

INTRODUCTION

The insurgence of the Arab uprisings that was sparked in the year 2011 marked a new chapter in the socio-cultural, economic and political life of the Arab region. The events had been the focus of various research attempts that tried to pin down the reasons and complex ingredients that led to these uprisings. Geo-political, social, economic and even religious and cultural elements had been working in the evolving process of change in the Arab world. Understandably, the heavy legacy of totalitarian regimes and authoritarianism particularly that of Tunisia's Ben Ali, Egypt's Mubarak, Yemen's Ali Abdallah Saleh and Libya's Kaddafi, have had an extremely important role in the instigation of the popular uproar in these Arab countries.

This dissertation sets itself within an evolving trajectory of events that took place successively after the death of the Tunisian Mohamed Al Bouazizi in the year 2011 and the domino effect that swept over the Arab world as regimes started to dismantle in response to the popular demands for "change". The period of seven years observation of the Arab uprisings, their trajectories, and the various--mostly catastrophic-- impacts they had on different countries that witnessed "the winds of change", had undoubtedly enriched the scope of the research and added to the solidification of its conclusions.

Even though, the focus of our analysis in this dissertation will be basically on the role played by youth in the uprisings as well as the gender dynamics and mechanisms that prevailed over the protesting scenes, the work tries to give a more inclusive reading of the so-called Arab Spring as well as analyze the extent to which the latter could be called revolutions in the positive

sense of the term. More significantly, the dissertation attempts to dissect--depending on theories of contentious politics--the reasons for contention in these regions as well as the internal and external factors that lay behind these changes. Definitely, to say that these uprisings came about without any planning would partially hit at the spontaneous and surprising nature of their rapid spread, but would in no possible manner dismiss the underlying socio-cultural, economic and geopolitical reasons that were at the heart of the so called Arab Spring. In the words of Jonathan Christiansen:

Social movements do not just happen; they require many resources and have many stages through which they develop. In other words, people do not simply suddenly become upset with a policy or even a ruling system and then instantly form a social movement with a coherent ideology that is capable of holding mass demonstrations or overthrowing an existing power structure. (Christiansen, 2011, p. 15)

It is exactly in the aforementioned sense laid out by Christiansen that one could assert that the Arab uprisings came about as a result of various elements and ingredients that were interwoven to shape the trajectory of the Arab Spring. Moreover, the evolution of the events and their complexity from local, regional and international perspectives as they unfolded and turned into a series of nuanced conflict of interests defines the degree to which one has to be cautious even with the use of terminology such as the Arab spring, revolution, and political movement.

Contentious politics, which constitutes the core of the theories of political resistance, has been defined by eminent political analysts such as Charles Tilly (2008), as entailing: “the

interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties.”¹ Actually, it is through contentious politics that these actors resign to the use of disruptive techniques to make a political point or to change the government policy. These techniques range from demonstrations, strike action, riot, and civil disobedience to revolutions and insurrections.

Defining the terminology used in this dissertation would undoubtedly help the modern reader see the great differences between the concepts used to refer to the events that took place in the Arab world starting from January 2011. A good example to start with is the clarification of the confusion often made between a social and a political revolution. The so called Arab Spring, for instance is always looked at as a social revolution; a fact that this dissertation tries to highlight despite the nuances that the term carries especially in relation to an Arab context. According to Skocpol's distinction stated in Laremont (2014), “social revolutions are profound events: they involve a fundamental reordering of the relationships of power in a state and society. They are rare. They most often result from class struggle and conflict. The French, Russian and Chinese revolutions can be counted among them. What happened in North Africa we define as political revolution rather than social revolutions.” (Skocpol in Laremont; 2014, p. 2)

In this dissertation we attempt to go beyond the early impressionist views of the so-called Arab Spring; views that turned each and every one of these movements of protestation into a revolution *per se*. The perspective we uphold in this dissertation especially with regards to what happened in Morocco as a result of the Arab uprisings is that of a social revolution that started with the reforms initiated in the Kingdom. The dissertation looks at the Moroccan revolutionary

¹Tilly, Charles. *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 5.

experience partly in line with the views expressed by the Moroccan thinker and political analyst Abdelilah Belkziz who states:

A revolution... is a total change of the social and economic foundations and structures, accompanied with a change in power relations and the class structures that serve the dominant socio-economic group....Any true revolution would have to impact the systems of production and the points of dominance within them.... Revolution is not only the mass demonstrations we see in the streets, the revolution is the concrete accomplishment of a new socio-economic project". (Belkziz, 2017, pp. 19-20, My Translation).

Even though the above views of Belkziz do define the revolution as a complete turn on the socio-economic and political structures of dominance in a country or a society, which has definitely been the case in some Arab countries where the political systems were overthrown, the exceptionality of others lies at the heart of our analysis of the Moroccan political scene. More significantly, with regards to Belkziz's concept of the revolution as "the concrete accomplishment of a new socio-economic project", the latter speaks to the core of what we see here as the Moroccan political regime's attempts to benefit from the uprisings through launching a project that would touch the various categories of the society.

It is within the abovementioned framework that the dissertation analyzes political movements such as the 20th February. Additionally, for a better understanding of the role of categories such as women and youth in the political arena and a genuine analysis and evaluation of that role, the work focuses on dissecting the notion of the revolution in the various Arab contexts. Hence, this dissertation will be divided into two major parts.

In the first theoretical part, emphasis will be laid on setting the ground for the socio-economic, cultural, political and even religious context of the Arab uprisings. It is here that I will be invoking the various theories of contentious politics to be able to detect and analyze the various phases of the so-called Arab Spring. Approaching these political insurgences from the perspective of contentious politics will allow us not only to draw comparison between these differing political and social experiences, but also to build a theoretically solid foundation for a confusing and complex protesting scene whose repercussions are still unfolding.

The first chapter of this part entitled: ‘Challenging Authoritarianism in the Arab World’ tries to draw a picture of the social, economic and political settings during which the Arab uprisings occurred. The chapter digs into the history of Arab leadership and the early national movements and the political mechanisms that brought figures such Leader, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, Zein El Abidine Ben Ali, and various others into power. It also attempts to clarify the shift in the trajectory of these figures who—at a certain moment—stood for Arab national values, into dictators who strangled the processes of democracy and ruled their countries with an iron fist. More significantly, this chapter will be tracing the reasons that led to the downfall of those regimes as well as clarifying how the new era of ICT has played a significant role in subverting their political power. Finally, the chapter will shed light on the geopolitical factors that have also been part and parcel in igniting the uprisings.

The second chapter entitled: ‘Youth and the Dynamics of Contention’ reads into the role of the Arab youth in the uprisings as well as analyzes the mechanisms that led to their involvement. It is here that we will be showing the ailments of the younger generations under the various regimes of dictatorship. Moreover, this chapter will allow us to question the validity of the participation of youth into the political process and inquire about the efficacy of their

protestation with regards to their true representation in the corridors of power. The chapter also looks at the extent to which the Arab uprisings have succeeded--in some cases--to bring about political achievements and reforms that served a better representation of youth in the political sphere.

The third chapter, under the title: 'The Gender Battle in the Arab Spring' provides a thorough analysis of the gender dynamics in the Arab Spring and the role played by women in the protesting scene. This chapter looks at the extent to which political arenas and public squares turned out to be a locus of not only resistance against dictatorship and authoritarianism, but also against the patriarchal social, economic, and political oppression of women in the Arab world. More importantly, the chapter will not only be focusing on valorizing the role played by Arab women in the protests, but also on evaluating how their participation has helped with improving their social, economic and political status. The aim here will be to contextualize that role within the different protesting situations in the Arab world. Moreover, it is here that one will analyze the gains of these women in light of their powerful participation.

The last chapter of the theoretical part concentrates on both elements of youth and gender in the Arab Spring, especially throughout the mobilization processes in which these two social ingredients have played an extremely significant role. Additionally, this chapter traces the dynamics of mobilization utilized by political forces and parties in the Arab Spring, particularly those of Islamism. Undoubtedly, this chapter seeks to clarify the various conflicting political ideologies that were highly present in the protesting squares. The chapter closes with an analysis of the new perspectives for both youth and women's involvement into the political scene and unveiling the mechanisms by which their participation in these social and political movements could be more effective.

The second part of this dissertation lays a particular focus on the Moroccan version of the so-called Arab Spring. This practical part of the paper will delve into the Moroccan specificity and the role played by various ingredients that defined what could be called the Moroccan Spring. The first chapter of this part entitled: The Democratic Spring of Morocco will explore the role played by the Moroccan youth and women in mobilizing for the protests that took place in the Kingdom just a month after the events in Tunisia and Egypt. It will particularly be looking at the ways in which Moroccans perceived the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa and the specificity of their response from both the populations and the regime.

The second chapter reads specifically into the case of the 20th February Movement; its emergence, its different components, its goals and objectives, its demands and the impact it had in the Moroccan political scene. Without a doubt, this social and political movement had been of extreme importance in outlining the political trajectory of Moroccan politics at a particular juncture. The dissertation also clarifies throughout this chapter, the rapid responses of the Moroccan regime to the demands of this movement. Definitely, the 20th February Movement stood as a melting pot that contained all the segments of the Moroccan political spectrum in spite of the great divergences in ideological and political platforms.

Chapter three entitled: Beyond the 20th February Movement, successively deals with the mechanisms utilized in the Moroccan context for both aborting the protests in the country and also securing a transformation towards a phase of political reform that would guarantee stability and development. The chapter also tackles the reasons for the rise of Islamism in Morocco after the uprisings and clarifies the dynamics of mobilization and protesting the latter used to propagate their ideological perspectives and articulate their views on governance.

The last section of this chapter tries to analyze the extent to which Islamists have been able to exploit the presence of women in the political arena and detects the representation of women in Islamist governments after the uprisings. The chapter also focuses on illustrating the attitudinal and spatial mechanisms that governed the dynamics of protestation in the public political squares and arenas.

The last chapter entitled: Towards a True Revolution, attempts to give some recommendations and views about the need for a new revolutionary project that would guarantee the powerful and effective participation of social categories such as youth and women into the political process. The aim of this chapter is to explain the trajectory of Moroccan politics after the uprisings and the processes for change adopted by the Kingdom as to find long-term solutions to the ailments of youth and women. It also gives an overview of the Moroccan evolving scene and the emergence of the political left in the country and the factors that led to the latter's involvement in the political sphere despite years of boycotting.

The chapter also concentrates on the case of the outspoken Moroccan female politician, Nabila Mounib, the secretary general of a leftist party whose ideas and perceptions show the degree to which women wanted a more effective into the Moroccan political scene. The theoretical part concludes with an assessment of the so-called Arab Spring. The evaluation provided in this chapter aspires to give recommendations on how to move towards a more effective political participation of the categories of youth and women in the process of political and social development.

The dissertation closes with questionnaires and interviews whose aim is to provide a practical review of the Moroccan perceptions about the Arab Spring in general and the 20th

February Movement in particular. The questionnaire is addressed to a wide variety of respondents, basically from the 20th February Movement with the purpose of identifying its inception, development and its recent dissipation. The questionnaire also addresses the various categories of youth and women and inquires about the reasons for their involvement in the movement and their expectations of its demands and its influence on the political scene in Morocco.

The interviews, on the other side will be concentrating on prominent members of the movement and other participants from the varying constituents that were part and parcel of the protests in Morocco. The interviews made are not only addressed to the members of the movement specifically, but also are directed to the common educated observers who have been following with the evolution of the Moroccan political scene. More significantly, the interviewees are selected from different parts of the country primarily Rabat, Casablanca and Fez for a more global understanding of these members' allegiance to the basic tenets of this social and political movement.

Once again, one would like to emphasize the fact that the major goal of this dissertation is to provide a holistic reading of the Arab Spring in general and the Moroccan experience in particular in light of the dynamics of both the inclusion and exclusion of the social categories of youth and women. Moreover, the paper attempts to trace the repercussions and evolution of the Arab uprising across time and their consequences and impact on the various and differing contexts of the Arab world.

Unquestionably, the issue of gender and youth leadership are what is at stake of this reading into the so-called Arab Spring. Additionally, subverting the traditional mechanisms of

mobilization and subduing resorted to by both the regimes and the traditional opposition (e.g. leftist, Islamists parties in Morocco) is key to the evolvement of this paper's argument. In the following part a general introduction to the Arab Spring in light of the theories of contention would provide a clearer vision of these social and political movements.

PART ONE:
SETTING THE GROUND: THE ARAB SPRING AND THE POLITICS OF
CONTENTION

Chapter 1: Challenging Authoritarianism in the Arab World

"We have aged hoping and waiting for this historic moment" Ahmed Al Hafnawi, 14, January,
2011

The above outstanding statement of an old Tunisian man uttered with a mixture of tears and a sigh of relief after the ousting of the country's dictator Zein El Abidine Ben Ali who ruled Tunisia for 23 years with an iron fist, is an excellent expression of the long-term sufferance of a whole generation under an authoritarian regime. The same feelings of relief were expressed by another Tunisian who was relentlessly touring the street shouting the famous words: "Ben Ali has fled, Ben Ali has fled".

The case of Tunisia was only one example of the intolerable social, economic and political conditions of the Arab world, a fact which was clearly revealed in the successive protests that had rapidly and dramatically spread across the region; Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and so on. The domino effect seen throughout the protesting events has shown the common nature of suppression and suffering under dictatorship in the region. For the masses in the region, authoritarian regimes have accumulated a series of grievances and exposed the population to humiliation that led to utter dissatisfaction and disbelief amongst the elite.

Challenging authoritarianism in the Arab world was often viewed as unrealizable especially with the prevalence of the police states and the military nature of most of these

systems that left no space for the normal functioning of the democratic institutions. In the words of (Roko, 2011), these "regimes often used co-optation, manipulation, repression and subjugation, alternatively and in varying doses to control major organized groups in society". Unfortunately, in the majority of Arab contexts this was often the case where "the authoritarian and repressive regimes usually nurture a political culture of fear, which obviously not conducive to the public expression of political opposition." (Doug Mcdam, 1981, p. 51).

In fact, the Arab authoritarian regimes, particularly those in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen have had extremely repressive mechanisms that relied mostly on subjugation and humiliation that strangled any voices of oppositions. As convincingly stated by Lahcen Achy:

Frequently, the authoritarian rulers implemented legal means of repression through emergency laws, and restricted people's freedom of expression, assembly, movement and residence. They also resorted to massive and disproportionate use of force and violence against bread riots and peaceful protesters, as well as arbitrary arrests, cruel torture and widespread intimidation. (2014, p. 304)

Despite the varying degrees at which these Arab regimes have resorted to the use of police and military force for repression, authoritarianism also relied on more subtle and much dangerous mechanisms for the dismantling of social cohesion, the spread of corruption, cronyism and the weakening of the educational institutions to guarantee the existence of an easily subdued population. Achy 2014 goes on to argue that:

Corruption and cronyism can be broadly defined as the abuse of state power in issuing laws, decrees and regulations that would allocate public assets or ensure favored market positions to a politically selected few. ...Cronyism may not be illegal and usually takes subtle forms of close ties between the state and big businesses. Crony capitalism and corruption have frequently been underlined as major sources of discontent and have fuelled uprisings in the region. (p.305)

Interestingly, the above crooked social, economic, and political apparatuses were often used by authoritarian regimes to ensure their continuity through serving twisted corps that would guarantee the maintenance of these interests. As could be clearly seen from the aforementioned views of Achy, the political situation in the majority of Arab countries demanded a total change of these regimes that had heavily repressed the will of the population and sowed the seeds of hate, resentment, loss of hope and apathy. It was these conditions of humiliation and bitterness that ended up with the various cases of self-immolation starting with Mohamed Al Bouazizi of Tunisia.

The majority of Arab regimes--which have interestingly started with nationalistic and popular and democratic slogans--have turned against the democratic processes establishing and solidifying the one party systems and strangling the opposition, hence putting an end to the peaceful and democratic transition of power. A glaring example one could start with as regards the shift of strategy as far as Arab political regimes are concerned could be the cases of Tunisia Egypt, Libya and Syria.

The political regime of Zein El Abidine Ben Ali left the country in a state of total loss in the midst of an extremely tight and suffocating policing over the masses. Moreover, the Ben Ali's regime and the monopoly and cronyism his family had over the years led to a roaring anger amongst the populations. The latter situation was heavily sensed by the people of Tunisia. A tape released by Wiki leaks encapsulates the resentment for the regime at the time:

Corruption in the inner circle is growing. Even average Tunisians are now keenly aware of it, and the chorus of complaints is rising. Tunisians intensely dislike, even hate, first lady Leila Trabelsi and her family. In private, regime opponents mock her; even those close to the government express dismay at her reported behavior. Meanwhile, anger is growing at Tunisia's high unemployment and regional inequities. As a consequence, the risks to the regime's long-term stability are increasing. (Brian Whitaker, December, 24, 2010)

No doubt, the regime of Ben Ali even though it has been able to suppress and force the Tunisian population into subjugation, it still failed to manage the wrath of these masses that was invoked by various social and economic and human rights conditions which were easily ignited by the self-immolation of Mohamed Al Bouazizi. The event of Sidi Bou Zeid stood out as an emblem to the end of the long process of suppression that Tunisians had undergone under the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali.

These events would later spread throughout the Arab world to be caught by Egypt where three young men would set themselves on fire. Not far from the situation in Tunisia, the Egyptian ousted president Mohamed Hosni Mubarak who ruled the country for about three decades during

which the country suffered from serious economic setbacks. Mubarak has also relied on police force and repression to subdue his opponents. Cronyism and the monopoly over power by the close family and relatives of Mubarak was also a prominent feature in Egypt to the extent that his eldest son Gamal Mubarak was to be prepared for presidency.

The grievances, said Michael Slackman (January, 28, 2011) "are economic, social, historic and deeply personal. Egyptians, like Tunisians, often speak of their dignity, which many said has been wounded by Mubarak's monopoly on power, his iron-fisted approach to security and corruption that has been allowed to fester."

The concept of "the revolution of dignity" associated with the Tunisian protests was deeply upheld by Egyptians who had to suffer for 30 years under the authoritarian regime of Mubarak. Social and political movements such as *Kefaya* (Enough!) The regime of Mubarak has not only been able to suppress people for a long time, but was also preparing the ground for his son as heir which left Egyptians desperate for political change. In the words of Emad El Dine Shahin (2014),

Egyptians associate Mubarak's reign with political stagnation. Astonishingly stubborn and unyielding when faced with pressures for change; Mubarak kept the political life of the country under tight control and prevented both true political contestation for power and any change for the basic structures of the political system. The state party, the NDP, wielded complete hegemony over the state institutions and parliament and monopolized the political processes. With the potential ascendance of Gamal Mubarak in 2002 as an heir, the NDP

became even more dominant and vicious in suppressing opposition to this plan of Egypt's political future. (Shahin, 2014, p.57)

Political movements and protesting groups in Egypt went out to the public squares on the 25th of January 2011 shouting the famous motto: "People want to oust the regime". This motto stood for a new era in the Arab world where people overcame the psychological barriers of fear and intimidation. The Tunisian uprising even helped protesters overcome their fear of the police force of the authoritarian regimes. The Tunisian Ahmad Chibel, a 30-year-old technology consultant who took part in the protests that overthrew Zein el Abidine Ben Ali stated "I lost all the fear when I saw people killed by cops during the demonstrations. "I had courage when I saw people on the streets. I lost all the fear because I felt the rage of the people and saw the brutality of the police." (January, 30, 2011, Los Angeles Times).

Fear of the humiliating force of the regimes was at the core of the Arab population; a fear that the young generations have audaciously challenged during the protests ignited by the end of December 2010 and the beginning of January 2011.

Qaddafi's Libya has also provided a glaring example of a long history of dictatorship and the power of suppression. The reign of Qaddafi relied mostly on the over glorification of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi as the leader and the savior of Libyans, "guide of the revolution". One of the most dangerous features of the regime of Qaddafi was its reliance on tribal divisions for strengthening its hold over the country. According to the New Arab magazine (20, October, 2015), Qaddafi "pitched tribes and regions and different ethnic groups against one another for

decades, which is why Libyans and the international community have struggled to create a national identity in his absence."

The dictatorship of Qaddafi was marked with the entrenching of a systemless state that was deeply dependent on his personality. For years, Qaddafi has turned Libya into an eccentric society that no state institutions. Youssef Sawani(2014) captured the above situation by stating

Because Qaddafi wanted to build a state in a way that satisfied his personal aspirations and ego as a self-acclaimed visionary or "prophet" whose ideology or philosophy was could resolve all human agonies, he took Libya on an exhaustive odyssey, claiming the application of "direct democracy". The regime he built he claimed was one of the "people's power" yet it provided cover for his authoritarian rule that brooked no dissent and rejected freedom of expression. (Sawani, 2014, pp. 82-83)

No doubt, the Arab uprisings were triggered by the heavy reality of the iron-fisted regimes that strangled the will of the people. The cases of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya are a valid example of how the authoritarian nature and suppression of the regimes led to a strong rejection of the rulers; a rejection that ended up in some of these cases with the barbarous murder or injury of the ousted presidents (Qaddafi and Ali Abdella Saleh are a case in point).

In the following section we will delve deeper into the historical background of Arab national leadership as well as analyze the socio-political, economic and even global factors that led to the ascendance of Arab dictators to power. The goal of tracing the evolvement their political trajectory and the turn their made from nationalism and enthusiastic pan-Arabism into one absolute power and repression is to clarify the need to shift the political discourse of

glorification of leaders into that of continuous assessment and accountability for a truer conceptualization of democracy and development.

a). The Deception of Absolute Power: National Leaders Turning into Dictators



Source : Google

It is quite intriguing that most of these dictators who fell horribly during the Arab uprisings stood as national and regional emblems of the masses' aspirations for a unified Arab world that could achieve democracy and progress under the notion of pan-Arabism. Qaddafi, for example, even though he stood as an eminent symbol of authoritarianism had often preached a powerful version of pan-Arabism or Arab socialism. Qaddafi who came to power by 1969 through a military coup, he was seen back then as representing the hope and aspiration of Arabs to overcome economic stagnation and to unify under the banner of "the instigator of the revolution". Qaddafi claimed Sawani (2014), has "successfully managed in the early years of his regime to construct a populist legitimacy based on his responses to the aspirations, hopes and needs of the population." (p. 82).

Interestingly, this was the case of most of the political regimes in the Arab world who had harped on the sentiments of the Arab populations for both national and regional support. The majority of these leaders have unfortunately turned their back to those aspirations resulting in a long history of the abuse of political power, police force and the military for suppressing any opposition. Most of these leaders says Sayyid Amiruddin (2016);

The leaders of this version of Arab nationalism were all dictators. Nasser of Egypt, Saddam Hussein and his predecessors of Iraq, Qaddafi of Libya, and the leaders of most non-monarchy Arab republics come into this category. Their actions and disregard of Arab religious sentiment resulted in the unprecedented and phenomenal rise of pan-Islamism in the region.

Definitely, the loss of hope, the Arab people had with the tight grip of the Arab dictators who turned against the pan-Arab and democracy and development that brought them to power has resulted in the rise of pan-Islamist movements. Moreover, a closer look into what happened in the Arab revolutions reveals the degree to which the general mode had shifted towards Islamist parties to which the populations have had recourse.

Not far from the case of Qaddafi's absolute control over Libya through propagating an agenda of both Arab and African social nationalism, Egypt's Mohamed Hosni Mubarak adopted a very enthusiastic and passionate tone of social and economic reforms that spoke to the heart of a country in dire need for change. Mubarak even though took from the Nasserite project of pan-Arabism defending the interests of Arabs across the region, has more focused--at the beginning of his rule--on strengthening global economic ties with the global economic forces. The latter

made his stand as a symbol for revolutionary economic development. Monier and Ranko (2013) declared:

Mubarak's regional-leadership project was not one of Arab unity as understood under Nasser. The vision of stability and unity was no longer for the sake of creating a single Arab nation but for preserving the sovereignty of individual Arab states. This diluted Arabism used the resonance of the claim to be defending Arab interests while avoiding competition with the system of national sovereignty that emerged after the failure of Nasserism.

Mubarak who stood out as a national leader at a certain time lost the glamour of that position the more he stayed into power. Social and political movements emerged that were a true expression of the horrendous economic ailments of unemployment, corruption, cronyism and political monopoly. The Tunisian example of Ben Ali shows the utter transformation of a national leader who, at the very beginning stood for popular hopes and demands into one that had a tight and suffocating control over the country.

The events at Sidi Bouzid that triggered the Arab uprisings and notion of self-immolation that ran amok various counties of the region express the degree to which the younger generation has lost hope in the systems. The shift of power marked a new beginning for the Tunisian people who went on with solidifying their democratic institutions while making sure that the experience of Ben Ali would not be undergone again. The protests of Tunisia constituted at their core an ailment that stood for the majority of Arab political regimes. Ailments such as "high unemployment, high food prices, and widespread poverty have characterized much of Tunisia.

Government corruption and a paucity of political freedoms have also painted its landscape." (Global Nonviolent Database, 2011).

In the following section, we will be highlighting the dilemma of democracy and lack of state democratic institutions that guarantee the voice of the peoples and ensure the separation of powers as well as the peaceful transition of power. It is here that we attempt to set the distinction between social and political revolutions that topple dictatorships and authoritarian regimes only to guarantee the implementation of the will of the people and others where the immaturity of the democratic and institutional experience renders these attempts dangerous, uncertain and sometimes hopeless.

b). The Dilemma of Institutional Democracy in the Arab World

The notions of democracy and the implementation of democratic institutions speak to the core of the long-standing underdevelopment of the majority of Arab countries. Most of the Arab countries have undergone a slow process of democratization after independence while the majority have also bloated the concept of democracy by rendering the democratic institutions void and toothless. According to a report released by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in 2000,

Western democracies resound with questions regarding the diminishing popularity of certain long-established democratic institutions such as parliaments, political parties, and some areas local government/councils. ...The Arab world is not immune to similar questions--although in the Arab context, the issues leading to these questions tend to arise from the consequences of

decades of authoritarian rule, conflict, overblown state bureaucracies and widespread corruption. (p.7)

Unquestioningly, what is at stake in the Arab is not the existence of such institutions per se, but in the power dynamics that turned them into mechanisms for the empowerment of dictators and authoritarian rulers. Most of Arab dictators have succeeded in controlling the institutions which were supposed to serve the normal democratic process and the healthy functioning of the state. The words of one Egyptian political activist, "there is a small Mubarak sitting in every system of the society" (Mohn, 2012, MA, Thesis), encapsulate the relationship between the supposedly democratic institutions and the totalitarian rulers who interfere with the functioning of these establishments and turn them into a means for tightening their grip over their countries.

One of the basic tenets of democracy and the rule of law is the separation of powers. It is this real separation of powers that would allow the branches to be able to control and balance each other's work. In fact, the role of the parliament as a legislature and the judiciary system as a separate and completely autonomous entity of the executive strikes at the heart of the balance of power in a normal democratic and constitutional country. Charles Magna Fombad (2005) states that,

One important fundamental preoccupation of constitutionalism is the avoidance of governmental tyranny through the abuse of power by rulers pursuing their own interests at the expense of life, liberty, and property of the governed. A major challenge faced by constitutional engineers has been to design a system of governance that maximizes the protection of individual

members of society while minimizing the opportunities for governments to harm them. (Fombad, 2005, p. 301)

Unfortunately, the majority of Arab countries, these supposedly democratic institutions have been a source of suppression and political hegemony over the right of opposing individuals and groups. The judicial system was stripped off its role as the guarantor of justice only to be used as an apparatus for persecution by the authoritarian governments. The separation of powers which was supposed to solidify democracy in the Arab world was shifted into a governmental tool for institutionalizing and legalizing oppression and political and economic corruption. Farhad Khosrokhavar (2012) captured the latter meaning in relation to the causes of the uprisings in the Arab countries by declaring:

Institutional obstacles are mainly the old state apparatus with its lack of transparency and its relationship to civil society, police and security forces, and the judiciary. Under a dictatorship, these institutions worked mostly under illegitimate laws, disrespectful of divisions between the judiciary, legislative and executive bodies. (p. 126)²

The above was exactly the reason for the exacerbating condition of the abuse of democratic structures by Arab regimes to tighten their grip over their population with the fake alibi of promoting democracy and the rule of law. The Arab regimes fostered serious ailments that helped further their continuity in power. All these ailments have led to the deterioration of the role of political institutions which has progressively led to the deterioration of the civil

² Makdisi, S. & Elbadawi, I. (2017). *Democratic transitions in the Arab world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

liberties and the freedom of speech and assembly. In the words of Makdisi and Elbadawi (2017), these conditions have led to

a weak central authority and weak political institutions which, in turn, gave rise to the emergence of the twin issues of unstable political equilibrium and poor governance (reinforced by a non-democratic regional environment, the persistence of the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict and a frequent state of instability in the region. Generally the prevailing domestic political environment tended to foster corruption, nepotism, clientelism and laxity in the upholding of the public interest. (p. 245)

Democracy in the Arab world was very much influenced by the tense environment of conflict and the growing tendency of the Arab leaders towards staying in power. Interestingly, even though most of these leaders came to power as a result of revolutions or coup d'états against earlier regimes, most of them would turn into despotic rulers who strangled any voices of resistance or opposition. More importantly, for one to comprehend the deficits of democracy in the Arab world, it is necessary to analyze the various elements of the democratization process adopted and the Arab regimes have been trying to make it fit into a different and more complex context than that of the Western countries wherein these notions had been born.

In fact, there were various factors that made the democracy of the Arab world look the way it is before the revolutions. Again, in the words of Makdisi and Elbadawi "the evidence from the cross country model showed that for the Arab region as a whole, while the extended modernity variables (eg. income, education, neighbor polity, female participation in the labor force) are important determinants of democracy in the long run, they fail to explain why the

Arab democracy deficit persisted relative to other regions. Other explanatory factors included past colonial rule, ethnic fractionalization and religion. (p. 1).

No doubt, the aforementioned reasons were extremely vital in leading to the peculiar status of democracy in the Arab world, a status deeply influenced by powerful factors that had some indelible impact on the democratic institutions in Arab countries. Most of the Arab regimes have worked on ingraining notions of corruption, nepotism and tribalism to solidify their continuity. Moreover, these regimes have fostered a political and constitutional condition wherein the judiciary and legislative have become instruments in the hands of the executive to ensure compliance and conformity with the operating systems.

For a more understandable vision of the situation in the Arab world and the its political regimes, one has to really fathom the degree to which these regimes have adopted different strategies for maintaining power. More significantly, we have also to see how these regimes were different from each other in their ways of approaching authoritarianism. As clearly defined by Alimi, Sznajder and Sela (2016),

the situation is different for authoritarian regimes. Barbara Geddes...has distinguished a wide variety among them, including personalist, military and party regimes, monarchies and various hybrids. Moreover, there is a substantial literature in the theory of revolutions arguing that personalist regimes--which feature a dominant individual who came to power by military, party, or even democratic rule, but who then subordinated all other political groups and individuals by making them dependent on his favor and patronage--are

particularly vulnerable to revolutionary collapse in the event of widespread popular uprisings. (p. 99)³

Clearly, as we could see from the above quote, the notions of dictatorship and authoritarianism took different shapes in the various parts of the Arab world. Definitely, the regimes in Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have historically been different, especially in the way their leaders came to power, despite the fact that many of them have similar processes and trajectories when it comes to ascendance to power by revolutionary means that sought to fight corruption and dictatorship.

Actually, the above state of revolutionaries and freedom fighters turning into dictators that tightly control the supposedly to be democratic institutions was the dilemma of the Arab world. The whole process of shifting was very nuanced and very much impacted by the particularity of the Arab context imbued with notions such as cronyism, nepotism, corruption and tribal and regional interests.

Undoubtedly, the above context of authoritarianism and corruption has led to serious problems most of them related to education and turning the masses into illiterates who fail to recognize their rights and duties within a state. The lack of education and the rising level of poverty were extremely vital elements in maintaining a situation of suppression and denial of basic rights and of fair distribution of national wealth. This last stance was stressed by Chatterjee and Singh (2014) who argued that;

the turmoil in the Arab street in the 21st century, the so-called Arab Spring is a reflection of the anger with which the Arab middle class is seething. It has

³ Alimi, E. Sela. A. & Sznajder (2016). *Popular contention, regime and transition: The Arab revolt in comparative global perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

been piling up for decades, which was ignored by the ruling elite. It has been piling up for decades, which was ignored by the ruling elite regardless of whether it was republican or a monarchy. For long, the innocent bystander has falsely been briefed about the achievements of the ruler/ruling elite, much to the appreciation of rented mass supporting such policy. But of late, all the various strata of the society have joined in to express their angers and sufferings that have been piling over the years. Some analysts have chosen to call it a less secular revolution that has taken place in Tunisia, others have added economic and political angles to the revolts in Egypt where the peoples had been kept at bay from the decision making of government in matters which directly affected their daily livelihood. (Chatterjee & Singh, 2014, n.p).⁴

The reasons for the turmoil expressed earlier were various, but the prevailing ones were basically, the serious search for freedom and the equal participation in the political and economic life of most of the revolting communities. There were also other mechanisms and shifts in the social life of the Arab people that was incurred by new concepts such as globalization and the ICTs. The rapid spread of information and the borderless nature of social networking would also play a vital role in changing the Arab world, especially with the bulge of younger population who became tech-savvy and were deeply involved in strengthening the dynamics of change and subversion in their societies. In the following section we will analyze the extent to which the ICT played a key role in the Arab uprisings and see the various elements of change they incurred in the Arab world, especially in relation to social categories such as youth and women.

⁴ Chatterjee, K. & Singh, P. (2014). *The dilemma of the popular sovereignty in the Middle East: Power from or to the people?* New Delhi: Institute of Foreign Policy Studies.

c). The Rise of ICT and the Demise of Dictatorship



Source: Google

The rise of the information and communication technologies has changed the world in many ways. Apart from their ability to rapidly spread information, ICTs eased the process of communicative political participation which paved the ground for more subversive ways of networking and social and political connections. As evidently stated by Stephan Stetter (2012), "the emancipatory potential of ICTs --the idea that they might facilitate new forms of communicative political participation in areas that have thus far been characterized by authoritarian structures of government. Early assessment of the introduction of technologies like

satellite television, the Internet and short message service (SMS) telephony took a technological determinist turn, arguing for an inevitable democratization of politics as the states monopoly on communicative instruments was eroded." (p. 43).⁵

With the introduction of new, faster and more effective instruments of communication such as the social networks of *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Youtube*, the monopoly of the regimes and control over information became extremely hard. Most of these means of communication became the platform for some extremely subversive revolutionary and protesting messages that ran havoc on the net. The power of ICTs lie in the fact that they were not only handy and available but also speedy in spreading the information and the news about plans of protestation. Facebook as social network was the most powerful ground for creating groups and pages that worked to subvert and topple down regimes of suppression. Most of the pages and the tweets on the social network were directed to criticizing the policies of the dictators and their governing elites. As James Gelvin asserted, "it was not long after the outbreak of the Tunisian uprising that Western media began to call the even a 'Twitter Revolution' or a 'Facebook Revolution', after two types of social media that the protesters used (protesters used other forms of new media such as cell phones and blogs as well, but those did not seem to have the cachet of Twitter and Facebook." (Gelvin, 2015, p.54).⁶

In fact, both Facebook and Twitter were highly effective in steering the arenas of revolutions. With all the power of words and articles posted and shared on these two networks; with all the vibrant messages and notes delivered, these two means of social communication became extremely subversive and vital in changing the perceptions young peoples in most of

⁵ Stetter, S. (2012). *The Middle East and globalization: Encounters and horizons*. New York: Palgrave & Macmillan.

⁶ Gelvin, J. (2015). *The Arab uprisings: What everyone needs to know*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Arab countries and raising their consciousness with regards to their rights and their terrible conditions under these corrupt regimes. The use of social networking has also enhanced and motivated the role of civil society which became more apparent especially with the vibrant involvement of youth. As was clearly asserted by Grote and Roder (2016), with regards to the Tunisian revolution,

The Tunisian civil society emerged out of the street protests and the generalized revolt across the whole of the country against the Ben Ali regime. It may be said that young people were the lynchpin of these revolutions which they were driving through their new language, their blogs, their subversive use of Facebook, Twitter, and the new communication technologies, their politicized music and their slogans. Unable to endorse or put up with a censorship incompatible with modern times any longer, these young people brought about the wind of freedom. (p. 77)⁷

Without a doubt, the role played by social media was of extreme importance and constituted a serious problem for the authoritarian regimes. The hardly controlled nature of these instruments and the widespread effects they had on people had been of extreme vitality. The tech-savvy generation was hard to stop and the authoritarian regimes found themselves faced with an unprecedented condition of awareness from the younger population. Moreover, despite all the efforts and suppressing mechanisms used by the regime to halt the evolution of the events towards toppling them down, the youth have been constantly a dangerous force that went beyond all those mechanisms. Tunisia stands as a flagrant example of how the ruling regime tried all the

⁷ Grote, R. & Roder, T. J. (2016). *Constitutionalism, human rights and Islam after the Arab Spring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

means to curb the protests, but only to be defeated by a relentless resistance from the young and tech-savvy Tunisians. Farhad Khosrokhavar (2012) has plainly explained it by declaring that,

The Internet, mainly Facebook and Twitter, played a major role in mobilizing the youth. The new technologies penetrated into where information was controlled by the Tunisian government, but the government was not able to control it as tightly as traditional sources of information. When security forces forbid the zone of Sidi Bouzid, where Bouazizi committed suicide, to the national and international media, a group of savvy bloggers, more than one hundred of whom had been censored during the previous months succeeded in sidestepping government censorship and disseminated the news of the events in that town. The number of connections (more than 1.5 million Tunisians, almost one out of six, using Facebook) made censorship more difficult for the government. Websites multiplied that carried political and social content under the guise of blogs. (p. 41)⁸

The evolution of ICTs marked the beginning of the demise of dictatorship in the Arab world. Many regimes have found themselves faced with a population of youth and women fully aware of their rights and the need to incur change in the deeply corrupt systems. More importantly, it was the development of ICTs that has also allowed the youth to share and speculate about their problems. It is undeniable that authoritarianism often thrived on the lack of communication to suppress its opponents and control and strangle any voices of resistance that try to unsettle the current power. History is full of numerous cases of imprisonment and disappearance of persons who challenged the regime. Various ruling elites have even tried to use

⁸ Khosrokhavar, F. (2012). *The new Arab revolutions that shook the world*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

international ground for censoring Twitter and Facebook, but only to fail later, especially with the intermingling geopolitical role of world and particularly Western powers in the evolvment and even the inception of the Arab Spring.

We are not trying to say here that the West was the main conspirator and mastermind of the revolutions which we take to be spontaneous in their inception and triggered by the common suppression and the tight grip of authoritarianism and dictatorship, but it is certain that Western interests were highly present in the events. As declared by Mitchell & Mitchell (2014), "the international forces driving the Arab Spring were triggered by strong networks of democratic states in the international system. Pressures for democratic socialization arising from the system of states operate at two levels. First, there have been forces operating in the global international systems. Here the strength of the Western powers and the permissive environment this fostered within the Middle East were critical. Second, regional dynamics within the system of states also played a key role." (p. 54).⁹

It is quite evident that the West had some extremely vital and clear-cut economic goals and aspirations in the Arab world. The Arab Spring was an opportunity for Western powers to ensure that their interests in the region are being guarded. It was clear, for instance, that Gaddafi despite his tight grip over Libya was not the type of leader that the West could subdue very easily. Gaddafi was very influential in world politics, especially with the great wealth the country had, and Gaddafi meddling with and sponsorship of rebels and terrorists in Africa, he became of an extreme danger to the Western powers. We are going to give more details on this in the following section as a part of the geopolitical factors that led to the revolutions.

⁹ Mitchell, H.E.S. & Mitchell, S. M. (2014). *The triumph if democracy and the eclipse of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Again, I would like to emphasize that the dissemination of information and the consciousness raised amongst the Arab population especially the youth had been of great importance in incurring the revolutions in the region. As stated by Murphy and Carmody (2015), "ICTs then impact on the governance of economic processes, although not always in the way that is commonly thought. They are also increasingly thought to have impacts on political governance. For example, mobile phones are thought to be capable of reducing political corruption, uplifting failed states, enabling democracy, and contributing to progressive revolutions like the Arab Spring." (p. 20).¹⁰

Even though, we might take again the above quote its negligence of the role of the new media in shifting the ground particularly in the political and social, still the quote shows clearly the development of media techniques and how more developed and more sophisticated means such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube have become of great impact on the evolution of revolutionary means. Now, we could see how all regime and government's programs, plans, projects, and even public officials have become vulnerable to criticism and scandalous condemnation from the masses. Not only did the ICTs work as a means to disseminate knowledge and information among the population, but had become a tool for controlling politicians and the ruling elite.

Taking into account the peculiarity of the Arab context, especially during the years of the Arab Spring, one could very much argue that ICT had been a tool to dismantle power and subvert political regimes. More importantly, one has to admit that though ICTs sometimes could be turned into a tool for serving the interest of authoritarianism as expressed by the following

¹⁰ Murphy, J. T & Carmody, P. (2015). *Africa's information revolution: Technical regimes and production networks in South Africa and Tanzania*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.

words of Kalathil and Boas (2003), the fundamental fact in the Arab world remained that they slipped out of the hands of the regimes and subverted their rule in various countries of the revolutions. Kalathil and Boas argue;

based on systematic examination of evidence from eight cases--China, Cuba, Singapore, Vietnam, Burma, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt--we argue that the Internet is not necessarily a threat to authoritarian regimes. Certain types of internet use do indeed pose political challenges to authoritarian governments, and such use may contribute to political change in the future. Still other uses of the internet reinforce authoritarian rule, and many authoritarian regimes are proactively promoting the development of an internet that serves state-defined interests rather than challenging them. (p.3)¹¹

Definitely, the above quote reveals the degree to which regimes would not stay passive in their interaction with the impact of the internet and social media on the masses by adopting alternative ways, still the quote belongs to a context when the internet was at its earlier stages with less users and less tech-savvy generation like ours. Moreover, the geopolitical and international actors who fostered the availability of the internet to the populations; an accessibility that served the interests of those actors who saw in the Arab political regimes a threat to their international economic and security interests.

In the following section, we will shed the light on the importance of the geopolitical and international factors that incurred the so called Arab Spring. The complexity of this section lies in the fact that it attempts to delineate the various and intermingled reasons and factors that first

¹¹ Kalathil, S. & Boas, T. C. (2003). *Open networks, closed regimes: The impact of the Internet on authoritarian rule*. Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

ignited the uprisings in the Arab countries. More significantly, it showcases the nuanced nature of the Arab context and the differences amongst the various countries that witnessed the uprisings. It is only when the modern reader is able to understand the particularity of each and every context and fathom the extent to which regimes have reacted sometimes differently that a clearer vision of the Arab revolutions would be shaped.

d). The Arab Spring and the Geopolitical Actors

The international perception of the Arab revolutions defined them as movements for liberation and freedom. The *Jasmine* Revolution of Tunisia was basically described as a revolution for dignity. The Egyptian revolution was viewed as one for 'bread', symbolizing a revolt against the unbearable economic condition of the country, while that in Syria, Yemen and Libya marked a flagrant roar against the tight grip of the military and dictatorship. The success of the Tunisian revolution and especially its well-organized nature and the vibrancy of its youth who took to the streets led to the domino effect that went through other neighboring countries. In the words of (Laremont, 2014), "the miracle of this revolution was that it toppled a police dictatorship. In less than a month of struggle, the people deposed their despot. Ben Ali fled the country on January 14, 2011. The second miracle was that the revolution did not plunge the country into terror. Rather, the peaceful nature of the revolutionary process convinced Tunisian that their nation would succeed in establishing democracy and restoring dignity to its people." (p. 30).¹²

The social, political, economic and even religious context has sometimes greatly differed across the Arab world which clarifies the various conditions of the uprisings across the region.

¹² Laremont, R.R. (2014). *Revolution, revolt, and reform in North Africa: The Arab Spring and beyond*. London: Taylor & Francis Group.

Undoubtedly, the case of Tunisia was totally different from that of Libya and Syria; countries that have deeply suffered from serious instability and rampant terror. Understandably, the political regimes in the latter countries started to adopt suppressing mechanisms to abort the revolts which have unfortunately led to a lot of bloodshed and violence across these countries. Most of the factors that led to the uprisings were basically internal ones related to the terrible economic; political and social conditions of the populations, but some of these factors could be related to the international geopolitical reasons.

Undeniably, the revolts in Libya is a case in point where the international community was willing to topple down Colonel Gaddafi relying on the boiling situation of the country and the political explosion succeeding Gaddafi decades' tight grip over the country. As stated by Ehud Eilam (2016),

Western powers did not forget their civilians who were murdered in terrorist attacks supported or planned by Muammar Gaddafi. They did not forgive him, but they were willing to reconcile with him for a time. Nevertheless, in 2011 Gaddafi once again became the enemy of Western powers, who feared he was about to slaughter his own citizens, cause a humanitarian disaster, disrupt the oil market and have an adverse effect on what seemed to be positive developments in the Middle East. However Western powers hesitated to intervene in the civil war in Libya, mostly due to financial considerations...Eventually, the Western powers became convinced that military action could be carried out quickly and effectively. European powers

had the combat capability to protect Libyan civilians, if only through air bombardments against Gaddafi's forces. (p. 177)¹³

The geopolitical and economic interests of the West in the Arab world were pretty clear during the revolutions. States that both had a promising economic future or were considered to be a threat to the state of Israel were immediately dismantled. Interestingly, there was definitely no possibility for backing down from the ousting of rulers like Gaddafi for instance, who was seen to be a threat not only to the people of Libya, but also to all the international community. Furthermore, the assassination of this dictator opens a lot of doors of inquiry as to the many secrets and unrevealed deals his system might have had with the West. Economic factors also were highly present as reasons for his demise. Stephan Hahnemann (2014) claimed that:

Muammar Gaddafi as well took an aggressive tune towards the multinational oil firms which operated in Libya, and he demanded that the price of the oil should be strongly lifted for the financing of his ambitious development projects. He succeeded in forcing one of the minor firms to yield-causing much nervousness in Washington and the Wall Street about whether the other OPEC members should follow up. ...Gaddafi nationalized a dozen, American, British and Italian oil firms, this initiating a wave of nationalizations in the Middle East over the next year. (p.200)¹⁴

¹³ Eilam, E. (2016). *Israel's way of war: Operational analysis, 1948-2014*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers.

¹⁴ Hahnemann, S. (2014). *Oil, Israel and modernity: The West's cultural and military interventions in the Middle East*. New York: Books on Demand.

The case of Egypt, though was at the very beginning derived by the mass anger of the population directed towards Mubarak and his military junta and immediate family, was later influenced by the international fear of the threat of Islamism that ascended to power as a result of the revolutions. Jerzy Zdanowski (2014) asserted that "as a result of the Arab Spring of 2011, there has been a shift in power in both Egypt and Tunisia, which came under the governance of Islamist parties; in Egypt the Freedom and Justice party (*Hizb Al Hurriya wal Adala*), which was formed on the 30th of April, 2011, and was affiliated with the Muslim Brothers, and in Tunisia *Ennahda*." (p. 306).¹⁵

The ascendance of Islamism political Islam to power in these countries rang the alarm bell for many Western observers who saw in it the beginning of the spread of the dangerous and expansionist ideologies of political and radical Islam. Egypt was thrown into turmoil after former president Muhammad Morsi won elections in June 2012. Even though there were internal reasons for the coup d'état that ousted Morsi out of power, especially with the powerful secular and liberal movements in Egypt, there were also some strong geopolitical and international factors that led to the shift. One of the most apparent reasons was the danger the Islamists constituted for the neighboring state of Israel.

Unlike the regime of Mubarak which has always shown aspirations of peace with the occupying Israel, the Islamists were clearly against any approval of peace or reconciliation with the Jewish state. This view was clearly shown by Beitler and Jebb (2003) when stated that "Mubarak contends that peace with Israel is his country's interest and that Egypt can play a role in ameliorating the Palestinian condition. A crucial United States concern is the question of what happens in Egypt if Islamists gain power. Since the Islamists do not hide their disdain for the

¹⁵ Zdanowski, J. (2014). *Middle Eastern societies in the 20th century*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Jewish state, many in the U.S. government assert that if the Islamic groups achieve power, they should almost certainly terminate peace with Israel. The ramifications of this action, according to the U.S. officials would be disastrous for the entire region." (p.39).¹⁶

No doubt, the issue of the security of Israel was at the forefront of the concerns of the international community, especially those of the United States and Europe. The tension brought up by the Islamists' ascendance to power and the continuous demonization from the liberal and secular Egyptian media fed into the peoples' willingness to oust Morsi and his government which has eventually led to a coup d'état led by the military. Many have argued that this latter action of the military intervention has led to the rolling back of the democratic goals achieved during the Arab Spring. McMillan (2016), for instance asserted that;

There are divisions too within the anti-Morsi camp: the protests which led to the coup were not a case of a simple binary choice between the military or the Muslim brotherhood. Many protesters wanted Morsi out but wanted a wholly new system with more robust institutions to replace him. ...The is a strange contradiction about the Egyptian military's overly aggressive role in politics and their seizure of power on the back of a tank: the military actually has supporters in Egypt...But the military leadership clearly do not believe they have sufficient support to risk going to the polls in a free and fair contest, and like the colonels of old, their concern is less with winning power than with exercising it and enjoying the privileges of it. Since this coup, they have

¹⁶ Beitler, R.M. & Jebb, C.R. (2003). Egypt as a Failing State: Implications for U.S. National Security. USAF Academy, Colorado: Institute for National Security Studies.

therefore rolled back any democratic progress made since the Arab Spring and have reinstated the one-party military state. (p.232)¹⁷

The above quote reveals the great extent to which politics in Egypt was very much impacted by external factors, particularly geopolitical and strategic ones that, along with the internal and specific context of the country, have been at the heart of the evolution of the uprisings. More significantly, the fact that the Arab Spring led sometimes to a counterproductive state of military rule, like what happened in Egypt opens the doors to various inquiries as to how one could call it really an Arab Spring. Truly, the above inquiries about whether one could call the revolutions an Arab Spring are of an extreme legitimacy. In various countries that witnessed the revolts, the situation has sometimes gone in the opposite direction of the high expectations of democracy, equality, the fair distribution of wealth, freedom of speech and the rule of law. This plainly summed up by Adam Roberts and Michael Willis (2016) when they declared that;

However, regimes survived, buttressed by significant domestic and external support. In particular, the government of Bahrain defeated the revolution, thanks in part to the arrival of a Saudi-led intervention force on 14 March 2011. This can be seen as the first major setback for the Arab Spring, but other problems were burgeoning. In Libya civil resistance in February 2011 (and some distinctly uncivil resistance) was followed rapidly by an open civil war, direct military involvement by NATO (from 20 March), the killing of Gaddafi, and then the decline of the country into endemic violence. The situation in Syria rapidly became one of civil war in a particularly horrific form leading to

¹⁷ McMillan, M.E. (2016). *From the first world war to the Arab Spring: What's really going on in the Middle East?* England: Palgrave MacMillan.

the exodus of millions of refugees into neighboring Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq, adding destabilizing pressures to the entire region. (p. 271)¹⁸

Despite the complex and extremely nuanced geopolitical factors that ignited the uprisings in the Arab world, and in spite of the catastrophic results that some countries had suffered due to the violence and dissidence caused by the riots, the Arab revolutions paved the ground towards an awakening that swept over the Arab region. It was through this awakening that various social, cultural and political categories came to recognize their rights and demand or even forcibly take them back from the grip of the ruling regimes. Categories that have been relegated to the margin for many years such as youth and women were able to voice their opinions against serious ailments that suppressed them. Both dictatorship and patriarchy played a key role in burying the voices of these categories and enshrining a culture of political and economic monopoly that denied them their rights in the modern state.

In the following chapter, we will analyze the extent to which the Arab Spring constituted a good ground for youth to challenge the political regimes and put forward vital issues related to their ailments particularly those related to unemployment, poverty, and lack of education to mention but a few. We will also see in this chapter how the dynamics of contention worked to shift the power relations especially with regards to the role of youth and women in the uprisings and the outcomes of the latter on the positioning of these social categories within the political and economic realms in the Arab region.

¹⁸ Roberts, A. & Willis, M. (2016). *Civil resistance in the Arab Spring: Triumphs and disasters*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chapter 2: Youth and the Dynamics of Contention

"We, the youth, did the revolution. We didn't say that it should be Islamic or whatever. And people felt good. They felt relaxed here" Rania Rifaat; Egyptian Social Activist July, 31; 2011¹⁹

The above statement by Rania Rifaat, an Egyptian social activist who clearly defined the role young people played in the Arab uprisings, could be taken as a prominent example of how youth in general and young women in particular have been at the heart of the change that swept over the region. Actually, there has always been a very close link between the notion of resistance and the category of youth and the upholder of all values related to revolution and protestation. In the majority of Arab countries the idea of youth involvement into the political process was very much neglected by the vast majority of the political regimes. It was this negligence and even disrespect towards the younger generation that sparked the uprisings starting from Tunisia. In the words of Alcinda Honwana (2013), "the spark lit by Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid ignited a regional youth protest against police abuse and unemployment that spread into a youth movement fighting for better living conditions and freedom of expression, which then transformed into a nation-wide coalition that managed to overthrow one of the most entrenched dictatorial regimes in North Africa." (n.p.)²⁰

The youth of Tunisia was not the only example of the younger generation taking to the streets enacting for freedom and social, political and economic change. Many young men and women in countries such as Libya, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria and various other Arab countries worked on a rapid process of revolution that used social media and the

¹⁹ Robin, B. (2011). The Arab Spring Quote. PJ Media Online.

²⁰ Honwana, A. (2013). *Youth and revolution in Tunisia*. New York: African Arguments.

street marches as the most influential weapon to subvert power, dismantle the system or call on for serious changes and reforms from the part of the ruling regimes.

The seriousness of the cause of youth was seen in different arenas and public squares where these young men and women have come spontaneously to express their anger and their condemnation of the ways the political regimes have excluded them from the decision making and relegated them to the margins. In this regard, I found myself in partial disagreement here with scholars such as Nadine Sika, who has fervently argued that the Arab youth were weak and fragmented during the demonstrations. Sika (2017) asserted that;

The youth movements were weak and fragmented and lacked a firm foundation of active networks either prior to the uprisings or after them. In three of the countries--excluding Bahrain--the youth movements called for major reforms, but not for the end of their regimes. At the same time, all four regimes issued strong political upgrading measures to prevent the protests from gaining ground. Even though youth movements were not able to bring down their respective regimes, their repertoires of contention, and their social, economic and political grievances, along with their contemporary ability to communicate via social media with others holding similar grievances, influenced the policies of their regimes in various ways. (Sika, p. 133)²¹

No doubt, the involvement of youth in the sweeping wind of change during the Arab Spring is of extreme vitality and importance. Not only were the communications via social media the only subversive means utilized to topple down the regimes, but also were the millions'

²¹ Sika, N. (2017). *Youth activism and contentious politics in Egypt: Dynamics of continuity and change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

marches organized and ignited by youth and women. Definitely, the youth found in the protests the most efficient mechanism to voice out their ailments and to bring to the forefront some of the most important issues related to their basic needs. Adopting a serious politics of contention and a methodology of protestation that combined the taking out to the streets with the sharing of every single personal or collective experiences via social media were some of the most effective ways for reaching out for people and confusing the defense of th political regimes.

A good example contention could be seen in the squares of Sana'a in Yemen where a lot of young people and women activists. The contention in Yemen was fostered by young people who were very much aware of the political conditions of their country; youth who did not want to return to the old way of authoritarianism with new slogans and old rulers in news skin. Political analyst Stephen Day (2012) has very much clarified case when he stated that;

Sensing a foreign plot to hijack Yemen's revolution, the youth demanded the prosecution of president Salih and other members of his regime responsible for killing scores of people since January 2011. The most ardent youth leaders in Sana'a, Taiz, Al Hudayda, Aden, and other cities distrusted the leadership of the JMP, especially, the senior tribal and religious figures in Islah, whom they accused of sacrificing of street protesters in order to gain power. According to these youth, any future rule by Islah leaders...each of whom had patron in Saudi Arabia would be as bad or worse than the rule of Ali Abdallah Salih. (p.284)²²

²² Day, W. S. (2012). *Religionism and rebellion in Yemen: A troubled national union*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

The above quotes delineates how the youth of Yemen were not only conscious of the domestic factors and nuances of politics that tried to pull the country back to the authoritarian rule of Salih, but also reveal the great extent to which they are aware of the international and external mechanisms that work to serve the regime's interests. The case of Yemen was not the only one where youth have shown a great deal of responsibility and interest in toppling down the regimes that had been the primary reason of their unbearable ailments. Young people went out for protestation in Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Algeria, Morocco and various others in the Arab region.

In Libya, for example, even though violence and instability have swept over the country which gave the revolutions a stamp of bloodshed and recklessness, the role of youth was clearly noticed in the evolvement of the struggle against Gaddafi's regime. The role of youth was extremely prominent and major political and social activists belonged to this category. The resistance in Libya took different forms amongst which the most influential was that of the campaigns launched on social media by civil society groups and youth organizations. As eloquently stated by scholars like Cole and McQuinn (2016),²³

In 2011 in parallel to the reassertion of traditional power structures, Benghazi also saw the flowering of political activism, free speech and independent civil society. Over 200 political and civil networks and independent media organizations were quickly mobilized by women, exiles, youth and religious conservatives. These groups formed the backbone of volunteer movement that performed virtually all state functions, garbage collection, telecommunication services, neighborhood watches, medical treatment and humanitarian

²³ Cole, P. & McQuinn, B. (2016). *The Libyan revolution and its aftermath*. New York: Oxford University Press.

assistance. Libyan urban and middle-class were particularly prominent in this political activism and volunteering as well as frontline fighting. (p. 211)

Undoubtedly, most of these youth organizations were the backbone of a very subversive media campaign that overthrew the regime of Gaddafi. The politics of contention incurred by youth was vital bringing about serious and deep political changes in the Arab region. The domino effect of the revolutions brought other regimes to their knees and pushed them to hearken to the demands of the neglected categories. For many political analysts, the effects of the uprisings though they are sometimes bloody in their outcomes had been of extreme necessity for changing rules that stayed for long in the region.

Contention has always been at the heart of any political or social change. The politics of contention reveals the great extent to which the mechanisms and dynamics of change intermingle to bring any dictatorship or any overarching power for that matter to an end. In the Arab world, contention took different forms. Contention has been continuing across the region which led many scholars to argue that the Arab Spring has just opened the door for a series of unstoppable and confusing changes in the political arena. In the words of Marc Lynch (2014),

Whether the upsurge in contentious political action will bring enduring political change remains highly uncertain. We also cannot yet define and measure the political changes that have occurred. Even the fall of the dictators in Tunisia and Egypt only opened the door to new political struggles, which left many of the revolutionaries at home and observers abroad deeply concerned. In Egypt, the old regime reasserted itself through a military coup on July, 3, 2013 which overthrew the elected government of Mohamed Morsi.

The dizzying pace of the Arab Spring has now slowed to a gritty, desperate and increasingly bloody set of interlocked battles for power. (p. 2)²⁴

Definitely, the aforementioned statement by Lynch explains some of the most perplexing sides to contention and its setbacks, still the very notion of change and reform, especially in relation to regimes that had held power for so long and whose grip was extremely suffocating to both youth and women could be seen as one of the positive elements of the uprisings. Taking into account what has occurred in Egypt where the regime restored power through the door of the military, one still could argue that the forte of contention lies in the fact that it threatens the regime of the shaky ground that the revolution could topple at any moment. More significantly, and as we are going to see in the following section, contention and the continuous policy of protestation had helped bring the issues of youth to the forefront of the regimes' concern. The particularity of the Arab context in relation to the involvement of the younger generation into the political life of the communities and the continuous negligence of the power, efficiency and importance of this social category would be one of the most flagrant and eye-catching slogans of the Arab Spring.

a). The Ailments of Arab Youth Under Dictatorship

Two of the basic hallmarks of an authoritarian regime are exclusion and suppression. The youth in the Arab countries suffered from the aforementioned two at the highest level possible. Not only were the authoritarian regimes extremely suppressive, but added to that fact the total negligence and exclusion of youth from the decision making process. In the majority of Arab countries youth constitute sometimes more than 70 percent of the population which speaks very

²⁴ Lynch, M. (2014). *The Arab uprisings explained: Contentious politics in the Middle East*. West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

fluently to the need for their inclusion into the affairs of the community. The youth bulge is an extremely important characteristic that led to the uprisings due basically to the need for catering for their escalating demands. As stated by Altomonte and Ferrera (2014), "to the surprise of much of the world... and stimulated by high level corruption and their unusually strong youth bulge, in many of these MENA countries in the last year or two there have arisen political uprisings, which in some cases at least have led to revolutionary regime changes. In view of the trend toward regime change and the continuing pressure to generate suitable jobs for their citizens, this would seem to be an appropriate time for a thorough rethinking of their entire economic, social and political orientation". (p. 36).²⁵

The contention of youth was stimulated by many factors that the Arab regimes fostered such as unemployment, corruption, nepotism and cronyism. All these were enough reasons to turn these young men and women into rebels who were determined to topple down the roots of all these evils. The youth bulge in the Arab world was also an extremely important that led to the uprisings. The fact that Arab countries were known for the great percentage of young people constituted element in shifting the political situation. In the words of the political analyst and scholar Nur Laiq:

In the Arab world, 60 percent of the population is less than twenty-five years old. This means that out of a total population of 360 million, approximately, 216 million are youth. In addition, many activists up to thirty-five years of age count themselves as part of the youth movement. If you include this demographic, the figure would amount to over 70 percent of the population.

²⁵ Altomonte, C. & Ferrera, M. (2014). *The economic and political aftermath of the Arab Spring: Perspectives from Middle East and North African countries*. Massachusetts, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

The youth bulge has long been compelling for its political and economic ramifications. It is a demographic that has unemployment rates of 20 to 40 percent, making youth unemployment in the Arab region the highest in the world. Forty percent of high school and college graduates cannot find a job. Many youth in the Middle East are relegated to lives of despair, with little hope for the future. (Laiq, 2013, n.p.)²⁶

The Arab regimes were unable to cater for these basic needs of youth which ultimately led to a situation of turmoil and turbulence that led to the ousting of dictatorship. Once again, if one goes back to the example of Bouazizi, it could be clearly seen that his was a serious issue of unemployment that denied him his rights as an educated Tunisian citizen. More significantly, youth were also denied access to the political sphere which led to a serious condition that opened the doors for dangerous conduct such as drug addiction, theft and even religious fanaticism. The example of Libya also shows how youth had been an easy prey for terrorist and fanatic organizations that stated endless series of attacks and kidnapping in the country.

Undoubtedly, the radicalization of youth by terrorist organizations would gain ground especially when they are in a situation of vulnerability and loss. The Arab revolutions were an excellent opportunity of instability and depression that led to the involvement of some of the youth in terrorist groups. As clearly defined by Ekici and Ragab (2016); "youth are the most vulnerable segment in society to be recruited by radicals and terrorists. Youth encountering high

²⁶ Laiq, N. (2013). *Talking to Arab youth: Revolution and counterrevolution in Egypt and Tunisia*. New York: International Peace Institute.

unemployment rates, psychological crises and social strains are especially vulnerable. All the factors push youth towards radicalism and terrorism." (p. 133).²⁷

As clearly shown in the above quote, the Arab regimes have unfortunately bred a dangerous generation of youth. Despite the fact that there were many young men and women who chose to struggle through peaceful political and social activism, still various others have found recourse in terrorism and radical Islamism. Many outlets that would also help youth spend their time of leisure such as sports, theatre and various other cultural venues were neglected while the regimes immersed themselves in a life of extravagancy that was reflected in how the immediate families and friends of dictators like Gaddafi, Ben Ali and Mubarak for example, had much wealth and property.

Just days after the Tunisia's uprisings, media went into the palace of Ben Ali and revealed the huge amount of gold, diamonds and foreign money he and his wife Leila Trabelsi had. As clarified by Nouri Gana who asserted that,

Ben Ali and his wife and their extended families got their hands on more than 40 percent of economy at a time when the national unemployment rate had reached 13 percent and went as high as 40 percent in the southern and interior parts of the country. Economic growth was mostly confined to Ben Ali's entrepreneurial class in the greater Tunis area and along the coastal urban areas to the detriment of the interior regions which trailed behind. While more than a third of the country's youth were unemployed, Ben Ali's entrepreneurial class continued to prosper by legal and illegal means. ...Wikileaks exposed the extent to which the clan of the extended families of Ben Ali and Leila Trabelsi formed the nexus of corruption in the country. This quasi-mafia or 'owning family' (as they are called by Tunisians) had no scruples whatsoever about

²⁷ Ekici, S. & Ragab, E. A. (2016). *Countering terrorist recruitment in the context of armed counterterrorism operations*. Amsterdam: IOS. Press.

coveting more assets and money, property expropriation, extortion of bribes, money laundering or drug-trafficking, illegal privatization of national companies and so on. (Gana, 2013, p. 21)²⁸

This unprecedented state of corruption in Tunisia and the full control the immediate and extended family and entourage of Ben Ali held over the resources of the country, along with the high percentages of unemployment and the lack of alternative ways to include young Tunisian men and women into the economic and political life of the country, all these had been part and parcel of the uprisings. No doubt, the case of Ben Ali's family and entourage was not far from that of Mubarak who ruled Egypt with an iron fist and whose family too played a significant role in excluding many from the benefits of the state.

In Egypt, what had exacerbated the case was the preparation of Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak for power which left many Egyptians in a state of hopelessness with regards to any future prospects of positive change. The unemployment rate in Egypt was also extremely high which also shows the degree to which the economic condition in country under Mubarak's regime was very exasperating for the youth. Youngman and Hadzikadic (2014) claimed that;

The growing number of unemployed youth created a security concern that the Mubarak regime was unable to address and it became a persistent source of grievances in the years that led up to the protests. Government policy planning under Mubarak was unable to reduce the pressure of the growing youth population on the economy. Youth unemployment soured in part because of pressure from the international financial community, which impelled Mubarak to reduce parastatal and other subsidized sources of employment. ...Policies of state entrenchment did not create sufficient economic opportunity to absorb the

²⁸ Gana, N. (2013). *The making of the Tunisian revolution: Contexts, architects, prospects*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.

loss of employment and prevent the political mobilization of unemployed youth in Egypt. Youth services were never the focal point of national development policy. The thorniest problem was that the education system was turning out a large number of degree holders who had limited practical job opportunities. (p. 155)²⁹

Truly, as stated earlier, youth services were not the focal point of development for many authoritarian rulers who did not pay much attention to the inclusion of this social category into their countries' plans and strategies of development. This also could be seen in the cases of Libya and Yemen both of which have failed to find strategies for the inclusion of youth into the economic and political process and governmental strategies of development and progress. Undoubtedly, in Libya, as stated by David Kilcullen (2013) "a lack of economic opportunity for young people, meant that Libyan cities--especially Benghazi, because of its marginalization by the central government--gradually filled with educated, politically aware, unemployed, radicalized, alienated youth, with little opportunity to improve their lives within the existing system....When the Arab awakening began, 'although unemployment was not the only source of the grievances that led to the 2011 uprising, Libya's chronic youth unemployment problem was a major reason behind the instability'." (p. 217).³⁰

The ailments of youth in the Arab world was very much similar in various cases. A common state of suppression and denial; a common negligence of the problems of youth and a failure to integrate them into the social, political and economic process were some of the main factors that led to their prominent presence in the arenas of protestation. Some of the countries of

²⁹ Youngman, P.A. & Hadzikadic, M. (2014). *Complexity and the human experience: Modeling complexity in the humanities and social sciences*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

³⁰ Kilcullen, D. (2013). *Out of the mountains: The coming age of the urban Guerilla*. New York: Oxford University Press.

the revolutions had regimes that were fully aware of the need to adopt new strategies and methods in dealing with the issue of youth unemployment and dissatisfaction with the political ruling elites.

The majority of these governments have speedily and persistently started on a serious engagement in reforms that wanted to cater for the inclusion of youth and paving the way before their integration into society as positive agents of change. The strategies for countering the protestations differed from one country to another, but one of the common threads used by all regimes was to rethink the positioning of youth in the political and economic lives of their countries. Moreover, the regimes felt also the need to listen to and include a youth perspective to any national strategies of future development which led to an easier integration of this category into the process of shaping the future of their communities.

In the following section we will see in detail how the various regimes in the Arab world have started to work on alternative strategies and ways to calm down the revolutionary aspirations of the younger generation. Most of these regimes saw the need to get all these revolting categories involved into the political and economic process of their countries. Youth and women have proven during the revolutions that they can no longer be neglected. These two categories had common interests in challenging notions such as authoritarianism, dictatorship, patriarchy and state corruption.

The section will also clarify the degree to which the strategies adopted by the political regimes were sufficient in targeting the root causes of the problem of youth unemployment in the Arab world. More importantly, it will detect the manifestations with regards to the evolution of the situation of youth in the region. No doubt, providing current and up-to-date information

about the percentages of youth in the public services and their positioning in the socio-economic lives of their countries will help the modern reader understand the extent to which the Arab uprisings have helped in transforming the situation of youth in various countries of the Arab region.

b). Arab Regimes and Political Concessions

Most of the Arab political regimes found themselves in front of a serious and exacerbating political situation with the thriving of the uprisings in the region. Their strategies for confronting this dilemma ranged from ones of suppression that wanted to strangle the revolutions to others of concession that understood the need to listen attentively to the demands of youth and seek much more lenient ways to solve them. Even though, the majority of the Arab ruling political systems have had recourse to the former to suppress the contention, others have been keen and attentive to the need for a more peaceful solution. As eloquently argued by Mehran Kamrava (2014),

One of the most interesting factors in the eighteenth-month period from February 2011 to July 2012 is the clear attempt by the regime to play what might be described as a mixed or alternating, strategy to contain the challenge of mass popular mobilization. The regime systematically repressed the opposition throughout this period (muzzling the media, making wide spread arrests, preventing protests, and using violence against political activists), but it also made a number of limited concessions (release of political prisoners, establishment of an independent inquiry, and calls for dialogue) that indicated the government's desire to return to some form of ruling bargain based on popular consent rather than repression.³¹ (p.363)

³¹ Kamrava, M. (2014). *Beyond the Arab Spring: The evolving ruling bargain in the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Actually, these concessions on the part of the regimes indicated the power of the threat of the protesters and the need to immediately try to find effective solutions to the root causes of the problems. No doubt, the continuous fervent protestations led by these young people opened wide the doors before a governmental reevaluation of the strategies and processes of the inclusion of this category into the developmental programs. More importantly, for many, as Kamrava (2014), continues to assert,

Alternating strategies of both concession and repression may arise because of uncertainty about which strategy will most effectively quell protest. Offering concessions may reduce anger and increase satisfaction with the regime, but concession may also signal regime weakness and lead to further demands that rulers may be unwilling to meet. Using repression on the other hand, has the potential to reduce protest and quell popular demands through the use of fear, but it is also likely to increase the level of anger toward the regime, which could further fuel protest and accelerate demands on the government if levels of popular anger outpace fear of further repression. For regime leaders whose principal objective is to stay in power, it may be difficult to choose which strategy is most likely to succeed in meeting their objectives over time. (p. 363)³²

The above quote encapsulates the degree to which the Arab political regimes were conscious of the need to adopt new strategies of concession that would speak in a more lenient way to the powerful demands of the protesters. On the one hand, many of the regimes have seen the need to cater for these demands and the powerful nature of the revolts of the younger population, on the other, the revolutions opened the doors wide before a serious reevaluation of the role of youth into the social, economic and political domains.

³² Ibid. (p. 363).

In all the countries that witnessed the uprisings, one could very easily see the degree to which the demands of youth were met with a sometimes tough reaction that usually ended up with the suppression of these voices or a wiser tackling of the issues that took into account the possibility of negotiating with these protesters and rethinking the strategies of development that would include youth as the most important element of the projects of progress and economic development.

In Egypt, the regime of Mubarak, even though it started with the toughest methods of intimidation and suppression, has shifted to more lenient ways of dealing with the issues at hand. The regime adopted new strategies that tried to speak directly to the ailments of the unemployed youth of Egypt. Various were the mechanisms for containing the contention and high level of anger and depression among the youth and women in the country. The regime even though has tried its best to hasten the pace of development and progress in the creation of job opportunities for youth was late in quenching the fire of dissatisfaction among the younger generation.

Not far from the Egyptian context, that of Libya was extremely tense especially with Gaddafi's long term rule that strangled country's possibilities of attaining a condition of youth involvement into the economic and political life of the country. As stated by Manuel Castells (2012)

Most of the youth of Libya were disaffected politically vis-a-vis the regime, but in Tripoli they had greater economic opportunities than their counterparts in Egypt. Under these conditions, the demonstrations that started on February 17 in Benghazi following calls in social media and through mobile phone networks, had only limited repercussions in Tripoli, and expressed both democratic aspirations and a regional and tribal rebellion against the authoritarian, patrimonial state. As they were backed by one segment of the

armed forces with links to the East and were protected by these armed units when Gaddafi tried to crush the movement by force. Thus the rebellion escalated into a civil war: by February 20, only three days after the beginning of the movement, the rebels had occupied Benghazi and other towns in the East, and by February 23 they had taken Misrata, mid-way to Tripoli. (Castells, 2012, n.p.)³³

The revolutions in Libya had turned into an extremely bloody civil war that was exacerbated by the insistence of Gaddafi to keep using power and military force to crush the protesters. Instead of paying attention to the demands of youth that the regime should peacefully leave, the ruling family of Gaddafi decided to turn it into an everlasting battle between the two factions in the country. The country went into turmoil and many young men joined armed groups that fought hard to topple down Gaddafi and his family who ruled the country for over forty years with a tight grip.

In Syria, the case was a bit different. The regime of Bashar al-Asad was extremely powerful and the military was hardly infiltrated or plagued by any serious dissension at the beginning of the revolts. In fact, it was this reality of the strength of the Asad regime and the stout political protestations that led to even a bloodier struggle in Syria that is still going on and shattering the country into pieces. The struggle in Syria was particularly painful with all the murders and torturing taking place. Moreover, the spread of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) exacerbated the condition of violence in this country. Additionally, the different and conflicting geopolitical and economic international interest in the region made the situation even worse. As clearly stated by McMurray and Somers (2013),

³³ Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

For over a year, Syrians have endured what has become the most tragic, far-reaching and uncertain episode of the Arab uprisings. Since protesters first took to the streets in the towns and villages across the country in March 2011, they have paid an exorbitant price in a domestic crisis that has become intertwined with a strategic struggle over the future of Syria. The regime of Bashar al-Asad has fought its citizens in an unsuccessful attempt to put down any serious challenge to its four-decade rule, leaving several thousand dead. Many more languish in jail. The regime has polarized the population, rallying its supporters by decrying the protesters as saboteurs, Islamists, and part of a foreign conspiracy. (p. 22)

As expressed earlier, most of the Arab regimes started with a tough reaction to the protests that classified them as movements against the stability and national security of their states. The case in Syria could be taken as a very clear example of the degree to which the ruling elites in these countries have tried to put an end to the protests by strangling them right at birth. This strategy would prove extremely wrong and dangerous for the continuity of the political system. Despite the fact that al-Asad's regime was able to kill many and suppress the voices of numerous students and protesters, its reaction did great harm to the country and took it to an escalating level of violence and persistent terrorism.

The situation in Syria now is extremely complicated even though the regime of Bashar al-Asad had started to revert to other ways for calming the demands proposed by the revolutionaries, particularly those of youth. What we started to have in Syria now was a combination of suppression and concessions that tried to cater for development despite the complexity of the geopolitical and restraints and the escalating international involvement in the

internal affairs of the country. Malcolm Russell (2014) declared that the regime of Bashar al-Asad tried different mechanisms for intimidating the protesters that ended up with the suppression of many voices of the students and revolutionaries from across the country. More importantly, the regime understood the need to address some of the demands at hand even though they were not taken seriously at the beginning. Russell continues to argue that;

For a decade, president Bashar al-Asad hinted at reform, but aside from economic liberalization he changed little. Whether the result of rivalries within the elite or hesitancy by Bashar, the regime played games with activists, arresting those who pressed too hard in sensitive areas, but releasing some prisoners to win public support...The arrest of the graffiti writing teenagers and the fatal violence inflicted against protesters in *Dar'a*, ignited wide spread demonstrations that gradually spread to most of the country. The regime initially responded with apparent concessions. A new cabinet was appointed, and the decades old-regime emergency laws were formally abolished. But fundamentally, Bashar al-Asad and his circle chose the wrong alternative. Rejecting serious reform, instead they trusted a mixture of nationalist appeals, financial, fears of sectarian chaos and the manipulation of public opinion that extended to outright lies. Rather than dialogue with critics, the official media leveled wild accusations at the demonstrators claiming that they were Israeli agents or armed Salafist extremists. (p. 173)³⁴

The methodology adopted by the Syrian regime did not work for many youth who seriously wanted to engage into the social, economic and political life of their country. Now, the regime understood the need to attentively listen to those demands of youth as the most effective way of ensuring social and political stability in the country. All these ruling elites in countries

³⁴ Russell, M. (2014). *The Middle East and South Asia: The world today series 2014-2015*. 8th Edition. Washington: Rowman and Littlefield.

like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco and Algeria, for example, have come to adopt new strategy for countering the escalating contention of the youth. They have come to consider the dire need for looking at the roots of the problem and adopt developmental plans that speak directly to these demands.

In the following section we will shed light on how these young people have broken the silence of ages of negligence, exclusion, negation and even degradation by the long standing political regimes. Moreover, this section will also highlight the great extent to which the young people have and had been the fuel for protestation in the Arab Spring. The section attempts dig deeper into the roots of the protesting scenes and analyze the degree to which the ingredient of youth had helped in igniting the protests throughout the Arab region. More importantly, it will tackle the common thread that united these youth across the various countries despite the various contexts of the Arab countries.

c). Breaking the Silence: Youth and Political Protestation

Source: Google



Young was often linked with political immaturity and lack of experience; two traits that are of extreme importance when it comes to serious and effective political participation and presence in the decision making process and in the corridors of power. Youth were at the heart of political resistance in all of these countries. They did not only ignite the socio-political scenes through their persistent presence in the public squares, but had also been extremely efficient through their arrangement and neat organization via social media such as Facebook, twitter and Youtube.

As stated by the political experts Khalaf and Khalaf (2011),

Youth is regarded as a dangerous and risky social category, with immense vulnerability during a stage of transition to adulthood. They are, as it were in double jeopardy: personal ambivalence, and anxiety at a time of economic decline, when the state is compelled to reduce public support for them. As such they are prone to be victims as Wyn puts it, of the exclusionary categories of deserving and undeserving youth. As the state withdrew support, a great share of responsibility for resourcing education and health fell on the young and their families. Additionally, the state tightened control through more repressive measures of surveillance and monitoring both the young and the places they frequented. (n.p., 2011)³⁵

All the above methods and mechanisms of monitoring and surveillance used by various regimes to control the movement of the youth had been very effective in bringing up their struggle to the forefront of the public arena. As part of the protesting scene, the actions of the

³⁵ Khalaf, S. & Khalaf, S.M. (2011). *Arab youth: Social mobilization in times of risk*. London: Saqi Books.

youth had bothered the systems of authoritarianism and dictatorship. Youth have really stood as a dangerous category to the political stability of any system due to their ability to mobilize and "rock" the social and political sphere with their demands of change and the need for their inclusion into the affairs of the community. Carol Yeakey argued that;

Commonly called the Arab Spring, (also referred to as the Arab uprisings) significant social and economic developments have accompanied this wave of mass protests. Juxtaposed with the considerable youth bulge throughout the region, the Arab uprisings have called to attention the significant role of youth participation and activism in bringing about awareness to various issues and pushing for social and political change in Arab states. For example, youth movement in Egypt played a vital role in the January 25, 2011 Egyptian revolution. From the April 6 movement to the followers of the "We are all Khalid Said" Facebook page to the youth wing of the Muslim brotherhood, the youth in Egypt quickly mobilized a critical mass necessary to gain the crucial support from labor movements and the broader Egyptian society. (Yeakey, 2017, p. 340)³⁶

The power to mobilize, resist and sustain the protests were some of the basic characteristics of the youth movement. Along with their readiness to sacrifice their lives for their cause, these young people and their struggle for freedom, economic and social equality were extremely subversive to the political ruling elite in all of the Arab region. The more the protesters stayed longer in the streets and public square the more dangerous they were on the

³⁶ Yeakey, C. (2017). *The power of resistance: Culture, ideology and social reproduction in global contexts*. London: Emerald Publishing Limited.

continuity of the dictatorship that stood cautious of the unexpected outcome of any suppression of these youth that ignores their legal and basic demands of social, economic and political involvement and for reforms that could guarantee their equal share in the state.

More significantly, the youth had been present throughout all the political spectrum that challenged the regimes. Basically, youth were among the Islamists, the liberals, the civil society organizations and the students' syndicates; which all stood as dangerous segments of society that tried to put an end to any injustices of the system by taking to the streets at any moment by challenging the political will of the rulers and making sure that their views and perceptions about social, economic and political life are seriously taken into account. Moreover and in spite of the fact that youth in the Islamist organizations played a key role in the uprisings' that we will be analyzing later, one could very much assert that a huge part of the early success of Islamist groups in countries like Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco, for instance, was greatly due to the active involvement of the youth and their ardent opposition to the regimes and their unstoppable challenge to the status quo.

The role the Egyptian youth of the Muslim Brotherhood in the revolutions is undeniable for example. For many, the high presence of youth in the Brotherhood was of extreme importance for strengthening the position of the protesters who had swept across the country calling up for the ousting the regime of Hosni Mubarak. Furthermore, it was their power through the savvy use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and many other channels that ignited the revolutions and opened the door before the serious questioning the political elite and the immediate family of Egypt's long standing dictator. Political scholar and analyst Nadine Sika (2017) claimed that;

Although police brutality was a clear political threat to activists, it did not stop more protest movements forming, especially when opposition to Mubarak's policy was increasing among the intellectual elite. Kifaya's main activity was a petition demanding free and fair presidential elections before Mubarak's projected fifth term in office. After signing it Kifaya members demonstrated intermittently against Mubarak under the slogan "No Extension (of Mubarak's presidency, no to Gamal Mubarak (succession by his son). The language of contention however is not invented overnight. (p. 56)³⁷

The youth that led the protesting scene in Egypt were fully aware of the trajectory the country was taking, especially with the preparation of Gamal Mubarak as the future president of the country. The youth did not want more of Mubarak and had been conscious of the need to topple down the regime and find new ways to ensure the discontinuity of the long standing and corrupt entourage of the dictator. Not far from the problems posed by their counterparts in Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Bahrain, and various other Arab countries, the issues brought up by the Egyptian youth showed the degree to which these young men and women had been enduring the long-term suppression and negation from these political systems.

One of the most interesting features of the so-called Arab spring was also the fact that it showed the extent to which the younger generation could unify despite the many ideological, political, ethnic and gender differences. The politics of contention and the culture of protestation revealed a new unifying ground on which youth were more concentrated on their ailments and

³⁷ Sika, N. (2017). *Youth activism and contentious politics in Egypt: Dynamics of continuity and change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

looking for ways and strategies to challenge the authoritarian regimes and the dictatorships that caused and exacerbated them. Political scholar Gamal Selim stated in this regard that,

The Tunisian protest and the broad-spread uprising they ignited represented an unprecedented model for political change in the modern Arab world. A Western backed autocrat being toppled by his own people in a mass uprising was not an established precedent in a region that had been racked with elite internecine political competition and military coups. Such a populist uprising by definition had important implications for the Arab world where political change had always been viewed as a top-down process. ...The Tunisian uprising put Arab regimes on heightened alert over the dangers posed by widespread economic grievances and the potential for emulation against other authoritarian Arab regimes. (p. 136)³⁸

The nature of dictatorship and authoritarianism in most of these Arab countries paved the ground before a unification of the youth against the regimes that were the root cause of all their political, social and economic problems. The youth unemployment factor was the number one issue that stood at the heart of these ailments which led to the furious and persistent protestation of most of the revolutionaries in the Arab region. No doubt, the Arab uprisings have led to the downfall of most of the old dictatorships and had also pushed many other regimes to rethink their strategies towards the younger generation. But a persistent question remains; how have youth in the Arab world benefited from the outcomes of the Arab spring?

³⁸ Selim, M. G. (2015). *The international dimensions of democratization in Egypt: The limits of externally-induced change*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

In the following section entitled: "Beyond the Arab Spring; Youth and Political Power", we will focus on the repercussions of the revolutions and the positioning of youth in the aftermath of the Arab spring. It is here that we will attempt to analyze the social, political and economic scene, especially in the 6 years after the Arab uprisings took place. Without a doubt, reading the political scene in the various contexts might look confusing to the modern reader particularly with the differences and varied reactions and strategies for encountering the uprisings across the region, but still the very fact that the majority of these regimes have either started on reforms or were basically toppled down, would allow us to see the common grounds on which new ways of dealing with the issues of youth and their ailments have been adopted.

More significantly, this section will highlight the extent to which the promises made by the alternative political parties and opposition movements towards the youth had been kept. It is also here that one will be able to see whether these youth had been conscious and determinant of their effective inclusion into the political scene or whether they had only been used as instruments of political mobilization by the senior political actors.

d). Beyond the Arab Spring: Youth and Political Power

The political scene before and during the Arab uprisings was less complex than that of the current days. The reason we could affirm this is that most of the youth were focused on one common enemy; a dictatorship that lasted for long and robbed many their political, social and economic rights. Today, after years of furious struggle and very nuanced and context-bound political change, the aftermaths of the Arab spring need a careful and vigilant analytical conceptualization.

If one for example starts with the situation in Tunisia, it could be clearly inferred how the political scene differed from that of Libya, Egypt and Syria. Directly after the protests and the fleeing of Ben Ali, Tunisia went into a long process of searching for true democracy and equitable inclusion of all into the social, political and economic affairs of the community. Of course, this was not an easy fought battle especially with the rise of Islamism or political Islam that was the immediate alternative for the long standing secular dictatorship of Ben Ali. As stated by De Guppy, Capone and Paulussen (2016),

After Ben Ali's fall, the Islamist leaning Ennahda party, which won the country's first free and fair elections, shaped Tunisia's policies toward the flow of foreign fighters abroad. Ennahda had a relatively permissive policy, and there are sharply divided opinions in Tunisia about why the party adopted this approach. Some commentators argue that Ennahda's policies towards Jihadist groups were relatively benign, that it operated under the assumption that inclusion was the best way to moderate groups like AST. (p. 449)³⁹

For many, the situation in Tunisia after the Islamists took power needed a deeper consideration as to the outcomes and the future prospects to development and public liberty. Even though Ennahda stood as a moderate Islamist party that called for notions such as the compatibility between Islam and modernity, and the need to reform and interpret the Islamic religious texts in a more moderate and context-based way, the fact that its adherents have vehemently attacked the percepts and values of secularism was a source of anxiety for those who looked forward for a more liberal Tunisia.

³⁹ De Guppy, A., Capone, F. & Paulussen. (2016). *Foreign fighters under international law and beyond*. Berlin: Asser Press and the Authors.

This idea of an Islamist ascendance that would put an end to the liberating secular views which were considered the only good left from Ben Ali's regime, especially with regards to the positioning of women, was of extreme importance in the aftermath of the Spring. A report written by the Foreign Affairs Committee in the British House of Commons with regards to the situation in the countries of the uprisings sums up the whole position on the emergence of political Islam as a result of the revolutions. It states that

The opening up of the political system has allowed Islamists to operate in. Assertive Islamist parties now anticipate the real possibility of achieving power democratically. The Arab spring is facing an "Islamist tsunami" displacing the liberal youth who started the upheavals. While playing the democratic game, the core aims of all Islamist movements are inherently anti-democratic and any implementation of Shari 'a will always be discriminatory for non-Muslim religious minorities (Baha'i, Christians and Mandeans) for women and other minority groups and for Muslim 'heretical' communities'(like Alawis, Ismailis and Druze in Syria) and individuals accused of blasphemy and apostasy. (p. 177)⁴⁰

As described in the above quote from the report of the British House of Commons with regards to the Arab Spring, one could clearly infer the great extent to which Islamism was seen as the hobgoblin of the revolutions. Regardless of the Western mindset that lurks behind such accusations, one could still see one reality that the liberal youth had suffered under the sweeping Islamization of the Arab Spring. Still, one should that the way political Islam reshaped itself

⁴⁰ Foreign Affairs Committee: British House of Commons. (2012). "British Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring: Second Report of Session 2012-13."

especially after gaining power needs a separate dissertation, especially with regards to its varying contexts in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya and Morocco.

More significantly, if one looks at the case of the positioning of youth in the political sphere in countries like Egypt and Morocco, despite the particularity of the Moroccan context as we will delineate later, it could be seen that Islamist parties that gained power after independence have sometimes failed to cater for the demands of youth and women with regards to political participation. The rights of youth and women, according to various political observers have rolled back with these regimes due to their radical and backward interpretations of the precepts of Islam; interpretations that discard women from the political and public sphere. Lahai and Moyo (2017), asserted that,

Women's rights organizations and feminists began organizing shortly after the fall of Ben Ali, staging protests in anticipation of the return of the exiled politician Rached Ghannouchi in late January 2011, the rise of the Islamist Ennahda Party and the anticipated roll back on women's rights. There was only one woman in the transitional government, the academic, Lilia Labidi, who served as the interim Minister of Women's Affairs. She was not a popular choice among women's rights organizations and activists because she did not use her platform to make high profile or symbolic gestures in favor of women, including speaking out against Tunisia's reservations to CEDAW. Tunisia has historically been singled out as unique in the Arab region for its exceptional stance on women's rights, including, naming a few measures, a liberal personal status law that strives for equality between husband and wife and that has eliminated polygamy. (p. 127)⁴¹

The above stance on the positioning of youth and women after the revolutions in the Arab world speaks clearly about an anxiety over the rolling back of such categories especially with the

⁴¹ Lahai, I. J. & Moyo, K. (2017). *Gender in human rights and transitional justice*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

ascendance of political Islam to power. Many have actually argued otherwise and shown that with the rise of Islamism to power, various categories of youth and women who were part and parcel of the uprisings found themselves represented in the corridors of power in the Arab countries. Political Islam, they asserted showed no negation of the youth and women from the public sphere; or at least the way we interpret it in alliance with the liberating spirit of the Qur'an and the prophetic Sunna.

But still, many saw in the aftermath of the revolutions a despairing rolling back in the rights of youth. In an article in the *New Yorker*, a Tunisian young man clearly puts these claims by asserting; "Let's get to the point," "There was a revolution in Tunisia and Kasserine, and it got stolen by political parties that didn't know what they were doing—first Ennahda, then Nidaa Tounes." He went on, "You feel no interest from the post-revolutionary governments in us here. People feel that the coastal areas, with twenty per cent of the people, are still getting eighty per cent of the wealth. That brings a lot of psychological pressure, to feel that you're left alone, that there's no horizon, no hope."⁴²

Definitely, the above views expressed by a Tunisian young man stand as extremely depressing when it comes to the youth's expectations from the uprisings. Actually, the very fact that most of these youth had sensed the coming back or the repetition of the same practices of exclusion towards youth from politicians opens wide doors before questioning the validity of the uprisings in certain Arab contexts. The situation in countries like Morocco has proven to be different especially with the royal status of the country. The kingdom has adopted various strategic and developmental plan to absorb the uprisings through the inclusion of youth and

⁴² Packer, G. (March, 28, 2016). Exporting Jihad: The Arab Spring Has Given Tunisians the Freedom to Act on Their Unhappiness. *The New Yorker*. Online Magazine.

women into the political process and also through finding social, economic and even religious and sportive outlets for the integration of these categories.

But, without a doubt, one could argue that the case in Morocco did not represent others in countries like Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and Egypt, where the demands have sometimes been met with extreme violence and repression which had allowed for more dangerous outcomes and outlets for youth who sometimes found recourse in terrorist groups and violent organizations.

In the following chapter, we will attempt to delve deeper into the gender dynamics that marked the Arab Spring. Interestingly, gender had been a vital element that fed the revolutions and shed light on the ailments of women not per se, but in relation to the various social, political, and economic problems and ailments that the region suffered. Women played an extremely vital role in shifting the balance of power and toppling down dictatorships, but the questions that we will recurrently try to pose are; were the uprisings really beneficial for women? In what way were women mobilized and who mobilized them? What was their exact role during the Arab spring? and more importantly, what political, social, economic and religious gains they had throughout the so-called Arab Spring?

Chapter 3: The Gender Battle in the Arab Spring

" These revolts are leaderless, faceless, and genderless. The women were as oppressed as men before and during the protests." Rana Moussaoui, 2011⁴³

⁴³ Moussaoui, R. (2011, 25, December). A Woman's Touch in the Arab Spring. The Daily News of Egypt. Cairo. Egypt.

As we have seen in the earlier chapters, gender has been part and parcel of the revolutions that took place in the Arab world. The boom in the social media, the active participation of women, and the emergence of youth as powerful agents of change, all these were strong indicators to the great transformation in the social gender paradigms. If one starts from the definition that gender is the socially constructed images of the role of men and women, it becomes clear how these social norms were easily challenged by the participation of women in various public activities usually associated with men.

In this chapter, entitled the "Gender Battle in the Arab Spring", we will highlight the tremendous role played by Arab women in the revolutions and how their participation spoke against numerous stereotypical images that have always relegated to them to the margin of socio-political life. This latter fact was revealed by the UN Report that warned the Arab world about the consequences of their lack of freedom, in addition to their failure to empower women. In fact, it was the Arab Spring that turned the table against the misrepresentation and degradation of women in Arab societies. Muhammad Olimat (2014) argues that:

Unlike in the past, Arab women took a front seat in the revolution for democracy and dignity during the Arab Spring. There was a noticeable participation specifically in Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Tunisia. The Arab Spring has provided a great opportunity for visibility, evidenced by media and social media, including Facebook and Twitter, which unveil the face of autocracy and position the people, men and women, as main players in the making of democracy. Interestingly, rather than being acknowledged at

regional and national levels, Arab women's role in the revolution was fully acknowledged at the international level. (Olimat, 2014 p.25)⁴⁴

Evidently, though one would take against Olimat his negation of the role of women in the past revolutions, still one sees in the acknowledgment of their participation in the Arab Spring an important fact. Taking into account the extremely conservative and patriarchal gender paradigms in the Arab world; paradigms that have always denied women the rights to achieve political power or to be part of the decision making process, the fact that these women had fervently entered into resisting the political system speaks to the core of the emerging change.

The nature of the patriarchal Arab culture demands that women stay linked to the domestic sphere. Women in this culture usually stay home, do domestic chores, and care for their children and husbands. This emphasis on women's domestic roles, states feminist scholar and activist Mervat Hatem "contributed to their exclusion from the public arenas and associated benefits." (Hatem in Brynen, Korany & Noble, 1995, p. 188).⁴⁵ No doubt, the solid division of gender roles and the relegation of Arab women to the private domain played an extremely important part in their political underrepresentation. Women's political activism during the revolutions has shown the extent to which the politics of participation is at the heart of the empowerment of women. One of the most important goals of the participation of women in decision-making is catering for the need of addressing women's issues in the public sphere. Claire Desoi has cogently argued that:

⁴⁴ Olimat, M. (2014). *Arab Spring and Arab women: Challenges and opportunities*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.

⁴⁵ Brynen, R., Korany, B. & Noble, P. (1995). *Political liberalization and democratization in the Arab world*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Women in leadership positions can have a profound positive impact on the status quo. Women enter politics with different priorities from their male counterparts, as they bring different perspectives to the decision making process. They have usually experienced first-hand the legal restrictions holding women back from full and equal participation, and come prepared to dismantle barriers that men are often blind to. Moreover, when women in visible positions of power, they serve as role models for girls and other women who aspire to be a force for change. They combat stereotypes about gender roles, thereby shifting public attitudes about women in the public sphere. Desoi (March, 19, 2015)⁴⁶

The above statement goes in line with the perceptions that the majority of the female activists in the Arab Spring had. Not only was the basic idea behind women's participation in the revolutions, their wrath at the corrupt autocratic regimes, but more importantly a roar in the face of an extremely malicious patriarchal culture that had often relegated them to the margin in the social and political domain.

The example of a leading woman who directly goes against police force, tear gas and sometimes live ammunition is of extreme significance when it comes to challenging the various stereotypical images of womanhood in the Arab societies. The typical association of women with fear, softness and cowardliness is totally shattered by the images we saw during the days of the

⁴⁶ Desoi, C. (March, 19, 2015). Women's Political Participation: A critical Step for Economic Empowerment. National Democratic Institute. Washington D.C.

revolutions. As quoted by Rana Moussaoui (2011), “challenging the stereotypical image of the housebound Arab woman, female protesters have faced tear gas, baton-wielding troops, sexual assault and have, in several cases been killed.”

The arenas of resistance were genderless, a fact that revealed the great importance of joining powers in face of both authoritarianism and patriarchy. Moussaoui continues: “women joined mass demonstrations, distributed leaflets, and led crowds just like their male counterparts in societies where female political activists were once scarce. These revolts are leaderless, faceless, and genderless. The women were as oppressed as men before and during the protests.”⁴⁷

Undoubtedly, the very fact that arenas like *Tahrir* Square in Egypt and Yemen, and *Taqyeer* Square in Bahrain have become a space for rights claims has played a significant role in diversifying the protesters’ views on various social and political issues during the Arab Spring. They were also was podiums from which underprivileged categories have been able to express their needs for recognition and representation in the corridors of power in their respected countries. Still, one cannot deny that these arenas were also a battleground on which many socio-cultural and religious percepts about womanhood and the role of women in the public sphere were fighting furiously.

Even though, the political scene as we have seen earlier has allowed for the mixing of various different and sometimes contradictory views with regards to women's rights, the very fact that Arab women were already there in the protesting arenas has opened the door for serious

⁴⁷ Moussaoui, R. (2011, 25, December). A Woman's Touch in the Arab Spring. The Daily News of Egypt. Cairo. Egypt.

inquiries about their role in the public and political sphere. This stance was clearly expressed by Roberts, McCarthy and Ash (2016) who argued that,

The squares were physical and social spaces where people from all these different groups met and exchanged views, shared living conditions, and generally interacted in a largely unprecedented manner. The recourse to non-violence was a major mechanism to allow these groups, some of which clearly distrusted each other, to meet and freely participate in discussions in a way they would not have done had they feared armed response to the expression of their views. This enabled them to discover that they had common concerns and could seek common solutions. The peaceful nature of the movement and its ability to bring together men and women of completely different social status and background to discuss issues of common national concern in squares throughout the country was a major achievement. (p. 164)⁴⁸

No doubt, the political claims of all these social categories have played a major role in unifying their voice against the long-standing suppression of dictators throughout the region. Both men and women, young and old, from various cities, districts and regions have come to a common ground wherein their political, social, economic and even religious rights were at the forefront of the protesting scene. Of course, the situation varied respectively especially with the different Arab context. It is definitely correct to argue that Tunisian and Moroccan women for instance, were much more accepted in the protesting scene than those of Yemen, Libya, Egypt

⁴⁸ Roberts, A., Willis, M. & Ash. (2016). *Civil resistance in the Arab Spring: Triumphs and disasters*. New York: Oxford University Press.

and Syria. Certainly, the aforementioned stance could very much related to the conservative or otherwise liberal nature of these different Arab countries.

One great example of the gender battle was seen in the Tunisian context where revolutionary women like Mebrouka M'bareck had powerfully resisted the conservatism of Islamists who tried to roll back the rights of the Tunisian women under the guise of the complementary role of Muslim women in the social, cultural, economic and political public affairs of the community. Ellen Grigsby (2015) clearly states with regards to this situation that;

The first of the voices at the beginning is that of Mebrouka M'bareck describing her elation at hearing young girls expressing their enthusiasm for politics and for becoming political leaders of a new democratic Tunisia. Ms. M'bareck has opposed religious conservatives who wanted the country's new constitution to have complementary rights for men and women rather than the same such rights. The second and third voices quoted are those of rival groups competing to shape Egypt's post-Arab spring future, as one group seeks to compose conservative religious (*Sharia*) restrictions through the legal system while the other proposes to steer Egypt's future in a more secular direction. (p. 173)⁴⁹

Surely, the above quote summarizes the different trends that took over the political contentious political scene in the Arab world. Two main inclinations were at the heart of the debate over the inclusion of women into the public sphere. For the Islamists even though the political engagement and mobilization of women played a key role in toppling down and

⁴⁹ Grigsby, E. (2015). *Analyzing politics: An introduction to political science*. Stamford: Cengage Learning.

challenging the political regimes, women had basically limited duties and rights in the public sphere. Women, from an Islamist standpoint should basically be involved into the domestic sphere with the traditional role of catering for the family and taking care of children and domestic chores.

On the other side of the coin stands the liberal and secular perspective that demands the inclusion of women into the public affairs of the community. It is this liberal perspective that pushes women to rebel against the traditional socio-cultural and religious shackles that kept them out of the public sphere and relegated them to the margin of the political life.

In the following section, we will try to shed light on the nuanced and sometimes complex gender dynamics that took place in the public arenas and squares in the Arab world. Looking at the various contexts in which these gender involvements took place is of extreme importance in analyzing the situation and showing the great degree to which change and subversive revolutionary mechanisms were at the centre of the uprisings. Undoubtedly, understanding these gender dynamics will pave the way towards a serious questioning of the aftermath of the Arab revolutions and inquiring about the positioning of the Arab women into the political arena especially after the arrival of new regimes to power.

More significantly, this section will show another dimension of the contentious politics particularly with regards to the gender element as of vital significance in igniting the revolutions. Moreover, it is in this chapter that one will be able to delineate on the true nature of the agency of women, especially when taking into account the complexity of ingredients present in the public squares of the Arab spring.

a). The Arab Spring and the New Gender Dynamics



Source : Google images

The Arab Spring opened wide the doors before a serious and vital revision of the role of women in the public sphere. Many people in Arab and Islamic cultures and communities have always associated women with the domestic realm denying them any involvement in the more effective and significant fields of politics and economic development. It is true that various examples of women who stood apart in the Arab world as emblems of revolution had been brought to surface in different occasions, but still women were seen in the Arab traditional

mindset as domestic creatures whose main job was recreation and catering for the domestic affairs of the family and husband.

A close analysis of the various scenes in protesting arenas such as *Tahrir Square* in Egypt, Manama Square, *Taqyeer* Square and different others, would clearly detect some of the most interesting gender dynamics that took over the Arab Spring. In the words of Houda Abadi (2014)

The Arab Spring produced, changed and reinvigorated contestations around space, citizenship, femininity, religion, and sense of belonging, as women played an increasingly significant role in the revolutionary processes and developments in the region. Women were not just confining themselves to stereotypical gender roles, such as nurturing or supporting men in their struggle for freedom.⁵⁰

Without a doubt, the Arab Spring has brought many social, political and religious concepts and attitudes into question. The images we had about women standing side by side with their male counterparts, staying out at night, facing tear gas and sometimes live ammunition; all these were new dynamics that characterized the new revolutionary scene. The gender division of roles in the Arab world had always been a solid ground on which women were excluded from the public sphere.

The presence of Arab women in the resisting arena spoke against various stereotypical images. Moreover, there were some very significant social, political and even religious

⁵⁰ Abadi, H. (2014). Gendering the 20th February Movement: Moroccan Women Redefining: Boundaries, Identities and Resistances. Vol. 8, Iss. 1. Cyber Orient.

connotations that demolished various ideas and perceptions about women in the Arab world. The best examples could be seen in the famous protestation scenes where women would not only be at the heart of the protest, but also in the changing dynamics through which space became genderless. The very presence of these women and their full participation in the protests had definitely shown the extent to which women's political activism is part and parcel of the progress of their rights. Actually, it was the long standing exclusion of women from the political sphere that led to persistent ailments in the Arab society. In the words of Valentine Moughadam (2008)

If the long-standing exclusion of women from political processes and decision-making in the Arab region is a key factor in explaining why the region was a laggard, compared with other regions, in democratization's third wave, then women's participation and rights could not only speed up the democratic transition in the region but also enhance its quality. At the same time, the region's "modernizing women" need to be mindful of the problems needs, and aspirations of working-class and low-income women, given that the mass social protests in MENA were as much a call for social justice as for civil and political rights.⁵¹

The fact that the arenas of resistance were open to diverse views and perceptions as far as freedom is concerned has pushed some women to even use their bodies as a way to contest the traditional modes of gender roles and the look their societies had about female bodies. Some Egyptian women, for instance, states Maha El Said:

⁵¹ Moughadam, V. (2008). *Democracy and Women's Rights: Reflections on the Middle East and North Africa*. Purdue University.

Chose to resist using their bodies. Making bold political statements, Alia Almahdy and Samaa El Masry, made use of their female bodies as a means of resistance, breaking the power dynamics of social control over women's bodies and mind in the Foucauldian sense. Although both women used their bodies as "a site for opposition to established power relations and ideological hegemonies" (Ian Burkit), the reactions to each of these women's bodily being and bodily performance were extremely different: Alia el Mahdy, who posed nude and publicized her nude picture on the internet, stirred a havoc of criticism and was rejected by both the conservative Islamist and the liberal revolutionaries who described it as "too much" and "out of taste". On the other hand Samaa el Masry, who performed a series of satirical belly dancing sketches, was received with applauds and her seductive moves were perceived as resistance. She was embraced and hailed as an activist, and described as the new "militant"⁵² (El Said, 2014).

The above views show the extent to which the squares of resistance have become loci not only for political rebellion, but also a site for questioning the validity of social perceptions of bodily acts and sexual orientation. These new dynamisms were of extreme importance for negotiating social justice and the rights of minorities in an Arab context. Interestingly, cases like the above were not only restrained in manifestations of nudity and flagrant expositions, but also in the presence of some gay and lesbian communities in the arena who demanded equal treatment as well as social and political recognition. Noah Rayman captured the latter views by stating that during the Arab Spring,

⁵² El Said, M. (2014). *She Resists: Body Politics between Radical and Subaltern*. Warwick: London. U.K.

The Internet has provided one of the few new portals for LGBT communities to congregate and speak out, as the oppressive online restrictions of the previous regimes have given way to greater freedom of information. Websites like the Bahrain-based forum Ahwaa.org, the Tunisian Facebook page of Kelmti, with nearly 1,000 Likes, and the Tunisian online magazine Gayday have formed Internet communities since the Arab Spring. (Rayman, 2013)⁵³

The concept of intersectionality is of extreme importance in this particular context. It is the common suppression of these social categories that brought many of the socio-cultural and political views into question. As defined by Crenshaw Kimberle (2004), the concept stands for,

Intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. The theory suggests that—and seeks to examine how—various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, species and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systemic injustice and social inequality. Intersectionality holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, and belief-based bigotry, do not act independently of one another. Instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination. (Kimberle, 2004, p. 4)

⁵³ Rayman, N. (2013). After the Arab Spring, No Bloom for Arab LGBT Rights. World Time Website.

In fact, the new gender dynamisms in the Arab world have often been considerate of the need to bring peoples' demands into the arena. Despite the powerful social and cultural perceptions about certain groups such as gays and lesbians, the latter have found it extremely pertinent to raise their voice at a time where everybody was challenging a certain authoritarian and oppressive discourse. The validity of the LGBT claims found itself into an array of challenges that tried to topple down any sort of oppression be it through dictatorship, patriarchy or homophobia.

The squares in the various countries of the Arab world stood out as a glaring example of the true meaning of a square which has historically stood as an emblem of fairness and equality. Whether it is a *Tahrir Square* or a *Taghyir Square* or any other spot, these arenas challenged the various types of social, political, economic, cultural and religious oppression. Women and other social categories found it of extreme relevance and importance to bring their ailment to these areas of protestation in order to challenge and subvert the status quo.

In the section that follows, one will investigate the role played by women in the Arab revolutions. It is in this part that we will be detailing the various and diverse experiences of Arab women during the Arab Spring. Ranging from outgoing and outspoken personalities such as Tawakkoul Kerman, to other more introverted and tech savvy who have played a major role in mastering the media propaganda for the revolutions, the paper attempts to highlight the extreme significance of those roles and how they have been a part and parcel of the revolutionary scene. More significantly, the chapter will look at the common grounds of suppression and resistance in the Arab revolutions. It is here that one will be able to distinguish between the various challenges

that stood in the way of the revolutionaries notwithstanding their age, gender, class, religion or sexual orientation. Undoubtedly, as we will see here the notion of common suppression encapsulates how different mechanisms and dynamics of change and resistance had merged together to draw a new and spontaneous strategy of subversion towards all types of political, social, cultural, religious, economic or gender discrimination and oppression.

b). Common Suppression: Dictators and Patriarchs

Patriarchy and political dictatorship stem from the same root of social, political and economic oppression. While the term ‘revolution’ is usually viewed as one that results from political upheavals and economic instability, women’s presence at the heart of these protests brings to surface another issue of the political discrimination against them.

Men and women protesters had all been victims of the oppressive political systems in the Arab countries of the revolution. Rahman (2012) has clearly explained this idea of common suppression when he states that

On the one hand, female activists are dissatisfied with gender pandering committed both by government and political parties and consequently work outside the system to change it. On the other hand, Moroccan youth have lost patience with the system’s deliberate progress and have decided to start a movement pushing for immediate reforms. Both men and women and the youth realize that politics in Morocco are dominated by a class of elites, a group in which neither women nor the youth have a voice. (Rahman, 2012, p.325)

Interestingly, men's early identification with the ailments of Arab women could be seen as a result of their common oppression by these regimes. It is at this stage that both went out calling for political change. In the words of (Musaji, April, 28, 2012), as expressed by Nadia S. Muhammad "under many Arab dictatorial regimes both men and women have suffered tremendously."⁵⁴

It was that common sufferance which led many women too to take part in the protests. Sadly, men's identification with the issues of women often stopped at the threshold of their political engagement and participation. As we have seen earlier with the Islamist mobilization of Muslim women, the latter's role has often been overshadowed by the patriarchal mechanisms that surrounded the protesting scene. The subtlety of the patriarchal political discourse lies in its ability to exploit women's political and economic oppression for its goals, while turning a blind eye to their social and cultural exclusion and debasement once its agenda is fulfilled.

The opening of the Arab uprising, states Sarah Lynch had given aspirations of emancipation for women. Lynch maintains that, "the Arab spring uprisings that have ousted dictators and ushered in democratic reforms such as free elections also gave some women hope that, they too, would see an end to discrimination."

It is these aspirations that pushed many women out of the thresholds of their houses to call against not only political suppression, but also against the long-term exclusion of the female gender from the corridors of political power. More significantly, women's stance has shown a deep revolution against the socio-cultural perceptions that had often denied them access to the

⁵⁴ Muhammad, N. (2012). Everybody Hates 'Mona'. *Altmuslimah*.

public. Undoubtedly, the fact of invading the public sphere with the “out loud” cries for political change stands as a powerful symbolism of revolutionary modern conceptualization of the role and status of women in Arab countries.

Nevertheless, Arab women still have a long way to go in their revolution against socio-cultural and patriarchal values that exclude them from politics. The kind of exploitation they have been subjected to by politicians should be overcome for them to be able to challenge the patriarchal perceptions that push them to the periphery of the domain of politics and deny them access to the corridors of power in Arab countries.

As clearly argued by Kendra Heideman and Mona Youssef, regimes, particularly those of Islamists who took over power after the revolutions have denied women access to vital political positions and vital decision making processes. They maintained that;

Arab women's presence and participation in public life--specifically in politics, decision making positions, and state affairs--moved from marginalization during repressive regimes to rejection with Islamist regimes. The Islamists not only took the fruits of the revolution, but also hijacked the principles that started the awakening as far as women are concerned. Their social policies regarding the role of women will be focused on bringing women back to the private sphere where they believe their role to be. This social exclusion policy from public life that will be adopted by Islamists--after exploiting her role during the uprising--is the starting point of the deterioration of the principles of

equality, social justice, human dignity, and political pluralism advocated by the revolutionists. (pp. 3-4)⁵⁵

In fact, if one looks into the political representation of women at the positions of power, they will be stunned by the meager presence of these agents who had been at the heart of the uprisings and who played an extremely important role in toppling down the dictatorship. The example of how the Islamists in many countries especially Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco who saw the glaring ascendance of Islamist political parties. No doubt, these women came to the public squares searching for the equality of opportunity and the socio-political rights that everybody in the streets was chanting for. Many have put at the centre of the revolts their interests a society of equality, gender equity and mutual respect.

As could be clearly inferred from the powerful presence of women in the protestations that led to the revolutions, the ailments of the female gender were of extreme importance as to trigger the roar against all types of social, political and economic suppression. The fact that these women had been conscious of the need to question powers of oppression such as patriarchy and dictatorship played a significant role in shaping their demands at the squares of liberation and change. In the words of the political analysts of the Guardian Magazine;

Arab women can claim to have been all these things and more during the three months of tumult that have shaken the region. Some of the most striking images of this season of revolt have been of women: black-robed and angry, a sea of female faces in the capitals of north Africa, the Arabian peninsula, the

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Syrian hinterland, marching for regime change, an end to repression, the release of loved ones. Or else delivering speeches to the crowds, treating the injured, feeding the sit-ins of Cairo and Manama and the makeshift army of eastern Libya. But as revolt turns into hiatus and stalemate from Yemen to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, Bahrain and Syria, one thing is clear: for all their organizing, marching, rabble-rousing, blogging, hunger-striking, and, yes, dying, Arab women are barely one small step forwards on the road to greater equality with their men folk. Women may have sustained the Arab spring, but it remains to be seen if the Arab spring will sustain women.

No doubt, these efforts by Arab women had been at the centre for the different causes that were raised during the revolutions. Dictatorship stood in shock of the subversive emergence of voices that did not only question the legitimacy of the regimes, but also of a serious and dangerous inquiries raised by other socially oppressed categories such as women, LGBT communities and so forth. These communities for example, found in the atmosphere of the Arab Spring the most suitable environment for raising the demands for social equality and acceptance of all. As clearly stated by Brian Whitaker (2012) with regards to gay rights in the Arab Spring;

There are basically two strands to achieving LGBT rights (and sexual and gender rights as well). One is institutional acceptance, which involves changing laws, and the other is social acceptance, which involves changing people's attitudes. You need to have both, but in practice they don't always happen simultaneously. What we are seeing with the Arab Spring is the beginnings of generalized institutional change, starting with the removal of authoritarian regimes. But that is also being driven by social pressures – frustrations over a lack of freedom (at a personal level as well as a political

level), frustrations over a lack of economic opportunities, a lack of opportunities for self-fulfillment, and so on. These social pressures for change began long before the events in Tunisia and they'll continue long after the dictators have gone. Looking elsewhere in the world, institutional acceptance of LGBT rights has often been the result of political upheaval. For example, South Africa when apartheid ended, or Latin America when the age of the military juntas came to an end.

Certainly, the work, strife and sufferance of Arab women was of extreme importance in fighting against the regimes of dictatorship. Moreover, as clearly defined in the above quote, women's participation alongside other oppressed categories opened the doors before a wide variety of inquiries and demands that emphasized the need to see the commonality of oppression and the dire need to get rid of patriarchy, racism, homophobia and other social ailments along with that of political authoritarianism

In the following part, we will shed light specifically on how Arab and Muslim women had been agents of change in the Arab world. More significantly, we will highlight the role played by the revolutionaries in mobilizing these women and also analyze the degree to which they were represented in governments and positions of political power after the uprisings.

c). Arab Women as Agents of Political Change

The political participation of women was seen by many analysts and political scientists as one of the major weapons by which the Arab Spring was successful. Not only have the cultural perceptions of womanhood been used to distort the image of the regimes, but were also emphasized as to show the dire need to get rid of the suppressive system. Unfortunately, this

weapon has oftentimes been turned against women at certain moments. As Elizabeth Marcus (2011) cogently argues:

As momentous as these changes are, they are occurring within a social context that has made sexual violence against women a powerful instrument of political repression. In many cases, sexual violence against women is a desperate reaction of the powerful elite groups linked to authoritarian leaders and dictators who are rapidly losing power and relevance. (Marcus, 2011)

No doubt, women's violation, as clearly stated by Marcus has been a powerful weapon used by the authoritarian regimes in order to abort the revolution. Interestingly enough, it was this very particular weapon that was used by the protesters to topple down the authority of these political leaders. Marcus goes on with her argument stating that,

Like other forms of violence and repression, sexual violence against women has been used as a tool to punish or intimidate those advocating for political change. The most horrific of these tools being used to control women is rape. Used rape as a weapon of war is not new, but in the context of patriarchal religious societies, it holds unique potential as a horrific tool of political repression. (Marcus, 2011)

Many women have stood against this horrific political weapon and made sure that their voices were heard. Though the above views could be taken as standing for some of the regimes' policies towards women, still one could claim that one does have to homogenize about their views towards women's liberation. Although this would inevitably complicate the notions we

had about the Arab Spring, the very fact that women have been exploited in the name of the revolution does not have to skip our imagination.

In a report published 2013 by CARE International about Arab women's political participation in the uprisings, the earlier point was clearly elaborated. The report admits that,

Women's groups face a number of challenges in adapting to the new politics. The old regimes had made some progress of women's rights at the level of policy. Countries in the region had endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), changed some discriminatory laws and increased women's participation in the parliament. (CARE International, 2013, p. 4)

The fact that the old regimes have made some progress in the rights of women should not be taken positively for most of these reforms had been cosmetic. Though women were represented through quotas and solid percentages, most of those who had the chance were either in direct relationship to those in power or powerless women used for decoration and legitimizing politics. Again, and in the words of Khosrokhavar, "*The new actors consist of the non-homogeneous Arab youth. They are men and women, girls and boys, the poor and the rich, students and those who did not go to university.*"

The fact that women have been part and parcel of the Arab spring actors and protestors stood at the heart of the above quote. One of the most revolutionary aspects of the so called Arab spring is the unprecedented visibility of women's presence and participation as protestors, organizers, bloggers, leaders of demonstrations and social media actors. According to Nadia

Marzouki, “A surprisingly under-covered aspect of the Tunisian demonstrations is the impressive visibility of women, also in contrast to stereotypes about the “Arab street” that propagate the image of a male-dominated public space.”⁵⁶ During the Arab Revolutions, women have been key players in demonstrations and protests demanding social and political change.

These female active participants in the Arab revolution have not only been instigators of powerful social network mechanisms like “Facebook, twitter and Youtube”, but also ran the risk of being in the frontlines of the outrageous rebels that swept over countries in the Arab world leading to the downfall of some of the most despotic regimes. Ranging from the revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya which have historically ended up with the overthrow of these countries’ presidents, to those that were ignited in Syria, Yemen and Morocco, all these were stunningly backed up with a noticeable presence of Arab women who stood side by side with men in the frontlines “shouting” and repeating the famous slogan “people want to oust the regime”.

The significance of Arab women's contribution in the revolutions and their powerful presence at the heart of the political arena can be well exemplified in women like Lina Ben Mhenni of Tunisia, Asma Mahfouz of Egypt and Tawakkoul Karman of Yemen . Ben Mhenni is a prominent Tunisian female activist who played a critical role in being one of the first activists to write about the incident of the self –immolation of Bouazizi, turning her blog, Twitter and Facebook page into a virtual space for mobilizing and documenting Tunisian protests. A founding figure of the Egyptian April 6th youth movement, Mahfouz is one of the many examples of the Egyptian female activists who connected her activism with the Tunisian protests, posted a video call on Facebook encouraging the Egyptian citizens to go down to Tahrir Square

⁵⁶Marzouki 2011

on January 25 to protest .In Yemen, Karman is another leading female activists who has engaged in both blogging and activism.

Despite the fact that these latter women had their voice internationally recognized as effective actors of political change in the Arab Revolutions, still the efforts of numerous others who had been part and parcel of the success of the Arab Spring have gone unacknowledged.

Apart from the media shootings that showed these women lining side by side with men in the public squares, it is undeniable that the images of these women's torture and suppression in the protests had been at the core of the downfall of the Arab dictators. The courage of these women who had shaken the traditional image of women's cowardice could be seen in examples such as the Egyptian young protester Mona Seif who interestingly states

I would always be told by the men to go to the back to avoid getting injured, and that used to anger me. But since January 25 people have begun to treat me as an equal. There was this unspoken admiration for one another in the square. We went through many ups and downs together. It felt like it had become a different society''. (Merlini & Roy, 2012, p. 67).

The above articulations by Mona show clearly the degree to which Arab women like her have identified with the cause of democracy and liberation in the Arab world. Arab women have taken a major part in all the protests that swept all from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. Ranging from human rights activists who fought against both dictatorship and patriarchal oppression to others who were adherents to Islamist and even *Salafist* parties, all of them have unquestioningly helped in the shift of power paradigms in the Arab world.

Historically, Arab women have been active participants in social and political change in the region. No one could ever deny the tremendous role played by Tunisian, Egyptian, Moroccan, and Algerian women during the colonial period in the resistance against imperialist powers. No doubt, the presence of these women at the heart of the political and revolutionary scene played an extremely important role in the independence of these countries from the grip of colonial authoritarianism.

But, interestingly, what had often been at stake for this involvement of women is the rolling back of their rights and representation in these countries in the post-revolutionary political arena. Being taught by history that women's involvement and participation is not enough for their political empowerment, women's engagement in the Arab revolutions has posed many serious questions as to their representation in the political sphere and whether their online and offline participation had been a channel of empowerment or one of exploitation for political ends.

Linking concepts such gender and democracy remains very essential to contemporary feminist scholarship. Without question, the Arab uprisings were about human rights, including freedom, dignity, and justice. Many have claimed that women's rights stood at the of the concept of democracy. In the words of Moughadam,

The empowerment of women and the establishment of gender equality are crucial to democracy. Democracy is as much about citizenship rights, participation and inclusion as it is about political parties, elections, and checks and balances. The *quality* of democracy is determined not only by the form of institutions, but also by the extent that different social groups participate in

these institutions. In this regard, the *gender* of democracy matters profoundly.

The absence of women from political life results in democratization with a male faces or in a "male democracy"—an incomplete and very biased form of democracy (Moughadam 2004)⁵⁷.

Moughadam's view of democracy is of an extreme significance for addressing women's role and position in the recent insurgences as will be elaborated in the coming chapters. It is of particular interest to note that the Arab Spring issues were themselves not focused on women's rights. The main thing to keep in mind, though, is that issues of gender rights were principally embedded in the Arab spring claims such of freedom, equality and justice.

d). Contextualizing Women's Gains in the Arab Spring

This section aims to give a clearer view of both the political gains and losses of the Arab women, during and after the uprisings in the Arab world. Without a doubt, the whole process of change in the region had brought with it new conceptions and inquiries about the role of women into the public sphere. Definitely, women's role in the revolutions, as we have seen in the earlier chapters stood at the heart of the social, economic and political upheaval. Women's political mobilization and active presence in the arenas was vital to the downfall of the Arab regimes. But this fact would also opened the doors before serious inquiries about whether Arab women were able to gain their rights as a result of these protests. Were women only used as a tool for political mobilization? How were they represented in the corridors of power after the Arab Spring?

⁵⁷Moughadam, Valentine M. *The gender of democracy: the link between women's rights and democratization in the middle east.*

To answer the above questions and inquiries one has to go through the different varying contexts in the Arab world. No doubt, the situation in these different contexts had varied even slightly. How women were seen as active political agents in the Arab governments and parliaments after the Spring would be the first indicator of their political gains or otherwise losses after the uprisings. As clearly detailed by a report by CARE International,

The main findings of the report conclude that the outlook for women in the region remains uncertain. The popular uprisings in the Middle East have created a complex set of challenges and opportunities with regards to women's political participation. Whilst there has been an upsurge of new activism by women and concrete gains made in some political transition processes, in other cases there has been talk of the 'Arab Spring' turning into an Autumn or Winter for women's rights. Nearly all Middle Eastern countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report scored more poorly in 2012 than they did in 2011.

Interestingly, the situation has turned out to be depressive for many Arab women after the revolutions. Their representation in the corridors of power and the recognition of their social and economic rights took a U turn. The regimes that took on power especially in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco were basically those of Islamism or political Islam. Many have argued that the ascendance of Islamism meant a serious rolling back on the rights of women and other oppressed social categories. If one takes the example of *Ennahda* Islamist Party in Tunisia for instance, one could very easily notice the anxiety shown by many as regards to its position on thorny issues

especially with regards to women and LGBT communities in the country. Milton Edwards argues in this sense that,

Many were frustrated that Ennahda simply did not seem to understand the rules of the new democracy game and that even if the ancient regime was deposed, many of the secular values--particularly as they related to women and their status--remained at the bedrock of Tunisian identity and the concept of state and rights...Tunisians were irked that Ennahda even considered it likely that the new constitution could be Islamist-inspired, or that for example, women's rights could be rolled back through legislative proposals that would chip away the rights accorded to women through the Personal Status Codes. The concerns of women and groups supporting the rights of women were apparent in a series of protests on social media sites by Tunisian feminists and women's rights activists against the socially conservative agenda of Ennahda. (p. 64)⁵⁸

The situation in Egypt was not far from that of Tunisia where women's positioning within the political scene was degrading due to the social and radical religious perceptions of womanhood that the Islamist had upheld. The regime of the Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi did not pay too much attention to the role of women in his new government which had led many to see in their ascendance a disturbing degradation of the rights of Egyptian women. According to the political analyst Ishaan Tharoor (2012),

For women, much is at stake. The promise of sweeping political change has run up against the realities of conservative, deeply patriarchal societies. In both

⁵⁸ Edwards, B. M. (2016). *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Arab Spring and its future face*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.

post-revolution Egypt and Libya, Islamist pressure led to the axing of minimum quotas for women in the countries' new elected legislatures. Fears grow over a roll-back of the moderate gains made by women's rights in the era of the dictatorships, which, while repressive, tended to be secular. In Egypt, incidences of sexual harassment and intimidation — which had a brief reprieve during the giddy days of unity at Tahrir Square — have worsened; many feel increasingly marginalized by the post-revolution status quo. "For women, there's a sense that their revolution never really ended.

Without a doubt, all these conditions had led to a pessimistic environment for Arab women who saw in the aftermath of the revolutions a more repressive atmosphere as far as women's rights are concerned. For many, the situation had worsened in comparison to that under the rule of dictatorship and authoritarianism. At least, as is argued by various observers, most of these regimes who adopted secular values admitted the need for gender equality and the democratic representation of women and even adopted international conventions that guaranteed the representation of women in politics through quotas. According to a report by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (10/10/2015),

At the beginning of the 2011 uprisings in the Arab world, women joined the people's demands in the street to call for changes in government. Despite suffering the same police repression as their companions and aggressions because they are women, they also wanted to occupy centre stage in the struggle. Faced with a country-wide objective, gender-based demands could wait. Unfortunately, once the dictators were removed, women were generally

excluded from the negotiating tables and the provisional transitional institutions. And this has meant a loss of their visibility in the new political era. Egypt is the most striking example. By abolishing the quota of women deputies, the Parliament moved from a women's representation of 12% in 2010 to less than 2% in 2012.

The exclusion of women from important political institutions such as the parliament spoke directly against the regimes' unwillingness to share power with those categories that once were at the centre of the Arab uprisings. Women, unemployed youth and the LGBT communities were strictly relegated to the margin in the new political strategies of the Islamist parties that took over power in the Arab world. For many, the gains of Arab women had been turned into a serious negation of the great role played during the uprisings.

Even though, the situation in countries like Morocco was a bit different with regards to the positioning of women, still the ascendance of the party of the Justice and Development-a party with an Islamist background- had shown a shying away from a real and effective representation of women in the positions of power. Again, the Moroccan case would always be different from other contexts in the Arab region due to political, social and structural geo-strategic factors that were typically Moroccan. Fatima Siddiqi had detailed the aforementioned situation by arguing that;

Two major paradoxes have emerged after the Arab Spring. On the one hand, there was a spectacular street presence of women of all ages, ideologies, ethnicities and social statuses during the political mobilization phases of the uprisings (this has been well documented by all types of media), but, on the other hand, these women were then excluded from decision-making posts after

the uprisings. As mobilizes and political actors during the revolutions, women stunned the world by braving gunfire, successfully manipulating social media, and actively pushing for democratic elections. Their image has been repeatedly used to provide a narrative for the Arab uprisings, yet the outcome for them was not so positive. The governments elected by the people after the revolutions represented women either poorly or not at all. For example, in Egypt, the women who bravely stood up to army-sanctioned ‘virginity tests,’ were absent; the constitutional committee appointed by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces includes no women. Indeed, women won fewer than 10 of the roughly 500 seats, making up only 2% of the first post-Arab Spring parliament in Egypt (compared with the 12% of seats that they held in the previous government). In Tunisia, the October 2011 elections allowed 49 women to be elected to the Constituent Assembly, that is 22% out of 217 seats. However, the backward direction of the political discourse was exemplified by the woman who was allegedly raped by policemen and then, when she filed a complaint, was accused of public indecency.

Siddiqi goes on to show the situation of the absence of women in other Arab contexts of the revolutions. After detailing the political positioning of women in countries like Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring, she continues to argue that;

In Libya, which had not had a civil government in four decades, women were used as pawns in complex politics, tainted by tribal and central power interests. In Morocco, women won 67 parliamentary seats (out of 395, that is 17% of the seats), but there was only one woman in the elected government (compared with the previous 2007 government which contained seven women). In addition to all this, women were excluded from the transitional governing bodies, constituent assemblies and committees that rewrote the first draft

constitutions. Furthermore, debates on the appropriateness of women as heads of state increased public rhetoric about women's proper place in the domestic sphere, strident campaigns by Islamists to roll back relatively progressive family law, and, most tragically, increased politically motivated violence against women.

Certainly, as claimed above by Fatima Siddiqi, Arab women were excluded from an efficient presence in the political scene after the revolutions. Undoubtedly, this raises the issue of the validity of their political mobilization and whether they had only been used as a means to topple down dictatorship while solidifying the notion of patriarchy which they sought to overcome alongside authoritarian rule. Unfortunately, the gains of Arab women had been curtailed due to their immense absence from the political scene. As we will highlight later in the practical part of the dissertation, the struggle of Arab women to achieve recognition and to be effectively represented in the corridors of power demand new strategies that would cater for a more effective presence in the political domain.

In the following chapter entitled: 'Youth, Gender and Mass Mobilization', we will see in detail how the two social categories of youth and women had been used for mass mobilization and stood at the centre of the dynamism that incurred change in the Arab world. More significantly, this chapter tries to shed light on the various mechanisms used by political parties and group during the uprisings to ensure the effective participation of youth and women into the process of political change and the ousting of dictatorships. The chapter also unveils the degree to which these mechanisms of political subversion have relied on socio-cultural concepts of

womanhood and resistance to guarantee the demonization of these regimes and their use that as an alibi to get rid of the political systems.

Chapter 4: Youth, Gender and Mass Mobilization

"Challenges are all quite real. But it is also the case that new forms of grass-roots politics during the Arab Spring have often demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to gender equality among younger generations of activists."(Vickie Langohr, 2014, Washington Post)⁵⁹

The linkage between the three concepts of youth, gender, and mobilization shows greatly the extent to which the protests of the so called Arab Spring had been able to use these mechanisms to ensure a dynamic and subversive change of the regimes. In fact, the arenas and squares of the Arab countries set a perfect example of how the public sphere could be easily turned into an area of very nuanced and complex political conflict between the various categories in the Arab communities.

Undoubtedly, the youth played an extremely significant role in challenging the dictatorships that ruled over the Arab region for approximately forty years. Ranging from the regimes of Ben Ali, to that of Gaddafi, Mubarak, Salih, and various others in the region, these regimes have sown the seeds of rebellion in the heart of the younger generation of Arab men and women. Unquestionably, the fact that these regimes had extremely suppressed the voices of these younger people had automatically led to a feeling of resentment that made it quite easy for the opposition groups and parties to mobilize such categories to topple down the systems.

⁵⁹ Langohr, V. (2014). Arab Youth Activism for Gender Equality. *Washington Post*.

In fact, the rise of Islamism or political Islam, as we shall see in later chapters was basically due to the tremendous abilities of these groups and parties to mobilize and put youth and women at the heart of their protests and revolutions against the political regimes. It is very clear how these Islamist groups, for instance, were able to reach political power after the uprisings due to their deep awareness of the power they obtained through mobilizing youth and women throughout the movements.

Unfortunately, Arab youth had always been relegated to the margins of politics by most of the regimes and political groups. Youth inexperience was always looked at as a way to exclude them from the public domain and the corridors of power by these political groups. According to a report by the International Development Research Center (IDRC),

Arab youth aged 15-29 years constitute the largest age group in the population, but tend to be poorly organized and lacking in programs and networking opportunities. The youth groups that do exist are affiliated for the most part with political parties or government, and do not provide young people with opportunities to express their views on policies and programs affecting their current and future lives.

The above quote reveals the great extent to which the positioning of youth and women into the political domain by the ousted regimes was at the centre of their dissatisfaction which had ultimately led to the downfall of these political systems. More importantly, it also show the degree to which these two social categories were an easy prey to the aspirations of political groups and parties of opposition that often wanted a change in the regime across the Arab world.

The fact that the younger generation had often found itself excluded from politics played a major role in the mobilization process that would take place in different countries of the Arab region.

Many regimes had become acutely aware of the need to look at the ailments of these social segments as to find solutions to the escalating anger and protestation. Definitely, the fact that these young people, as stated earlier, were secluded from the political and economic decision making played a major role in shifting the balance of power in these countries and threatened their political systems. According to political analysts Williamson and Abadeer (2014),

Since 2011, analysts have been hard at work identifying the factors that should have made the surprising revolutions of the Arab world seem inevitable to keen observers. These scholars attribute causality to a variety of social, economic, and political factors, including social media, demographic shifts (the youth bulge), and economic grievances like high unemployment and limited social mobility. While all these issues are relevant and probably helped to spur the protest movements, none satisfactorily explain the *variance* in outcomes across different countries. In attempting to explain why certain dictators succumbed to popular pressure while others never faced serious challenges to their rule, scholars and Middle East observers have identified a number of structural variables that affected regime durability. Among the most compelling arguments is that something about monarchies sets them apart—perhaps a distinctive political culture, or access to a wider range of political strategies. Alternatively, the well-known “resource curse” argument posits that a surplus of oil wealth in several authoritarian Arab countries hindered revolutionary change. Meanwhile, others point to the strength of a regime’s coercive apparatus as the most important factor in determining the dynamics of conflict in protest-ridden societies. Proponents of this position argue dictators are more likely to survive if the armed forces decide to stay

loyal to the regime, whereas their defection makes it more likely a revolution will succeed.

No doubt, 'the resource curse' was of extreme importance in highlighting the need to get rid of these regimes that kept strangling people for so long and had their hand on the natural resources of their countries through corruption, embezzlement and nepotism, but the fact that these younger people were aware of that monopoly and the ability of the opposition groups and parties to mobilize them to topple the system was vital to the evolution of the protests in the Arab Spring.

Sadly, the drawback in the positioning of women into the political sphere spoke flagrantly against the end results of the revolutions and how they turned out to be quite depressing to categories such as youth and women. No doubt, as could be seen into different contexts in the Arab world, women were clearly excluded from the most vital positions of the governments and the decision making corridors. As was evidently shown by Anne Price, Helen Rizzo, Chelsea Marty, Katherine Meyer (March, 2017), who argued that

In other countries that have resumed some stability, women have seen themselves left out of the state building process, such as in Egypt. One of the major setbacks women have faced in Egypt since 2011 has been their isolation from the formal, political decision making process. In the first post-Mubarak parliament, and following the cancellation of the women's quota law, women's representation was a mere 1.5% (link 4), while out of an 85-member constituent assembly tasked with drafting Egypt's 2012 constitution, only seven percent were women (link 5). In the one year period under President Mohamed Morsi (member of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Political Party) 2012-2013, the Islamist dominated parliament threatened women's status with discussions of changing the following laws: lowering the

legal age for marriage, repealing the 2000 reforms to the personal status law that made it easier for women to end their marriages, lowering the maternal custody age to 7 for boys and 10 for girls, and easing restrictions on female genital mutilation (FGM). Officials in Morsi's government also downplayed gender based violence and their response to mob sexual assaults and rapes at protests was to blame the victims by saying that they took the risk of being violently attacked by participating in risky and dangerous protests.

Definitely, women who had been part and parcel of the revolutionary process in the Arab world as clarified by the above scholars and political analysts, were left out from the more beneficial and serious scenes of politics. Arab women were most of the time used as a subversive mechanism not only for mobilization and protestation, but also for disturbing and distorting the image of the regimes by showing them as misogynous and hateful of the female sex. More significantly, the political arenas and squares were new areas of gender conflict that both the regimes and the opposition had used to battle through bringing up taboo and deep rooted stereotypical representations of womanhood in the Arab culture and traditions. Concepts such as shame, dignity, were at the centre of the mobilization process and played an extremely significant role in igniting the revolutions and turning the arenas into a battleground of socio-political perceptions of womanhood.

In the following section entitled Islamism on the Rise, we will analyze the great extent to which Islamism or movements of political Islam had greatly benefited from the exacerbating situation of youth and women in the Arab societies and highlight the degree to which these movement had been able to mobilize these oppressed social categories to serve the political interests of their parties and groups. More importantly, the section will attempt to delve into the

various perceptions and mechanisms used by these groups used to topple down the political systems.

No doubt, one of the goals of the dissertation is to clarify the degree to which these social and political arenas had been at the centre for the promotion and propagation of views and concepts about youth and women and their political involvement and presence into the political sphere. Moreover, it is here in this dissertation that one will try to explain the various perspectives of womanhood and the positioning of women that marked the so called Arab Spring. Additionally, it is the goal of the paper to delineate on the very much nuanced mechanisms that brought about the wave of political Islam to the corridors of power and analyze the reasons and factors that led to the Islamization of most of the uprisings that took place in the region.

a). Islamism on the Rise: Youth, Women and Ideology

It is undeniable that the uprisings and revolutions that took place in the Arab world starting from 2011 marked the rise of political Islam to the corridors of power in the region. Many of the Islamist groups in the various countries of the Arab region have been able to mobilize women and youth to serve their subverting goals of ousting the regimes. In Egypt and Tunisia, for instance, no doubt that parties such as Freedom and Justice and Ennahda played an extremely vital role in propagating and raising slogans of dissention and revolution that led to the downfall of Ben Ali and Mubarak successively.

In the Time online magazine January, 21, 2011, Rania Abouzeid claimed that the Islamist party of Ennahda had majorly benefited from the uprisings as to reach out for power in the country. She continues to proclaim that;

As Tunisians revel in their newfound freedom, the long-suppressed Islamists, like everyone else, are trying to figure out what role they can and want to have in the new Tunisia. Ennahda leaders — including the party's exiled founder Rachid Ghannouchi, who is waiting to return from London — have been quick to reject fears that they espouse, let alone want to impose, a radical Islamic view. Many Tunisians interviewed by TIME in the week since Ben Ali's spectacular fall, say there's room for everyone, as long as their political agendas are clear. "We don't want to live in a new dictatorship whether it claims to have heavenly or earthly credibility," says Amene, 22, a university student who has been protesting in Tunis's main Avenue Habib Bourguiba every day for weeks. A black-and-white keffiyeh, the symbol of Palestinian resistance, around her neck, the Chinese-language major says she doesn't want the Islamists to be sidelined. "On the contrary. I think everyone can be represented but we want fair and real elections." (The idea of a new beginning and a clean slate was reinforced on Friday when Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi he would step from office and leave politics as soon as new elections were held.

Interestingly, though the above citation attempts to show that the Islamist party of Ennahda did not stand as representing the old stereotypical image of an Islamist party that propagated radicalism and *Salafi* thought through its political platform, the quote clarifies the great extent to which parties like Ennahda had been able to hugely benefit from the change that occurred in the region, especially that they had always been considered the victims of this regime by many.

Ennahda party in Tunisia stood as the first beneficent from the downfall of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Actually, there were various reasons for this, which included the fact that this particular party was suppressed by his regime while his leadership was in exile for long due to the seclusion it suffered from Ben Ali. As declared in a report by SBS News,

A Tunisian Islamist party has emerged victorious in the Arab Spring's first elections, taking 41.47 percent of votes cast nine months after ousting dictator Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, results show. The Ennahda party obtained 90 seats in a new 217-member assembly that will rewrite the constitution, appoint a president and form a caretaker government, elections chief Kamel Jendoubi told journalists in Tunis. The provisional results put two leftist parties in second and third place after Sunday's historic polls: the leftist Congress for the Republic (CPR) obtaining 13.82 percent of the vote, representing 30 seats, and Ettakatol 9.68 percent or 21 seats, he said. Ennahda, banned under Ben Ali's regime and registered as a political party in March, had preempted its victory by announcing Wednesday it had started coalition negotiations and intended to form a new government within a month. The party, which presents itself as having a moderate Islamist agenda, has put forward its number two, Haamdi Jebali, as its candidate for prime minister. The new assembly will decide on the country's system of government and how to guarantee basic liberties, including women's rights, which many in Tunisia fear Ennahda would seek to diminish despite its assurances to the contrary.

The emergence of the Ennahda party as leading the political scene in Tunisia has led many to worry about the future of the rights of women in the country. In fact, there was a contradiction as to the aspirations people had in the Islamist parties to rid them from the suppression of dictatorship and the anxiety these newly regimes of radical Islamist backgrounds

might have on the basic rights of liberty, freedom of speech and the rights of social categories such as women and the LGBT communities.

More importantly, as could be easily inferred from the context of Egypt with the ascendance of the Freedom and Justice party, people were much more worried about a new form of governance marked by what is called *Wilayat al-Faqih* or *Al-Mourchid* as had been seen from the involvement of men like Mohamed Badie in the shaping and influencing of the government of the ousted Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi. The rise and fall of Islamism in Egypt showed the great extent to which the country was witnessing a stage of instability and restlessness that reflected the uncontrolled nature of the youth and women's organizations that supported change in the region. No doubt, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had exploited the turbulent situation to topple down Mubarak's regime, only to be caught up in situation of defiance after losing the trust of Egyptians. As stated by Elizabeth Monier and Annette Ranko,

Under former President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt was a major power in the Middle East.¹ Despite Mubarak's weakened credibility in the latter years of his presidency, which contributed to a decline in Egypt's regional political status,² Egypt continued to lay claim to its historical and physical place at the center of the Arab world.³ One of the ways in which Mubarak had sought to shore up his domestic authority and regional influence was by promoting Egypt's role as a security guard for the Arab world. Among the enemies Mubarak claimed to be securing Egypt and the Arab world against were Islamists.⁴ Yet it was Islamists, notably the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), who gradually came to dominate Egypt's post-revolution transition⁵ and took responsibility for determining Egypt's domestic and foreign policies. Although this was initially seen as an endorsement of political Islam, even during the ascendancy of Islamist forces there was a refusal to label the January 25 Revolution an Islamic awakening and a preference for understanding the

uprising as an Egyptian nationalist renaissance.⁶ The varied reactions to the MB's rise from other Middle East actors contributed to expectations of the tensions to come. The MB's political success was relatively brief. Comparisons between Mubarak and MB President Mohammed Morsi quickly arose as the latter was accused of simply continuing Mubarak's authoritarianism in a new garb. Then, with the "second revolution" of June 30, 2013, and the overthrow of Morsi, the MB was discredited and represented as an enemy of the 2011 revolution, a threat to the state and, by extension, to the Arab world.

Without a doubt, the rise of Islamism in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia stood differently from other countries of the Arab world. The case in countries like Morocco, Libya and Yemen for instance was basically different and with totally divergent results and consequences. The Islamist groups in Morocco for example; though have hugely benefited from the outcomes of the Arab revolutions through their powerful mobilization process of the various categories of youth, women and the oppressed minorities have been at the centre of the political change since the first days of the Arab Spring.

In Morocco, though the Justice and Development Party has won the elections and gained power in the country during and after the Arab uprisings, the open and modern nature of the Moroccan society and culture did not allow the party to have a rigid and backward interpretation of Islam that would have led to the political Islamization of Moroccans. Interestingly, as quoted in an interview with *Al-Masry Al-Youm*; an Egyptian magazine Abdel Ilah Ben Kirane, the leader of the Moroccan JDP stated that,

The Islamic movement in Morocco has its own ideology; we have nothing to do with the Muslim Brotherhood as some claim. In general, we are opposed to the idea of interfering in people's private lives. The people are in need of reform and must obtain their rights. Moroccans have known Islam since

ancient times, and are characterized by a deep love for the family of the Prophet Muhammad. They were able to build a modern state and maintain stability; and since the beginning have engaged in the logic of the times. They have always preserved their Islamic character, although no one can claim that they succeeded in achieving this balance 100%. For us, as an Islamic movement, we emerged in our modern form in the 1970s. We first entered politics as the Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement, which later became the Justice and Development Party. This party first ran for elections following in 1997, and won nine seats in parliament. In the next elections in 2002, following the death of the late King Hassan II, we won 42 seats. In the 2007 elections, during the reign of King Mohammed VI, we won 46 seats. Yet when the winds of the Arab Spring arrived, the party won 107 seats and formed the government commissioned by the king.

No doubt, as Ben Kirane clarified above the positioning of the Moroccan Islamism within the various Islamist groups was typically different in the Moroccan context. Even though the party of the Justice and Development has always tried to preserve an Islamic character, still many of its views and perceptions on various issues have shown an inclination towards modernity and progress that emphasized the compatibility between the Islamic teachings and those of the modern creeds of modernity and the era of technology. Still, for the Justice and Development party, issues such as the participation and representation of women into the public sphere had always been seen as an obstacle before the party's progressive views and perceptions of womanhood.

Actually, the above views as clearly expressed by the leader of JDP show the great extent to which the Moroccan experience was different from other experiences that attempted to install a primitive version of the interpretation of Islam that did not go hand in hand with the new technological and modernity contexts. Islamism in countries such as Egypt, Libya and Yemen

for example, had been a perfect example of political groups that called and mobilized in the name of archaic concepts of Islamism such as the state of *Khilafa* as we are going to inspect in the following section.

b). Youth and the Challenge of the Nation State vs. the State of *Khilafa*

The Arab revolts have opened the door wide before various concepts and perceptions of how Islam and the Sharia law should be implemented, not only in Arab and Muslim countries but also across the world. During the revolutions different *Jihadi* and *Salafi* groups have emerged that called for a stricter application of the Sharia and wanted to install a state of *Khilafa* instead of the modern secular state that mimicked the West from their perspective. Despite the fact that in many Arab countries the above views did not find their cadence in the various Arab context, still in countries such as Syria, Libya, Egypt and Iraq the turbulent situation and instability contributed to the flourishing of the dogma of *Jihadism* which paved the way to world terrorism in the name of Islam. In a report in the Daily Signal by Sharyl Attkisson (March, 12, 2015), Attkisson stated that,

Eleven terrorist groups have been added to the U.S. list of foreign terrorist organizations since the Arab Spring. “Arab Spring” is the popular name given to the democratic wave of civil unrest in the Arab world that began in December 2010 and lasted through mid-2012. It turns out the revolutionary movement created an ideal environment for terrorism to grow and thrive. “Terrorists realized they could exploit the confusion and vacuum in power created by the uprisings,” says a U.S. intelligence officer stationed in Libya during the Arab Spring movement. He says terrorists used social media to

stoke civil unrest and take advantage of the chaos. In the Arab Spring's wake, Egypt and Tunisia disbanded the security structures that had helped keep jihadists in check, and freed many Islamist and jihadist political prisoners. In Libya, parts of the country fell entirely outside government control, providing openings for violent terrorist movements. "Many of the regimes weakened or deposed by the Arab Spring were among Washington's most effective counterterrorism partners," noted Juan Zarate in an analysis written in June 2011. A senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Zarate said the political upheaval created "new space" for al-Qaeda and associated terrorist movements to operate where none existed before.

Without a doubt, the political and social upheaval that took place in the Arab world has greatly contributed to the flourishing of terrorist groups whose goal was to set an Islamic state of Khilafa. Libya, as stated above, has been one very clear example of how instability was at the core of the wide spread terror that called for a total change in the governing systems while claiming Sharia as the sole manner by which the world should be ruled. In fact, it was the emergence of this dogmatic thinking during the Arab Spring that has led to the violent nature of the revolutions whose repercussions still strike countries in the region such as Syria, Libya, Yemen and various others. Tunisia was also a country that was influenced by the Arab Spring as far as the flourishing of terrorist groups is concerned. In the words of Shadi Hamid (December, 1, 2015),

Young fighters, with no real military experience, went to Syria not knowing what to expect. Some became disillusioned. Others like Hichem appear to have radicalized over the course of the fighting, particularly after joining ISIS. "In the final months, he was asking his mother to pray for him to join the ranks of the martyrs," his father recalls. This isn't necessarily surprising. War and radicalization go hand in hand, which makes it all the more important to

distinguish between the initial motivations for joining an Islamist rebel group and how those motivations and ideological commitments evolve over time. In other words, a young Tunisian might, at first, be moved to join Nusra for “secular” reasons—to fight Assad out of a desire for revenge because their friends joined, or because those groups take better care of fighters or have more advanced weapons. Individuals are complex, so we should assume that their motivations are complex as well. This suggests that the decision to ally with one faction over another is based on some combination of all of the above factors. Of course, religion plays a role as well, otherwise we would see liberal Tunisians going to fight for, say, the FSA. Salafi-oriented Tunisians are more likely to see the Assad regime as a secular, infidel regime at war with pious Sunni Muslims. They are more likely to see jihad as religious obligation. For them, it doesn’t matter that they are Tunisian and the people they’re ostensibly fighting on behalf of are Syrian; they are all Muslims, bound together as members of a transnational *umma*. But while religion may be necessary, it is not sufficient.

The turbulent situation in the Arab world paved the ground before serious instability that fostered a spirit of terrorism and a flourishing of Islamist groups that called for the rigid implementation of the Sharia law. The case in Egypt was also not far from what took place in various other regions in the Arab world. The Muslim Brotherhood did not succeed to stay for long because of the mismanagement of the affairs of the modern state. Instead of ruling the country from a democratic perspective that respect the legitimacy of an elected president Mohamed Morsi fell into the trap of a primitive interpretation of the principle of Shura or consultation that showed him as reliant on the views and sometimes even orders of the great Murshid Mohamed Bedie.

The problem with the state of Khilafa as theorized for the Islamist groups lied in the fact that most of these groups have tried to implement the injunctions of Sharia as they were fit to the earlier generations of Muslims. These groups have unfortunately failed to adopt the perceptions of Sharia to the current situation of Muslim within a global community. More significantly, most of these groups especially in Egypt have come out from an experience of civil organization and civil work that even though allowed them to be in touch with much of the community, did not invest them with the experience of governance and authority which is extremely different from what they were propagating.

Certainly, the political experience of Islamism or Islamist political groups in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria had shown the great extent to which these groups have failed to govern properly in a world of globalization and shared human rights and values. Moreover, the experience of Islamism had opened the door wide before the arrival of the old political systems in these countries and the strengthening of their grip over the political affairs of the community. A perfect example of the arrival of these regimes could be seen through the case of Egypt where the country went back to the rule of the military regime after the ousting the Islamist Freedom and Justice party and its leader Mohamed Morsi.

In a report about the turmoil in Egypt that led to the ousting of Mohamed Morsi, a CNN news report stated that,

A strict Islamist educated in southern California, Morsy was elected Egypt's president in June 2012 after a campaign focused on appealing to the broadest possible audience. But critics say he became increasingly authoritarian and forced through a conservative agenda during his year in power. He is also

blamed for failing to revive Egypt's economy, which crashed when the 2011 uprising, which toppled longtime strongman Hosni Mubarak, drove tourists away. That led many of his supporters among Egypt's poor and middle class to become disaffected, said Fawaz Gerges, director of the Middle East Center at the London School of Economics, speaking before Morsy fell. "That some of the revolutionaries are calling on the army to return to politics is a testament to how polarized Egypt is a year after the election of Morsy," Gerges said. "Think of the millions of people who cheered Morsy after his election. Think of the millions of Egyptians who pinned their hopes on Morsy.

Undoubtedly, the very fact that Islamists had failed to control a country like Egypt has led many to argue that the notion of the state of *Khilafa* was outmoded as it contradicted the modern perceptions of a civil and secular state. The Islamists have found themselves in front of a new dilemma that needed a new mindset that could fathom the new world order and that would contribute to a global world view instead of staying engulfed into the parochial notion of a religious state.

In fact, there were various other reasons that led to this failure on the part of the Islamist parties in their way of governance. Among these reasons stood their inability to cope up with promises they made to oppressed groups on the one hand, and their ideological exclusion of social categories and minority groups that were at the centre of the Arab uprisings--basically LGBT communities. In the following section we will try to shed light on the importance of the protesting arenas as barometers for assessing the degree to which concept of gender, race and

class equality were present. More importantly, this section will attempt to explain some of the nuanced cultural and social perceptions of womanhood propagated and promoted during these protests, as well as see the extent to which the different ideological battling parties were conscious of these perceptions and whether the public squares have maintained some of these sociological stereotypes about the role of women in the public political sphere.

c). Public Squares and Gender Dynamics

The public squares or arenas had become a battleground for the socio-cultural, economic, political and even religious perceptions of the role of the state and the regimes in guaranteeing equality amongst these categories under the law. In analyzing the social and gender postures and gestures that categorized the uprisings, one would be able to comprehend the degree to which these arenas have sometimes helped emphasize socio-cultural stereotypes, while at other challenged and subverted that social positioning. Space played an extremely important role in defining the social and cultural limits of gender interaction and classification while it also showed the great degree to which the dynamics of the revolutions and the contentious politics had helped unify these categories under one banner; that is of exclusion and oppression. In the words of Shazia Archad (January, 24, 2014),

whilst the Arab Spring was not a gender based revolution it did mark a turning point for the role of women in public space and the advent of women as part of these protests was a significant marker in the changing dynamics that were beginning to take force. While the revolutions were not defined by the role of women there was a general call by both men and women for regime change and revolution – but significantly the gender identities of the revolutionaries was not the focus of the revolutions. However, the overthrowing of the old

traditional regimes meant that there were calls for old practices to be ended and with that came the call for the end of traditional patriarchy, the norm for many of these Arab societies. Women in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya (and elsewhere across the region) found that they had access to newer and wider audiences who were interested in and allowed for their voices to be heard directly from them. Tawakkoul Karman became a figure of the Yemeni uprisings; her role as a revolutionary catapulted her into the media spotlight, her role as a strong woman cemented that position. Despite the fact that the revolutions were not gender based calls for freedom, the spotlight on women's roles across the Middle East and North Africa was intensified.

There were various women who stood as emblems of the revolution in different parts of the Arab world. The arenas of the Tahrir square in Egypt and the Taqyeer square in Yemen and various other countries were vital to the questioning process that was consistently addressed to the traditional beliefs and perceptions of the role of women into the public sphere. No doubt, the gender dynamics that were prevalent in these areas of contention played an important role in challenging some of the most vital social problems that were at the heart of the ailments of youth, women and minority groups. According to Dina Yazdani (November, 7, 2016),

It was not uncommon to see news of the Arab Spring accompanied by photos of women on the frontline. Women participated, organized and even led many of the uprisings throughout the region. In some countries, it was women who became the face of the revolution, including Tawakkoul Karman in Yemen and Zainab al-Khawaja in Bahrain, to name a few. Even for the average woman, squares where protests took place became liberating spaces with few social boundaries. Men, realizing the integral role that women would play in the revolutions, welcomed and accepted them into what traditionally was their

space. The promise of freer and democratic societies would presumably facilitate greater women's rights. As it would turn out, women had the most to gain—and lose—from the Arab Spring.

Clearly, as stated above by Yazdani, the Arab women of the revolutions had seen in the squares of protestation a way to divulge their views of social, economic, political and religious oppression that denied them presence and participation in the public life of their communities. The gender dynamics that took place amongst the various groups that participated into the process of the uprisings, ranging from Islamists to secular revolutionaries and many others have contributed to a new era of subversion that did not only question the legitimacy of the political regimes, but also started to inquire about the oppression of certain cultural and religious percepts such as sexism, patriarchy and homophobia that robbed some categories of some of their basic rights as citizens.

In many of the social and political movements that called for the ousting of the regimes such as Kefaya in Egypt, the 17th of February in Libya, the 20th February in Morocco and so on, the issues of gender equality and the involvement of women into the political process were at the center of the debate and dominated the protesting scene. The public squares in these countries have witnessed a tremendous acceptance of various categories that aspired for social, political, economic and religious equality. In fact, it was this spirit of unity and the commonality of oppression that led many of these groups to solidify their struggle against the authoritarian regimes. In the words of Josh Sanburn (May, 17, 2011),

From Egypt's Tahrir Square to Tunisia's central Bourguiba Avenue to the plazas of Syria's ancient cities, public squares have been at the center of the Arab Spring. But the centrality of these spaces to the narrative of the uprisings in the Middle East has largely been overshadowed by the role that social networking played in fomenting rebellion. For all the praise that has rightly been lavished upon the Arab world's youthful revolutionaries, one must not forget the gray, old spaces where they massed.

The regimes of Hosni Mubarak, Bashar Al Assad, Ali Abdulla Salih, Ben Ali, Kaddafi and various others have been under the serious criticism of the younger generations that saw in these political elites a strong persistence of authoritarianism and the rule of dictatorship. The commonality of oppression will always be at the heart of the uprisings in many of these regions which would pave the ground towards a more organized movement against the dictatorships that had for long suppressed the categories of youth and women in these countries. Not only were women the only segment of the oppressed social categories that was present in the public arenas, social groups and minorities such as the LGBT communities were clearly visible in these squares who called for social equality and respect of their rights within the mostly conservative Muslim societies that do not recognize them as full citizens.

In the following section, we will focus our attention on the positioning of women into these arenas and look for alternatives that had been used to challenge the traditional representations of women into these areas of public resistance. Moreover, the section will delineate the mobilization process that had been utilized by most of the protesting groups with regards to women and their role. The mechanisms used and the perspectives applied to the arenas

are of extreme importance for fathoming the degree to which the agency of Arab women had been put into question.

The new perspectives we will be trying to highlight into this section are basically concerned with the conclusions reached by observing the political scene and the various failures that Arab women faced while engaging into the revolutions. It is here also that will conceptualize the need for new dynamics of gender interaction that would guarantee a more beneficial participation of women into the revolutionary operation.

d). New Perspectives on the Role of Women and Youth in Political Mobilization

Surely, the participation of Arab women into the upheavals that ran amok in the Arab region and had a domino effect was of extreme vitality with regards to the ousting of Arab dictators and authoritarian regimes. However, the positioning of women after the Arab Spring and the way their efforts were betrayed demands from the modern researcher to question the whole process of that participation and mobilization of women at the heyday of the revolutions. Unfortunately, if one looks at the various countries that witnessed the uprisings and how women had a narrow access to the corridors of power after the end of the protests, shows clearly that some things went wrong with regards to valuing the work and agency of women.

As clearly defined by Haifa Abu Ghazaleh Assistant Secretary General, Head of Media and Communication, League of Arab States from Jordan,

The status of women has not improved in most Arab Spring countries. Their social, economic, and political demands have not been fulfilled; they have instead been dragged by terrorist groups into battlefields in several countries, thus becoming enslaved, widowed, or bereaved. In some Arab Spring

countries, women are subjected to a reality that is unlike anything that has existed except in mythology. They are overwhelmed by the surrounding circumstances, because the region has fallen into the abyss of political and military conflicts. Women have paid the price of these conflicts in two ways. First, religious discourse in many parts of the Arab world has turned against women; some cowardly personalities who call themselves religious men have begun to spout haram-halal fatwas which restrict women's rights and roles. Second, girls are forced into marriage, being offered as sacrifices to men for pleasure, or sold as slaves and war loot in "markets." These violations of women's and children's bodies are sanctioned by the laws of these terrorist groups. Arab women shall always consider this time in history as "the Dark Ages."

Certainly, as stated above, the consequences of the Arab Spring on the rights and the positioning of women within the Arab politics had shown a pessimistic vision of how the Arab traditions and culture still refuse the vital presence and participation of women into the public affairs of the community. More significantly, these dynamics of change that uprooted the political regimes of dictators and put an end to a long era of suppression had failed to provide for women the possibility of an effective participation in the life of their communities. It was this exact negation of categories such as women, youth, and the LGBT communities that turned the aftermath of the Arab uprisings into an autumn for these social groups. In a report by CNN with regards to the status of the LGBT community during the Arab revolutions, the report claims that,

"For example, in Egypt and Tunisia there was a lot of hope initially that there would be a more tolerant civil society. Now it seems that the impetus for change will be hijacked by conservative forces who will make the situation worse for gay people and other minorities. "In Syria and other countries,

there's a fear that gay people could be used as sacrificial lambs." One gay American who recently left Syria, where he had been working for several years, said the unrest had made life more dangerous for gay people. The man, who spoke to CNN on condition of anonymity, said: "It has caused even more skepticism and paranoia for the gay population -- just another reason to be harassed and checked."

Various social and cultural mechanisms were used into some of the public arenas to drive away and denigrate social groups such as gays and lesbians who participated in the protests. Even though these groups had been relegated to the margin in some contexts, still in other areas of the Arab uprisings these communities found themselves warmly welcomed as victims of the social; political, economic and religious suppression that both men and women suffered under dictatorship and authoritarianism.

The new gender dynamisms in the Arab world have often been considerate of the need to bring peoples' demands into the arena. Despite the powerful social and cultural perceptions about certain groups such as gays and lesbians, the latter have found it extremely pertinent to raise their voice at a time where everybody was challenging a certain authoritarian and oppressive discourse.

More importantly, one of the most significant reasons that had always led to the solidification of the efforts of these younger people during the Arab Spring was the need to cover up for the basic demands of the priorities of life, especially the basic needs of employment, the lowering of the food prices etc. The issue of social stability and economic equality will be at the center of many of the inquiries that the protesters raised during the Arab revolutions. The whole

process of change that took place had demanded the need for the full mobilization of women and the youth as to guarantee a fervent revolution that put an end to the authoritarian regimes of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Gaddafi, Salih and different others.

The environment of the Arab uprisings was particularly suitable to social categories that were oppressed throughout the years. No one could deny the fact that the majority of women who were driven to public squares and streets in their countries were highly politically mobilized. Despite the fact that these protests were considered spontaneous reactions to political and economic corruption of the ousted regimes, still political parties in general and Islamist parties in particular had been the nucleus around which the opposing slogans and demands of change have been revolving. Islamists have always been revered for their power to mobilize.

But, unfortunately, as we have seen from the earlier analysis of the political situation and the positioning of women into the political scene after the revolutions that women and minority groups that had suffered oppression under authoritarianism and dictatorship had been betrayed by the very groups they helped ascend to political power. The Islamist parties in particular had been the ones that mostly benefited from the fervent anger and dissatisfaction of the youth and women throughout the revolutions. Furthermore, the representation of these categories within the corridors of power in the Arab world had opened the door before a serious questioning of the vitality of the mobilization of these categories and the extent to which youth and women had to be extremely cautious with regards to their decisions related to the involvement into the political transitions within the region. According to Nadine Abdallah (2015),

The accumulated research on youth movements in general, and on Egyptian ones in particular, analyses the characteristics of the youths who triggered the Arab Spring: their history of activism, the cycles of contention they experienced, the new tools of mobilization they used, as well as the particular forms of activism and organizational structures they adopted. Academic work focused on youth activism in Egypt, however, thus far lacks research on how the youth movements modified their strategies according to the political context and the repercussions this had on the transformation process.

The Arab Spring thus, had been an excellent experience through which the younger generation of men and women and the other socially marginalized groups had been able to assess and see the great extent to which they could be a vital source for change. The public squares and arenas have revealed to the modern reader the value of protestation and the importance of a common ground on which gender, social, political, cultural and even religious battles for equality and acceptance are to be fought. As stated above by Abdallah (2015), these younger generation have started to comprehend the need to modify and change their strategies as far as protestation, resistance and mobilization are concerned. More importantly, the repercussions that succeeded the Arab revolutions were an eye-opening event for these youth and women to try and build and adopt new ways of political resistance that would ensure their equal representation within the corridors of power.

Part II of this dissertation paper entitled: 'Youth, Gender and the Moroccan Spring', will give a more detailed vision of the Arab revolutions and their impact on a country like Morocco. Surely, in this part, our focus will be laid on delineating the degree to which the Moroccan

experience was both similar and different in its political manifestations than that of other countries in the region such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and so on and so forth. It is here in this practical part that we will try to assess and value, through the mechanisms of observation and interviewing, the particularity of the Moroccan situation and more importantly, reveal the specificity of this context through the example of the Moroccan 20th February Movement that stood and still stands at the heart of the many protests that had run throughout the country since the early days of the so called Arab Spring.

PART TWO:

YOUTH, GENDER AND THE MOROCCAN SPRING



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Though most of the literature that has been written about the case of Morocco is of great importance in delineating the Moroccan specificity, the following chapters will give specific attention to a practical analysis of the political arena through the 20th February Movement. It is undeniable for example that this exceptionality was utilized intelligently at a certain juncture by the Moroccan authorities to divert the domino effect of the Arab revolutions that ran amok in various countries.

According to Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley (2006), for example, Morocco was an exceptional case due to different social, geopolitical and even institutional reasons. Morocco,

they say: “has been deemed an exception to the region’s unrest because of its political stability. It is actually this political stability and the various reforms initiated by the monarchy even before the revolutions that guaranteed a peaceful and smooth political reform in the country that has strategically taken into account the needs and demands of different social categories particularly youth and women.

More significantly, many Moroccan activists were really cautious about the use of the term “Arab Spring”, particularly in its relation to their specific diverse social and ethnic composition. In one of the interviews I had with a Moroccan Amazigh woman, she affirmatively stated that she found herself more inclined to the use of the term Moroccan or democratic revolutions as it does not collapse all Moroccans to one specific social and ethnic category. Moreover, one could very much confirm that the specificity of the Moroccan situation lied in both the peculiar attachment most Moroccans had towards their monarchy while at the same time expressing their need to a serious and thoughtful reform that would guarantee a positive change; demands to which the monarchy has responded promptly.

Zoltan Barany (2013), asserts that

King Mohamed VI of Morocco and King Abdullah II of Jordan responded to demands for reform with tactics they have long mastered; manipulation, co-optation, and minor concessions masked as major reforms. They projected willingness to compromise and carefully calibrated the actions of their coercive agencies to avoid the clumsy overreactions of other rulers in the region.

Even though, the above statement of Barany tries to find answers to the exceptional reaction of Morocco as far as its response to the demands of the revolutions is concerned, he evidently has failed to trace the monarchy's *avangardist* efforts to reform the political and economic conditions of Moroccans. One example that could be provided here is the case of the former Moroccan King Hassan II who has started a process of democratization that took into consideration the peculiarity of the modern age that demanded a more progressive, tolerant and open-minded integration of all social and political constituencies in the country. These reforms could be seen in the diversification of political parties, the renewal of the constitution in, and initiating new programs for the inclusion and integration of parties and civil society groups.

According to Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley (2006), "reforms enacted by Hassan II fell into four broad categories: improved respect for human rights, a limited increase in the power of parliament, enhanced opportunities for political participation by parties and civil society, and some attempts to curb corruption". The particularity of the Moroccan case, as we shall be highlighting in this part of the dissertation lies in various social, political, cultural, economic and geostrategic factors that made Morocco a different version of the so called Arab Spring. Surely, as has been stated by many authors and political and social analysts, the uprisings that took place in a country like Morocco revealed to the great extent to which Moroccans had specifically spoke through the revolutions to problems and issues that were relevant to their context.

Moroccans, like many other Arab citizens who had suffered the turmoil of the uprisings that were ignited by the end of December 2010 and the beginning of 2011, had been very much impacted by the legitimate demands and slogans raised during the revolutions. Approximately,

the majority of the problems and the issues raised in the various parts of the Arab region had some common thread about them that was basically centered on ailments such as unemployment, high prices of the basic food, nepotism, corruption and the social, economic and political exclusion of youth and women from the corridors of power in their countries.

For many Moroccans, the particularity of their political and social struggle did not start with the Arab revolutions only, but had been ingrained for so long in the history of the country as an African and an Arab country that stood firmly against the winds of colonialism and had a history of resistance. The specificity of the Moroccan context could be also seen in the various geopolitical and social, economic, cultural and strategic aspects that defined how to be Moroccan in relation to the different winds of change across the Arab and African worlds.

In the following chapters, we will shed light on the importance of the Moroccan Spring and how it spoke to the ailments of the Moroccan youth and women and also how social and political movements such as the 20th February had been at the centre of the debate over the improvement of the social and economic life of Moroccan under the regime.

Undoubtedly, as we are going to see in these chapters, the Arab uprisings had a domino effect on countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Algeria which constitute countries of the Maghreb and whose contexts were a bit similar, but also different with regards to how these regimes have responded to the uprisings and their repercussions within these various contexts. As one respondent argued in an interview with her about the impact of the Arab Spring on Morocco, she stated that, "Morocco will always stand as different when it comes to the uprisings,

we have a constitutional monarchy and a king whose legitimacy derives not only from the people, but from his roots as Commander of the Faithful. "

The above statement, reveals the great extent to which Morocco had always been different throughout its long history of the monarchy that stood for so long while challenging all the winds of upheaval and change in the country. The king's dynasty that ruled Morocco for centuries is a double edged weapon that serves the stability of the country on the one hand, and put the kingdom at the heart of all the crises the country could undergo. The following chapter will be particularly focusing on that Moroccan specificity and how it played an extremely important role in imbuing the Moroccan Spring with the touch of an extremely special Moroccan touch that stood at the centre of all the uprisings that swept over the Arab world for approximately 7 years starting from the year 2011.

Chapter 1: The Moroccan Kingdom and the Arab Winds of Change

The Arab winds of change have swept across various regions in the Arab world. Whether these winds of change were positive in their results or not is a question that would need a whole different dissertation paper to answer. But, without a doubt, the problems that initiated the uprisings in the Arab world had the same roots that lied basically in issues such as poverty, unemployment, exclusion of youth and women from the political and economic sphere. In the words of Abat and Ninet (),

the origins of the modern constitutionalism in Morocco have distinctive characteristics associated with the immediate post-independence political

events. This historical specificity started with the role of the Sultan (monarch after independence) as an agent who proclaimed a constitutional text for the newly independent state. In Morocco it has been the monarch, who, on more than once occasion, has moved the country further towards more toward the democratic ideal. ...The Moroccan monarchy was at the centre of Moroccan political life following the revolution, and it remains so today. Indeed, Mohamed VI's critical role in the beginnings of the Arab Spring is a paradigmatic example of this influence. ...The king followed a typical strategy of the Alawite family: use the constitutional process to make changes to the law when royal authority is challenged.

The above quote clearly shows the great extent to which the Moroccan monarchical system is at the heart of the whole political process in this country. The fact that we are talking about a royal dynasty that had ruled Morocco for centuries explains the degree to which the situation of the country during the Arab Spring was so much imbued with demands that though challenged the bitter economic and miserable unemployment situation in the country, still did not want to hit hard at the political system especially with regards to the role of the king in the political scene in the country.

More importantly, in order to fully comprehend the political situation in this country, one also needs to look at the various segments of society that constitute the Moroccan ethnic, cultural, and religious mosaic.

Definitely, Morocco is a country of diversity; a diversity that played an extremely important role in enriching Moroccans, but also opened the door before serious ailment once stability and security was threatened. For many years, the monarchy has succeeded in putting the issues of national unity and security at the heart of its social, economic, cultural and religious strategies for developing the country. Morocco is a melting pot for various ethnic groups including Arabs, Berber or Amazigh, *Sahrawis* and so on whose integration and unity had always been a good characteristic of the Moroccan country. The different ethnic groups in Morocco had always set a good example of diversity that is imbued with integration through the lingua franca of *Darija* which a dialect from Arabic.

The Arab Spring that started by the end of the year 2010 and the beginning of 2011 constituted a new phase in the life of Moroccans who had started to feel the need for more equal representation in the social, economic and political life of their country. Many have started to question the regime and the need to start a new era of democracy and the equal distribution of national resources. As eloquently stated by the political analyst and observer,

Change is coming to Morocco in a calmer and more gradual way. The ruling regime has been reformed instead of replaced, leaving institutions intact and creating no vacuum for thugs and fanatics to fill. Demonstrations sometimes occur, but they don't degenerate into riots, armed conflict, or mob rule. Nobody thinks civil war is coming; nor is there any danger of an Iranian-style revolution. Morocco has been outperforming its Arab neighbors for years. Now that a political hurricane is battering the rest of the region, it looks better

than ever. Morocco evolves instead of explodes, and while incrementalism does not offer the instant gratification of uprising and revolution, it's precisely what the United States should be promoting throughout the Middle East.

No doubt, as the above quote shows clearly, Morocco's change is one of evolution instead of that of revolution. Many have noticed that for the Moroccan context, protesters have preferred to work on slogans that addressed the corruption of the ruling parties and their famous figures and to denounce the rotten government that led to this catastrophic situation of high poverty and unemployment rate amongst the Moroccan youth and women. More importantly, others have brought to the protesting scene issues of ethnic, regional and even gender exclusion from the decision making process in this country. According to a report in Morocco by the World Bank Group,

Before the 'Arab Spring,' there was a lot of talk in Morocco, and in many of the neighboring countries, about how the youth were an important resource, that they represented the future. Now is the time to advance in the direction of actualizing an ambitious vision to place this generation at the center stage of development in Morocco. Having young people as key partners in finding tailored solutions, and ensuring their participation in decision making and service delivery will be key. The Bank team has a combination of older and younger people but we've involved a lot of young people in this report and we've used a tremendous amount of participatory research. That has to translate at a policy level. One of the major recommendations of this report is to help support and bring voice to the youth movements in more formal venues of decision making. They have a lot of ideas! We have provided a menu of options and shown that this issue can be tackled, but you need to have focus, you need resources, and you need to have youth participation. You need to bring into the mainstream all those young people that feel excluded. Some

agencies have already started to do that. It's really amazing to see the transformation.

The ideas discussed above reveal the great extent to which the case of the Moroccan context has focused on the need to challenge the government that was basically responsible for the economic crisis that hit the country. Instead of calling for the downfall of the Moroccan long lasting monarchy, the Moroccan people clung to the king and wanted him to intervene for bettering their lives and for getting the train of development on the right track. Development and bettering the condition of youth was always at the centre of these claims that the Moroccan protesters have raised. One of the respondent to the questionnaire argued that, "the battle in Morocco was a battle for ensuring economic and social justice. We, Moroccan cling to the king and his wisdom and we know that he would not allow for corruption to prevail. The king is our support and our only recourse to fix the political and economic situation in the country, and we know he will do it."

Without any doubt, the above state encapsulate the ideas of various Moroccans with regards to the protestations and how they evolved in the region. The following section will try to detail the particularity of the Moroccan context through the various interventions and reforms adopted by the kingdom during the days of the Spring. More significantly, this section will be giving a more specific view on how the reaction of the Moroccan monarchy stood as an obstacle against some of the views that linked the monarchy to the revolutions and how Moroccan should try to limit the authority of the king.

a). Contextualizing the Moroccan Democratic Spring

Morocco was very much impacted by the domino effect of the Arab Spring that swept over Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and various other Arab countries from the MENA region. Moroccans have oftentimes preferred to call their protests or demands for change, a democratic Spring rather than an Arab Spring, alluding to the diversity of the Moroccan context that was not homogenous and inclusive of different social and ethnic groups. Moroccan diversity was of extreme importance in mitigating the power of the winds of the Spring. For many, the fact that Moroccans need to keep this diversity intact and to protect it from the dissidence that might be caused by any anarchic attempt to reform was vital to the process of the evolution of the Moroccan Spring.

As clearly stated by, what happened in the Arab world has hugely impacted the Moroccan context and led to a tsunami of social and political change and call for reform. He argues that,

As elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East, the youth-driven revolts in Tunisia and Egypt produced a tsunami in Morocco's political landscape. On February 20, a movement took shape that publicly demanded a constitutional monarchy in which an elected and accountable government would have control over the country's social, economic, and security policies. All across the country, it organized rallies in which tens of thousands of Moroccans participated. Morocco's largely co-opted and aging political parties, from the Islamist Justice and Development Party to the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, remained quiet, and distanced themselves from the young movement. At the heart of this movement's demands has been the role of the King, who,

since independence, has been in control of all senior governmental and military appointments. Especially under King Hassan II (1961–1999), the monarchy's system of rule, called *makhzen* in Moroccan parlance, has often had recourse to force during the so-called Years of Lead.

The particularity of the Moroccan context lied basically in the way it put the king at the heart of the reforming politics. Even though there were people who had fervently wanted a constitutional monarchy that wanted to weaken the role of the monarchy in the political process. Nevertheless, the majority of Moroccans had been aware of the need to unite around the king, especially with the fact that Mohamed VI had been intelligent and flexible enough to adopt new strategies and ways of governance that was much more lenient towards the common people and the oppressed categories. In the words of Shadi Hamid,

In a season of growing disillusion—and disastrous televised speeches—the king of Morocco's June 17 national address stood out. It wasn't a great speech, and it fell well short of protesters' demands. But it was a substantive engagement with the opposition. The 47-year-old monarch did not demean his own people or place the blame on foreign conspirators. Instead, he announced a new constitution—one that has the potential to reshape the country's politics. While retaining effective veto power over major decisions, he pledged to empower elected institutions. The prime minister, drawn from the ranks of the largest party in parliament, would have the authority to appoint and fire ministers, as well as to dissolve parliament.

The Moroccan solution to the uprisings was extremely cautious in addressing the mobs and the king was conscious of the need to introduce new reforms that would clearly speak to the demands of the populations. For many, Morocco stood as a model for the Arab countries in the way the regime took responsibility for the ailments and the problems that were taking place and shown a great example of directly addressing and solving them at various levels.

The case of the flexibility of the Moroccan king with regards to the revolutions was of extreme vitality in defining the particularity of this context. The king Mohamed the VI was aware of the need to change the stance the monarchy has always has towards the population with regards to demands of political change. Instead of resorting to the old systems of repression and violence the king chose to negotiate and to look for ways to reform the political process through a policy of inclusion that put these social categories at the heart of the new reform undertaken by the monarchy.

Hamid () continues to argue that

To preserve power, you sometimes have to give some of it up. We can call this the "pre-emptive" model of reform. Here, autocrats take protests seriously. They announce big, high-profile reforms—whether it's moving toward elected governments or rejiggered constitutions. They release political prisoners and appoint real commissions that come up with real recommendations. They give people hope by using all the right buzzwords: change, democracy, reform, institutions, accountability. In doing so, this time around, the Moroccan regime has managed to seize the initiative and steal some momentum from the Feb. 20

protest movement—the loose coalition of leftists, liberals, and Islamists that has brought tens of thousands of Moroccans out into the streets. With a resounding "yes" vote in the July 1 constitutional referendum, the monarchy will be able to say that the mass of Moroccans stand behind the crown, further underlining regime legitimacy in a time of uncertainty.

The issue of the relationship of the crown with the political condition in Morocco was of extreme importance to many people. As one of the interviewees from the 20th February Movement stated: "we believe that the king is our savior from this political impasse. As our national slogan goes: Allah, the King, and the Homeland, we totally believe in the need to support the king in the battle against corruption and economic exclusion". Certainly, for this respondent, the king stood at the heart of the Moroccan politics and seemed to be no solution to the problems of the country without the direct implication of the king who is the commander of believers and the representative of the people as well.

The Kingdom, as we are going to see later had been able to adopt various and important strategies to challenge and appease the protesters with new reforms that it adopted. These new reforms have spoken directly to some of the problems that basically the youth and women had suffered throughout the years. The evolution of the revolts in Morocco and the different economic and social strategies adopted were certainly important factors that led to changing the trajectory of the revolutions to be one of evolution and social and political reform rather than one of contention and the calling for the ousting of the monarchy that ruled and united Moroccans for years and centuries.

In the following section, we will look particularly about the elements of gender and youth resistance within the Moroccan context and try to analyze the degree to which these elements have succeeded in imbuing the Moroccan political scene with a touch of contention that started from the specificity of the country and its unique stance amongst the Arab region. Moreover, it is here that the dissertation will clarify the role played by these the two social categories of the youth and women within the protesting scene and the adaptation the Moroccan monarchy took in order to speak to the demands of this younger generation, especially with regards to issues such as corruption, youth unemployment and exclusion from the corridors of power; and more importantly, the long standing denial of youth agency and their efficacy within the social and economic life of the country.

b). Youth, Gender and Political Resistance in Morocco



Source : Google

Political resistance in Morocco had taken different shapes and came about in various manifestations. The younger generation of Moroccans has tried to find out ways to revolt against the political systems that rendered its participation into politics and the economic and social life of the country invalid. Women and youth played an extremely important role in the evolution of the revolts and the change that occurred in the region. Whether they were adherent to political parties, or part of youth social movements such as the 20th February Movement or were part of Islamist organizations such as Al Adl wa Lihsan (Justice and Charity), the youth were highly represented within these political and social structures and played a vital role in challenging the regime and its political aspirations. As clearly stated various political analysts, Moroccan youth were at the centre of the political movements, and women in particular have deeply contributed to the contention that took place in the region.

Standing as fervent protesters who put their demands at the heart of the protesting scene and looking for solutions to these issues from the monarchy as a balancing power that could speak to those demands, these social categories had been extremely conscious of the need to question and to challenge the political system. As claimed by Nicole Pilling,

In the days leading up to the protests, the Moroccan government created false Facebook messages, claiming that the three initiators of the Facebook group “February 20 Movement for Change”, Rachid Antid, Ahmed Qatib, and Hicham Ahalla, were calling off the protests. The three initiators had started the group as a call to dissolve parliament and “push for constitutional reforms that would reduce King Mohammed’s powers and make the justice system more independent”. On the eve of the protests, Antid announced that due to the promised involvement of the Islamist Justice and Charity, he was withdrawing

from the protests. Antid announced that “There is vagueness about their political agenda, starting with their position regarding the monarchy as a consensual political regime for the nation.” The “February 20 Movement for Change” wanted socio-economic reform, but would not entertain a political overhaul. In spite of governmental attempts to dispel protestors and the withdrawal of the initiator, messages flooded the social media sites demanding action. By February 20, over 19,000 Facebook users had joined “February 20 Movement for Change”, and over 37,000 people took to the streets, officially pulling Morocco into the wildfire of the Arab Spring.

The domino effect had gone amok amongst the Moroccans and many youth organizations took to the street asking for social, political, economic and even religious and gender equality. The organizations involved were conscious of the need to involve all these social and political categories as to be able to address some of the serious ailments that all of them had confronted throughout the years. According to Abdessalam Siddiqi in the Guardian magazine,

Youth employment challenges are a global policy issue, but the situation is of serious concern in north Africa, which has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world. Underemployment and job informality also affect young people. In Morocco, four out five unemployed people are aged 15 to 34. Although the unemployment rate has declined over the past decade, youth unemployment is still twice that of the total population. In 2003 youth unemployment was 19.3% and general unemployment was 9.2%. There are variations according to gender, age, area of residence and education. Urban youth are more likely to be unemployed than rural youth. Girls and women are

even worse off, even though Morocco is better than some neighboring countries for female youth employment.

Surely, issues such as the unemployment of the youth and the meager representation of women in the political process was one of the motivations that led to the uprisings in Morocco. One of the basic elements for the mobilization that took place especially with regards to the 20th February Movement was to put in action a dynamic revolution that sought to speak directly to the needs of Moroccans in general and the Moroccan youth and women in particular.

Moroccan youth were at the heart of the 20th February Movement and more importantly, had greatly contributed to the evolution of the protests amongst other social and political groups that wanted to be part and parcel of political change in the country. The youth have become able to understand the need for organization and for political mobilization as to be able to pressure for demands that spoke to their needs in a serious situation of unemployment, economic corruption and nepotism amongst the ruling elite and political regime. In the words of the Moroccan statisticians and political analysts Boudarbat, Brahim and Aziz (2007); " unfortunately, today's youth face severe economic and social exclusion hampering their transitions to adulthood. Youth exclusion is determined by many factors including illiteracy and unemployment. But moreover, exclusion is not just a condition but rather a process which marginalizes certain individuals. This process varies with context (e.g. urban versus rural) and is constantly evolving."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Boudarbat, Brahim and Ajbilou, Aziz, Youth Exclusion in Morocco: Context, Consequences, and Policies (September 2007). Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper No. 5. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1087430> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1087430>

The above statement by these Moroccan scholar clarifies the degree to which the Moroccan political elite had succeeded in using mechanisms for changing and challenging the ailments put forward by the younger generation. Both women and the youth were aware of the need to adopt new strategies to cope up with the political change that the country was undergoing. Moreover, these ingredients were vitally present in their various forms whether they had been youth from urban or rural areas. The majority of the protesters as we had seen from the questionnaires distributed put at the centre of their claims the need to reform the political system; a reform that would speak to the demands of youth and cater for their social, political, economic and social needs.

In her response to my questions about the role of youth and women within the 20th February Movement; one of the respondents claimed that "Moroccan women and men, both of them, especially from the young age were very concerned about the future of our country. We know that the king had good intentions for positive change, but we need to help our king achieve those goal by challenge the corrupt politicians who are robbing us from our rights to live decently in this land. It is not easy, but as long as we are determined change will occur sooner or later."

In fact, the above statement shows clearly the value and recognition given by the Moroccan youth to the role of the monarchy in helping in the process of incurring change. The young generation of Moroccans were also intrigued by the great adaptation of the King Mohamed IV who had been extremely conscious of the need to adopt a new political discourse that would cater for the demands of the youth. Right after the protests that took place in Tunisia,

Egypt and Libya, the king announced important reforms that needed to be taken as to quench the fire of the revolutions that were ignited in the Arab world. According to Marina Ottaway (2011)

The constitution King Mohammed VI announced to his country on June 17 has been greeted by Moroccans with a great deal of ambivalence. Although it appears to be a foregone conclusion that a majority of Moroccans will vote “yes” in the referendum announced for July 1, many will do so with reservations. The young protesters who have been organizing periodic demonstrations beginning on February 20—hence the name, February 20 movement—have already announced that they do not intend to stop their actions. In fact, protests took place on June 19, drawing thousands of protesters in Casablanca and smaller numbers in other cities.

The government and the Moroccan monarchy knew that it was time to incur serious change before the wind of the revolution could sweep to the country with the risk of dismantling the social and ethnic fabric of Morocco which could ultimately to extremely dangerous and catastrophic consequences. The monarchy, however, had been able to absorb the evolving contention that was ignited by the economic and social dissatisfaction amongst the youth and had swiftly looked for urgent solutions to these problems and promised change and progress in the life of Moroccans.

c). Moroccan Women and Political Change



Source : Google

Moroccan women an extremely vital part of the political upheavals in Morocco during the first days of the revolutions. The majority of the Moroccan political parties, social and political groups had relied on the full presence of women in the political arenas as to be able to put pressure on the regimes and force to give concessions with regards to the economic and political opportunities. Most of the political groups that mobilized women had very big promises of a better economic life and a better political representation for them. In fact, it was these promises and political and economic aspirations that put women at the centre of the uprisings, only to be betrayed later when they were excluded from being represented in the political positions such as parliamentarians, ministers, administrators and so forth. According to the Fanack website,

Two major paradoxes have emerged since the 2011 uprisings. On the one hand, a spectacular street presence of women of all ages, ideologies, ethnicities and social statuses during the political mobilization phases of the uprisings (this has been well documented by all types of media); on the other hand, the exclusion of these women from decision-making positions after the uprisings. As mobilizers and political actors, women stunned the world by braving gunfire, successfully manipulating social media and actively pushing for democratic elections. Their image has been repeatedly used to provide a narrative for the uprisings.

Women played a very important role in the Moroccan Spring. Apart from the various ones who were highly present in the public squares and contributed to the protesting scene, still many were using social media and the new ICTs to challenge the political and economic situation in their country. The majority of the female respondents in the questionnaire distributed, especially amongst the educated university students had shown a great interest and activism of these young women on social media. Not far from the Arab women who relied on the media to send their message of dissatisfaction and protestation, the Moroccan women had been able to use the ICT as the best way to subvert the traditional image that suppressed and relegated the voice of the female to the margin.

The internet was an extremely important platform for sharing ideas and dismantling social, political, cultural and religious perceptions of womanhood in the Arab world. Moreover, it was the "pri-blic" nature of the social media that allowed for a more critical and

more subversive tool of protestation to take place. As eloquently stated by Houda Abadi (2014),

The February 20th movement deployed a gendered collective identity as a communicative strategy to push for change. The activists questioned the top-down state-imposed desired citizen and state co-optation of institutions and equated Moroccan citizenry with values of freedom, economic social justice, and ethnic and gender equality. Gender equality became part of the larger discussion of Moroccan citizenry and constitutional reforms. As such, women's issues were not marginalized to the periphery and instead women and men partnered as a team to fight the battle for social and economic justice.

No doubt, the 20th February Movement was only one good example of how Moroccan went on to negotiate the role of women into the public sphere. The uprisings that came as a result of the so called Arab Spring played an extremely important role in defining the role of Arab women in the revolutions and the politics of resistance. A respondent who was answering a question I asked about how women have resisted the political system in Morocco clarified that "the uprisings were a good opportunity to show the powerful positioning of women in the social and political life of the community. We are powerful and we could mobilize and oust regimes, and more importantly, we have demands of social and economic justice that have to be catered for."

Surely, the above declarations show eloquently the extent to which Moroccan women had been conscious of the need to question the political system and to put the issues of women and their representation in society and politics at the heart of the political debate. The king's declarations later on, had certainly taken the women's demands and claims into account. The

reforms introduced by the king had not glossed over the repositioning of women within the political system. Even though there was much focus on the revitalization of the role of the younger generation, the monarchy chose to put the reforms with regards to women at the centre of their strategies and new solutions to the ailments of the Moroccan people.

According to the Guardian online magazine (2011), the Moroccan king Mohamed VI was keen to adopt new strategies with regards to the role of women. Moreover, the king wanted a reform that would speak to the ailments of the social, political, and economic groups that had suffered the bitterness of exclusion and political and economic negation for a long time. The Guardian declared;

"By launching today the work of constitutional reform, we embark on a major phase in the process of consolidation of our model of democracy and development," said the king. The efforts aim in part to devolve greater power to Morocco's regions, improve the independence of courts, and ensure that the prime minister is selected by the majority party in parliament, he said. The king said women's rights and political participation – already a mainstay of his previous reforms – would be strengthened, for instance via ensuring through law that men and women have equal access to elective positions. The plan would aim to broaden individual freedoms, solidify the rule of law and strengthen human rights. The king said he was committed to a "strong push" to revive the country's reform ambitions.

Of course, the above views show the great extent to which the uprisings that swept over the Arab world have had a great impact on the role attributed to women and their social, economic and cultural representation within the Arab countries. Moroccan women were keen to adopt new strategies for bring up their views about the positioning of women to the surface of the debate. Despite the fact that, as we had seen earlier, women have sometimes been utilized in certain contexts and under particular circumstances to serve the interests of political parties and groups that wanted to use them for pressure, still the role played by women in the uprisings made them acutely aware of the need to challenge the political conditions and to ask for a better representation within the corridors of power.

Change was a keyword in describing what happened in Morocco with regards to the positioning of women. As stated by Mohamed Ennaji (2007), "Moroccan women's participation in political life is an essential component of the country's democratization and modernizing processes. Their political involvement has benefited from fundamental global economic changes, from national and international support for the country's social and political reforms, from changes in political priorities and the growing importance of democracy in the world, as well as from the increased role of women's movements worldwide". (Ennaji, 2007).

As clearly stated by Moha Ennaji, the political reforms in Morocco, in addition to the international pressure of world organizations that emphasized the importance of the inclusion of women with the political process; all these were important factors that have hugely contributed to the evolvement of the situation of Moroccan women. Certainly, space and time

were vital social elements that Moroccan women challenged and subverted during the uprisings.

The 20th February Movement along with various movements and political groups and parties in Morocco were very much aware of the adoption of new reforms with regards to the social and political positioning of women in their groups especially during the days of the protests. The political space had definitely provided a new recourse for women as to directly speak against the stereotypical images that they had suffered for long; stereotypes that linked them to the domestic sphere and relegated them to the margin of the economic and political sphere. According to Larbi Touaf (2017), the Moroccan conceptualization of womanhood often linked it the private domain which explains why women had been often kept out from political participation which is seen as the realm of men. Touaf declared that;

there is the traditional political space inherited from pre-colonial times and on the other, the modern public sphere the proponents of which aspire to put the country on the world map of democratic nations. In addition to being ingrained in the power structure of the state, these two strands are also rooted in the collective *imaginaire* of Moroccans and speak an anthropological “in-betweenness” and a cultural ambivalence that commands and shapes the conceptualization of public space. In this perspective, women’s political participation, which essentially means women going out into the public space (where the private and the public often collide), is subject to a dual perception (traditional and modern) that makes progress slow and uncertain.

The statement of Touaf shows us the great extent to which Moroccan women had to face a huge social and cultural challenge from the traditional mindset that denied their existence within the public sphere. It is exactly this traditional denial that the Arab revolts in general and the Moroccan Spring in particular had succeeded to challenge and subvert. Now, the traditional groups and parties that linked themselves with Islamism that had for long adopted those values, found themselves faced with new political and economic conditions that led them to adopt new strategies for the public inclusion of women.

Space has no longer been adopted as a criterion for dividing both genders, and women's voices which were once considered *Awrah*, are now a sign of political challenge and resistance that these groups and parties need for the subverting the political regime. In the following section we will shed light on the political response of the Moroccan monarchy to the uprisings and see in detail how the kingdom had succeeded at a certain stage to absorb the political, social and economic anger of the protesters. It is in this section that one will be able to comprehend the degree to which the flexibility and intelligence of the monarchic reactions to the uprisings had been at the centre of what we could legitimately call, 'the natural evolution of the Moroccan revolution'.

d). The Monarchy and 2011 Political Reforms

The specificity of the Moroccan case lied basically in its longstanding history of monarchy. The Moroccan political system put at its heart the role of the king not only as a popular leader, but also as a Commander of the Faithful and a descendant from the Prophet

Mohamed (Peace be Upon Him). For Moroccans, the king is part of a triad that is sacred in their traditional conception of a nation; that triad is eloquently expressed as *Allah* (God), *Alwatan* (Nation) and *Al Malik* (the King). For centuries, Morocco had kept the heritage of a powerful monarchy that played an extremely important role in the stability and progress of the country. As stated by Aidan Lewis (2011) with regards to the power of the Moroccan kingdom, Lewis declared that,

Central to the monarchical regime's strength is its longevity - the Alaoui dynasty gained control of most of Morocco in 1664 - and its claim of descent from the Prophet Muhammad. "The king has tremendous religious and political capital - it's not just the king but the whole political establishment," says Mohamed Daadaoui, author of a recent book on the monarchy and the "makhzen" - the patronage network that embodies Morocco's ruling elite. King Mohammed is aided by a powerful propaganda machine - his image adorns streets and shops across the country. Symbolic rituals also boost his status. In an annual ceremony of allegiance, the "*bay'a*", which is broadcast on national TV, Moroccan officials bow before the king as he parades on a horse. Moroccan citizens, many of them poor and illiterate and living in rural areas, "believe that the monarch has a special gift or blessing and they feel that they have some psychological relationship with the king"

Understanding the value and position of the monarchy within the Moroccan context will be the first step for comprehending the particularity of the Moroccan political case and the nature of the uprisings that swept over the country in the name of a Moroccan revolution. In fact, the

Moroccan king reactions to the Arab uprisings had been swift and quite positive towards the protesters. Unlike the other Arab regimes who had recourse to the suppression of the youth and relied on violence as a means for muzzling the uprisings, Morocco thought that the best way to address this problem was to launch new reforms that would directly speak to the need of the population.

The Guardian magazine had described the above position by the Moroccan king as keen and intelligent by stating that;

Moroccans first took to the streets in February, but the country has not experienced the degree of violence seen elsewhere in Arab countries. Officials claimed that respect for the king combined with a regime that is more liberal and less severely policed than elsewhere had helped prevent a Tunisian or Egyptian-style uprising. But Moroccans are clearly fed up with rampant corruption which, according to US embassy cables released by Wikileaks, stretches right into the heart of Mohamed VI's palace. Those cables show one former US ambassador to Rabat condemning "the appalling greed of those close to King Mohammed VI".

Clearly, the above statement shows the great extent to which the monarch had been aware of the need to address the population with a discourse that took into account the corruption of the political elite around him. The king who stood out as a great leader for the majority of Moroccans wanted to keep up that image by standing against all the issues related to the nepotism and corruption of the system.

The protesters in the 20th February Movement brought this vitality of the king to the heart of their demands and often raised slogans that tried to distinguish between a fair king who stood for all what was right and just, and a corrupt regime that did not work for neither the benefit of the king nor for that of Moroccans. At the centre of the demands of the protesters were these such as freedom, dignity and social justice. Without a doubt, theme such as the former show the great degree to which Moroccans aspired for a change that would not only topple down ailments such as corruption and political violence, but also address problems such as the exclusion of youth and women from the political and economic life.

So, now the questions to be asked are: what was the nature of these reforms introduced by the Moroccan king? Who benefited from these reforms? Were they enough to absorb the anger of the protesters? And, were there any true concession from the monarchy with regards to the tough demands of the younger generation? And more importantly, how did women benefit from these social and political reforms?

According to an article in Wikipedia (2011), the king started with a referendum that was of extreme importance in addressing vital political and social problems that stood at the heart of the protests. The referendum was a new strategy to introduce reforms that would speak to the ailments of Moroccans in different fields and at different levels. The article goes on to argue that;

A referendum on constitutional reforms was held in Morocco on 1 July 2011.

It was called in response to a series of protests across Morocco that began on 20 February 2011 when over ten thousand Moroccans participated in demonstrations demanding democratic reforms. A commission was to draft proposals by June 2011. A draft released on 17 June foresaw the following

changes: requiring the King to name a Prime Minister from the largest party in Parliament; handing a number of rights from the monarch to the PM, including dissolution of parliament; allowing parliament to grant amnesty, previously a privilege of the monarch; making Berber an official language alongside Arabic. The changes were reportedly approved by 98.49% of voters. Despite protest movements calling for a boycott of the referendum, government officials claimed turnout was 72.65%. Following the referendum, early parliamentary elections were held on 25 November 2011.

In the following chapter, we will be concentrating on the demands of the 20th February Movement and their role in reviving the Moroccan uprisings. The chapter attempts to analyze the extent to which the movement had contributed to the concession made in the Moroccan context and see the degree to which the 20th February Movement had succeeded to achieve some of the goals with regards to the issues it addressed throughout the protests. More importantly, it is here in this chapter that we will address the movement as a melting pot that united a lot of Moroccans around the simple goal of changing their social, economic and political condition by speaking directly about their needs and raising the slogans of ousting the regime unless these demands are satisfied.

Chapter 2: The Case of the 20th February Movement

"The population wants a new Morocco"

A slogan raised by protesters from the 20th February Movement in Rabat

The emergence of the 20th February Movement marked a new era in the history of political resistance in the country. For many, the country has now moved from a phase of fear and intimidation by the forces of *almekhzen* to a new stage of openness and flagrant criticism of the political system. In fact, the 20th February Movement has come as a result of the socio-political upheavals that marked the whole scene in the Arab world since the year 2011. Moroccan youths who had their eyes on the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt via media channels and internet social websites started to inquire about the similarity of their conditions to that of the revolting countries. “These young people convened demonstration throughout the country for 20 February, 2011. The 20th February was born.” (Desrues, 2012, p. 31).

The various ingredients that shaped the 20th February Movement in Morocco marked a new phase of protesting that stands at the heart of contentious politics. Unlike the traditional methods of social movements that usually are spun around particular political parties or charismatic social activists and leaders, the new movement had constituted many voices from various parts of Morocco. Ranging from organizations such as *Al-Adl Wa al-Ihsan* to political parties like *al-Adala wa Tanmiyya*, and others in the political scene from the leftist side along with the civil society activists; all these constituted major significant elements of the 20th February Movement. More importantly, at the heart of the new constituencies stood some of the unaffiliated youth and women who had no desire but the raising their claims against political and social despotism and economic corruption.

The 20th FM has been an extremely vital melting pot where all the social, political and cultural ingredients came to adopt each other in opposition to their common ailments and

economic exclusion. According to a Kit Press Report, (2012), the 20th FM “relies on the support of diverse organizations (leftist, Islamist, Amazigh, students and others.” (p. 13).

Interestingly, despite the various ideological orientations of these diverse social and political elements, the presence of women within the protesting arena was widely tolerated by all these constituents. My observation through the domain of the protests in the Moroccan context has shown the great degree to which the socio-cultural perceptions of women have melted within the protesting scene. Despite some radical conservative patriarchal perceptions brought up by Islamist organizations such as Justice and Charity, the latter’s withdrawal from the movement paved the ground before more gender egalitarian demands. Sarrah Idrissi (2012) a social activist and a member of the 20th February movement stated:

The growing presence in the movement of the banned “Justice and Charity” group negatively influenced the gender equality agenda, and gradually, gender rights slogans were no longer raised. This is a big transformation for a movement which saw women at its forefront in the early protests, where most spokespersons were young female activists. The astonishing withdrawal of the Justice & Charity group in December from the movement, citing differences with the “ideas” of some of its youth (despite expressing continued belief in the movement’s demands) has lessened concerns about gender rights. (Idrissi, 2012)

The power of the above political discourse is shown throughout the degree to which some of the female protesters and activists had been conscious of the danger of the claims of some of these constituents of the revolutionary fabric. The Moroccan 20th February Movement could be seen as a political outlet where many of these categories have been able to express their aspiration for freedom due to their common suppression and political exclusion from positions of power. Now, says Desrues (2012),

Many young people have found another exit or voice in collective action through the 20th February Movement, the Moroccan version of the Arab Spring. The starting point of this movement is related to the convergence at the same moment of diverse factors that have reduced the cost of collective action. These are the frustration of young people... (p. 30)

The Moroccan youth from various regions and different ethnic and political groups and more importantly from both genders have decided to unite against the longstanding oppression of a corrupt political system that had not only denied them the right to take part into the political process, but also rendered them unemployed and hopeless for a better future. Houda Abadi (2014), once again argued that

Although the Moroccan monarchy has historically enjoyed legitimacy, the political landscape in Morocco shares much in common with its neighboring countries in terms of sociopolitical and economic problems. Inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, young Moroccan activists, known as the February 20th Movement, stood against the so called "Moroccan exceptionality," created online digital campaign videos explaining

dissatisfaction with the monarchy's top down approach, and called for a national march in all major cities. Unlike their counterparts in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the Moroccan activists did not demand a change of regime but instead called for a genuine constitutional monarchy. The social and political protests the February 20th movement sparked in Morocco are not new but the appeal of the movement within the Moroccan streets signaled a major shift in popular attitudes regarding the monarchy and the current sociopolitical situation (Maghroui 2011). Inside the Moroccan kingdom, the February 20th prodemocracy movement mobilized thousands of protestors to the streets to demand greater political reform and social justice.

Surely, as stated above by Abadi, the 20th February Movement members were extremely conscious and cautious of the longstanding history of the monarchy, hence through their demands asked for a regime change, still they did want to assume the claim of wanting to revolt against the monarchical system of the country. A call for a change in the socio-economic and political life of Moroccans was at the heart of the 20th February demands. As clearly asserted by the majority of the 20th February Movement respondents, the goal and aspirations of the movement are not topple down monarchy. We have a solid belief in the historical legitimacy of the king and we think that Morocco has always enjoyed that privilege of having a lenient and modern kingdom. What we want is a serious change in the political elite surrounding the king that is strangling Moroccans; a change in the political elite that was corrupt and unhealthy would certainly set things right once again.

In the following chapter we will give a detailed definition of the 20th February Movement. It is here in this chapter that we will look at the various constituents that shaped the movement and paved the way before its serious and extremely subversive claim within the

Moroccan political scene. Throughout interviewing members of the movement, and an observatory method of analyzing the spatial and the slogans raised by this movement, the chapter aims to showcase the importance of the 20th February Movement in bringing to the surface some of the most important issues especially in relation to the social, political, economic, cultural and religious positioning of women in the Arab world in general and the Moroccan specific context in particular.

a). Defining the Movement of 20th February

Chapter 3: Beyond the 20th February Movement: The Triumph of Leadership and Organization

a). The Rise of Moroccan Islamism after the Arab Spring

The way Islamism has approached the revolutions particularly with much reliance on the great capacity at mobilization, especially of women had a great impact on the trajectory of the Arab Spring. At the squares of resistance, the veiled Islamist women were apparently present. Interestingly, there was a division of women on the ground of their Islamism; a division that played a significant role in the way women were treated at the various squares of freedom. This was rightly captured by Zahia Salhi who stated that

Regardless of the reasons for veiling, the non-veiled women in MENA have become the targeted minority by Islamists. While many would argue that veiling is not a sign of women's submission to the rule of patriarchy and Islamism, MENA women can be divided into two broad categories; Islamist women who believe that salvation lies in the re-Islamisation of the region since Islam guarantees women's human rights,

and secular women who believe that Islamism is detrimental to women's human rights and discriminates against women at all levels. In the aftermath of the Arab springs MENA women are forced to renegotiate traditional norms, values and power relationships in order to achieve social change (Weiss 1998), and although they actively make choices, many of the circumstances under which they act are not of their own making (Walby 1996), and claiming agency while working within Patriarchal boundaries results in deep contradictions and restrictions as in actual fact women are colluding with their patriarchal oppressors (Salhi 2013)

This very contradiction on the part of women who are seemingly out in a call for freedom and liberation hits at the core of the Islamist discourse that spoke against women's liberation and called for more conservative attitudes towards their representation in power. The discourse had ironically changed from one that looked at women as *awrah* who should not be seen outside, to one that encouraged the full participation of women in the riots and protests that took place during the Arab Spring.

Women played an extremely significant role in the Islamist political discourse. Moreover, instead of having the traditional image of the Islamist woman as a follower of men in the political path, most of these women have found way to ascertain their agency and independence. In the words of Omaima Abdellatif and Marina Ottoway (2007),

Women are beginning to play a bigger role in shaping the politics of Islamist political movements in the Middle East. Mounting evidence suggests that women activist have made important inroads in Islamist movements by creating strong women's branches and pushing for

broader political participation and representation in the upper echelons of the entire movements. (p. 1)

Though, one would disagree with the above statement, especially as far as the political participation of Islamist women in the political discourse—taking into account the presence of powerful Islamist women in the history of the movement—still it could be argued that the modern Islamist women have started to be conscious of the need of a more serious and actual representation in the corridors of power within their movement. This idea was also well-captured by Abdellatif and Ottoway (2007) who announced that:

The rise of women's activism in Islamist movements has complex causes. First, Islamist movements needed women in their ranks to reach out to all segments of the population. Second, as more and more educated women joined the ranks of the Islamist movements during the past two decades, they became increasingly aware of their importance to the movements and started petitioning for a more significant role as political actors. (p. 5)

Understandably, Islamist movement have also hearkened to these calls of women, not only as a part of strengthening their political and social fabric, but also as a new way of inserting democratic ideals into their agenda as to fit into the demands of the new generation. This was rightly captured in the words of FarhadKhosrokhavar (2012) who declares that “in post-revolutionary Egypt as in Tunisia, the Muslim Brotherhood clearly declared its intent to follow the path of democracy, that the people's will should be determined by the ballot box.” (p. 118).

The process of the modernization of Islamism is of extreme importance to the development of this movement, especially as a result of the Arab Spring. The new demands of the people and the diversity of the voices heard in the squares of freedom pushed the Islamist to revise their positions on different issues related to basic human and women's rights. In a sense, this is what Bayad calls "post-Islamism". The latter term stands for the new concessions made by Islamists with respect to their more solid and ossified opinions related to issues of democracy and human rights.

b). Moroccan Islamism and Women's Political Power

Women's involvement in the Moroccan protests had been seen by many feminists and social activists as constituting one major element in the success of some of the demands of these protesters, especially with the ascendancy of Islamists to political power in the country. The gender discourse had played an extremely important role in these protests despite the fact that women were barely represented in the new government of these Islamists.

Throughout my interviews with some women who were members of the 20th February Movement in Rabat, I was able to come across various perceptions of women's positioning in the Arab revolts in general and the Moroccan case in particular. It is through these interviews that one comes to an understanding of the gender dynamics and mechanisms that worked and have been working within the protesting circles.

- Interviewing young women in Rabat in November 2012, I asked them questions that ranged from their political involvement with the 20th February movement to their views of the representation of women in Moroccan politics and their participation in the protests that were

ignited as a result of the Arab Spring. In fact, the majority of these women respondents have recognized the role Arab women had played in the revolutions in Arab countries in general and the Moroccan protests in particular. All the respondents have also relatively agreed that within the circles of protests, women had been in the frontlines. One young lady told me: “we had been walking side by side with men. Some women were even more courageous than men; they had shown greater audacity and zeal than that shown by men.”

The above incident has been seen as a strong evidence of the socio-cultural break of the stereotypical images of the role of women within the revolutionary culture. Standing at the heart of these interviews were these young women’s attitudes towards the position of Islamists on the participation of women in politics. All the respondents have also agreed on the setbacks in the rights of women with the arrival of the Islamists to power. One of them argued: “I see in the representation of women in the cabinet of Binkirane, a hard smack in the face of women. This is actually a denigrating move to have only one woman in the new government.”

The Islamists in Morocco had greatly benefited from the political mobilization of women. Islamist women though often went out in separate queues, had been present at the heart of the protesting scene. All the young ladies I interviewed admitted that they see no prospects of positive change for women within the Islamist circles. Islamists, the majority of them claimed had negative attitudes towards the mixture of men and women within the protests; they paid more attention to issues of separation of seclusion of women. “They do not have a clear-cut political project, they focus instead on trivial issues such as the clothing of women, their separation from men...etc” one respondent stated.

Undeniably, the Moroccan revolutionary scene has shown the great extent to which women had been vital agents of political change. Though, many feminists and political analysts would have

frowned at the meager representation of Moroccan women in the newly elected government of Binkirane, still one could see in the presence of women in the revolutionary arena, a challenge not only to the political exclusion of women from decision making position, but also a cry against the socio-cultural and isolation of the female gender. One of the respondents eloquently stated: “women’s participation in the Arab revolutions illustrated many things, the least of which was that women had been able to challenge Arab societies’ views of their weakness and inability at protesting.”

- Another aspect revealed throughout the interviews conducted with these young women members of the 20th February Movement was their faith in the future prospects of the movement and its unceasing struggle to achieve equal rights for all. “As long as oppression and the suppression of human rights survive there will always be movements such as the 20th Feb”, one respondent claimed. “Women still have a long way to go, for the struggle is no longer that political dictatorship, rather it is a struggle against the socio-cultural patriarchal mentalities that denigrate women and seclude them behind closed doors of illiteracy and ignorance”, added another.

No doubt, the interviews I have conducted with these young women protesters had not only shown the future aspirations for the 20th February Movement, but also revealed the great extent to which women had and still have been vital constituents of the revolutions in the Arab world.

c). Patriarchal Dynamics: Analyzing Spatial and Attitudinal Dimensions

No one could deny the fact that the majority of women who were driven to public squares and streets in their countries were highly politically mobilized. Despite the fact that these protests were considered spontaneous reactions to political and economic corruption of the

ousted regimes, still political parties in general and Islamist parties in particular had been the nucleus around which the opposing slogans and demands of change have been revolving. Islamists have always been revered for their power to mobilize. In her interesting chapter entitled: Questioning Power, Mobilization, and Strategies of the Islamist Opposition, Holger Albrecht (2010), had adequately illustrated the strength of Islamist opposition movements in terms of their social mobilization capacities.

An interesting question that comes to the forefront in the Islamists' mobilization of women during the revolutions is how they have managed to combine a traditional attitude that relegated women to the domestic or private sphere with one that demanded their presence in the public political arena.

Though a thorough reading of the dynamics of gender and space within the public squares sometimes reveals a segregation between the two sexes—women stand either in a separate line, or surrounded by men in an act of ‘protection—still the presence of these women in a traditionally recognized male sphere shows the great extent to which the discourse of Islamists speaks against itself. Undeniably, one of the basic tenets of the Islamist discourse on the positioning of women in Muslim societies is that of their relegation to the domestic sphere. Women's voices, according to Islamist hardliners are ‘*awrah*’ (pudenda), and their primary role is that of bearing and rearing children.

The majority of the examples given here were taken from the Moroccan context where the differing constituents of Al-Adlwa Al-Ihsan organization and al-Adalawa al-Tanmiyya party were the primary factions concerned with the segregation of women and the denial of the rights brought up in various slogans in the protesting arenas. Interestingly, these parties had sometimes

found themselves obliged to concur with the presence of women in the public sphere though that did not go with the traditional perceptions they held against that position.

Now, in the heyday of political activism, Islamist parties found themselves in confrontation with mobilization needs that demanded the presence of women in the public arena. This stance of women between the private and the public sphere could be compared to the act of women's veiling which has been seen by the Moroccan scholar and feminist Fatima Amrani as a subtle women's empowering position. Women's political mobilization by Islamic parties, like veiling allows them to have access to places they had not often been allowed into. But, again, Islamist parties' recognition of women within the political arena is surrounded by many spatial ingredients that put into question the validity of women's true activism within the political public sphere.

An analysis of the patriarchal dynamics that work in the public political squares where women are either siding in one line or are shown in a position where the men seem to be protecting them ; all these forecast the relegation they would suffer once the oppressive regimes are ousted.

d). Up to Power, Back to Home, Moroccan Islamists and Women's Political Mobilization

Tracing women's revolutionary presence at the socio-political arena, one is stunned by their current positioning and representation in the corridors of power and how their efforts and tremendous resistance had been consigned to oblivion. The Egyptian as well as the Tunisian, Yemeni, Libyan and Moroccan experiences have been clear examples of the rolling back of the rights of women after the success of these Arab revolutions. Without a doubt, the representation

of women in the new governments and parliamentary positions in these countries show a flagrant betrayal of the cause of women by politicians in the aftermath of the ‘Arab Spring’.

Women’s mobilization by Islamist parties, one could argue, has been a process of ruthless exploitation that eventually glossed over their ultimate and invaluable sacrifices in the public arena. According to a UN report published on Reuters by Michelle Nichlos (March, 2012), women’s political rights have not improved in these countries. On the contrary, says the report, ‘we can even see setbacks have occurred, particularly in Egypt where the percentage of women parliamentarians has fallen from 12 to 2 percent.’ (Nichlos, 2012).

The drawbacks in the plans of the Islamists could also be seen throughout the representation of women in the cabinet of the Moroccan JDP whose Islamist background, one could cogently declare, has been behind the presence of one woman who was given the ministry of social affairs (Bassima al-Haqqawi).

Not far from the Egyptian and Moroccan contexts, women in countries like Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen have suffered the same exclusion from the corridors of political power. A recent report by the International Federation for Human Rights declared that after the Arab Spring ‘women now are confronting attempts to exclude them from public life, as well as acts of discrimination and violence perpetrated with impunity by extremist groups and security forces.’ (March, 6, 2012).

In an article entitled : After the Spring : Women of the Arab Revolution, IshaanTahroor (9, July, 2012), argued that in the ascendancy of Islamist parties much became at stake for women. She maintains, ‘ the promise of sweeping political change has run up against the realities of conservative, deeply patriarchal societies. In both post-revolution Egypt and Libya, Islamist pressure led to the axing of minimum quotas for in the countries new elected legislatures.’

(Tahroor, 2012).

The above quotes show evidently the great extent to which the Islamist political discourse had turned out from one that mobilized women for political change and revolutionization, into one that propagated their domesticity and exclusion from the public realm. Palpably, these women have undergone a process of exploitation by these parties which have not only been able to reach positions of power due to women's rigid presence in the days of the revolutions, but also have been pushed to the margin of the political life by the ousted regimes.

Without a doubt, Arab women's involvement with Islamist parties and their role in the Arab Spring were at the core of the success of the revolutions. These women's presence in the public sphere, along with their sharp engagement with men in raising their voices against the forces of oppression, political and economic corruption, all these were shared ailments that they have both firmly fought against.

Unfortunately, the end result of women's involvement in the Arab Spring has shown the great degree to which their voices have been rendered in the service of politicians. In the following conclusion, I give some recommendations for a better and more conscious participation of women in the political domain. It is at this stage that the paper illustrates Arab women's dire need to revolt against and oust the patriarchal regimes that hold sway over the public arena. In the words of Worden Minky 'the revolution is not yet finished.

CONCLUSION

The title of this dissertation encapsulates the goals that it tried to show and contest throughout the so-called the Arab Spring. Even though, this paper has attempted to give a thorough view of the trajectory of the Arab Spring and the end results of the revolts that swept over the region, still its focus was on delineating the Moroccan case and clarifying the degree to which the Moroccan Spring was different from others across the Arab countries. Subtling this dissertation with the phrase "Beyond the 20th February Movement" clearly speaks to the extent to which we were conscious of the evolution of the contention within this context; a contention that we would later see in movements such as *Hirak Errif* or *Hirak J'rada*, whose evolvement emphasize our hypothesis about the continuity of change and the instability of the political process.

Not only did the theoretical part of the dissertation clarify the vitality of the nature of change within the various social and political movements that ran across the Arab world, but also it tried to show the thread that linked all these incidents together and contributed to the domino effect that impacted various countries from the ocean to the gulf. The first part of the dissertation has delineated the evolution of the Arab Spring and the role played by the two most important social categories that were at the heart of the revolutionary process. More importantly, it was in this part that we have seen how political groups and organizations have succeeded in mobilizing youth and women to take part into the process of toppling down the ruling regimes, and how that whole process ended up with the exclusion of these two categories from the corridors of power and political representation in the aftermath of the so called Arab Spring.

No doubt, the questionnaires distributed and the interviews made with various protesters the majority of whom were adherents to the 20th February Movement had been of extreme importance for valorizing the role these movements have played in the revolutionary scene in Morocco. Certainly, the political protesting scene in the Arab world in general and in Morocco in particular, and through the 20th February Movement specifically has been inclusive of various social, political, cultural, religious and gender categories that had been excluded or relegated to the margin of the political life of the countries of the Arab region.

The political regimes have variously responded to the protests and were sometimes extremely divergent with regards to their reactions on the uprisings; reactions that ranged from suppression and flagrant violence and repression, to others of containment and concession. Undoubtedly, we have seen how rulers such as Ben Ali, Mubarak, Al Asad, Gaddafi , and Ali Abdullah Salih have adopted violence as a means of silencing the revolutions on the one hand, and how others such as king Mohamed VI had been conscious and cautious of the need to address the demands of the people without demeaning the authority of their regimes and falling prey to the uncontrolled proposals and claiming of an angry and oftentimes leaderless mobs of protesters.

One of the reasons why the dissertation has tried to look at the situation of the contention and the evolution of the revolts across the region was to determine the great extent to which these contexts were different in their ways of dealing with the public uprisings and the demands of their populations. Certainly, the Arab Spring had been a locus for change across the region

and one of its vital roles was to put the train of political involvement and participation on the right track.

Despite the fact that women and youth were mostly betrayed by the end of the revolts in various parts of the region, still their presence and participation in the protests was of extreme importance, not only for them to learn the new ways of politics within these contexts, but more significantly, to challenge these same structures that mobilized and utilized them for their own interests and benefits.

As we have seen throughout our analysis of the spatial dimensions and the gender mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within these contexts and squares of revolution, the dissertation highlighted the value and importance of the public sphere as an arena and a battleground for social, political, economic and even religious ideas and perceptions, particularly in relation to issues in relation to the positioning of women and the youth.

Moroccan scholars such as Abdel Ilah Belkziz had been aware of the particularity of the Moroccan context in this regard and had highlighted the vitality of the public arenas in contesting the social and economic inequality amongst the various ingredients that constitute the Moroccan nation. The Moroccan democratic spring had set a great example on the importance of benefiting from social and ethnic diversity as not only to challenge the regimes, but also to unify around themes such as fighting corruption and nepotism and aspiring for social, political and economic justice.

Throughout the theoretical part of the dissertation, we have tried to highlight the importance of what we called “the common suppression” in relation to the political claims and

demands raised during the uprisings. The goal of the dissertation was to show the narrow thread that linked the popular demands to the common suppression of social categories such as the youth, women and minorities like the LGBT community. People who contributed to the revolts belonged to these different and sometimes divergent social groups, but were aware of the nature of their unity under the banner resistance of corruption, unemployment, social and political exclusion.

It was also the goal of the dissertation to delve into the nuanced nature of the politics of space in the arenas of protestation and its relation to the social and cultural perceptions and views of womanhood. No doubt, the ideas of space and how women had been able to enter the public domain and subvert the traditional image of their social and political agency was an important achievement during the Arab Spring. More importantly, by dealing with the case of the 20th February Movement in Morocco, the dissertation highlighted the importance of this movement as an example of spatial subversive arenas for dismantling the traditional images about the role of youth and women into the public domain. Moreover, the case of the 20th February Movement was a vital ingredient that kept the kingdom alert to any dissatisfaction that ailments such as corruption and unemployment might incur at a national level.

Undoubtedly, the fact that contention was at the heart of this dissertation reveals the great degree to which the notion of change is substantial to the evolution of social and political movements in Morocco. Most recently we have seen the evolution of the 20th February Movement uprisings and its impact on other movements that sweep over the country. Movements and uprisings such as that Hirak Jrada, and Hirak Erif and so on clearly reveal the extent to which Moroccans had overcome the notions of fear and intimidation by *elmekhzen*. From now

on, the monarchy had been acutely aware of the need to adopt newer strategies and ways to deal with the popular uprisings and certainly, the best way to do that is to cope up with the demands of youth and live to the requirement of today's world of ICTs that had deeply served the cause of the younger generation.

The Moroccan King Mohamed VI was extremely aware of the need to address the younger generation. The kingdom is no longer that opaque hierarchical structure that was farfetched and not very much concerned with the ailments of the grassroots, rather, the king became extremely involved in the life of the Moroccan community and was active on social media and had various encounters with the young across the country. This notion of a popular king was of extreme importance for challenging the protesters and offering a new example for the political elite to cater for the demands of the populations. This notion was clearly shown long time ago by Craig Whitney (1999) who stated that " The king himself keeps saying that he wants to promote "a new concept of authority." He has done this with early, popular calls to improve the lot of the majority of Moroccans, who live in poverty, scratching an existence out of the rocky desert, and with a series of conciliatory gestures that appear to signal new openness toward political opponents and estranged parts of the country."

Finally, one could say that throughout the trajectory of this dissertation paper, we had been able to see the extent to which the Arab Spring in general and the Moroccan Spring in particular were extremely nuanced and complex in its unfolding. We have also recognized the need to address the demands of the population and to get the younger generation involved into the political, social, and economic process. More importantly, the dissertation offers as a conclusion some remarks and recommendations as to address any political upheaval whose goals

are to call for social equality and values of freedom, dignity and fair distribution of national resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Arab women have to sensitize about their roles in the revolutions and then demand larger representation in the corridors of power in accordance with their sacrifices.
- ✓ Women who are engaged with Islamist parties have to challenge the patriarchal discourses that are implicitly and subtly propagated in these circles and ask for a better representation.
- ✓ Arab women have to embark on statistical research to highlight the decrease in the rights of women after the uprisings and propose serious solutions to the problem.
- ✓ Youth have to get more involved into politics and mobilize for a better representation

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APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Part one: socio-demographics

Table 1: Gender

	Frequency	Percentages
Female	58	64,2
Male	104	35,8
Other	0	0
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 2: Age categorization

	Frequency	Percentages
16- 25	92	56,8
25-35	50	30,9
35-45	20	12,3
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 3: Education level

	Frequency	Percentages
High school	13	8,0
University	143	88,3
other	5	3,1
Non response	1	6
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 4: Job

	Frequency	Percentages
Student	87	53,7
Employed	27	16,7
unemployed	23	14,2
Non response	25	15,4
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 5: Political Orientation

	Frequency	Percentages
Liberal	6	3,7
Islamist	3	1,9
Socialist	19	11,7
Leftist	62	38,3
Socialist-leftist	33	20,4
Non	39	24,1
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Part two:**Table 1:** When did you join the movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Before the demonstrations	34	21,0
First day of demonstrations	35	21,6
First week	17	10,5
Later	76	46,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 2: How did you join the movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Personal choice	112	69,1
Someone suggested so	6	3,7
Social Media	44	27,2
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 3: Why did you join it?

	Frequency	Percentages
To claim socio-political and economic change	66	40,7
To guarantee women rights	6	3,7
To fight corruption and dictatorship	31	19,1
To demand human rights	10	6,2
Other , specify....	11	6,8

Multiple choices	38	23, 5
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 4: What does the Movement and its aftermaths mean to you?

	Frequency	Percentages
A sociopolitical movement demanding change and fighting corruption	28	17, 3
A popular youth movement in which the people expressed their dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the miserable socio-economic conditions	47	29, 0
A popular revolt oppressed by the makhzen	38	23, 5
A militant experience for change and constant protest of Moroccans	23	14,2
-The beginning and means of change -Hope for change -Proof of political awareness -Youth zeal for change -A new generation	26	16, 0
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 5: Is it a movement or a revolution?

	Frequency	percentages
A movement	86	53, 1
A revolution	60	37, 0
both	16	9, 9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 6: What is the most powerful aspect in the Movement?

	Frequency	percentages
Political force/power	38	23, 5
NGOs	4	2, 5
Youth regardless of their political and gender affiliations	91	56, 2
Experienced leaders in protests	10	6, 2
Multiple choices (all)	19	11, 7
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 7: Does the Moroccan case constitute an exception or not?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	61	37,7
No	98	60,5
relatively	3	1,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 8: Was the Movement influential in on the constitutional reform?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	96	59,3
No	27	16,7
Relatively	39	24,1
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 9: After the 25th February 2011 elections, the Islamic party of Justice and Development came first. Was that because:

	Frequency	Percentages
The 20th February Movement' support	16	9,9
The makhzen fear of the Movement	33	20,4
The makhzen trust in the Justice and Development Party to absorb the protests	91	56,2
Other, specify....	14	8,6
Multiples choices	8	4,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 10: Do you agree with women's participation in the Movement protests?

	Frequency	Percentages
Agree	156	96,3

disagree	3	1,9
Neutral	3	1,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 11: Women had an outstanding role in the protests:

	Frequency	Percentages
Agree	142	87,7
disagree	11	6,8
Neutral	9	5,6
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 12: Women had leading roles in the Movement:

	Frequency	Percentages
Agree	125	77,2
disagree	21	13,0
Neutral	16	9,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 13: Are you satisfied with the role of women
Within the Movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	108	66,7
No	21	13,0
Relatively	33	20,4
Total	162	100%

Source : Fieldwork Results

Table 14: Are you satisfied with the youth role within the Movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	108	66,7

No	17	10,5
Relatively	37	22,8
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 15: Are satisfied with the role of political parties within the Movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	12	7,4
No	140	86,4
Relatively	10	6,2
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 16: do you think the Movement has achieved its goals?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	18	11,1
No	123	75,9
Relatively	21	13,0
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 17: What did the Movement realize for the youth?

	Frequency	Percentages
Political awareness	53	32,9
Breaking chains of fear and nurturing the protest culture	15	9,3
Liberty and reviving hope for change	12	7,5
Non	82	50,6
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 18: What did the Movement realize for women:

	Frequency	Percentages
Political awareness	22	13,6
Women's rights awareness	32	19,8

Breaking chains of fear and nurturing the protest culture	18	11,1
Liberty and reviving hope for change	9	5,6
Non	81	50,0
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 19: After the protests, there was a weak representation of women in decision making within the parliament and ministries. Was that because of?

	Frequency	Percentages
Weak women participation	6	3,7
Islamic ideology doesn't allow it	15	9,3
Lack of political maturity	46	28,4
Political oppression	58	35,8
Lack of aptitude	37	22,8
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 20: Do you agree that Morocco should have an Islamic leadership in the post-democratic phase?

	Frequency	Percentages
Agree	13	8,0
disagree	125	77,2
Neutral	24	14,8
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 21: Women faced verbal and physical harassment during the Movement:

	Frequency	Percentages
Agree	0	0
disagree	149	92,0
Neutral	13	8,0
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 22: What has given the Movement the Moroccan specificity?

	Frequency	Percentages
Monarchy regime specificity	57	35,2
Embracing varied groups	52	32,1
Technological expertise of Moroccan youth	44	27,2
Other, specify.....,	1	6
Multiple choices	8	4,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 23: What factors weakened the Movement's activities and its members' manoeuvres?

	Frequency	Percentages
The abandonment of some supporters	22	13,6
Fear	8	4,9
The royal speech promising a new constitution	25	15,4
The joining of minorities (gays and lesbians)	2	1,2
Repression	57	35,2
Other	6	3,7
Multiple choices	42	25,9
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 24: How did the government deal with the demands and aspirations of the protesters?

	Frequency	Percentages
Responding to the protesters' claims	0	0
Providing reforms like (the new constitution)	26	16,0
Integrating youth into decision making	3	1,9
Co-opting important social groups mainly political parties	23	14,2
Creating an opposition movement	12	7,4
Repression	57	35,2
Multiple choices	41	25,3
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 25: What did women obtain from the Movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Solidifying women's rights movements	38	23,5

Inclusion into politics	59	36,4
Other, specify.....,	55	34,0
Multiple choices	10	6,2
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 26: Why did youth activists, specifically, women turn to online activism?

	Frequency	Percentages
To subvert government censorship	22	13,6
To mobilize demonstrations against the government	13	8,0
Reach out to activist across the country	47	29,0
Other	18	11,1
To avoid violence	22	13,6
Multiple choices	40	24,7
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 27: How did the electronic activism influence the Movement?

	Frequency	Percentages
Reducing coordination costs	22	13,6
Mobilizing and accelerating contentious collective actions	27	16,7
Generating awareness to socio-political injustices	45	27,8
Voicing out the demands of all marginalized groups	17	10,5
Other, specify	10	6,2
Multiple choices	41	25,3
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

Table 28: Can the Movement be considered an outstanding phase in the Moroccan political system: if yes, why; if no, why?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	120	74,1
No	32	19,8
Non response	10	6,2
Total	162	100%

Source: Fieldwork Results

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEWS

Interviewing khadija Riadi (AMDH) 6.June .2017.

Question: I would like you to share your political experience

Answer : I am leftist ,belonging to the Democratic Way (Known as Annahj Dimocrati). I joined the students syndicate. My father was socialist. I grew up within the socialist youth. I was among the qa3idiin and once the party was established I joined it in 1994. Politics is the most important domain where one understands where he/she is going.

Question : How do you see the Arab spring?

Answer :We don't consider it Arab spring ; we rather call it revolutions lead by different ethnic groups: Arabs, Amazigh, Kurds... politically, the people were ready to revolt sooner or later because of what they experience daily as a result of the dirty corrupted political leaders. So there was no intervention or manipulation from the outside. The internal situation in all countries was already enough to generate revolutions. Later on imperial powers seized the opportunity and infiltrated to control the situation. Otherwise, the already established regimes serving imperialism will not survive and hence the interests of imperial powers will not be secured under any would-be democratic regime. In the same way as imperial powers intervene to change heads of states all over the world, they will certainly intervene to protect their allies. In Tunisia for example there are still fighting the remains of the old regime. So for every country there is specificity.

Question: what do you think of the Moroccan spring?

Answer: It isn't spring. It resulted in a new power balance. Better in that that it was lead by the youth at a time when the youth were thought to be outside any political game. They did demonstrate a big concern and ability to have their say in what is happening supporting all torture exerted by the public authorities. They were also highly organised in setting the rituals for

gatherings. Another good point is how they formulated their claims after having discussed them openly and exhaustively. That was technically and strategically.

Concerning the slogans, they attacked the symbols of corruption without attacking the head of state. So they were aware of the Moroccan exception. They also called for a democratic constitution in which the people hold power over institutions and have the right in sharing the wealth of their homeland. Also contrary to the previous movements in Morocco in the past when they were limited to one city, this one is characterised by 100 thousands of people in more than 50 places all over the country manifesting from February until long time after the constitution referendum. Even after Al3adl wal Ihsan chose to leave the movement, the youth went on faithful to their manifestations and demonstrations.

Q:What do you think of youth and Women in politics and the Arab spring?

Answer:Women were there in the movement as leaders. The leading NGOs of women weren't there unfortunately they said because of the presence of Al3adl wal ihsan. That is indeed a mistake. The movement is Moroccan and all sects can participate and have their say. Some NGOs women member participated as individuals. Unfortunately, at the beginning there wasn't any slogan about the claims of women. However later on the support committee paid attention and changes one of the slogans and made it purely women's: from only freedom and dignity, they added real equality in Rabat. It could have been better to see the women NGOs participating and influence the movement.

Q: Did you participate in The 20 February movement?

Answer: I did in manifestations and discussions in Rabat

Q: How you see the movement?

Answer: I consider it the biggest political movement since the one against the colonials forces. There were participant from the majority of the people and the slogans were strong claiming putting up with the corrupted. As a result, some died , others arrested. The slogans can still be heard. Morocco didn't change after the movement but the Moroccans did.

Q: Did the movement change the political scene in Morocco?

Answer: It did with respect to fighting injustice. We started seeing Moroccan protesting every time it is necessary. Women too became popular and influential. Recently in AlHoceima, women were leaders in a city which is so-called conservative.

Q: Who made up the movement?

Answer: When we were in the support council, 100 organism attended to support it. Justice and charity known as Aldl Wal Ehsan constituted the biggest mass in the movement. But the leftists lead the movement with fewer numbers for three or four weeks after Al Adl wal Ehsan stepped back.

Q: The youth and women in politics after the movement?

Answer: I prefer to call it the revolution on 2011. All over morocco, the youth are present through their cameras filming any injustice.

Q: what do you think of the Islamists after the Movement?

Answer: In a word, it was a deal between the JDP and the makhzen. The party seized the opportunity of superficially leading rather than managing the government. For the makhzen, the JDP was used to absorb the wrath/anger of the movement activists. The party with its

militants and sympathizers can play the role of political tranquilizer to calm down the angry protestors. So the movement militants trusted the party which is in bad terms with the makhzen concerning some points. Even the elite leftist mass in Morocco thought that the political charisma of the party can help make the promising constitution articles become reality.

Q: what do you think of Women's rights after the Movement?

Answer: Apart from article 19, which some women might consider an achievement, I personally see it referring to conditioned liberties. The constitution is then no longer democratic because it doesn't allow different interpretations. The only interpretation of women laws that exists is one that follows the main agreed upon pillars of religion, monarchy and conservative views.

Q: Did political Islam empower women?

Answer: The presence of the Islamic party leading the government had given more visibility to many women's NGOs affiliated under the party or close to it. Even during the official government meetings, the party NGOs were absent but now they are easily traced as JDP allies, such as Azzahrae..., benefiting now from financial assistance. As to women, the Islamic discourse is easily accepted by women because they are easily convinced by the holy text of so-called formal interpretations. Within the leftists framework, women can talk and discuss all ideologies. Actually, the division Islamist and leftists must be forgotten now because there is one enemy: the makhzen. Any movement attempting to build a strong parliamentary democracy is to be welcomed. I will welcome any group having such a view.

Q: Can Islamists manipulate women?

Answer: The Islamists don't believe women can have presence in the public sphere. In terms of number, women have more representation in the Al3adl wal ihsan. They even gave women representations that outnumber other political parties. They have qualified women. Therefore, we can't talk about pure homogeneity; there should be heterogeneity in any attempt to change.

Q: what do you think of Youth's integration after the Movement.?

Answer: Political parties -even rightists- have attracted members from the Movement especially the youth election lists. So some parties got rejuvenated at the expense of the movement. its popularity and the same thing about the JDP. The makhzen decorates the political scene with election winners to legitimize a fake democracy. A very high shunning (10% participation rate) can result in a very big failure of the political regime of the makhzen.

Q: Does the Public space for protests guarantee equality?

The public space can guarantee much freedom because of the protests. Under the influence of the street, the Makhzen adopts this tactic: When reform is less costly, it is adopted.

Interviewing Naima el Ainani (AMDH) 7.June.2017.

Question: How do you see Moroccan spring?

Answer: Well, the movement (20feb) in Morocco started as a reaction against corruption, torture and oppression. Of course in Tunisia, it was worse as the country was not open to any reform as to freedom of speech or legitimate rights. Thus, the movement started as a reaction in Morocco against the indifferent policies of the makhzen and the government. The political arena is taken as a continuity of the makhzen game in torturing any political movement trying to democratize the country and enlarge the sphere of liberties by judging corrupted officials and taking the uncorrupted judicial as the sole means to democracy.

Also the separation of powers in terms of mission and evaluation and in terms of responsibility and accountability. The demands of the 20 February Movement were ones of all democrats: democratic constitution, dissolving the parliament, the government, judging the corrupted, stopping corruption and dictatorship, enjoying economic social and cultural right , making real not fake political parties. In sum, the population shuns politics because the election are manipulated. For decades, the change touched only the people not the system. This made the situation worse and aggravated the suffering of Moroccans. Thus, the youth became indifferent to fake politics.

Question: What do you think of Women and youth participation?

Answer: Many youth participated in all parts of Morocco. Unlike other Arab countries, in Morocco it was a nationwide movement. Also it was contrary to what was being said that Moroccans are indifferent to politics. Women participated too regardless of the educational level. Literacy has nothing to do with awareness. Women in Morocco were already claiming schooling and right for their kids. Also they were claiming medical care for their kids. However, the

Movement didn't witness official elite women NGOs participation, so Women were present in the protests, but women NGOs were absent which raises many questions as to why:

Question: what were the constituents of the movement?

Answer: Political parties through their representing members, the Islamist Movement, the rights movement -founder of the Moroccan Coalition of Human Rights- were all members in the movement. Unfortunately, the syndical representations didn't support the movement and betrayed the aspirations. They in fact left the Movement after signing the agreement of 26 April, especially the central trade unions. This organisations quitting was disappointing.

Q: Do you think there was any specificity of Morocco as far as the Arab spring is concerned?

Answer: First, the claims were for democracy and human rights Second, the movement went spreading nationwide ;additionally, the Movement didn't call for king stepping back.And finally, there were many participants from different political and ideological affiliations.

Q: what do you think of the reforms after the protests?

Answer: They weren't that promising: The constitution doesn't guarantee the separation of powers. The constitution was supported by the State official corrupting religious people in Mosques and the Sufi association ... even the king called in his speech to vote yes for the constitution, specially with his symbolically majestic charismadespite oppression and torture everywhere, the moment had gained much freedom. After the Movement protests and

manifestations faded, oppression and bad treatment is used now against the Movement militants and all those who claim rights, considering them behind the Movement.

Q: Islamist after the Arab spring?

Answer: The Islamic party PJD coming to the government is thanks to the Movement. The party tried to calm down the protests then we will witness the biggest attack against the economic, social cultural and basic rights of Moroccans. They accepted a politics game in which they will not have the real power. They accepted everything to ally with the makhzen in this critical period even at the expense of Moroccans. Practically, even the 2011-constitutional reforms became disregarded. All that in addition to torturing militants, arresting and martyring them constituted an unfortunately disappointing reality.

Q: What do you think of Women's participation?

Answer: Women are heavily present in all groups but they are being used as means rather than as partners voicing their rights and speaking out their claims. The quota system of representing women in decision positions at all levels might be a good start but not enough.

Q: Youth and politics after the movement?

Answer: A minority can be engaged in politics. A majority left Morocco because of fear of oppression and torture. Others felt depressed after the Movement stopped. It is a question of lack of experience and maturity resulting from lack of any political socialization; being militant doesn't mean you will get your right in the first short-life awakening.

Interviewing Mr. Khalid -a sociology PhD candidate- joining & Mr. Achraf (Justice and charity youth) . 28 .December .2017.

Q: How do you see the Arab spring?

Answer: A gratified movement against injustice and corruption of people who are robbing the county's wealth. The continuity of dictatorships all over the Arab world certainly leads to protests and revolution. There will be more revolting movements. The flaw in the Arab world is that the State leaders are interested only in being on the chairs. On the other hand, foreign powers claiming to protect democracies have demonstrated their support to dictators.

Q: How do you see the Moroccan spring?

Answer: The Moroccan Arab spring has been aborted from within and from outside. The movement in Morocco was meant to be pacific and positive. The slogans of the king to change the constitution through an instituting association, but that wasn't achieved because some members in the movement were playing a double role: partly with the movement and partly with the State. The movement with respect to monarchies is special. The kingdoms has some religious grounds.

In Morocco, the royal institution responded to the Movement. So Moroccans thought about giving time to the regime in their country. However, politics isn't a football game. People are suffering from poverty and bad medical care... once they are dead sure you aren't the right one to lead, they will react. Like a health problem, you can't keep curing it using tranquilizers. Now after six years, it seems that what is coming will be much stronger and more powerful.

Q: How do you perceive the involvement of youth in politics in general and the Arab uprising in particular?

Answer: The youth are suffering at two levels: Like other citizens, youth have the same problems. They have their own problems as a productive category. The regimes didn't understand that the youth have their own means of communication. The traditional means of manipulating the youth in NGOs and youth houses. Their participation rate in the post-Movement elections shows that they were not happy about the situation that was already the same. So their shunning is the result of a stand they have against the political sphere.

Whatever the names given to the Movement, it has always been their dormant until the right time came. Then they started talking everywhere: in cafes in the street... The youth were sort of hiding their problems in modes of life they haven't chosen but rather modes they have found available: The movement was then the right opportunity for them to express their cultural, political, economic wishes. For the sake of expression youth from all sects were ready to die and undergo all torture and oppression. It was amazingly satisfying.

Q: What do you think of Women in politics and Arab spring:

Answer: Ironically and sarcastically laughing, the participation is excellent. Centuries of marginalization, being mere housewives, to go out only when taken after death to the toms. Generally, religion came to free and emancipate women. In the Arab spring, it was a very important participation, leading training/framing sessions...The movement focused not only on the demonstrations and manifestations but also on sensitizing people to the importance of mass participation to get their rights. Women were from all walks of life and ideological trends. So, the presence of women was interesting though it wasn't very high.

Q: How do you see the movement?

Answer: It was an opportunity but unfortunately contained by the makhzen. There were internal problems. The protestors made the Makhzen and the political regime what has not been expected. Legitimate claims and rights about political reform, sharing the wealth and other important rights, which influenced the discourse of the makhzen later on. The movement was very important to know all the parties ready to engage in the reform regardless of the ideologies that generated conflict in the past. Also it was a political training to all Moroccans in terms of slogans: life to the people= عاش الشعب

Q: How do you see Women and youth in the Arab spring?

Answer: It is not that promising in reality but virtually the internet social media is pregnant with examples. This constitutes a qualitative leap in the awareness of people after the Arab spring started, a sort of Facebook-revolution. Generally, the youth have started being interested in what is happening in their society.

Q: what do you think of The Moroccan specificity: exceptionality

Answer: Objectively, Morocco is different in terms of granting liberties despite being angry at some. However, once that freedom is about to attain some achievement, the makhzen is there to abort the efforts. Smartly, It is like the pressure pan system. Realistically, there is dictatorship like other Arab countries; poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, health care. The specificity after all is no more than political marketing.

Q: How do you see the coming of the Islamist to power?

Answer: The specificity of Morocco here is two types of Islamists. Maybe the situations in the Arab world differ. In Egypt the Islamists were jailed; in Morocco they were used

as a pressure pan. Then they are burned. In Tunisia, they are trying to push the population to clash with the Islamists. Here, we have to define Islamists. they are a stream based on reference to Islam and suggesting a project which is socially and politically full-fledged with reference to Islam. Politically, we seek justice, fairness and dignity.

Although the new constitution has come with so-called promising wishes, we talk about two Islamists with reference to their political bases: Those who oppose the regime pacifically the real governors not the ones in the façade. This is Al3adl wal Ihsan. those who think they have intentions to reform inside the game far from any clash with the real governors. This is the JDP.

Q: Did women benefit after the Movement?

Answer: Relatively, the national strategy of women insertion can be considered an achievement. Apart from that, nothing is gained. Empowering women is defective because it required a multidisciplinary comprehensive view to many aspects of life. There are things related to management of crises but as long as it isn't comprehensive, it will be difficult if not impossible. In Morocco, there are NGOs for women but it is obligatory they have to relation to Al adl wal ihsan. We are trying to have a woman NGO, but they don't allow it. There are double standards in treating us at Al adl wal Ehsan. Politically, both sexes suffer from lack of rights to enjoy freedom of expression, e.g. the Rifian singer Silia. Other sectors, the makhzen doesn't allow women health care in further points. Women have no schooling, no good working conditions... women who enjoy so-called political rights are their women - women in the orbit of the makhzen.

Q: Is the Movement still present somewhere right now?

Answer: As a Movement practicing the true ritual acts in the streets, no. However, we can still see the flag of the movement here and there between now and then in Labor Day ...In our group, we consider the movement dead as an action but we keep its lessons and souvenirs. In Al Hoceima, had it been active, the movement could have lead the manifestations. For us, once we left the Movement, we declared that it had used its potentials.

Q: Women in decision making now:

Answer: Women are there but inactive. However, the women we should talk about are the women in remote villages, e.g. my mom as illiterate, so there is illiteracy and poverty. There is the making of a political elite even among women themselves, such as among the political parties and NGOs. There is a sort of plastic surgery reform in general and for women in particular, which is not enough. Decision making is limited to a very few minority. The margin left for the local authorities and municipalities to manage their affairs witness a very weak participation of women. The presence of women requires political extroversion. As long as such extroversion is absent, both women and men are absent. Protests are now outside the movement. Women are brave champions in fighting the daily problems. It seems that women are highly appreciated in politics within our society.

APPENDIX 3: ARBIC VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

السن

لتوجه السياسي:

1. المرجو منكم مشاركة تجربتكم السياسية .
- 2 ما الغاية/الغايات من دخولكم المجال السياسي؟
- 3 كيف تنظرون إلى المسار السياسي بالمغرب؟ .
- 4 ماهو الأساس السياسي لحزبكم أو جماعتكم السياسية؟
- 5 ما رأيكم بخصوص ما عُرف بالربيع العربي؟
- 6 كيف ترى ما يسمى الربيع المغربي؟
- 7 كيف تفسرون دخول الشباب إلى السياسة بشكل عام والربيع العربي بشكل خاص؟ .
- 8 كيف تفسرون مشاركة المرأة في السياسة بشكل عام وفي الربيع العربي بشكل خاص؟
- 9 هل سبق لكم أن شاركتكم في حركة 20 فبراير إبان الربيع العربي في المغرب؟ .
- 10 كيف ترون هاته الحركة؟ .
- 11 هل تعتقدون أن الحركة قد غيرت المشهد السياسي بالمغرب؟
- 12 ماهي أهم مكونات الحركة؟ .
- 13 كيف ترون مشاركة المرأة والشباب في الساحة السياسية بعد الربيع العربي؟ .
- 14 هل تعتقدون وجود أية خصوصية مغربية فيما يتعلق بالربيع العربي؟ .
- 15 كيف ترون الإصلاحات السياسية في مغرب ما بعد 2011؟ .
- 16 كيف ترون صعود الإسلاميين في مغرب ما بعد الربيع العربي؟ .
- 17 هل تعتقد أن النساء قد استفدن من بعض الحقوق بعد الحراك بالمغرب
- 18 هل تعتقد أن الإسلام السياسي قد قوى النساء أكثر؟
- 19 كيف ترى قدرة الإسلاميين على تحريك النساء؟

- 20 هل تعتقد أن الشباب قد تم إدماجهم بعد الحراك؟
- 21 هل ترى أي حضور للحركة بأي شكل من الأشكال وفي مكان ما الآن؟
- 22 ماهي توقعاتكم بالنسبة للوضع السياسية للمغرب؟ .
- 23 هل تعتقدون أن للمرأة حضورا فاعلا في السياسة وصناعة القرار بالمغرب؟ .
- 24 ماهي الجماعات السياسية التي يجذب إليها الشباب والنساء أكثر؟ .
- 25 لماذا اختار اليساريون مقاطعة الانتخابات بالمغرب؟ .
- 26 هل تعتقدون أن الفضاء العمومي للاحتجاجات في المغرب أكثر ضمانا للمساواة؟ .
- 28 ما رأيكم بخصوص حضور المرأة في ساحة الاحتجاجات؟ .
- ما هي الأسس المشتركة للمحتجين؟ .

APPENDIX 3 : ENGLISH VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. I would like you to share your political experience?
2. What were the reasons for your political involvement?
3. How do you see the trajectory of Moroccan politics?
4. What is the political platform for your party organization, political group?
5. What are your views of the so-called Arab spring?
6. How do you perceive the involvement of youth in politics in general and the Arab uprising in particular?
7. How do you perceive women's both to the Arab spring and politics in general?
8. Have you been acquitted with the 20th February movement?
9. How do you perceive of this movement?
10. Do you think it changed the political scene in Morocco?
11. What were the constituents of this movement?
12. How do you see the representation of both women and youth into the political sphere after the Arab uprising?
13. Do you think there was any specificity of Morocco as far as the Arab spring is concerned?
14. What do you think of the political reforms in Morocco after 2011 (till now)?
15. What do you think of the rise of Islamism in Morocco after the Arab spring?
16. How do you foresee the political situation in Morocco?
17. Do you think that you and women had more effective presence in politics and decision – making?
18. What are the political factions that are more attractive to youth and women in Morocco these days ?

19. Why did the left choose to boycott elections in morocco?
20. Do you think the public space of protest in morocco is more egalitarian?
21. What do you think of women's presence in the protesting arena?
22. What are the common ground the protesting actors

APPENDIX 4: ARABIC VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

استمارة

تهدف هاته الاستمارة إلى جمع معطيات من أجل إنجاز أطروحة البحث حول موضوع الحضور النسائي و الشبابي في الساحة النضالية في المغرب بشكل عام و في حركة 20 فبراير على وجه الخصوص. المرجو ملء الاستمارة بكل حرية لأن المعطيات المستقاة سيتم توظيفها لأهداف وأغراض أكاديمية بحتة. إذا لم تكن المساحات الخاصة بأجوبة الاستمارة كافية، يمكنكم الإجابة في ورقة مستقلة.

شكراً جزيلاً على مساعدتكم !

الجزء الأول: معلومات شخصية

النوع:	<input type="checkbox"/> ذكر	<input type="checkbox"/> أنثى	<input type="checkbox"/> آخر		
السن:	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-25		
المستوى الدراسي:	<input type="checkbox"/> ثانوي	<input type="checkbox"/> جامعي	<input type="checkbox"/> آخر		
- المهنة :					
التوجه السياسي:	<input type="checkbox"/> ليبرالي	<input type="checkbox"/> محافظ	<input type="checkbox"/> معتدل	<input type="checkbox"/> آخر	<input type="checkbox"/> بدون

الجزء الثاني:

متى التحقت بحركة عشرين فبراير؟

<input type="checkbox"/> قبل المظاهرات	<input type="checkbox"/> أول يوم للمظاهرات	<input type="checkbox"/> الأسبوع الأول	<input type="checkbox"/> بعد ذلك
--	--	--	----------------------------------

كيف التحقت بالحركة؟

<input type="checkbox"/> اختيار شخصي	<input type="checkbox"/> اقترح عليك شخص آخر الالتحاق بالحركة	<input type="checkbox"/> مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي
--------------------------------------	--	--

لماذا التحقت بالحركة؟

محاربة الفساد والاستبداد
 آخر

للمطالبة بالتغيير السياسي، الاجتماعي والاقتصادي
 للمطالبة بحقوق المرأة
 للمطالبة بحقوق الإنسان

ماذا تعني لك 20 فبراير 2011 فما بعد ؟

.....
.....

هل 20 فبراير 2011 حركة ام انتفاضة ؟ لماذا؟

.....
.....

ما هي القوة الضاربة في حركة 20 فبراير .؟

قوة سياسية . اذا كان نعم ما هي و لماذا؟
 جمعية المجتمع المدني. اذا كان نعم ما هي اهم جمعية؟
.....
.....

الشباب بكل انتماءه الجنسية والسياسية

قيادات سابقة لها تجربة سابقة في الاحتجاج

هل فعلا المغرب يشكل استثناء ؟ نعم لماذا؟ لا لماذا

.....
.....

هل كان لحركة 20 فبراير تأثير في تعديل الدستور؟

.....
.....

بعد انتخابات 25 نونبر 2011 تبوأَت العدالة والتنمية المرتبة الأولى. هل سبب ذلك

تخوف المخزن من الحراك

دعم حركة 20 فبراير

آخر

ثقة المخزن في العدالة والتنمية في امتصاص الاحتجاج

هل تنفق مع مشاركة المرأة في احتجاجات الحركة؟

لا اتفق

محايد

اتفق

كان للنساء دور كبير في الاحتجاجات بالمغرب

أتفق محايد لا أتفق

كان للنساء ادوار قيادية في الحركة

أتفق محايد لا أتفق

هل انت راض عن العمل التي قامت به المرأة في حركة 20 فبراير

هل انت راض عن دور الشباب في حركة 20 فبراير؟

هل انت راض عن دور الأحزاب في حركة 20 فبراير؟

هل في نصرك حققت حركة 20 فبراير ما كن مطلوبوا منها؟ اذا كان نعم لماذا؟ لا لماذا؟

ماذا حققت الحركة؟

للشباب

للنساء

لاحظنا بعد الاحتجاجات تمثيلية محتشمة للمرأة في مواقع القرار مثل البرلمان والوزارات. هل مرد ذلك إلى:

غياب الأهلية

غياب النضج السياسي

ضعف النساء

لايدولوجيا الإسلامية لا تسمح بذلك القهر السياسي للنساء

هل تتفق أن تكون للمغرب قيادة إسلامية لمرحلة ما بعد المرحلة الديمقراطية؟

أتفق محايد لا أتفق

تعرضت النساء للتحرش الشفهي والجسدي. ما رأيك في ذلك؟

مقبول غير مقبول لا أبالي

ما رأيك في نظرة المرأة لمشاركة النساء في الاحتجاجات؟

مقبول غير مقبول لا أبالي

ما الذي يجعل للحركة خصوصية بالمغرب؟

خصوصيات النظام الملكي تضمنها لجماعات متعددة الخبرة التكنولوجية للشباب المغربي

ما هي العوامل التي أضعفت نشاط الحركة وأعضاءها وتحركاتها؟

انسحاب بعض الأنصار الخطاب الملكي الذي وعد بدستور جديد القمع

الخوف التحاق الأقليات مثل المثليين والمثليات اعتبار الحركة جزء من التغيير آخر

كيف تعاملت الحكومة مع مطالب وتطلعات المتظاهرين؟

تحقيق المطالب الإجتماعية إدماج الشباب في مواقع القرار إحداث حركة مضادة

القيام بإصلاح مثل الدستور الجديد استقطاب الجمعيات والأحزاب السياسية القمع

ماذا اكتسبت المرأة من خلال الحركة؟

دعم حركة الدفاع عن حقوق المرأة الاندماج في السياسة اخر

لماذا توجه الشباب وخاصة النساء المناضلات إلى النضال الإلكتروني

تجاوز رقابة الحكومة التواصل مع النشطاء حيثما كانوا بالمغرب تجنب العنف

تحريك المظاهرات ضد الحكومة آخر

ما هو تأثير النشاط الإلكتروني على الحركة؟

- تقليل تكاليف التنسيق إيقاظ الوعي بالحقوق السوسيوسياسية آخر
- تحريك وتسريع الحركات الجماعية المتنازعة التعبير عن مطالب الفئات المهمشة

هل تعتبر حركة 20 فبراير محطة أساسية في تاريخ المنظومة السياسية؟ نعم لماذا؟ لا لماذا؟

.....

.....

ملحوظة:

قد أحتاج توضيحاتكم بعد ملئكم الاستمارة. هلا تفضلتم بكتابة بريدكم الالكتروني أو رقم هاتفكم.

الهاتف: بريدكم الالكتروني.....

APPENDIX 5: ENGLISH VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Part One: Personal Information

1. Gender

1. Male 2. Female 3. Other

3. Age

3. 16- 25 2. 25 - 35 1. 35 - 40

5. Education Degree

- 1 .Primary school 2 .High school **3.University** 4. other

4. Job:

1. Student 2. Employed 3. Unemployed

6. Political Orientation

1. Liberal 2. Islamist 3. Socialist 4. Leftist 5 non

Part two:

1.When did you join the 20th February Movement?

- 1.Before the demonstrations 2.First day of demonstrations 3.First week 4 later

2.How did you join the Movement?

1. Personal choice 2.Someone suggested so 3. Social Media (face book, twiter....)

3.Why did you join it?

- 1. To claim political, social and economic reform/change
- 2. To fight corruption and dictatorship
- 3. To guarantee women rights
- 4. To demand human rights
- 5. Other , specify....
- 1. 6 .Multipule choices

4.What does the Movement and its aftermaths mean to you?

.....

5 . Is it a movement or a revolution?

- 1 . A movement 2. A Revolution

6.What is the most powerful aspect in the Movement?

- 1. Political force/power
- 2. NGOs
- 3. Youth regardless of their political and gender affiliations
- 4. Experienced leaders in protests
- 5. Other, specify....

7. Does the Moroccan case constitute an exception or not?

- 1. Yes 0.No

8. Was the Movement influential in on the constitutional reform?

- 1. Yes 0. No 3. relatively

9. Upon the 25th February 2011 elections, the Islamic party of Justice and Development came first. Was that because:

- 1. The 20th February Movement’ support
- 3. The makhzen fear of the Movement
- 2. The makhzen trust in the Justice and Development Party to absorb the protests
- 5. Other, specify....

9.Do you agree with women ‘s participation in the Movement protests?

1 Agree 2. Neutral 0.disagree

10.Women had an outstanding role in the protests:

1 Agree 2. Neutral 0.disagree

11.Women had leading roles in the Movement:

1 Agree 2. Neutral 0.disagree

12.Are you satisfied with what women did/fulfilled within the Movement?

1. Yes 0. No 3. Relatively

12. Are you satisfied with what the youth role within the Movement?

1. Yes 0. No 3. Relatively

13. Are satisfied with the role of political parties within the Movement?

1. Yes 0. No 3. Relatively

14. do you think the Movement has achieved its goals?

1. Yes 0. No 3. Relatively

15. What did the Movement realize for the youth?

.....
.....
.....

16.What did the Movement realize for women?

.....
.....
.....

17 .after the protests, there was a weak representation of women in decision making within the parliament and ministries. Was that because of:

- 1 .Weak women participation:
3. Lack of political maturity
5. Lack of aptitude
2. Islamic ideology doesn't allow it
4. Political oppression

18. Do you agree that Morocco should have an Islamic leadership in the post-democratic phase?

1 Agree 2. Neutral 0.disagree

19. Women faced verbal and physical harassment during the Movement:

1 Agree 2. Neutral 0.disagree

20. What makes February 20 movement peculiar in the Moroccan context?

1. 1.Monoarchy regime specificity:
2. 2.Embracing varied groups
3. 3.Technological expertise of Moroccan youth
4. 4.Other, specify.....,

21. What factors weakened the Movement's activities and its members' manoeuvres?

1. The abandonment of some supporters
2. Fear
3. The royal speech promising a new constitution
4. The joining of minorities (gays and lesbians)
5. Repression
6. Other

22. How did the government deal with the demands and aspirations of the protestors?

- 1.Responding to the protestors' claims
- 3.Integrating youth into decision making
- 2. Providing reforms like (the new constitution)

- 5.Creating an opposition movement
- 6.Repression
- 4.Coopting important social groups mainly political parties

23. What did women obtain from the Movement?

1. Solidifying women’s rights movements
2. Inclusion into politics
3. Other

23. Why did youth activists , specifically , women turn to online activism?

- 5.To avoid violence
- 1.To subvert government censorship
- 2.To mobilize demonstrations against the government
- 3.Reach out to activist across the country
- 4.other

25. How did the electronic activism influence the Movement?

- 3.Generating awareness to socio-political injustices
- 2.Mobilizing and accelerating contentious collective actions
- 1.Reducing coordination costs
- 4.Voicing out the demands of all marginalized groups
- 5.Other, specify

26.Can the Movement be considered an outstanding phase in the Moroccan political system: if yes, why; if no, why?.....

.....

.....

.....

