



"If [Ben Ali's relatives] were entering new sectors, suddenly the president would issue a new decree introducing new barriers in that sector, stifling competition."<sup>23</sup>

As to the corruption, it was a widespread and common thing in Tunisia. The family of Ben Ali's wife, the "Trabelsi clan", was a well-known figure of corruption. As a cable released by WikiLeaks says: "seemingly half of the Tunisian business community can claim a Ben Ali connection through marriage, and many of these relations are reported to have made the most of their lineage." Ben Ali set up barriers to prevent antagonists from overtaking his relatives and friends. He did this to guarantee the success of his wife's International School of Carthage, for example. A non-profit private school founded by Mohammed Bouebdelli was prevented from teaching some subjects and eventually couldn't award diplomas anymore, because it was a direct concurrent to Leila Trabelsi's new school. Moreover, the Trabelsi family owned the only private radio station, the largest airline, several hotel companies, car assembly-plants and for-profit schools. Two members of the family even stole the yacht of a prominent French businessman and had it repainted to avoid being detected. Another member gained control of a state bank by buying 17 percent of its shares, while only 25 percent were on sale. Moreover, when she fled Tunisia, Leila Trabelsi was suspected to have had 56 million dollars in gold bullion on her plane. The privatization of government-owned assets, a part of the neoliberal policies introduced by the World Bank supported this attitude.

Egypt gained a conditional independence from Great Britain in 1922. Egypt was a sovereign monarchy, but the British retained control of the key institutions. In 1936, Egypt and the United Kingdom signed the anglo-egyptian treaty, which implied that all British forces were to be withdrawn, except for those protecting the Suez Canal. Moreover, the United Kingdom would supply and train Egyptian forces and support them in case of war. This solution was not enough for Egyptian nationalists who demanded complete and unconditional independence. Colonel Gamal Abd-al Nasser and his "Free Officers" seized control in 1952. Nasser abolished the monarchy and became Egypt's first president. He established a one man, one party-rule. After Nasser's death, Anwar al-Sadat took over the presidency. His ruling fashion can be summarized by the answer he once gave to an insolent journalist: "In other times I would have shot you, but it is democracy I am suffering from."<sup>24</sup>. When Islamists assassinated Sadat in

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<sup>23</sup>Source: Antonio Nucifora, World Bank's lead economist for Tunisia;  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/revealing-tunisia-corruption-under-ben-ali-201432785825560542.html>

<sup>24</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford

1981, Hosni Mubarak assumed the presidency. Because of the many obstacles in the constitution, set up by himself, he had few rivals during elections, which led to the fact that he was “re-elected” three times. Egypt has been under state of emergency since 1957. The security forces had a huge role to play in Egypt’s dictatorship. Two million Egyptians participated in Egypt’s security apparatus. Some of them were attached to the interior ministry, others worked as Mubarak’s private army. In the 1980’s important figures of the government and private businessmen started using local criminals for their own security. The government used drug runners, common criminals, gang members, former prisoners, etc. to scare and cow the population and to create a menacing atmosphere. “The police, secret police, detention centres in the desert, riot police, secret service, and many other branches of this security apparatus are what Egyptians deal with on a daily basis. These forces are so notorious for their abuses that the mere presence of a large police truck sends fear into the hearts of passers-by. The corrupt security service functions outside the rule of law, where abuses, many of which have been recorded by undercover cameras and mobile phone cameras, go unpunished.”<sup>25</sup> As the Egyptian artist Ammar Abo Bakr puts it: “There’s politics in every country and politics have always been the dirtiest game. But in some countries they at least try to make you feel like a human being. [...] But not in Egypt. We didn’t have that. We had to deal with the military.”<sup>26</sup>

Although less colourful and creative than in Tunisia, corruption was also very present in Egypt. Similar as in Tunisia, bribery, even though punishable by law, was a common thing. “The problem in Egypt, according to WJP data, was not so much that the country lacked the regulations needed to crack down on corruption but that it failed to enforce them. Civil servants were rarely punished. Data (collected in 2012) indicated that nothing happened to civil servants caught accepting a bribe for a license in 19 per cent of such cases; in another 41 per cent, investigations would be opened but not concluded.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, corruption at higher levels has again been encouraged by the privatization of government-owned assets. “Capitalism of the crony, rent-seeking kind took hold”<sup>28</sup> Good contacts and relations was the key to success. Ahmad Ezz, a friend of Gamal Mubarak, for example, owned 60% of the steel industry. Amin Abaza, the former minister of agriculture, was the largest exporter of cotton and Zuhair Garranea, also a former minister, owned several luxury hotels and cruise ships.

<sup>25</sup> Source: Mohamed Elshahed ; <http://www.ssrc.org/pages/breaking-the-fear-barrier-of-mubarak-s-regime/>

<sup>26</sup> Source: Ammar Abo Bakr, Bombs! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFOVgV\\_y\\_Lg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFOVgV_y_Lg)

<sup>27</sup> Source : <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/12/09/egypt-bureaucracy-regulations-and-lack-of-accountability-inspire-corruption>

<sup>28</sup> Source: *The tragedy of the Arabs*, the Economist





Figure 3: (from l. to r.): Habib Bourguiba; Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali; Leila Trabelsi - Tunisia



Figure 4: (from l. to r.): Gamal Abdel Nasser; Anwar al-Sadat; Hosni Mubarak - Egypt

#### **4. The Uprisings**

The spark that ignited the Arab uprisings was the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on the 17<sup>th</sup> December in 2010. Mohamed Bouazizi, an ordinary costermonger like hundreds on Tunisian streets, started a whole wave of protests which flooded the Arab World. The 26-year-old had no employment and was then compelled to continue the job of his father: he became street vendor. One morning, when he sold his products like every day on the streets, a policewoman started bothering him because he did not have a vendor permission. Later on, police officers slapped and beat him with the excuse that people without connections and without money should be humiliated and insulted. As a result of police corruption, Mohamed tried to receive a meeting with President Ben Ali who denied seeing him. Later on, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire to revolt against social inequality. Unfortunately, the image (which has become popular through the media) of the jobless graduate whose fruits and vegetables have been confiscated because he had no permit, is not accurate. In fact, two rumours have dogged the story. One of them is that Mohamed Bouazizi was a university graduate, which is not true. The other one is that the officer took away Bouazizi's wares and publicly humiliated him. However she was acquitted of these charges, which could be a proof of her innocence. These two rumours might seem true to many Tunisian inhabitants, because they embody their main daily issues: abuse of power by authoritarian regimes and lack of economic opportunities, especially for educated youth. That is why Bouazizi was used as a symbol of the revolution.

The day after Bouazizi's suicide, a crowd of labour activists, fellow vendors, youths, lawyers and even some politicians came together and demonstrated in front of the local municipal building in Bouazizi's hometown Sidi Bouzid. The protests spread rapidly throughout whole Tunisia and reached the capital Tunis on 27<sup>th</sup> December. The demonstrations were video recorded and posted on social networks, like Twitter and Facebook, where the news channel Al-Jazeera picked them up and broadcast them in the country. This led to a shutdown of the Internet access for the common people. Demonstrators responded to this action of the regime by sending cell phone pictures directly to the satellite TV channel. However, Internet was reopened very quickly, due to pressure from outside companies.

On Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January, Mohamed Bouazizi died from the consequences of his self-immolation.

Successful protests in Tunisia are fairly rare because dissent is routinely suppressed. Nevertheless, human rights groups say that high unemployment and lack of political reforms are feeding social tensions. From the beginning to the mid of January, hundreds of Tunisian



went on the streets to manifest their dissatisfaction in a peaceful way. The uprisings reached their climax in the towns of Thala Kasserine, where the protesters clashed with the police. Five demonstrators have been shot in Thala, twenty-one in Kasserine. This was the beginning of the country's worst unrest in decades.

The first reaction to the events going on in Tunis was to offer both "carrots and sticks"<sup>29</sup>. After visiting Mohamed Bouazizi in hospital, who is still suffering from severe combustions, Tunisian's president Ben Ali spoke for the first time to his people by means of a television broadcast. As the first carrot, the president promised the



Figure 5: Ben Ali visiting Mohamed Bouazizi in hospital

protesters fifty thousand new jobs. However, this amount is enough for only a third of the estimated number of unemployed university graduates. He also assured he would put an end to Internet censorship and to initiate parliamentary elections, as well as to keep the constitutionally mandated age limit to seventy-five years, which would make him unelectable for the next terms. But he threatened a crackdown against violent protester fearing that tourism and foreign investment could be endangered. He sent security forces and the army to put down the demonstrations, but in the first encounter with the protesters, the army refused to open fire.

A few days after the bloody protests of Thala and Kasserine, the uprisings took an important political turn and the protesters ordered the immediate departure of President Ben Ali. This new demand spread throughout the country like a bushfire and reached the capital 13<sup>th</sup> January. The chief of staff of Tunisian armed forces demanded the army to stay down and not to intervene, which in the eye of the regime is high treason. On Monday, the 14<sup>th</sup> January, Tunisia's president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali announced his resignation and took refuge in Saudi Arabia, ending 23 years in power. Weeks of mass protests climaxed the first real victory on a long road for people who lived for the past 2 decades under the power of one of the Arab world's most repressive regimes. The people had finally managed to topple a government that

<sup>29</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 43)

had always seemed too strong to fall. The Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi took over as interim president and called on the sons and daughters of Tunisia to unite their beloved country and to return to stability.

The socio-democratic opposition leader Najib Chebbi, one of the founders of the Parti Democrate Progressiste and one of Ben Ali's most menacing critics, captured the sense of historic change. "This is a crucial moment. There is a change of regime under way. Now it's the succession", he said and added: "It must lead to profound reforms, to reform the law and let the people choose."<sup>30</sup> Tunisia's population had managed to topple the government, now they had to profit of this momentum to continue their road to justice.

"This is the first time in the modern history of the Arab world a popular uprising forced the ouster of a ruler."<sup>31</sup>

The Tunisian uprisings left behind a powerful impression on the Egyptian population. Bouazizi's suicide by self-immolation, for example, was copied over a dozen times. Self-immolation never really happened in the Arab world before 2010. The uprisings that brought down the Tunisian government showed neighbouring countries that this kind of demonstration can be viable anywhere. Even though the outcome of the events in Egypt was not as successful, the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings shared some similarities. They were marked by "its spontaneity, its leaderlessness, its rapid spread, and its nonreligious and largely non-violent orientation. Like protesters in Tunisia, those in Egypt linked demands for political rights with economic justice and thus linked youths and labour activists in a common cause"<sup>32</sup>.

Protest organisers, who never lost their sense of irony, chose 25<sup>th</sup> January for their protest, as a provocation for the police, because it is the national holiday of the commemoration of the Police Forces. In masses, they went out of streets, calling it the "day of anger". Nevertheless, lots of political groups chose not to participate, because they feared being accused as unpatriotic. The ones who faced the government, like the April 6 Movement, marched in direction of Tahrir Square. The police stopped most of the demonstrators before they could reach the square, but they were unable to hold back one group that clustered together in a working-class neighbourhood. The group swelled to thousands by the time they reached Tahrir Square. Ten thousand individuals made the decision to join the protests that day. At the end of the day, the police moved in and cleared the square by firing tear gas.

<sup>30</sup> Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/14/tunisian-president-flees-country-protests>

<sup>31</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 44)

<sup>32</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 44)





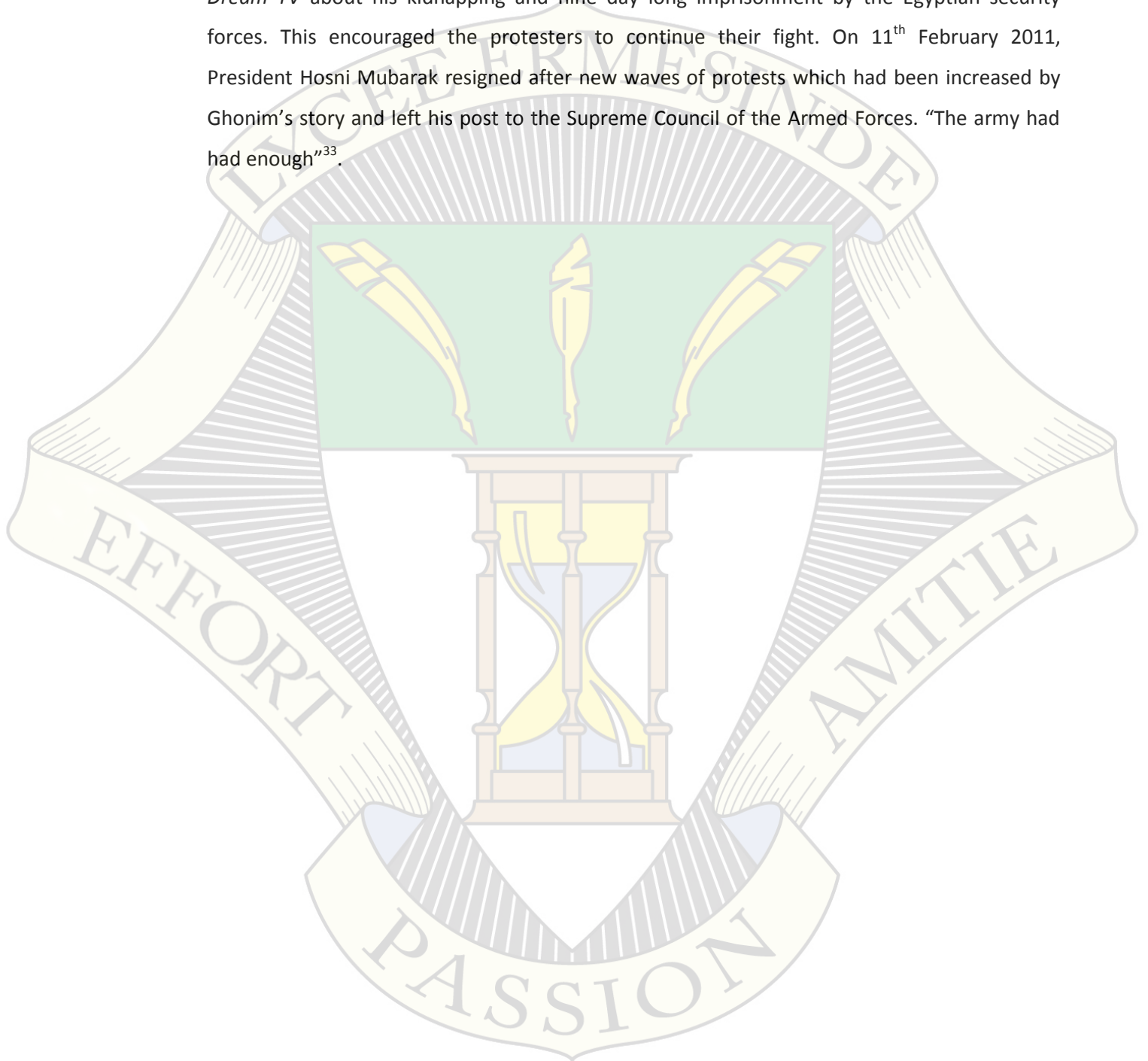
**Figure 6: The Egyptian uprisings at Tahrir Square**

On the National Police Day, demonstrations were held in twelve of the twenty-seven Egyptian provinces. In the cities Suez and Alexandria, the protests took a more violent turn than in the capital. Three protesters were killed during the clash with the police in Alexandria. However, the protests that occurred elsewhere in the country faded into the background, because most of the journalists were based in Cairo on 25<sup>th</sup> January. This gives an unauthentic view of how the uprisings unfolded.

Three days after the first wave of protests, the anonymous organisers called up for a second one. On the 28<sup>th</sup> January, crowds of protesters once again occupied Tahrir Square. The police attacked with tear gas and truncheons, but the battle still swung in favour of the demonstrators. Mubarak saw himself forced to order his interior minister to authorize the police to use live ammunition. However the interior minister refused the order and Mubarak deployed the army as a consequence. Upset by the president's decision, the minister ordered the police off the streets of Cairo before the army arrived. This was enough time for the protesters to strengthen their resistance on Tahrir square, which by the time became the epicentre of the Egyptian uprisings. Other protesters spread out in the city attacking the Ministry of Interior building and the state-run television station and setting the headquarters of the NPD and a few police stations on fire.



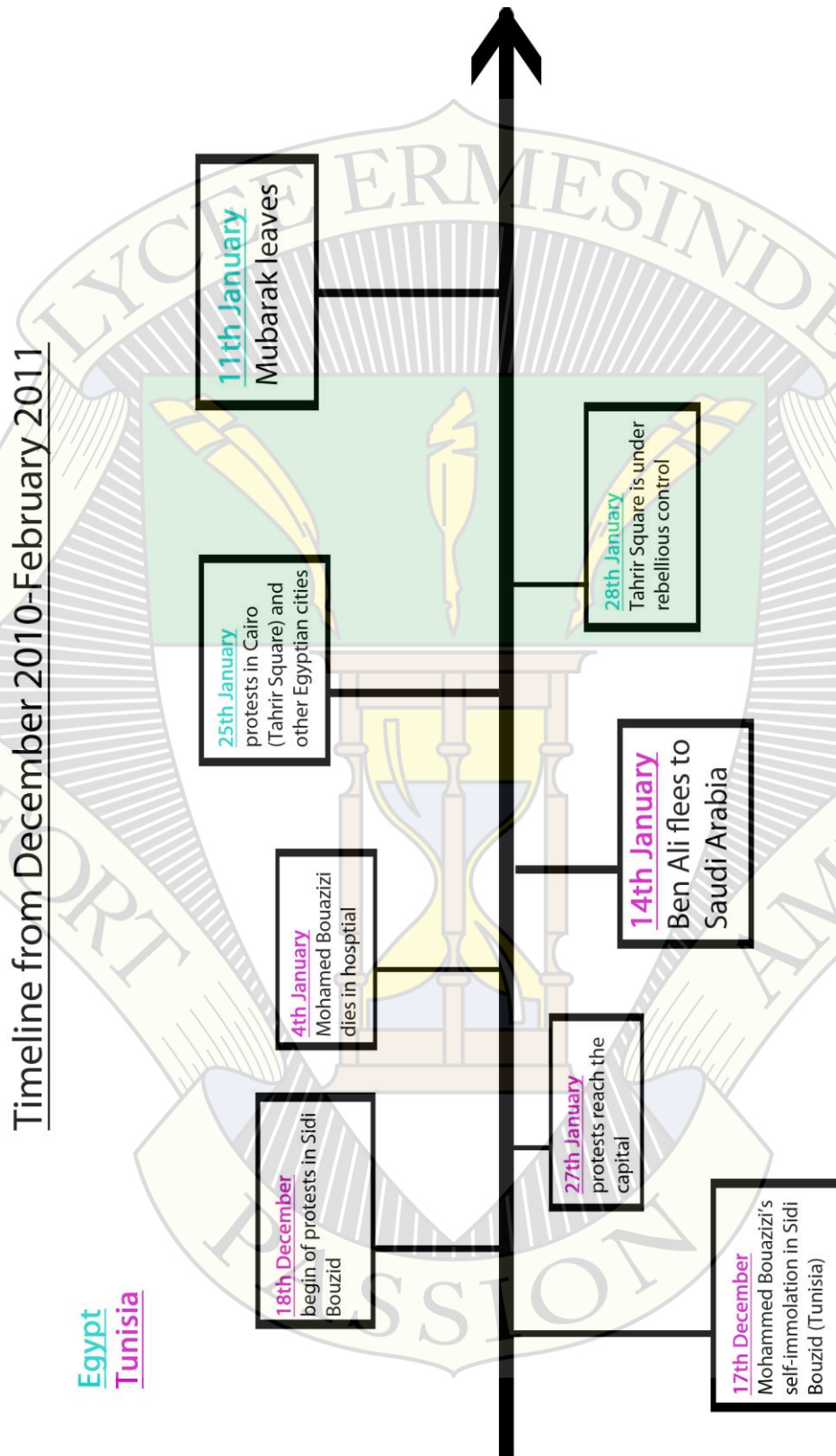
The events of 28<sup>th</sup> January might be seen as the beginning of Mubarak's fall, but he staid resistant and remained in office. Then however, the founder of the Facebook page "We are all Khaled Said" Wael Ghonim, held an emotional interview on the private Egyptian channel *Dream TV* about his kidnapping and nine day long imprisonment by the Egyptian security forces. This encouraged the protesters to continue their fight. On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011, President Hosni Mubarak resigned after new waves of protests which had been increased by Ghonim's story and left his post to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. "The army had had enough"<sup>33</sup>.



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<sup>33</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 47)

#### 4.1. Timeline



#### 4.2. Who were the actors of these protests?

All kind of protests in Tunisia in the past had been successfully suppressed by the regime. Compared to Egypt, which is accustomed to a number of uprisings, the Tunisian population couldn't learn from former uprisings how to organize and mobilize the population on the streets.

In Egypt, however, the population get used to protest movements. Two main waves of protests which stepped especially out were firstly, the period of austerity riots in 1977, which been provoke by the introduction of the first neoliberal policies in Egypt and secondly, the proceeding strike waves in 1980s. They were important for the uprisings in 2011 for several reasons. The organizers made economic, as well as political demands and they also received tactical experience.

According to social scientists, the organizers which participated in these previous uprisings broke the "barrier of fear"<sup>34</sup>

The leaders of the Egyptian uprisings played a key role in the political development of the country and have to be classified in two different categories:

On the one hand, are the protesters who participated in the organization of the initial protests of January 25, followed by ad hoc groups and individuals that came together on and after January 28 on the Tahrir Square. These protesters managed to form a labor division among themselves, although they had different social backgrounds. Some of them took responsibility for defending the Tahrir Square or stood watch, while others took charge in food distribution, provided first aid or rested in contact with the media. The organizers took day-to-day decision. "Their success is evident from the fact that they were able to remain in the square longer than Mubarak was able to remain in office"<sup>35</sup>.

On the other hand, the final category includes organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, opposition parties, like Kefaya, and popular politicians, such as Mohammed El-Baradei. The Muslim Brotherhood, the April 6 Movement and Mohammed El-Baradei became the leadership of the opposition. Each one of them was able the help the opposition in a way the other couldn't: The April 6 Movement was the first to demanding for human rights and democracy and even initiated the protests in Cairo. But they didn't have a strong standing among the Egyptian population in contrary to the politician Mohammed El-Baradei, who had

<sup>34</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 47)

<sup>35</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 52)



great support from the population. Finally, the Muslim Brotherhood provided the opposition with political authority.

All of them shared the same goal: the resignation of Mubarak and the replacement of the current ruling party NPD. They also agreed to progress their protests in a peaceful way.

The **Muslim Brotherhood** is a Sunni Islamist religious, political and social organization that is dedicated to the establishment of Islamic principles in society. Founded in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, it spread through the Arab world. "The Brotherhood's stated goal is to instill the Qur'an and Sunnah as the "sole reference point for ... ordering the life of the Muslim family, individual, community ... and state.""<sup>36</sup> They have their strongest influence on Egypt. After a lot of incidents of corruption they firstly had success in the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, when they launched the civic and political party the "Freedom and Justice Party". This party supports the idea of basing the constitution on the sharia, without excluding people from other religions or women from their party, even though they suggest that these are not really appropriate for presidency.



Figure 7: The official logo of the Muslim Brotherhood



Figure 8: The official logo of the April 6 Movement

The **April 6 Movement** is an Egyptian activist group founded in 2008 from young people to support the workers in El-Mahalla El-Kubra, an industrial town, who were planning to strike on April 6. The group organizes public protests and gave a lot of input in the Egyptian uprisings.

However, it was by the help of social media that activist such as **Mohammed ElBaradei** became popular. Mohamed ElBaradei is one of a few leaders in the development of the revolution. ElBaradei opposed the government while he was asking for a democratic Egypt. He

<sup>36</sup> Source: Wikipedia Muslim Brotherhood: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim\\_Brotherhood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Brotherhood)

gained lot supporters by the use of the Internet and social media because he insisted to let people know that a political change was possible. He scored especially the attention from young Egyptians because he criticized and shamed the regime. For the Egyptian government, Mohamed ElBaradei was an enemy, because of his engagement. In 2010, he founded the National Association for Change with other activists, politicians and intellectuals. In 2005, he became a Nobel Peace Prize for his engagement for the development of a democracy in Egypt.

Another activist who took part of the rebellion was **Omar Afifi**. Omar Afifi was a police officer who turned to an activist and supported people during their revolts. He wrote a book with advises, how to avoid the corruption of police officers, for the people. But he reached the people not only by his book, which had been banned, but through the Internet, too. When he moved to the United States he began recording videos to support Egyptian population and published them on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Social media technologies were essential for him to continue advising people. He explained in videos on YouTube how to conduct peoples own revolution. Omar Afifi was a “leader”, because he decided the exact day to revolt, where they should do it and even what would be best to wear. According to the Associated Press, Afifi “”basically fired the first shot” when he released the first video following the Tunisian revolts on January 14”<sup>37</sup>. Even when he was not present this moment, he was part of the revolts because through his videos people realized their situation and were inspired of his idea of a peaceful protest.

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<sup>37</sup> Source : Social media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory; page 1213; ELTANTAWY, Nahed

## **5. Social media and Cyberactivism**

Beginning in 2000, the prominence of Egyptian internet users, as well as the creation of blogs in *arabizi* increased. “L’*arabizi*, la langue écrite utilisée pour communiquer sur smartphones, a permis aux jeunes générations de s’approprier leurs affects et leurs aspirations.”<sup>38</sup> *Arabizi* is the new Arabic language which is used on the Internet because when phones and computer became popular it was not possible to write in Arabic on most devices. Through the Internet, *arabizi* has evolved into a youth language and allows the new generation to express themselves in their own way.

Initially, all published blogs were in English, through the development of technology and Arabic software might have been an encouragement for Arabic blogs. The growth of Internet use led to an intensification of activist presence in the social media. In 2008, the first activists started publishing their ideas on social media, such as Facebook. However, they started creating their own Facebook pages, too. In April 2008, a group of activists created a Facebook page to support textile workers in Mahalla, who were on a strike. Due to the Facebook page, the strike came to an early end, because it reached more than 70,000 followers. These supporters were people around the world who joined the champagne on Facebook. Through that, Egyptian activists did the same and again its power and influence proved to be good and important for such revolutions.

Khaled Said’s death led to the creation of another Facebook group which is known by his name. The following group is called in its original version “*Kullena Khaled Said*” (“*We are all Khaled Said*” in English) and had been founded, by Wael Ghonim, in the summer of 2010. For many people he became a symbol for the brutality of the police against the population in Egypt. Khaled Said was a young man who lived in Alexandria, Egypt. His death is one of the most significant events which contributed to the Egyptian revolution.

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<sup>38</sup> Source : « Dans le monde arabe, le virtuel défait les sources traditionnelles d’autorité », GONZALEZ-QUIJANO Yves ; Philosophie magazine ; Octobre 2013



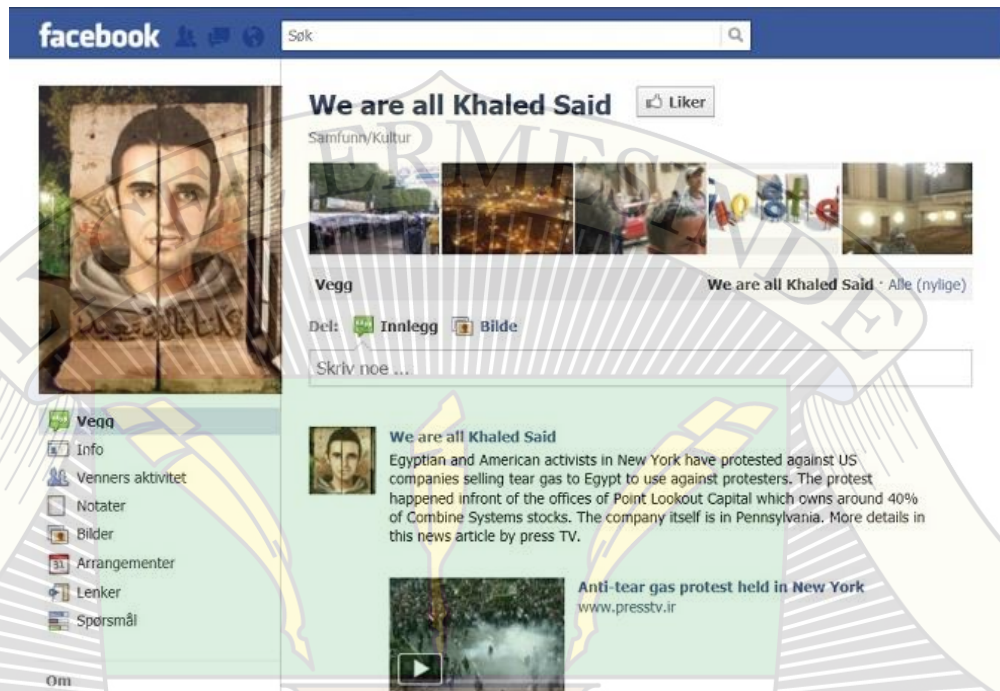


Figure 9: The Facebook page "We are all Khaled Said"

In June 2010, the young man was in an Internet access center, when two police officers came in and beat him to the ground. Online bloggers and reports affirm that the officers might have asked Khaled for money, whereupon he said that he didn't have any money. The fight continued on the street, and found its end when Khaled laid death on the ground. Later when his body was collected by the police, they told Khaled's family that he died after "choking on a packet of drugs". Khaled Said's supporters did not believe this to be true since a video, showing the two officers and pictures of Said's blemished face appeared on Internet websites. With regard to that, many people took to the streets, as well as many Internet activists to demonstrate their anger and to show their rebellion. The Facebook page "*We are all Khaled Said*" published statements such as the following ones:

"Tomorrow 27 July is the first court hearing in Khaled Said's death. We will fight for Khaled until justice prevails; BUT our struggle does not end there. Our demands are clear: End emergency law and end torture in Egypt. We will never stop until we achieve these demands."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Facebook page "*We are all Khaled Said*"; July 26, 2010

“This is the new Arab generation...A thousand Tunisian came together to support Khaled Said...If Facebook youth in this country unite against corruption and injustice, Egypt will become a better place.”<sup>40</sup>

Khaled Said became a symbol of the Egyptian revolution in 2011. However, why does his death seems to be a so significant event which contributed to the uprisings and the deaths of others not? One could argue that the death of unknown people weren't so “important”, because either they weren't caused by state employees, or they weren't published as much as in Khaled Said's case. Khaled Said's death gained a lot of supporters through the Internet and the media and rose in prominence in a short period. Since this kind of news was published in the media and on the Internet, as for example on Wael Ghonim's Facebook page, a lot of people began noticing the situation in their country. Secondly, one could say that the death of Khaled Said was such a significant event, because of the fact that he died on the streets and that people were present and filming the happening with their Smartphone, which highlights as well the influence media and phones had on events, because it was possible for every individual person to take his mobile phone to the streets, either in this case or in the uprising itself in 2011. The fact of using mobile phones created the possibility to inform people at the same time as the event is happening as well as people were able to inform themselves during the protests for example.

People use Facebook as a platform to voice their political demands which are justice, as well as the end of emergency law and torture in their country and dignity. Due to social media, they had the possibility to say and state the demands they have. They are clearly expressing that they won't stop until they have achieved these demands. Furthermore, on “Kullena Khaled Said”, a lot of people came together building a group demanding for political change in Egypt and they are designating themselves as a “new Arab generation”. Why “new” Arab generation? One might say that these people, who are demanding change and justices in their country, take part of the generation which is willing to use new technologies and methods for protests. Before the uprisings, there was no necessary link between internet usage and politics. Then people tried to overthrow a government via social media. Most people using social media as a platform for protests are mostly young workless men and women which are exactly those who are part of this “new” generation. It's a new way and method to develop a movement. The main force which raised the Uprisings was the will and courage of the Arab people to put an end to dictatorships and autocracy, as well as an end to corruption.

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<sup>40</sup> Source: Facebook page “Kullena Khaled Said”

### 5.1. What is social media?

“Social media is the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks.”<sup>41</sup> Social media gathers all the online websites which allow a person to communicate with the world. Some examples of social media, which were also used during the Arab Uprisings, are the following: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Social media is a communication strategy. All over the world people are using social media for their own business, whether one is looking for people, chatting with friends, sharing experiences, videos and/or photos, or discussing news with people all around the world. Social media is useful for people, because it allows an individual person, or a group to find everyone and everything one is looking for. Wael Ghonim said in his book that “[he] spend hours exploring the Internet, browsing websites and chatting anonymously with people [he] did not know from around the world [...] to make virtual friends”<sup>42</sup>



Figure 10: An Egyptian protester acknowledges the role of social media, picture by Awais Chaudhry

Thanks to the Internet, one is not only using social media for their own business but one has as well the possibility to mobilize people for various events. However; mostly all people using the Internet for mobilization remained usually undercover. By chatting and browsing through the Internet without specifying its true identity to individuals, it is way much easier to communicate and/or to bring out opinions. Nowadays, in our society, a lot of young people are using social media, via their mobile phone or PC, because they are growing up with the possibility to use it.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, state media was a well-known media in Egypt and showed Mubarak as the “epitome of wisdom”<sup>43</sup>. Mubarak was represented as a symbol of stability for Egypt and as the only hope for the Egyptian nation. In 1996, a new Arab TV-channel named *Al-Jazeera* had been founded by Hamad bin Chalifa Al Thani in Qatar. *Al-Jazeera* gained more and

<sup>41</sup> Source : Social Media [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media)

<sup>42</sup> Source: Revolution 2.0 ; Wael Ghonim

<sup>43</sup> Source: Revolution 2.0 ; Wael Ghonim



more followers and in a short period it became the “most viewed channel throughout the Middle East”<sup>44</sup>.

The shows of *Al-Jazeera* reveal a lot of criticism of many different Arab leaders which was according to Pakinam a good job in the first revolution even though she says that during the second revolution, *Al-Jazeera* was no great help. During the uprisings, media was focussing especially in Tahrir Square. Pakinam said that *Al-Jazeera* as well as international media described the second revolution as a “coup d’état”<sup>45</sup> even though it wasn’t. One could say that the regime has



Figure 11: The official logo of Al-Jazeera

a great influence on national TV. Since the regime is controlling the media, they are only publishing what the regime accepts which is a great favour for the government. However, it’s still unsure if it is true that *Al-Jazeera* is supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. One could argue that the head office of *Al-Jazeera* is situated in Qatar which is the main supporter, especially financially, of the Muslim Brotherhood. So it could be true that *Al-Jazeera* is a supporter as well because of the geographical situation of its head office.

At the beginning of 1999, the Egyptian government offered free Internet access and low-cost computers which led to an increase of Egyptian actors in the Internet. According to research, more than 21% of Egyptian population had access to social media in 2010 and more than 70% owned a mobile phone subscription.

Khamis Sahar, an assistant professor of Communication at the University of Maryland, points out that

“Ironically, although many Internet websites and blogs are used to defy and resist autocratic governments and dictatorial regimes in the Arab world, a number of these governments took steps to encourage Internet proliferation and accessibility, mainly in order to boost economic development.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Source: Revolution 2.0 ; Wael Ghonim

<sup>45</sup> Source: Pakinam Magdy El-Gohary

<sup>46</sup> Source: Media and Arab Transitions, Mediterranean Yearbook 2013 ; page 55

One can argue that this argument is true because the author heads to an interesting point in saying that it is ironic to give a population free access to Internet which might lead to boost economic development. Considering the political conditions in an authoritarian regime, in a way, it is contradictory to give a population Internet access giving them the means to fight against the government when it feels oppressed by it. One could compare this to giving someone a gun so he has the power to shoot you. People use social media as a platform to communicate, to claim their demands and regain their dignity and it is because of the government that they have this platform to disposal.

Social media played an essential role in the Egyptian revolution as it allowed Egyptian internet users to publish and share their opinions and ideas. The availability of Internet is a key factor in the uprisings, but the qualification of people to use it as well, which means that even if people have Internet access they can't necessarily use it. Before, activist used posters, faxes or prospectus to publish and share ideas; however social media make internal and international communication possible. Via Facebook, for example, Egyptian activists could follow events, participate in discussions and join public revolutionary groups, to support Egyptian rebellion. By the use of social media, the organisation of the movements, the anti-government protests and the collection of activists progressed more quickly, as well as the interactivity between people. These factors might have contributed to the massive changes in the Arab World.

However, social media platforms such as Facebook, for example, were banned and forbidden by the government. They were trying to take away this platform by censoring the Internet. The censorship of the Internet and phones stopped the cyberactivism in Egypt, but only for a short period. People were also using social media as kind of entertainment, which led to the fact, as reported by Pakinam, that the shutdown of the Internet connection and mobile phones was one of the major things that changed at the beginning of the uprisings. The Egyptian population had no connection to the Internet and no possibility to call people. The only media they still had were the TV and radio.

Through social media, the suppression of the population became more difficult as well as it became more problematic to hold back information from public. Egyptian's population started publishing videos and statements about the brutality and violence in their country. Police men became more and more accused of torture and sexual harassment, even though the national and international mainstream media were denying it. The social platforms became a useful tool for the population to uncover things, which the mainstream media and the government were not.

When the uprisings started in Egypt in 2011 the Egyptian army, which describes itself as the “army from the people and for the people”<sup>47</sup>, showed up after 3 days of protests. The population was calling for justice and freedom and wanted the army to step in and to support the nation. The uprisings lasted 18 day until the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) finally joined the protests. They took officially after Mubarak’s fall the power and assured the population safe protests as well as fulfilling of their demands. Actually SCAF always had the power in Egypt, even when the Muslim Brotherhood held the presidency SCAF did not give up its power.



Figure 12: Egyptian army propaganda in Cairo

However, after Mubarak’s fall media started publishing and sharing a lot of “propaganda” through the whole country and months later even international media was publishing numerous posters and articles. Everywhere, on busses or public means of transportation, for example, one could find posters of the army which were mostly decorated with slogans as the following one: “The army and people are one”<sup>48</sup>. This slogan is from a poster, where an army officer is holding a baby. According to an Egyptian psychiatrist, Dr. Manal Omar, one could say that the baby is the Egyptian population which is hold and protected by the army.

Furthermore, SCAF used as well as the Egyptian population social media, so they founded after Mubarak’s fall a new Facebook group. The page *Egyptian Armed Forces*<sup>49</sup>, which reached over 1, 9 million likes, allowed the army to communicate with the Egyptian population, as well as to see through the social networks what was going on. The whole social platform was very advantageous for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, because its engagement on social media was a form of propaganda. One could say that SCAF’s method, using social media as a “bridge of communication”, was especially an astute method, because this was how they build trust and how the population was manipulable. Also the government and political parties

<sup>47</sup> Source: Social media as a government propaganda tool in post-revolutionary Egypt; Sara El-Khalili; First Monday; 2013 (p. 1)

<sup>48</sup> Sources: Social media as a government propaganda tool in post-revolutionary Egypt; Sara El-Khalili; First Monday; 2013 (p. 1)

<sup>49</sup> See: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Egyptian-Armed-Forces/132218583481363>



started creating Facebook pages and Twitter accounts after the revolts; however SCAF's propaganda methods seemed to be more effective.

To deliver a certain message, SCAF choose carefully the colours in its propaganda figures: the colours of the Egyptian flag. Most of published posters were on a black background with a red title and a written in white. Furthermore, the SCAF logo was also always present, which could be seen as if SCAF is trying to represent Egypt, to show their power and to let people realize that they are now the leader of the country. During the first few months of the uprisings, the most posters and statements were published and people had the possibility to comment and like online what SCAF was sharing. SCAF tried to create an extremely positive self-portray of the Egyptian army and called itself as the "guardian" of the Egyptian population by repeating that it was the army who was on the side of the people during the uprisings. They express often online that due to the army, the protests were less violent and that it was the army who refused at protesters during the 18 days of protests.

"SCAF protects you and this nation providing you with the security and stability that maintains your right to express your legitimate demands ... SCAF will remain your revolution defender."<sup>50</sup>

By repeating all the time that the army is by the people, SCAF tries to retake again and again its role as guardian and that the army is the defender of the nation. Even though many people were convinced of the safety and stability SCAF offered them, many Egyptian developed a sceptical point of view about the military rule. Soon a lot of critics appeared on social networks as Twitter, for example, where the hashtag NoSCAF (#NoSCAF), which was spread very fast through the whole Internet, appeared. This was when the population started demanding civilian rule and no-more military rule. One could say that this was when the Twitter revolution really began in Egypt. The nation was split in two: the military believers and the "NoSCAF"-believers. When people were still counting on the army and supporting them SCAF described them on Facebook as "honourable citizens"<sup>51</sup>.

Although SCAF claims that they have never fired once during the whole revolution, that they have not arrested people who tried to express their critical point of view of SCAF and that it was not the army who stopped the medical supplies on Tahrir Square, they "never prevent a

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<sup>50</sup> Sources: Social media as a government propaganda tool in post-revolutionary Egypt; Sara El-Khalili; First Monday; 2013 (p. 3)

<sup>51</sup> Sources: Social media as a government propaganda tool in post-revolutionary Egypt; Sara El-Khalili; First Monday; 2013 (p. 3)

massacre from happening at Tahrir Square”<sup>52</sup>. One could argue that this is not the way an army who is ruling the country should handle a situation and that it is contradictory to the message SCAF is trying to transmit. However, SCAF was still trying to transmit the guardian role and the fact that the Egyptian army is the one who is maintaining peace. Due to the online pressure of online activists, using the hashtag FREE (#FREE) followed by the name of the arrested person, and of the nation who protested on the streets, many arrested civilians, as well as activists, were released from their army forced stay at the prison.

By publishing videos of protesters throwing “Molotov Cocktail bombs” at securities, SCAF is trying to deny the critics and is willing to show the world that it is the population who’s brutal. Such videos were also published by various mainstream media. SCAF’s strategy was to put the responsibility into the populations hand and to guarantee the fact that they are seen as the “stability” and the “guardian” of the nation and its county.



Figure 13:SCAF trying to convince the anti-Mubarak protesters to take of roadblockades

On the figure above, one can clearly see, that the army has the power as well as that the protesters have to follow the military rule and its rules. On the 100<sup>th</sup> day of the protests, the Egyptian military even congratulated the nation for its strength during the revolts and reminded them that the army was always supporting them.

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<sup>52</sup> Sources: Social media as a government propaganda tool in post-revolutionary Egypt; Sara El-Khalili; First Monday; 2013 (p. 3)

“While SCAF called [the Egyptian population] honourable citizens seeking their wisdom in protecting the country from protest[s] [...], the revolutionaries kept making the same mistake of calling such neutral people “the couch party”, referring to them as passive and not carrying to become involved.”<sup>53</sup>

One could support this quote by saying that it is right to say that the Egyptian population was maybe doing the same mistake by supporting the military rule at the beginning. It could be possible that through the online published, so-called, propaganda of SCAF, the Egyptian nation found at the beginning of the protests stability and support even though the army was only focussing on the trust of the population. By gaining their trust SCAF had a free hand on the country and was also well seen of its population. Furthermore, SCAF turned out not to be the carrying and neutral “party” which is supporting the nation demands for justice, freedom and dignity even though SCAF was finally the one who “won the battle”. Nevertheless, due to the activist’s non-successful ‘NO’-campaigns on Facebook and Twitter, the civilians learned that an aggressive campaign cannot reach its goals. The ‘NO’-campaign which was started by various online activists was a campaign trying to convince people to vote “no” and to demand a new constitution of the regime on a more aggressive way. In contrary, SCAF was trying through its online propaganda to convince the Egyptian population of the constitution and to accept it.

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<sup>53</sup> Sources: Social media as a government propaganda tool in post-revolutionary Egypt; Sara El-Khalili; First Monday; 2013 (p. 3)



## 5.2. What is cyberactivism?

“Cyberactivism is the process of using Internet-based socializing and communication techniques to create, operate and manage activism of any type.”<sup>54</sup>

Cyberactivism is similar to Internet activism, online activism or e-activism, which allows an organisation or an individual person to use the web by utilizing social networks or other technologies in order to reach a maximum online followers or to publish messages and video messages which might develop a movement. In Arab countries cyberactivism was common and known. People took part in online demonstrations, as well as they shared opinions of activists. An advantage of Internet was the fact that people could participate anonymous, which might have encouraged a lot of people.

Social media played an essential role in the Arab uprisings such as in Egypt and Tunisia. People used the Internet to communicate with other people or groups, which were stuck in the same situations. Through the Internet, they were trying to get attention and support from somewhere else, though they supported others, too. Activists started creating websites like online blogs or Facebook pages to revolt against the government and to create anti-torture campaigns. Due to anti-torture campaign, it was possible to fight against the violence of the police and the government. They were sure to reach more people through the internet, and they did:

“Some stats for Facebook page: 2000 of our members are from 19 different countries other than Egypt. About 2800 members have joined us in the past 10 days alone. It's a good rate but we can definitely do better. Please invite your friends to join us. We want the whole world to be aware of our anti-torture campaign.”<sup>55</sup>

By gaining more followers on Facebook the blog will be more popular which is beneficial for the awareness of the anti-torture campaign. The more people follow and join “*We are all Khaled Said*”, the more the blog becomes powerful. It becomes powerful because first of all they can reach people internationally. This means that they gained 2000 members from other countries. Secondly, by gaining 2800 followers in 10 days the blog becomes powerful, because

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<sup>54</sup> Source : What does Cyberactivism mean?  
<http://www.techopedia.com/definition/27973/cyberactivism>

<sup>55</sup> -Facebook page: “*We are all Khaled Said*”; August 3, 2010

it spreads rapidly. Speed is important and powerful, because due to the speed one can faster communicate with others and create faster campaigns. Finally, the Internet as a medium is powerful because it allows users, on Facebook for example, to invite people they know or don't know to join a campaign. As an individual user one can invite a large number of people, which leads to an increase in popularity.

The success of the Tunisian revolution through social media might have influenced Egyptians and improved the "sense of collective identity", as well as the goals the population wants to reach through the rebellion. By the use of social media it was possible for people to identify with somebody else and to build trust. People got a sense of identity because they knew that there were other people thinking/demanding/doing the same as they do. One could say that people all had similar feelings and demands and this is what led to the sense of collective identity. Due to cyberactivism Egyptian and Tunisian population got more information about the ongoing political and economic situation. Principally, both populations live under similar conditions, which manage that citizen-activists from both countries are looking for the same goals. For example, Egyptian and Tunisian activists exchanged experiences and knowledge, which might be useful. They gave each other suggestions by explaining what they were going through and how they were acting. Tunisia and Egypt have the following commonalities which might help to understand the development and the success of the uprisings in those countries, as well as why Egypt was so interested in the ongoing revolution in Tunisia:

Firstly, in both countries the majority of the population was Muslim and speak the Arab language. Secondly, geographically Tunisia and Egypt are "North African neighbours, separated by Libya"<sup>56</sup>, which means that they are in close proximity. Moreover both countries were ruled by dictators.



**Figure 14: Map of Tunisia, Libya and Egypt**

However, it was by the help of social media that activist such as Mohammed El-Baradei and Omar Afifi became popular.

Both of them were active participants claiming for a better regime and changes. Mohamed ElBaradei for example was one of a few leaders in the development of the revolution.

<sup>56</sup> Source : Social media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory; page 1213; ELTANTAWY, Nahed

## 6. Aftermath

### 6.1. Tunisia

There are hardly comforting news coming out of the country where the uprisings, which spread throughout the Arab World, took their start. The major revolutionary force after Ben Ali's took flight, pushing forward the process of democratization a coalition was formed by "Trade Unionists, leftists, human rights groups and Islamists"<sup>57</sup>. They turned the Casbah Square in Tunis into a site of intense political discussion and they dispersed any attempt of members of the former regime to re-establish their control. Furthermore, popular sit-ins untroubled by the police provided the process the needed persistence. Dissimilar from Egypt, the small Tunisian army sparsely played a role in the process. The low significance of the military forces in this country led to a forced resignation of two interim governments accused of being too closely associated to the old regime, the departure of several provincial governors delegated by Ben Ali and the dissolution of the old ruling party *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD)*. On 4<sup>th</sup> March, the interim Prime Minister Beji Cadi Essebi gave in to the protester's core demand and declared that the national elections for a Constituent Assembly would be held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2011. "There were some Tunisians who then said, and many who hoped in their hearts, that the revolutionary part of the political struggle was over, an aspiration that found its symbolic outlet in a new postage stamp with a picture of Mr Bouazizi [...]"<sup>58</sup>. However, the people underestimated the consequences of political divisions being provoked by changes; it was impossible to get to a common denominator.

The successive period was defined by factionalism inside of the pluralist party, which caused postponement of the elections to 23<sup>rd</sup> October. Retrospectively, this delay of three months revealed some advantages: Out of more than 100 parties, that initially announced their participation, only the serious ones remained. Furthermore, the party leaders also needed to gain as much agreement about the election system itself as possible. Finally, the *Commission for Political Reform* took the decision to look up to France for an election method. Their method of proportional representation, the so-called "largest remainder method" seemed to fit perfectly; this makes it rather difficult to achieve the absolute majority of seats and forces

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<sup>57</sup> Egypt and Tunisia: From the Revolutionary Overthrow of Dictatorship to the Struggle to Establish a New Constitutional Order; Roger Owen

<sup>58</sup> Egypt and Tunisia: From the Revolutionary Overthrow of Dictatorship to the Struggle to Establish a New Constitutional Order; Roger Owen



the parties to ally themselves into coalitions. The commission also decided to limit the *Constituent Assembly* term to just one year.

It was demanded from each of the parties to bring up some rough guidelines of contents that should be provided in the new constitution and to allow them to be discussed. These discussed issues also contained the role of religion within the reform. The religious and previously outlawed organization *Ennahda*, under the leadership of the charismatic Rashid Ghannouchi, made a strong political showing because of the large national support of the Tunisian population. They spoke out for a system in which the president designates the prime minister from the largest party, which might pave the way into a more parliamentary government.

With the aid of modern electoral practices, as experienced by members of the Ghannouchi family during their exile in London, and the popular support of their country, *Ennahda* won 89 of 127 seats in the elections. The fact that female candidates received nearly ¼ of the votes and therefore 49 seats in the new Assembly is rather impressive. All in all, this was a remarkable achievement.

The *Ennahda*, the *Congrès Pour la République* and the *Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties (Ettakatol)* built the new governing alliance. They did not want the government to come to a standstill, so they agreed to go separate ways for the constitutional discussions. The alliance set up 26 clauses for a provisional constitution outlining “the conditions and procedures to be followed by the country’s executive, legislature and judiciary...until a final constitution is agreed”<sup>59</sup>. These so-called “tumultuous” (Al-Jazeera) debates, which lasted only for five days, enticed thousands of demonstrators to gather in front of the Assembly building. A very important aspect discussed during these few days was the role of Islam in the new order. The final votes showed that 141 voted in favour, 37 against and 39 abstained.

*Ennahda* wanted to be well represented to the outside and organized a series of debates, lectures and discussions. One of the most captivating lectures in 2012 was the one held by the leader, Rashid Ghannouchi, himself. In “Religion and secularism”, he argued for a concept of citizenship that includes every single citizen “regardless of their religion, sex or any other consideration” and that citizens have the right to believe whatever they want “within the framework of mutual respect and observance of the law which is legislated by their

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<sup>59</sup> Source: “Tunisian assembly adopts provisional constitution”; Al-Jazeera English; 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

representatives in parliament”<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, the party presented a plan about economic and social development to the *Constituent Assembly* at the end of March 2012.

A lot has been done to set up a structure for a new constitution since Ben Ali’s flight in January 2011, including the agreement of two fundamental laws covering personal status and basic liberties. Another important discussed topic was the role of the Sharia within the constitution with a wide agreement that it is a “man-made rather than God-given set of rules and practices”<sup>61</sup>.

But at the end, even though democratization has found its way from the citizenry to the government, basic problems of the country remain unsolved. The economy is still in shambles and thousands of Tunisians flee aboard the country’s borders to escape poverty and unemployment.

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<sup>60</sup> Source: “Ghannouchi: Secularism doesn’t Conflict with Islam”, Eurasia Review, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012; <http://www.eurasiareview.com/10032012-ghannouchi-secularism-doesnt-conflict-with-islam/>

<sup>61</sup> Source: Egypt and Tunisia: From the Revolutionary Overthrow of Dictatorship to the Struggle to Establish a New Constitutional Order; Roger Owen

## 6.2. Egypt

As Hazem Kandil, a Cambridge University Lecturer in Political Sociology and Fellow of St Catharine's College, puts it in his article "Sisi's turn", "There is no getting around it. What Egypt has become three years after its once inspiring revolt is a police state, more vigorous than anything we have seen since Nasser"<sup>62</sup>. Mubarak warned that the alternatives to his rule would be religious fascism or chaos. The citizens went to the streets to exact for bread, dignity and freedom. Their only hope was to believe in a 'new Nasser on the Nile': Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi.

The military regained the power they lost under Mubarak's rule. But the question who would take over the political office was open to negotiations: the military did not mind to leave the responsibility to the power-hungry Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood did not endanger the military privileges and they benefited a lot from the security forces. They had no interest in supporting the process of democratization; they only wanted to take Mubarak's place on top. How did it come to this?

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011, while protests were still heaving in Tahrir Square, Mohamed Morsi and the future head of the *Freedom and Justice Party* (FJP, founded by the Muslim Brotherhood in the awakening of the Egyptian protests in 2011) held secret negotiations with the intelligence chief Omar Suleiman about receiving larger share of power if they withhold the uprisings. The Islamists adopted the military-security programme: firstly the elections, then the constitution and finally the reform. Everyone who claimed that the new democracy needs to establish some rough guidelines before going to vote was dismissed. As soon as Morsi entered his new office, he thanked the police for their support during the uprisings in 2011. Even more suspicious was that the Brothers deleted a report detailing police crimes. However, the contents found their way to some newspaper, like *The Guardian*.

The Muslim Brotherhood felt "entitled to exclusive rule after decades of toil"<sup>63</sup>. They did not perceive why they should share their deserved power with others and as the guardians of Islam; they did not want to ally with secularists. In consequence of this attitude, the acrimony which took over the Brothers affected them to accuse the demonstrators of selling out the revolution and allowing the police state to return. The military, which believed they could pass on their power, needed to revise its stance. The Muslim Brotherhood was expected to pacify the streets, but in fact they were incompetent and unprincipled. However they were the executive and legislative arm of the state, so it was their turn to take the decisions. The

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<sup>62</sup> Source: London Review of Books; Sisi's Turn; Hazem Kandil; edition of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014

<sup>63</sup> Source: London Review of Books; Sisi's Turn; Hazem Kandil; edition of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014



population waited 4 months for the still stand of the process of democratization to come to an end, but the Brothers were unwilling to compromise and drove their opponents into an alliance against them.

The General Commander of military, Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi, demanded the Muslim Brotherhood to break their agreement, but the Brothers did not accept. The tensions inside the country grew; anti-Islamists sit-ins around the presidential palace were violently dispersed. Dozens were killed and tortured during the collision with armed supporters, deployed from the Brothers. Thus emerged the movement *Tamarod* (eng: *rebellion*) which called on the people to take to the streets on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013. *Tamarod* quickly gained a lot of support from non-Islamists, the old regime and revolutionaries. They wanted to force early elections. The Brothers adversaries needed the support of the masses, because without them, they wouldn't have enough foot soldiers to face the military co-operation. The summer of 2014 in Egypt was historically unique. Millions of people took to the streets, not just once, but three times in a month: firstly to rebel against Morsi on 30<sup>th</sup> June, secondly for the military coup and finally to express their contempt for the violence exerted by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brothers complacency provoked this popular eruption: their miserable performance in leading position even convinced the most passive citizens, the so-called "sofa party", to stand up.

The Muslim Brotherhood hid their authoritarian purposes behind Islam. The citizenry no longer saw them as "god-fearing underdogs striving for power so that they could implement Islam, but as another set of corrupt politicians using Islam to justify themselves"<sup>64</sup>. The uprisings in June convinced the population that the interim government of the Brothers to be a terroristic organizations, even though they knew that the violence was perpetrated by their unruly allies, such as the Ansar beit al-Maqdis and the Al-Jama'a al-Islamyia groups (inspired by al-Qaida). The country fell into a vicious circle: the more the Islamists resisted, in form of violence, the larger the popular support became and the more comfortable the security forces felt for taking radical steps against secular activists, human right groups and foreign journalists. The instability in Egypt grew further and further.

The military coup was conducted by an alliance of military, justice and the security apparatus. The interim government had a civil and anti-Islamite mindset. Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi called Morsi's overthrow the "second revolution". The power play between military and the Muslim Brotherhood led to political insecurity which had economic consequences, especially on the

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<sup>64</sup>Source: London Review of Books; Sisi's Turn; Hazem Kandil; edition of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014

important tourism branch in Egypt. During the military interim government, the Muslim Brotherhood was banned: the leaders and low ranked members of the movement were arrested and their assets were confiscated. Morsi and 14 other leading members received court proceedings. Those proceedings caused in- and outland worries. People fear that Sisi will make the country into a police state again. Morsi was condemned to 20 years of prison on 21th April 2015.

In March 2014, Sisi won the elections for presidency.

It is still too early to figure out if Sisi's presidency is the solution of social issues like unemployment, poverty, inadequate healthcare and under-funded education. Perhaps, the population will lose their trust in the president or he will retransform the government into a police state. "In sum, The Egyptian uprising, like the Tunisian uprising, brought down an autocrat. It is still too early to determine whether either uprising will bring down an autocracy"<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> Source: The Arab Uprisings; What Everyone Needs To Know, James L. Gelvin, Oxford (page 65)

## 7. Conclusion

Did the population reach its goals through the revolution? We would say that the Tunisian revolution was more successful than the Egyptian, even though some believe that there is an improvement to be felt in Egypt. Egypt's first revolution ended in democratic elections, but the results were not satisfying for the army and the population. For the first time, Egyptians were allowed to hold free elections. The Muslim Brotherhood won the elections because they were the only party with a specific agenda, which helped a lot to convince people to vote for them. However, when Morsi was in power, the country was economically under the red line. Electricity shutdowns became a daily issue, which according to Pakinam led to general discontent as so much relies on electricity. Psychologically, the shutdown of electricity was horrible for the population. On the 30<sup>th</sup> June, the army decided to force Morsi to step down and in doing so they found great support among the population. The first revolution had been launched by the population and gained the support of the military later on. These upheavals were clearly started by the army, which make it a coup, and the population decided to follow because they were dissatisfied with the situation under Morsi. During his time in power, not only was the electricity shut down, but there were also fuel shortages. Strangely enough, this situation ended immediately the day after his fall. Actually the army, the true ruler of the country – also in economic terms – never lost control; not before, not during and not after the uprisings. One might wonder to what extent the electricity cuts and the petrol shortage were orchestrated by the army to re-establish military rule by vilifying their opponents.

After living her whole life under the Mubarak regime and then living after the uprisings under Morsi, Pakinam talks about more positive vibes in the political and economic scene in today's Egypt. In March 2015, 2'000 delegates from 112 different countries were present at the Egyptian Economic Development Conference. With the motto "Egypt the Future" a lot of investors participated in the discussion about Egypt's future and its "stunning amount of commercial potential"<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, Pakinam sees changes in the daily social life. The streets are cleaner, there are new constructions underway, jobs are being created and people feel more comfortable these days.

However, from a Western perspective one might wonder just how much has really changed, El-Sisi's regime is not better than Mubarak's, because it is still a military state. This is all that is

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<sup>66</sup> John Kerry ; <http://egyptianstreets.com/2015/03/13/egypts-economic-conference-launches-today-with-2000-delegates-from-112-countries/>



shown by the Western media. Maybe we should not judge so fast and compare 30 years of dictatorship with a 7-months-rule.

Although it is still not proven, one might say that the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions were not Facebook revolutions as such. Social media might have been a very effective and useful tool for starting the revolutions and for encouraging the population to fight against the oppressive regime, however it was still the determination and will of the population that brought the dictatorial regimes to an end, even though, the army, never lost control of the country. One can say that the “Internet revolution” or “Facebook revolution” are nothing more than events which were planned online and went real. The uprisings were created mainly through the youth and the social networks, but from the moment people took to the streets and the barrier of fear was broken, social media was no longer so important. Social media helped the people find the courage to express themselves but it was not the main tool for the political changes.

We think that social media is an important tool for mobilisation of masses, which was a crucial point in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, where people were oppressed and disappeared from the landscape for expressing their political opinions and demands.

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