



# What is democracy? Promises and perils of the Arab Spring

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## Abstract

The Arab Spring is still unfolding, as is the direction of change, and outcomes may be different for violent and nonviolent uprisings. This article focuses on three early cases of the Arab Spring – Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco – to discuss causes and likely outcomes, gender dynamics, prospects for genuine democratization, and the connection between feminist movements and democratization. A comparative and international perspective highlights similarities and differences across the Arab cases and between the Arab Spring and other ‘democracy waves’.

## Keywords

Arab Spring, democratization, gender, feminist mobilization

The year 2011 was a momentous one for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), in that it began with mass social protests for democratization and justice that led to the collapse of longstanding authoritarian governments in Tunisia and Egypt. The Arab Spring was launched by protests in Tunisia that began in late 2010 following the self-immolation of a young street vendor whose frustration at his inability to maintain a livelihood in the face of official obduracy seemed to reflect the loss of dignity of an entire people. The protests quickly spread to Egypt in the early part of January 2011 and then to Morocco in February, in a powerful surge of civil society. Elections in Tunisia and Egypt brought to power Islamic parties – the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-Islamic Nour party in Egypt, An-Nahda in Tunisia, and the Parti du Justice et Développement (PJD) in Morocco. It would appear that religious parties have become a

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major political force in the region, but where do they stand in relation to democratization? Here I examine aspects of the democratization processes in the three countries, offer an assessment of positive and negative trends, highlight gender dynamics, and evaluate prospects for democratic consolidation, including the building of an inclusive and women-friendly democratic culture. I begin with a brief overview of the literature on democratization and on gender and democratization.

## **On democratization**

The literature offers different definitions of democracy, and the historical record shows that there exist different models of democracy. In the minimalist definition, democracy is a type of political system in which power alternates through regular, competitive elections, and citizens enjoy certain basic rights.<sup>1</sup> Scholars note that models of democracy reflect configurations of class power and different conceptions of the role of the public sphere versus private interests. In a liberal democracy, a high degree of political legitimacy is necessary, as is an independent judiciary and a constitution that clearly sets out the relationship between state and society, and delineates citizen rights and obligations. Written constitutions serve as a guarantee to citizens that the government is required to act in a certain way and uphold certain rights. As Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl (1991: 77) have noted, however, 'The liberal conception of democracy advocates circumscribing the public realm as narrowly as possible, while the socialist or social-democratic approach would extend that realm through regulation, subsidization, and, in some cases, collective ownership of property.' That is, liberal democracy need not ensure that citizens have the material means to enjoy the civil and political rights that are afforded constitutionally. This is where social rights and economic citizenship come in (see Crick, 2000; Kessler-Harris, 2001, 2003; Marshall, 1964).

In a more expanded definition, democracy refers to a political regime in which citizens enjoy an array of civil, political, and social/economic rights that are institutionalized, and citizens participate through the formal political process, civil society, and social movements; it also refers to a society or culture governed by the values of tolerance, participation, and solidarity. Anne Phillips (1995) has written extensively of 'the politics of presence'; Graciela Di Marco (2011) defines real democracy as residing at micro, meso, and macro levels, including the family, organizations, and the polity; and for Sylvia Walby (2009), the principal criteria of democracy are suffrage (all adults participating and voting), presence (ensuring broad representation of the citizenry), and depth (democratization of a range of institutions, including welfare, employment, military).

Democratic transitions constitute another body of research, and studies have distinguished at least four pathways of democratization: political pacts; breakdowns between civil and military elites; international pressure; and grassroots movements demanding change. Steps toward the institutionalization of democracy may include liberalization, transition, and consolidation. In the first step, authoritarian regimes relax some restrictions, and this may be the result of elite breakdowns, international pressures, or grassroots movements. The transition is the stage between one political regime and another, during which time negotiations ensue and pacts are made, and new institutions and laws are enacted. Characterized by uncertainty, this stage determines whether a successful

democratization takes place – consolidation – or if there is a breakdown, a return to authoritarianism, or the outbreak of revolution (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski, 1992).

What are the conditions that bring about pro-democracy social movements and enable democratic consolidation? Scholars have identified a number of causes or contributing factors: a society's wealth; socioeconomic development; an educated population; a large middle class; civil society; civic culture; human empowerment and emancipative values; an homogeneous population; foreign intervention. Barrington Moore (1966) famously identified a modernizing bourgeoisie as key to democratic development. In classic democratic theory, socioeconomic development is a key determinant in the making of a democratic polity and culture; likewise, sociologist Kenneth Bollen found a positive relationship between economic development and political development (see Korzeniewicz and Awbrey, 1992). Similarly, structural conditions essential for the formation of a sustained pro-democracy movement include socioeconomic development, modern social classes, and resources for coalition-building and mobilization. Whether or not a pro-democracy movement succeeds depends on a complex of factors, including the capacity of the state and its responses to the movement, the strength of the coalition, and the movement's ability to resonate with the population at large as well as with world society.

Barbara Wejnert (2005) has summarized the literature and condensed the factors enabling democracy: (1) endogenous or internal features, that is, socioeconomic development broadly defined, and (2) exogenous variables that influence democratization via forces that work globally and within a region. This second set of factors includes diffusion processes, which work through media, international organizations, social networks, or connections to transnational advocacy networks.<sup>2</sup> In an era of globalization, with its feature of 'time-space compression', such diffusion processes are especially rapid and arguably more effective than in earlier periods or waves of democratization. Thus, whole countries may be influenced through diffusion processes. Citizens in one country can be inspired by movements and processes in other countries. The spread of the 'pink tide' in Latin America after 2001 may have been a reflection of that process, when one country after another elected left-wing governments. An additional set of exogenous variables is salient, variously known as international intervention 'imperialistic activity' (Go, 2007), neocolonial mischief-making, or the pursuit of state power and interests on the part of core countries or the hegemon. This factor has had a potent history in the MENA region, from the British-led 'Arab Revolt' against the Ottomans in World War I and the US-backed coup d'état against Iran's Premier Mohammad Mossadegh to the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011–2012.

Feminist scholarship on women, political participation and democratization began in the aftermath of the democratic transitions in Latin America and Eastern Europe, although in general it remains separate from the mainstream literature on democratization. As political scientist Lisa Baldez (2010: 200) has pointed out: 'Two characteristics of the mainstream literature on democratization prove particularly problematic for the incorporation of women and gender: a narrow definition of what constitutes democratization and an elite focus.' Karen Beckwith (2010: 160) further notes that 'what is politically distinctive about women worldwide "is their exclusion from the political process

and their collective status as political outsiders”; what is politically distinctive about men worldwide is their universal presence in national, international, and political institutions and their disproportionate dominance in these institutions’. Research has shown that women make a difference in politics, and that democratization and women’s participation and rights are interactive.

Various scholars have stressed that democracy and civility in public discourse is dependent upon a vibrant civil society and public sphere. In this connection, women’s movements and organizations are significant. Research on the various forms of collective action by women, especially in the context of revolutions or mass social movements for change, show that women’s rights movements are not ‘identity movements’ but rather democratic and democratizing movements. Women’s organizing tends to be inclusive, and women’s movement activism often involves the explicit practice of democracy (Barron, 2002; Beckwith, 2010; Eschle, 2000; Ferree and Mueller, 2004; Moghadam, 2004; Vargas, 2009). This is especially the case with women’s rights or feminist movements, which often practice democracy internally as well as ally themselves with other democratic movements, organizations, or parties. Women’s movement activism and advocacy – whether in the form of social movements, transnational networks, or professional organizations – contribute to the making of vibrant civil societies and public spheres, which are themselves critical to sustaining and deepening democracy.

John Markoff (1999: 285) identifies the following challenges to democracy: the meaningfulness of electoral accountability to citizens; the nature of citizenship; the reinvigoration of exclusionary politics; and the continued effectiveness of social movements as a force for democratization. But democracy has paradoxes and deficits, too, including income inequalities and the concentration of wealth in a small proportion of the population; the capture of government by the business sector and other moneyed concerns; and the tendency of some democratic transitions to marginalize women and minorities. John Dunn (2005) maintains that as early as the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the ideals of democracy were coopted and distorted by advocates of a competitive market economy. In some cases, democratic openings can have highly problematic consequences, bringing fringe elements to power, putting minorities in jeopardy, or unleashing violence. Amy Chua (2003) has argued that markets and elections often pull societies in opposite directions. Indonesia’s democracy movement was accompanied by attacks on ethnic minorities, notably the Chinese, who had held a prominent position in the country’s economy, and attacks on Christian churches followed. Similarly, John Lukacs (2005) maintains that unchecked popular sovereignty often unleashes a host of evils, targeting minorities but also degrading democracy itself, and in a recent book, John Keane (2010) notes the travails and ‘bad moons’ of democracy. These analyses echo Huntington’s (1991) observation that democracy can rise and fall, as it did with the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the coming to power of the Nazi Party, which then set about targeting communists, Jews, and other ‘undesirables’.

A pertinent example of the risks of democratization comes from Algeria, with the rise of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in the late 1980s. Algeria had been long ruled by a single party system in the ‘Arab socialist’ style. The death of President Boumediène in December 1978 brought about political and economic changes, including the growth of an Islamist movement that was intimidating unveiled women, and a new government

intent on economic restructuring. Urban riots in 1988 were followed quickly by a new constitution and elections, without a longer period of democracy-building. The electoral victory of the FIS – which promised (or threatened) to institute Sharia law, enforce veiling, and end competitive elections – alarmed not only Algeria's educated female population but also the ruling party and the military, which stepped in to annul the election results. That the FIS went on to initiate an armed rebellion when it was not allowed to assume power only confirms the violent nature of that party. The even more extreme Group Islamique Armée committed numerous atrocities (Bennoune, 1995; Moghadam, 2001). In contrast, a similar case in Turkey had a very different outcome. When the Turkish military banned the Islamic Refah Party, which was in fact more 'modern' and moderate than Algeria's FIS, Refah chose to reorganize itself rather than take up arms.

The Algerian experience of the 1990s compels us to acknowledge the perils as well as the promises of democracy, and to appreciate the importance of strong institutions and a civic culture to promote and protect civil liberties, participation, inclusion, and social welfare. The Algerian experience, or at the very least, the Indonesian case, may be the specter that haunts Egypt, where there have been no gains for women or the religious minorities, and arguably setbacks for both social groups. Not all protest movements are pro-democracy movements, and not all pro-democracy movements necessarily result in stable democratic institutions and cultures.

### *Women and democratization*

Examples of gender and democratic transitions – Argentina, Chile, South Africa, the Philippines, Northern Ireland – have shown that women's participation is a central pillar in the building of a democratic culture as well as to a democratic consolidation.<sup>3</sup> However, not all democratic transitions have been favorable to women. For example, Poland went through a period of political liberalization and a transition ushered in by a mass social movement – now famous as *Solidarnosc* – and resulted in a consolidated democracy. And yet, women lost out in the first democratic elections, when their parliamentary representation fell from about an average of 30% to 9% in 1991. The emergence of conservative political parties, along with the re-emergence of the Catholic Church as a major social and political force in Polish life, also led to a diminishment of women's reproductive rights. Such changes in Poland, as well as in other former socialist countries, inspired the terms 'male democracy' and 'democratization with a male face' (Heinen, 1992).

In previous work on gender and revolution in historical and comparative perspective, I identified two outcomes: patriarchal and egalitarian. Additional research on gender and revolution and on gender and democratic transitions suggests that the following factors shape the outcomes: (1) pre-existing gender roles, or women's legal status and social positions prior to the revolutionary outbreak/democratic transition; (2) the degree of women's mobilization, including the number and visibility of women's organizations and other institutions; (3) the ideology, values, and norms of the movement or new government; and (4) the new state's capacity and will to mobilize resources for rights-based development.<sup>4</sup> In addition, external factors – such as wars or invasions (a negative external factor) or transnational links and the promotion of women's rights by international organizations (generally a more positive external factor) – may be influential as well. It

is worth pointing out that while war-torn Afghanistan and occupied Iraq instituted a 25% female parliamentary quota, there is no evidence of women's political empowerment in either country. In Libya, among the first pronouncements of the new head of the transitional government was to restore polygamy and assert the primacy of Sharia law.

The sections that follow examine features of the democratization process in the three countries of the region most closely associated with the nonviolent, pro-democracy movements of the Arab Spring: Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. I begin with background information on the context in which the Arab Spring occurred.

## **Protests and democratization in MENA**

The pro-democracy movements in MENA occurred in a region that had long been assumed to be impervious to democracy. In much the same way that adherents of the 'totalitarian thesis' had argued that political change was impossible in the communist world, many political scientists examining MENA wrote at length about the 'robust' nature of authoritarian institutions in the region. A world-system perspective helps explain why the protests and revolutions occurred when they did: they emerged in the context of the global economic crisis, which itself was a consequence of neoliberal economic policies on a world scale.

In the 1990s, MENA countries joined the rest of the world in the move away from a statist economic strategy, in which large public sectors held sway, to one which prioritized denationalization, privatization, the adoption of 'flexible' labor markets, and recruitment of foreign direct investment. In some countries, oil wealth helped to attenuate the most adverse effects of this policy shift, and governments continued to provide citizens with cheap oil (for heating, cooking, and transportation) and other subsidies. Even so, unemployment kept rising, making the region's double-digit unemployment rates – especially those of youth – possibly the highest in the world and the subject of many academic and policy studies (Moghadam, 2008; Richards and Waterbury, 2007). In more recent years, various social policy 'reforms' were enacted, such as the withdrawal of subsidies and a decline in government investments in education, health, and social welfare. The financial meltdown of 2008 and ensuing global economic crisis led to rising food prices, resulting in strikes and street protests in Egypt. There and elsewhere in the region, the combination of high unemployment, high cost of living, and authoritarian rule heightened popular dissatisfaction.

In short, a number of exogenous and endogenous factors converged to enable the emergence of pro-democracy movements in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. These include the rise of an educated middle class and a 'youth bulge'; grievances over widespread corruption, unemployment, and the high cost of living (attributed by many to the effects of government policies of privatization and liberalization), along with human rights violations; a citizenry, including the large population of young people, outraged over the above but with access to the Internet for purposes of information-sharing and coordination of protest activity. Exogenous factors include the effects of the global neoliberal policy framework; transnational links via social media networks to such groups as the Serbian youth protest group Otpor and the writings of Gene Sharp (especially relevant to Egypt's youth protestors); the WikiLeaks revelations (which included information on the



corruption of Tunisia's first family); and the global diffusion of the democracy frame through social networks and international funding agencies.<sup>5</sup> The road to 2011 was paved with other democratic developments or campaigns: the 11-year feminist campaign for family law reform in Morocco, which culminated in a new and more egalitarian legal framework in 2003–2004; the Kefaya (Enough) Movement in Egypt in 2005, which challenged the apparent permanence of the Mubarak regime; the Green Protests in Iran in June 2009, in which young people played a major role challenging the authorities in the aftermath of what was widely seen as a rigged presidential election; and the growing prominence of Turkey's model of a 'moderate Islamic democracy'.

Diffusion processes, therefore, were complex and multiple, encompassing some of the regional precursors mentioned above, as well as links to democracy movements or organizations outside the region, and access to social networking media, which provided information, space for the expression of grievances, and a vehicle for mobilization. Tunisia launched the Arab Spring with protests in late December 2010, which then spread across the region.

### *Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco*

Notwithstanding decades of authoritarian rule, whether under Habib Bourguiba or Zine el-Abidin Ben Ali, Tunisia was characterized by social cohesion, a modern welfare system, women's rights, and an expanding civil society that included a major trade union (which periodically challenged the government's economic policies), human rights organizations, professional associations (which included activist lawyers), and a number of autonomous feminist organizations. Indeed, Tunisian feminist groups were part of the North Africa-wide Collectif 95 Maghreb-Egalité, in existence since the early 1990s. As a result, Tunisia had formed, over the decades, a tradition of secular republicanism and a well-organized and well-coordinated civil society staffed by advocates who had acquired strong civic skills. Such features helped to create a relatively smooth transition following the downfall of the Ben Ali government.

Former dissidents began quickly forming new political parties – perhaps too many of them, as it turned out, especially on the liberal/left-wing side – such as the Islamic An-Nahda, the Progressive Democratic Party (An-Nahda's main secular rival), and the Modernist Democratic Pole (which included Tajdid, the former communist party). A transitional governing body was formed, endorsing gender parity in the National Assembly charged with drafting the country's new constitution. The Haute Instance pour la Réalisation des Objectifs de la Révolution, de la Réforme Politique et de la Transition Démocratique (High Commission for the Realization of Revolutionary Goals, Political Reforms, and Democratic Transition) was composed of 12 parties, 42 national figures, and 17 civil society and national organizations, convening its first session on 17 March 2011.<sup>6</sup> It had a woman vice-president (Professor Latifa Lakhdar, a women's rights activist and secularist), as well as many women members (such as women's rights/human rights lawyer Alya Chérif Chammari).

Compared with women in other MENA countries, Tunisian women had a number of key advantages: a larger female share of employment; a larger female share of parliamentary seats; a stronger and longer tradition of women's legal rights (since the 1956

family law); established feminist organizations and policy institutes with transnational links; and gender norms that are more egalitarian than elsewhere. This is why Alya Chérif Chammari was able to declare at a meeting in Paris: ‘The Tunisian revolution is fundamentally a struggle for social equality and women’s equality.’<sup>7</sup>

Still, in October 2011, the Islamic An-Nahda party, formerly banned under the Ben Ali regime, won a plurality of 90 seats out of a total of 217, or nearly 42% of seats in the Constituent Assembly. In actuality, An-Nahda represented about 20% of the electorate, and thus it wisely chose the path of a coalition government, which at the time of writing (November 2012) was governed by the ‘troika’ of An-Nahda, the secular center-left Congress for the Republic Party, and the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties (Ettakatol). The president chosen was former dissident and veteran human rights activist Moncef Marzouki of the Congress Party.<sup>8</sup>

The troika proceeded to govern in an uneasy alliance, faced with a ‘culture war’ between secularists and the now vocal and visible Salafists, and social and economic dislocations that agitated the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT) (Ottaway, 2012a). At a meeting in Paris in June 2011, Mahmoud Ben Romdhane, a leading member of Tajdid, reminded the audience that the key revolutionary slogan ‘Ben Ali dégage’ was accompanied by such slogans as ‘emploi, notre droit’.<sup>9</sup> With its large membership and demands for social democracy and active labor market policies, the left-leaning trade union UGTT is a formidable challenger to the government and to the Islamists.

Egypt’s short-lived Kefaya movement was put down by the Mubarak regime, but it was followed by simmering dissidence aided by the growing use of social networking tools by the young, along with more traditional forms of collective action such as worker strikes. The Muslim Brotherhood – although long banned as a political party – had expanded its influence through supporters who ran as independents in parliamentary elections, controlled a range of professional associations, and dominated Egypt’s numerous mosques and religious centers. The Brotherhood had issued calls for political reform and democracy, advocating ‘the freedom of forming political parties’ and ‘independence of the judiciary system’, but also ‘conformity to Islamic Sharia Law’ (Brown et al., 2006). Given that Sharia law in its current interpretations distinguishes between women and men and Muslims and non-Muslims, there were fears among liberals and leftists that the Brotherhood brand of democracy would not be inclusive. At a 2005 panel discussion in Cairo entitled ‘The Gender of Democracy’, Egyptian feminist lawyer Mona Zulficar declared: ‘We don’t want democracy to have a gender. We want it to be inclusive. Unfortunately democracy is patriarchal, because it is rooted in patriarchal culture.’<sup>10</sup>

An August 2010 statement issued by the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR) criticized the Muslim Brotherhood for mock presidential elections held by its Youth Forum that denied the request by the Forum’s Muslim Sisters’ Group to be included in the nominations to the mock presidency. The ECWR statement asserted that the Brotherhood’s decision violated Egypt’s constitutional equality clause and the gender-egalitarian spirit of Islam. In November 2010, the ECWR issued another press release protesting the parliament’s overwhelming vote against the appointment of women judges (Komsan, 2010a, 2010b).

The mass protests of January–February 2011 saw participation by many Egyptian women, both veiled and unveiled, as well as Christians along with the more numerous



**Table 1.** Comparing women's prospects in the democratic transitions of the Arab Spring: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco 2010–2011.

	Egypt	Tunisia	Morocco
Paid labor force, F %	19%	25%	28%
Tertiary enrollment, F %	24%	40%	12%
age group			
Mean age at first marriage, F	23	27	26
Total fertility rate	2.9	1.9	2.4
Female share, seats in parliament (1995–2010)	2–3%	23–38%	11% (after quotas)
Women in judiciary <sup>a</sup>	First appointed in 2002; Total: 30	First appointed in 1965; 28% share of total	610, or 19% of total
Family law	Family law privileges men	Liberal family law since 1956	Egalitarian reform of Mudawanna 2004
State of women's movement	No organized women's movement (as distinct from women's NGOs)	Well-known feminist organizations and policy institutes, with transnational links	Same as Tunisia
Transitional government 2011	Military	Civilian	Constitutional monarchy (July 2011 amendments)
Possible gender outcomes	Patriarchal	Relatively egalitarian	Relatively egalitarian

Sources: WEF, *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*; CEDAW reports; <sup>a</sup>UNESCO Women in the Judiciary project, 2005.

Muslims. But a women's rights rally on Tahrir Square to celebrate International Women's Day was met with jeers and sexual harassment, in a shocking display of the widespread problem of male entitlement in Egyptian society. The ECWR mobilized a large number of women's groups to issue a petition calling for women's participation in the constitutional committee, but the call went unheeded.

Unlike Tunisia, pre-existing conditions in Egypt included a very conservative society and culture. Between 1995 and 2010, Egyptian women held just 2% of the seats in parliament; the chambers of the judiciary only recently had been opened to women (and even then, the highest court remained closed to them); and the country's family law continued to privilege men. (See Table 1 for a summary comparison of gender indicators and women's status in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco.) Egypt's very strong military has a huge budget, ownership over a number of economic enterprises, welfare agencies for its staff, and special perks for officers. Operating as a state-within-a-state, it chose to abandon Mubarak and control the country through the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). This did not prevent Egyptian Christians, known as Copts, being attacked by Islamists and by the military.

Given its influence in Egyptian society and its various mobilizing structures, the Muslim Brotherhood – or more precisely, its political wing, the FJP – won 235 out of the 508 seats in the November 2011 parliamentary elections. The extremist Salafists, organized under the al-Nour Party, took 121 seats, while only 35 seats were won by the main secular party, the Egyptian Bloc. The time allotted before parliamentary elections was too limited to allow for the establishment and consolidation of new political parties, while a largely conservative and pious electorate chose to cast their votes for the two religious parties. The new government faced serious social and economic challenges, including rundown public education and health sectors, widespread poverty, pollution, and unemployment. In the words of one critic, however, the parliament ‘prioritized decriminalizing female genital mutilation, abolishing women’s rights, and banning toys they deem offensive’ (Khatab, 2012: 9). In November 2012, a new crisis emerged in Egypt when President Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, sought to arrogate sweeping powers for himself. New protests broke out.

In the aftermath of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, Morocco saw the formation of the Mouvement 20 Février, which included representatives of youth groups, women’s groups, and left-wing groups, among other civil society actors. Political reforms were quickly instituted and constitutional amendments now limit the King’s power – something that the country’s progressives and trade unions had been seeking for some time.<sup>11</sup> Importantly, women made up five of the 18 members of the Consultative Commission for the Constitutional Reform.

The Moroccan women’s movement is well organized and has a history of working in coalitions. From the early 1990s until 2003 it worked toward the reform of the country’s very conservative family law (Moghadam and Gheytaichi, 2010). In 2010 it formed a coalition with human rights groups and associations of physicians and lawyers to overturn the prohibition and prosecution of abortion. Following the constitutional amendments, the Moroccan parliament and the King approved the removal of the final reservations to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). On 20 May 2011, l’Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) and other women’s rights groups played host to a seminar organized by the Collectif Maghreb, which focused on women and the democratic transitions in the MENA region. The Moroccan Minister of Women’s Affairs, the progressive Nouzha Skalli, was in attendance, as were representatives of UN Women, a number of transnational feminist networks, and international organizations.

Although the constitutional changes left the King with control over security, the army, and religious affairs, the King now selects the prime minister from the party that wins elections, and the parliament has more power. In the subsequent elections, the Islamic Justice and Development Party (PJD) won a plurality, and in November 2011 the prime minister, Abdelilah Benkirane, was appointed from within its leadership. The PJD is considered to follow the Turkish model of moderate Islam, and it governs in a coalition that includes ex-communists and pro-royalists (Ottaway, 2012b; Tremlett, 2011: 7). Unlike the new Egyptian government, that of Morocco set about launching a new national health services program, benefiting 8.5 million poor Moroccans and financed by a 1% surtax on private companies’ earnings (Ottaway, 2012b).

The 2011 Constitution, which was endorsed by fully 98.5% of those who voted in the July referendum, has references to Morocco's cultural diversity, a concession to demands of recent years for recognition of the Berber language and culture. The preamble specifies a 'convergence' of Arabo-Islamic, Amazigh, and Saharan 'components' that is 'nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebrew and Mediterranean influences'. Morocco now fully acknowledges the country's Berber minority, its language and culture (Silverstein, 2011). Maddy-Weitzman (2012) notes that the final version contained specific language emphasizing a commitment to an independent judiciary, the protection of human rights, and the ensuring of equality between women and men. However, the final draft dropped earlier references to 'freedom of conscience' and softened language guaranteeing the protection of religious freedom for all faiths. Moroccan society, therefore, continues to inch its way toward greater democracy and rights, although high unemployment continues to plague large sections of the population, and the contraction of available jobs in Europe makes labor migration less of an option.

## Conclusions

We may identify some similarities but also differences across the three cases, and offer some propositions. Tunisia and Morocco arguably appear best suited to effect successful democratic transitions, as activists have more of the 'civic skills' needed to consolidate democracy; Morocco in addition seems to have a monarchy receptive to democratic reforms. On the other hand, Prime Minister Rachid al-Ghannouchi's promise to follow the 'free market model' in Tunisia raises questions about the kind of democracy that would address citizen demands for social rights. What may be proposed is that if Tunisia maintains a vibrant civil society – with its many human rights, women's rights, and other advocacy organizations, professional associations and charities, and strong labor movement – along with a well-functioning political society, it could become a model of a democratic polity and society.

Employment creation will be a major challenge in Tunisia, as it will be in Morocco and Egypt, particularly for the *diplomés chomeurs*. There and elsewhere in the region, genuine social transformation is impossible without women's participation. This is because exclusion – including the exclusion of women – has been part of the logic of the authoritarian state. The inclusion of women in the political process, therefore, could help to change the nature of the state and of society. In turn, widespread female political participation requires female labor incorporation, which itself would be enabled by appropriate social policies and legal reforms.<sup>12</sup> In other words, attention must be directed to women's social rights and economic citizenship as well as to their civil rights and involvement in the political process.

Liberal democracy refers to a system of government in which those who hold public political office are chosen through regularly held competitive elections in which all adult citizens possessing legal capacity may freely participate by casting equally weighted votes. The strength of this model of democracy is that citizens are constitutionally guaranteed their rights to acquire and disseminate information, organize for lawful purposes, express their views, receive due process of law, and participate in the political process. But liberal democracy need not ensure that citizens have the material means to enjoy the

civil and political rights that are afforded constitutionally. Real democracy should be seen as a multifaceted and ongoing process at different levels of social existence: in the family, in the community, at the workplace, in the economy, in civil society, and in the polity. As John Markoff (1999) has aptly stated, democracy has never been a finished thing, but has been continually renewed, redefined, and reinvented. It remains to be seen if the Arab Spring can help redefine and reinvigorate democracy.

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## **Notes**

1. One definition of liberal democracy (see Dahl, 1971) is a political regime with three characteristics: adult suffrage; regular elections with a high degree of political participation; and rights and liberties for citizens.
2. Diffusion, defined as the flow or transmission of social practices and norms, occurs through channels that may be direct or indirect, leading to the adoption of the practices and norms or their adaptation to local conditions. See Keck and Sikkink (1998).
3. See Jaquette (2009), Rai (2000), Rueschemeyer and Wolchik (2009), and Waylen (2007). On Northern Ireland, see Roulston and Davies (2000); on Turkey, see Arat (1994, 2010).
4. On gender and revolution, see Kampwirth (2003), Moghadam (1997), and Shayne (2004); on gender and democratic transitions see Viterna and Fallon (2009) and Waylen (1994, 2007).
5. On the ties between 6 April Movement and Otpor, see Kirkpatrick and Sanger (2011).
6. Magharebia.com (United States Africa Command), 22 March 2011. See also Maddy-Weitzman (2011).
7. Author's observations and notes, UNESCO seminar, *Démocratie et Renouveau dans le Monde Arabe* (Paris, 21 June 2011).
8. See [www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/07/tunisian-opposition-parties-to-announce-official-coalition/](http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/07/tunisian-opposition-parties-to-announce-official-coalition/) The Tunisian spelling of An-Nahda is Ennahda.
9. Author's notes at UNESCO seminar, Paris, 21 June 2011.
10. Remarks made by Mona Zulficar, on a panel organized by the present author, at the International Conference on Democracy and Human Rights in the Arab World (Cairo, 19–20 December 2005), organized by UNESCO and former UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali. The conference was notable also by a silent vigil held by supporters of the imprisoned Ayman Nour, who had dared to challenge Mubarak for the presidency.
11. In an interview with the present author in Montecatini Terme, Italy (27 March 2009), former cabinet minister Mohammad Said Saadi emphasized that Morocco's political opening had been thwarted. The main problem, he said, was that the monarch retained excessive powers, preventing both political democratization and egalitarian economic measures. Dr Saadi had been a cabinet minister in the Yousefi government of 1998, widely credited by feminist groups with helping to promote the proposed new family reform. In Italy, he explained to me that he was now part of a loose coalition of progressives, including socialists and nationalists, who wished for a transition to the 'Spanish model'.
12. On women, work, and economic citizenship in MENA, see Moghadam (2013: Ch. 3).

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## Author biography

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## Résumé

Le 'printemps Arabe' et la direction de changement sont toujours d'actualité, et les résultats peuvent être différents pour les révoltes violentes et non-violentes. Cet article met l'accent sur les trois cas non-violent – la Tunisie, l'Égypte, et le Maroc – pour examiner des causes et des résultats, la question de l'égalité entre les sexes, les perspectives d'une vraie démocratisation, et le rapport entre le féminisme et la démocratisation. Une perspective comparative et internationale met en évidence des similitudes et différences entre les trois cas et entre le printemps arabe et des autres 'vagues de la démocratie'.

**Mots-clés**

Démocratisation, mobilisation féministe, printemps arabe

**Resumen**

La primavera árabe, y la dirección del cambio, están todavía abiertas, y los resultados pueden ser diferentes para los levantamientos violentos o no violentos. Este artículo se centra en tres casos tempranos de la primavera árabe –Túnez, Egipto y Marruecos – para discutir las causas y los posibles resultados, las dinámicas de género, las perspectivas para una democratización genuina, y la relación entre movimientos feministas y democratización. Una perspectiva comparada e internacional destaca las similitudes y diferencias entre los casos árabes analizados, y entre la primavera árabe y otras ‘olas de democracia’.

**Palabras clave**

Democratización, género, movilización feminista, primavera árabe