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Post-Arab Spring Tunisia: Socio-Political Dynamics and Institutional Reform in a Post-Revolution Era

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Abstract

This article explores Tunisia's transformation a decade after the Arab Spring in the social, political, legal, and educational fields. The methods used include qualitative descriptive analysis and social history. Data was collected through heuristic methods, utilizing online sources about Tunisia, such as scientific articles, journalistic reports, dissertations, and reports from international institutions. This article demonstrates that the transformation in Tunisia's socio-political, legal, and educational sectors is not only dynamic, reflecting the principles of a modern and democratic state, but also indicates a tendency to strengthen the stability of both the government and the state. Tunisia implemented new constitutional reforms in 2022 and transformed the education sector by improving both the quality and infrastructure of education. Based on these findings, the article concludes that a country's transformation, including that of Tunisia, is determined by the dynamics of its socio-cultural, political, legal, and educational structures.

Keywords

Tunisian Modernization, Secularization, Transformation, Legal Politics,
Constitutions.



Abstrak

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi transformasi Tunisia satu dekade setelah Musim Semi Arab di bidang sosial, politik, hukum, dan pendidikan. Metode yang digunakan meliputi analisis deskriptif kualitatif dan sejarah sosial. Data dikumpulkan melalui metode heuristik, memanfaatkan sumber online tentang Tunisia, seperti artikel ilmiah, laporan jurnalistik, disertasi, dan laporan dari lembaga internasional. Artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa transformasi di sektor sosial-politik, hukum, dan pendidikan Tunisia tidak hanya dinamis, mencerminkan prinsip-prinsip negara modern dan demokratis, tetapi juga menunjukkan kecenderungan untuk memperkuat stabilitas pemerintah dan negara. Tunisia menerapkan reformasi konstitusi baru pada tahun 2022 dan mengubah sektor pendidikan dengan meningkatkan kualitas dan infrastruktur pendidikan. Berdasarkan temuan ini, artikel tersebut menyimpulkan bahwa transformasi suatu negara, termasuk Tunisia, ditentukan oleh dinamika struktur sosial-budaya, politik, hukum, dan pendidikannya.

Katakunci:

Tunisian Modernization, Secularization, Transformation, Legal Politics, Constitution.

Introduction

The Arab Spring event marked a milestone for Tunisia and the Middle East. As the country that triggered the Arab Spring revolution in the region, Tunisia shows signs of significant socio-political, legal, and educational transformation compared to other Arab countries (Burdah, 2017). The collapse of Ben Ali's authoritarian regime opened up opportunities for Tunisia to rebuild on a more democratic and inclusive foundation. Tunisia has succeeded in fostering democracy after the Arab Spring revolutions, as democratic values have grown since before the Arab Spring. The political, social, and cultural structure of Tunisian society is seen as ready to embrace changes in a democratic direction (Susila Wati and Burdah, 2023).

Evidence of Tunisia's growth in democracy after the Arab Spring revolution is shown not only by the overthrow of authoritarian regimes but also by the success of democratic elections in 2014. Additionally, Tunisian democracy advanced after the passage of the 2014 constitution, which provided equality between men and women (Rahman, 2019). However, Tunisia's socio-political and legal progress seems to be in dilemma with the emergence of new issues, such as the suppression of political opponents and the dissolution of parliament carried out by President Saied's regime.

Tunisia's socio-political reality appears anomalous, creating a new stigma suggesting that Tunisia's democracy may be in decline. This is also reflected in the passage of the 2022 Constitution, which expands the president's power. It is interesting to explore how to understand Tunisia's socio-political transformation, especially in the context of its unstable economic conditions. Referring to the opinion of Trysnaningtias (2022), Tunisia needs a clear political plan to achieve stable democracy, particularly by addressing economic issues as a priority and increasing public trust. If this is not addressed, Tunisia, according to Trysnaningtias, is likely to return to an autocratic regime.

Tunisia's transition process has not been easy, as it has faced various complex challenges. Despite successfully overthrowing the authoritarian regime, Tunisia continues to experience political instability. Changes in government, sharp political polarization, and threats from extremist groups have all been obstacles to building a strong and effective government. A similar situation has occurred in the economic sector, where the post-revolution economic crisis was further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the high unemployment rate has become a serious social problem.

After the Arab Spring, Tunisia faced several problems, including political instability, economic struggles, corruption, and extremism (Nurali, 2021) (Rahman, 2019) (S. Rahman, 2019). After the Arab Spring, Tunisia also faced problems of corruption and radicalism. The legacy of the old regime, in the form of corrupt practices, remains a major issue. Efforts to eradicate corruption continue to face many obstacles, both legally and culturally. In addition, the increasing influence of extremist groups poses a significant threat to Tunisia's security and stability. Radicalism not only threatens state security but also hinders the process of modernization and transformation. Tunisia also faces challenges in achieving gender equality in the post-Arab Spring period (Susila Wati and Burdah, 2023).

On the other hand, the Arab Spring revolution presented its own challenges for education in Tunisia. If the socio-political and legal fields show anomalous symptoms as described above, then the big question related to education is: what form of transformation occurred in the education sector after the Arab Spring revolution?

This is worth exploring not only because the history of Tunisian education before the Arab Spring revolution showed seven significant changes and developments, but also because the momentum of the Arab Spring revolution provided an opportunity for the

improvement of Tunisian education. This is especially relevant in terms of how education prepares Tunisia's young generation to respond to the various socio-political and economic problems faced after the revolution (Abderrahmane, 2021). The issues mentioned above raise the question of how Tunisia will be transformed after the Arab Spring revolutions. This question appears quite general and broad. Nevertheless, several previous studies have traced the dynamics of Tunisia following the Arab Spring revolution. The findings of these studies show that non-governmental organizations and social movements are advocating for civil and political rights, as well as encouraging public participation in the democratic process. Some studies also highlight high unemployment and the steps taken by the government to stimulate economic growth through foreign investment and structural reforms.

Other research demonstrates an increase in women's participation in Tunisia's politics and economy, as well as a shift in people's attitudes toward gender and human rights issues (Alkholid, 2021; SAIDIN and ALFITRI, 2020). Several additional studies have also indicated that Tunisia faces threats from terrorism, along with challenges related to economic stability and social insecurity. There are also extensive studies concerning the religiosity of people in the Middle East. Tunisia has experienced a shift in cultural expression, freedom of opinion, and the role of the media in shaping national identity. Similarly, Tunisia emphasizes the importance of curriculum changes, improved teaching quality, and better access to education, although challenges persist regarding the education gap between urban and rural areas Ramadhani and Anshori,

2022). Studies related to the dynamics of Tunisia after the Arab Spring Revolution encompass a variety of scholarly works, covering socio-political, socio-religious, economic, and educational aspects.

These studies have provided valuable insights into the study of Tunisia. However, some of the research does not fully reflect the current situation and conditions in Tunisia. In other words, the latest changes and developments in Tunisia are not part of the discussion in these articles. For example, Tunisia adopted a new Constitution in 2022, which is not addressed in the existing studies. Additionally, the current research does not emphasize the comprehensive transformation of Tunisia but instead focuses on specific aspects, which also affects the methodological limitations of these studies. Based on the explanation above, this article focuses on Tunisia's transformation, particularly after the events of the Arab Spring revolutions. However, it also explores Tunisia's transformation since gaining independence from France. This approach is essential to demonstrate the continuity of history in each phase of Tunisia's changes and developments, while also highlighting the significance of the Arab Spring revolution in shaping Tunisia's transformation in the early 21st century. Focusing on the transformation post-Arab Spring, this article outlines Tunisia's changes and developments from 2011 to 2024. It specifically examines Tunisia's transformation in the socio-political, legal, and educational fields. Methodologically, given the focus on these three areas, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach in its analysis. Thus, this article is significant for understanding the recent changes in Tunisia more than a decade after the Arab Spring revolutions.

Method

The study of Tunisia's transformation after the Arab Spring revolution (in the socio-political, legal, and educational fields) requires a qualitative framework with qualitative descriptive analysis methods. This framework is necessary not only because the data used are verbal narratives, but also because it is useful for analyzing, in detail and depth, the transformation of Tunisia. Additionally, since the study of Tunisia's transformation after the Arab Spring revolution aims to reconstruct society based on past and present social phenomena and facts, this article employs the social historical method in a broad sense. The social history method, as part of historical study, is significant for analyzing and collecting data on Tunisia. It involves heuristic steps, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.

Heuristic data on Tunisia were gathered from various online sources using the keyword "Tunisia's transformation after the Arab Spring." These sources include scientific articles, reports from international institutions, online newspapers, and doctoral theses. Scientific articles were obtained from platforms such as Jstor, Google Scholar, and Mendeley, which provide access to researchers' publications on Tunisia in national and international journals. Additional articles and reports on Tunisia were sourced from organizations' websites, including the Encyclopædia Britannica, the Institute for Security Studies, the United States Institute of Peace, the Arab Reform Initiative, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and Traileoni. Journalists' reports from online newspapers such as Kompas.com, Tempo.com, Republika.com, and aljazeera.com were also included. This article also draws on dissertations published by ProQuest.

The sources mentioned above are relevant because they provide writings on the same topic from academics who focus on Middle Eastern studies and journalists. Additionally, these sources mutually confirm the eligibility and validity of the data. The data obtained from these various sources are then reduced, selected, and presented in accordance with the framework of the article's topic. At this stage, the data is validated by comparing one source with another. Next, the data that has been gathered is interpreted, presented, and elaborated upon with the approach of several auxiliary fields such as politics and law.

The core of this article begins with a general overview of Tunisia's development. This section includes an overview of the influence of Islam and France in the history of Tunisia. The following section discusses two main points: first, the modernization of Tunisia before the Arab Spring revolution; and second, the transformation of Tunisia after the Arab Spring revolution in the socio-political, legal, and educational fields. This categorization aims to highlight the different phases of Tunisia's history, along with the changes and social dynamics that have occurred. The article concludes with a closing summary

Results and Discussion

Overview of Tunisia's Development

Tunisia, a country in North Africa with a long and rich history, has undergone significant transformation in the modern era. The country's history, especially post-independence, is fraught with political, social, and economic dynamics. Tunisia has an area of 163,610 km² and a population of about 12,309,311 people. Of these, 98% are Arabs, 1% are Berbers, and 1% are from other ethnic groups. The majority of the population (98%) follows Sunni Islam (PPI, 2022; Geo, 2024; populationtoday, 2024).

Prior to independence, Tunisia was under French colonial rule for several decades. This period marked the beginning of modernization in Tunisia but also brought negative impacts, such as the exploitation of natural resources and discrimination against the indigenous population (Editor, 2024). Tunisia was colonized by France for about 75 years, and the emergence of a strong nationalist movement prompted the struggle for independence (Zada, 2016). Figures such as Habib Bourguiba became symbols of resistance to French colonialism.

Tunisia gained independence on March 20, 1956, and Habib Bourguiba became its first president, leading the country towards modernization. Despite gaining independence, French influence remained deeply rooted in the lives of the Tunisian people (Ranuwijaya, 2016). President Bourguiba's era was marked by modernization, secularism, and political stability. He implemented aggressive modernization policies, including agrarian reform, industrialization, and women's emancipation. Bourguiba also sought to build a secular state by separating religion from the government, a policy that sparked controversy and resistance from Islamic groups. Additionally, during Bourguiba's reign, Tunisia enjoyed relatively good political stability, although criticism of the regime's authoritarianism began to emerge.

In 1987, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali came to power through a coup. He continued Bourguiba's modernization and secularism policies, but with a more repressive approach. Ben Ali's regime was characterized by restrictions on freedom of expression and the repression of the opposition. By the beginning of the 21st century, Tunisia, under Ben Ali's government, faced an economic crisis that triggered social

discontent. In 2011, Tunisia became the epicenter of the Arab Spring, with mass protests demanding reforms and the end of Ben Ali's authoritarian regime. Tunisia successfully transitioned to democracy by holding free and fair elections. However, the democratic transition faced various challenges, such as the fragmentation of political parties, economic instability, and the threat of extremism (Khoiri and Anwar, 2022).

The development of Islam in Tunisia

The discussion about Tunisia requires an examination of the development and influence of Islam in the country. Islam in Tunisia has a long and rich history and has become an integral part of the country's identity and culture. The process of Islamization in Tunisia has unique characteristics that differentiate it from other regions in North Africa (Rizqa, 2020). The initial process of Islamization began with the Arab conquest. Like many regions in North Africa, Tunisia was first introduced to Islam through the conquest by Arab forces in the 7th century AD. This process occurred gradually and was met with resistance from the indigenous Berber people (Khoiri and Anwar, 2022).

The Arab expedition during the time of Caliph Uthman bin Affan took place in Tunisia in 650. Arab forces defeated the Byzantine Patrice Gregoire in the Sbeitla region under the leadership of Abdullah bin Sa'ad. A second attack, led by Mu'awiya Ibn Hudaij in 666, occurred during the time of the Umayyad Caliphate. In 667, the cities of Sousse, Djerba, and Bizerte were captured by Mu'awiya I (Maryam and Warsah, 2022). After the conquest, Islam spread rapidly among the local population. This process was facilitated by Arab scholars and merchants who brought with them the teachings of Islam.

The indigenous population of Tunisia gradually embraced Islam, with many converting voluntarily. Islam in Tunisia is marked by the development of the Maliki School, Sufism, the role of the Ulama, and cultural dynamics. The Maliki school is the dominant school in Tunisia, while the prevailing theology is that of Ash'ariyah. This school of jurisprudence and theology is considered more in line with the social and cultural conditions of the Tunisian people, who are closely connected to European traditions. Sufi orders also played an important role in the spread and development of Islam in Tunisia. Orders such as the Junaid al-Baghdadi provide a more mystical and emotional interpretation of the teachings of Islam.

Additionally, Tunisian scholars such as Muhammad Thahir bin 'Asyur, Abdul Aziz Al-Tsa'alaby, Khudar Hussein, and Tahir Hadad played key roles in maintaining and developing Islamic teachings. They established madrasas and mosques to teach religious knowledge to the community. Furthermore, Islam in Tunisia underwent a process of syncretism with local culture. Many traditions and customs of the Berber people are still maintained and adapted to Islamic teachings (Rizqa, 2020; Umam, 2020).

In the modern era, Islam in Tunisia was challenged by French colonialism. French colonialism significantly influenced the development of Islam in Tunisia, as the colonial government sought to control religious activities and introduce secular values. Nevertheless, the emergence of nationalist movements in Tunisia in the 20th century triggered religious fervor among the people. Islam became a symbol of national unity in the struggle against colonialism. Despite Tunisia becoming a secular

country after independence, Islam remained the majority religion and continued to have a strong influence on people's lives.

Even though Islam is the majority religion, it is known for its tolerance and moderation in Tunisia. Islam in Tunisia is characterized by its tolerant nature, where Tunisians coexist peacefully with followers of other religions. Additionally, Islam in Tunisia tends to be moderate and avoids extremism. This moderation is reflected in its syncretism, which involves the blending of Islamic teachings with local culture. As a result, Islam has become an inseparable part of Tunisian identity and culture, indirectly influencing the social and political landscape of Tunisian law. The long and complex process of Islamization has shaped the characteristics of Islam in Tunisia, making it rational, open, and distinct from other Muslim countries in the Middle East (Hasemi, Hasan, et al., 2021).

According to Rashid al-Ghannushi, the composition of Islam in Tunisia consists of at least three main streams: traditional, revivalist, and rational. Traditional Tunisian Islam preserves Islamic traditions based on the fiqh of the Maliki school, Ash'ari theology, and Sufism, such as the Junaïd al-Baghdadi order. In contrast, Tunisian Islamic revivalism, as described by al-Ghannushi, is represented by movements like al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun. This model emphasizes the religious spirit of Islam, based on authentic Islamic sources, the history of the prophets and companions, and the interpretation of Islamic beliefs in the context of contemporary realities. Rational Islam, according to al-Ghannushi, emphasizes understanding reality based on reason and modernism (al-Ghanusi, n.d.).

Although the composition of Tunisian Islam includes these three main streams, the socio-political dynamics have been dominated by the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun movement. This is due to the progressive nature of the movement, which has managed to connect religious beliefs with various social issues, including political aspects and constitutional law. As a result, the socio-political patterns in Tunisia, both before and after the Arab Spring revolution, have been strongly influenced by Islamic revivalism and Salafism.

French hegemony in Tunisia

In addition to the development of Islam, one of the significant historical phases of Tunisia's development was the influence of France. The French colonization of Tunisia is considered one of the important episodes in the history of North Africa. This process not only altered Tunisia's political and social landscape, but also left behind a complex legacy that continues to affect the country today. The French presence in Tunisia was driven by both French colonial ambitions and the weakness of the Ottoman Empire at the time. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was in decline, and Tunisia, as one of its territories, also faced instability and financial difficulties (Zemni, 2014; Robbani, 2022).

Meanwhile, France, seeking to expand its territory, saw an opportunity in Tunisia. Tunisia's strategic geographical location on the Mediterranean Sea made it an attractive target. France began to intervene economically in Tunisia by providing loans that eventually left the country in debt. In 1881, France forced Tunisia to sign the Treaty of Bardo. This treaty granted France the right to intervene in Tunisia's internal affairs, effectively making Tunisia a French protectorate. France gradually strengthened its control over Tunisia by weakening Tunisian institutions and replacing them with the French colonial system of governance (Totten, 2012).

The entry of French colonialism into Tunisia had significant economic consequences, with the French exploiting Tunisia's natural resources for their own gains. Agri-culture in Tunisia was transformed into plantations that produced export commodities such as olives and grapes, benefiting France. Similarly, France built infrastructure, including roads and ports, but the primary purpose was to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources (Jules and Barton, 2018).

In addition to the economic impact, French colonialism also affected Tunisia's socio-cultural and political landscape. Native Tunisian culture was suppressed and replaced by French culture, with French becoming the official language and being used in education. As mentioned earlier, France also sought to control religious activities and introduce secular values. Politically, Tunisia lost its autonomy and became part of the French colonial empire. However, the French colonization of Tunisia also contributed to the emergence of nationalism, which fueled the growth of the nationalist movement in Tunisia.

Politically, the result was the emergence of a resistance movement. Since the beginning of colonization, Tunisians had resisted the French, though the resistance was often divided and poorly organized. After World War II, the nationalist movement in Tunisia grew stronger, with figures like Habib Bourguiba emerging as leaders of the independence movement. After independence, Tunisia inherited aspects of French colonial heritage. France left behind a complex legacy in Tunisia, including the introduction of modernization and infrastructure development (ibid.).

On the other hand, colonialism also caused deep wounds due to exploitation, oppression, and the loss of identity. Thus, French colonization of Tunisia was a turbulent period in the country's history. This experience shaped Tunisia's national identity and became the starting point for the struggle for independence and nation-building. Tunisia followed the cultural and intellectual direction of European traditions, and the development of European science spread easily to the country.

Modernization Before the Arab Spring

Before being shaken by the Arab Spring in 2011, Tunisia had undergone a significant process of modernization and transformation, especially under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. This process began after Tunisia's independence from France in 1956. Habib Bourguiba had a clear vision to make Tunisia a modern, secular, and developed country. Some of the modernization efforts carried out by him included the secularization of the state, women's emancipation, economic development, and education (Lotan et al., 2011).

After Bourguiba was overthrown, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali took power. Initially, Ben Ali continued Bourguiba's modernization policies. However, over time, Ben Ali's government became increasingly authoritarian and corrupt. His government was marked by political stagnation, with political freedoms increasingly restricted and the opposition silenced. Corruption became a serious and widespread problem across various sectors, while the economic gap between the rich and poor grew wider. The social and economic conditions of the Tunisian people deteriorated further before the Arab Spring occurred in 2011. Unemployment was very high, corruption was rampant, and injustice further fueled public dissatisfaction (Abderrahmane, 2021; Francesco De Fazio, 2023).

Modernization of Habib Bourguiba's Reign

Habib Bourguiba, as the first leader of the Republic of Tunisia after independence from France in 1956, played a central role in the country's modernization process. Bourguiba had a strong vision to transform Tunisia into a modern, secular, and developed country. He expressly separated religion from the state in order to build a modern state based on the principles of rationality and progress. Bourguiba also reformed family law, replacing Islamic family law, which was considered traditional and discriminatory against women, with a more modern and secular family law (Susila Wati and Burdah, 2023).

Bourguiba also restricted the role of religion in public spaces, including a ban on the use of the hijab in schools and government institutions. Tunisia, under Bourguiba's leadership, adhered to a policy of non-alignment and established good relations with both Western and Arab countries.

As previously mentioned, Bourguiba also paid great attention to women's education and encouraged their participation in public life. He promoted women's participation in higher education and the workforce and gave them the political right to vote and be elected in general elections. Additionally, the reform of family law granted women more rights, such as the right to divorce and manage joint property (Gobe and Chouikha, 2015).

Bourguiba also launched various development plans to encourage industrialization and economic diversification. The government built infrastructure such as roads, ports, and factories to support economic growth. The agricultural sector also underwent modernization with the introduction of new technologies and improved irrigation systems. In the education sector, Bourguiba paid great attention to education and worked to achieve universal and quality education. In the health sector, Bourguiba improved the public health system through the construction of hospitals and health centers.

Bourguiba's modernization process brought significant changes to the social and cultural order of Tunisian society. Some of the changes that occurred include shifts in the role of women. Tunisian women became increasingly active in various spheres of life, including political, economic, and social arenas. Additionally, rapid urbanization took place, with more and more people migrating from villages to cities, and Western culture increasingly influenced the lifestyle of Tunisian people, especially the younger generation. However, Bourguiba's modernization and transformation efforts have drawn criticism, such as his government being seen as authoritarian and restricting freedom of opinion. Bourguiba is also criticized for imposing uneven secularization and modernization, which created a social gap between urban and rural areas (Burdah, 2017).

Even so, Habib Bourguiba remains a very important figure in Tunisia's modern history. His policies succeeded in bringing Tunisia out of the colonial era and toward modernization. However, his legacy of governance is also complex and continues to spark debate to this day.

Stagnation of Tunisia's Post-Bourguiba Modernization

Tunisia post-Bourguiba has stagnated in modernization and even tended to regress. After Habib Bourguiba was overthrown in a coup in 1987, the Tunisian government was led by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Initially, Ben Ali continued the modernization policies pioneered by his predecessor. He continued policies such as

infrastructure development, industrial growth, and improving the quality of education (Gobe and Chouikha, 2015).

As time passed, the government's focus shifted from economic development to efforts to maintain power. The legal and political policies implemented were more oriented toward the political and economic interests of the ruling elite than the welfare of the people. As a result, modernization under Ben Ali's leadership was often cosmetic in nature. Infrastructure development and skyscrapers prioritized exterior appearance over quality and benefits for society. Meanwhile, corruption spread across various sectors, and the country's wealth was largely controlled by Ben Ali's family and cronies (Veryna, Simatupang, and Sandhiyudha, 2018).

Although there was progress in some areas, freedoms of expression, organization, and opinion were severely restricted. Political opposition was silenced, and the mass media was tightly controlled by the government. At the same time, income inequality worsened. As a result, Tunisia's post-Bourguiba modernization became pseudo-progressive and stagnant, resulting from authoritarianism, corruption, dependence on the tourism sector, an underdeveloped private sector, and very limited technological innovation. Ben Ali's reign did not provide significant benefits to most Tunisians (Rahmanda, 2022).

Tunisia's Transformation After the Arab Spring

The Tunisian Revolution, often referred to as the Jasmine Revolution, became the starting point of a wave of massive protests that later spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, known as the Arab Spring. This event marked a new chapter in Tunisia's history and served as an inspiration for other countries (Arbi and Geri, 2021). Tunisia became the catalyst for the Arab Spring, with protests erupting in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. Many authoritarian figures were overthrown in Middle Eastern countries, including Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen. The slogan that resonated across these uprisings was: "*Ash-Sha'bu yurid isqat al-nizham*" ("*The people want to overthrow the regime*") (Muhajir, 2021).

The Jasmine Revolution itself was driven by several factors, including the authoritarian regime under the leadership of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Islamist women also played a significant role in these demonstrations, motivated by their long history of repression. The regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali rejected the existence of political parties based on religion, such as the Ennahda Party. Many Ennahda political activists were imprisoned, and some fled to Europe for political protection. This repression of Islamic activism motivated Islamist women to join the struggle against the Ben Ali regime. They also took personal initiatives, providing assistance to each other during the revolutionary process, such as helping to provide food for communities affected by the mass demonstrations (Alkholid, 2021).

The regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali is characterized by rampant corruption, restrictions on freedoms, and human rights violations. In addition, there was also a significant social gap between the rich elite and the poor. The Jasmine Revolution is also linked to the global economic crisis of 2008, which further aggravated Tunisia's economic conditions, including soaring prices of basic necessities (Lotan et al., 2011).

Although motivated by the factors mentioned above, the immediate trigger of the revolution was the suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor, who set himself

on fire. This desperate act was a form of protest against the unfair treatment he received from the government. In addition to being triggered by Bouazizi's suicide, the revolution was also influenced by the widespread use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media became a very effective tool for disseminating information about protests and organizing demonstrations (Veryna, Simatupang, and Sandhiyudha, 2018; Sehabudin, 2015).

The revolutionary process included mass demonstrations following Bouazizi's suicide. Protests erupted in various cities across Tunisia, demanding Ben Ali's resignation and political reforms. The government attempted to disperse the demonstrations with violence. However, this repressive action only intensified the atmosphere. Meanwhile, Western countries and international organizations began to pressure the Tunisian government to implement reforms. Ben Ali ultimately announced his resignation and fled to Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011 (Veryna, Simatupang, and Sandhiyudha, 2018; Sehabudin, 2015).

The Tunisian Revolution is often referred to as the Jasmine Revolution. The jasmine flower was chosen as a symbol of the revolution because it represents purity, peace, and hope. This flower also symbolizes the Tunisian people's resistance to the authoritarian regime. The Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia was a historic event that marked the beginning of a major change in the Middle East. This revolution demonstrated the power of the people in demanding change and ending corrupt, authoritarian governments. Although many challenges remain, the Jasmine Revolution has inspired hope for a better future for Tunisia (Romli, 2023).

Tunisia's Transformation After the Arab Spring

The Jasmine Revolution that took place in Tunisia in 2011 has brought about significant changes in various aspects of the Tunisian people's lives. These changes have occurred not only in the political realm but also in the economic, social, and cultural realms. Although many challenges remain, Tunisia has shown significant progress. For example, Tunisia's transformation has been accompanied by instances of sectarianism and extremism, though they remain limited. Notable events include the bombings and killings in 2013, such as the murder of Mohamed Brahmi, the killing of eight soldiers in the border area between Tunisia and Algeria, the bombing of a National Guard patrol, and the attack on the port of La Goulette. However, despite these challenges, sectarianism and extremism, while still a threat, do not appear to be sustainable, especially with the defeat of ISIS (Arbi and Geri, 2021; Yerkes and Mbarek, 2021; Rahman, 2019; Gobe and Chouikha, 2015).

Socio-Political Transformation

The post-Arab Spring political transformation began with the formation of a transitional government after Ben Ali resigned on February 14, 2011 (Romli, 2023). This transition period was marked by efforts to rebuild a democratic and inclusive political system after decades of authoritarian rule. The transitional governments were responsible for rebuilding strong and independent state institutions, such as the judiciary and parliament. However, the process of building a democratic country was not easy, as Tunisia faced a complicated transition period with an unstable socio-political and economic situation. For example, the transitional government led by President Fouad Mebazaa experienced pressure and changes in government, such as Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi running the government for less than two

months before being replaced by Beji Caid Essebsi to organize the implementation of free and fair elections (Gobe and Chouikha, 2015; Zemni, 2014).

Although the process was challenging, the transitional government was committed to turning Tunisia into a democratic country. This effort can be seen in various policies, such as strategic steps in terms of security and political reform. These included forming a new transitional government, dismissing the Minister of Defense, the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Finance, as well as freeing political prisoners, providing freedom of opinion, allowing the establishment of political parties, and ensuring press freedom. Other actions taken included dissolving the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) party, issuing a warrant for Ben Ali's arrest, punishing him in absentia, disbanding the Tunisian secret police force, forming an independent electoral body, and holding elections for the Constituent Assembly (Rahman, 2019).

At the end of 2011, Tunisia held elections to elect members of the Constituent Assembly. In this election, the Ennahda Party emerged as the winner with 90 seats, or more than 40 percent of the votes. The election, the first since the ouster of Ben Ali, was described by observers as free and fair. In early December 2011, the Constituent Assembly agreed on an interim constitution. Additionally, the Constituent Assembly elected Moncef Marzouki as President of Tunisia. Marzouki then appointed Hamadi Jebali of the Ennahda Party as prime minister. In the first year after the Arab Spring, Tunisia demonstrated its transformation by successfully holding elections and forming a government quickly (Jules and Barton, 2018).

Tunisia's transformation was also marked by the success of the Constituent Assembly in finalizing and approving a new constitution in January 2014. The new constitutional document was hailed by Tunisian leaders and international observers as an example of a successful compromise between Islamist and secular parties. The year 2014 also marked Tunisia's socio-political transformation, notably the holding of presidential and legislative elections in October 2014. The winner of these elections was the Nida Tounes party, led by Beji Caid Sebsi, which secured 85 seats out of 217 in the legislative assembly. In December, Beji Caid Sebsi himself was elected president of Tunisia, winning more than 55 percent of the vote in the second round against the incumbent interim president, Marzouki (Khoiri and Anwar, 2022).

However, Tunisia's democratization has involved complicated dynamics. In July 2016, for example, parliament dissolved the government of Prime Minister Habib Essid, who was later replaced by Youssef Chahed as Tunisia's seventh prime minister. Despite this, Nida Tounes Party leaders began calling for Chahed's resignation, while Ennahda continued to support him in an effort to maintain a stable prime ministership. Some Nida Tounes members also continued to support Chahed's premiership, as seen in the move of eight lawmakers from Nida Tounes leaving the party to prevent a no-confidence motion against Chahed (Umam, 2020).

The socio-political transformation in Tunisia after the Arab Spring was also marked by the growth of political parties. There are at least four parties that dominate Tunisia's political landscape, such as An-Nahdhah, The Congress for the Republic, Ettakatol, and the Modernist Democratic Pole and Democratic Progress Party. Today, An-Nahdhah is a popular Islamic party that dominates the majority of votes, followed by other parties. The rise of An-Nahdhah in post-Arab Spring democratization was caused by several factors. First, An-Nahdhah is firmly rooted in society through social-

community activities. Community support for An-Nahdhah is garnered through the tabligh method, student organizations, and financial assistance for communities in remote parts of the country. Second, An-Nahdhah advocates for moderation, accepting democratic values as the foundation of the state. It is open and accepts the concept of a civil state (Main, 2019).

Democratization in Tunisia is considered successful in terms of the implementation- tion of regular elections, the role and participation of the community, and the guarantee of freedom of expression and the press, which are influenced by cultural and religious elements in Tunisia. However, democratization in Tunisia has stagnated due to actions that occurred after President Saied issued decrees, such as the rejection of the democratic system, the control of the media, and the repressive measures by security forces against protesters and journalists. These actions show the deterioration of democratic principles in Tunisia, leading to authoritarian behavior. The impact of President Saied's actions demonstrates the decline of democratization principles in Tunisia after the achievements made in the post-Arab Spring era (Najib, 2024),

Tunisia's socio-political transformation also shows that there is a harmonious existence between Islam and democracy in Tunisia compared to other countries in the Middle East. The principles of democracy are evident in the implementation of elections, freedom of opinion, religious tolerance, and recognition of gender equality. Tunisia has successfully held several general elections, both for electing parliamentarians and presidents. These general elections are generally considered free and fair. Tunisia has succeeded in building a more democratic political system with free and fair elections (Shiddieqy, Simamora, and Madina, 2024).

Freedom of opinion and expression is increasingly guaranteed. Civil society has become more active in supervising the government and fighting for the interests of the community. Civil society plays a very important role in encouraging the democratic transition process. Support from Western countries and international organizations is crucial to the success of Tunisia's democratic transition. The experience of democracy in the past, albeit brief, provides valuable lessons for Tunisian society. The threat from extremist groups poses a serious challenge to the democratization process (ibid.).

Constitutional Transformation

Tunisia's post-Arab Spring transformation is also evident in the legal field, notably in the successful formation of a new constitution in 2014. In fact, in this area of basic law, transformation is further demonstrated by the development of the latest constitution in 2022. Historically, it can be explained that in January 2014, the Tunisian National Assembly approved a new constitution for the country, known as the Constitution of 2014. The ratification of this constitution marked a step forward in building democracy in Tunisia, three years after the fall of the Ben Ali regime (Muhajir, 2021).

The new constitution is considered the dream of the Tunisian people, a proof of the revival of the revolution, and a foundation for creating a democratic civil state. The approval of the constitution and its progress make Tunisia stand in stark contrast to the conditions in other countries after the Arab Spring. Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, for example, are still grappling with their own internal conflicts after the 2011 revolutions. The ratification of Tunisia's new constitution positions the country as the

most progressive and transformative. This constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women, calls for the state to address the issue of corruption, and outlines the division of executive power between the prime minister and the president (Abouaoun, Hill, and Siebert, 2022).

As explained at the beginning, the Tunisian Constitution underwent changes following a referendum held in July 2022. Tunisia has since adopted a new constitution, known as the Third Republic Constitution, which is the fourth constitution in Tunisia's constitutional history. In the 2022 Constitution, the political system shifted to a presidential model, where the president is granted broader powers. This change appears to be motivated by the previous political system, which was considered unstable and hindered the government's ability to perform its duties and exercise authority effectively. Thus, it is clear that Tunisia's state system underwent a transformation after the Arab Spring (Boussen and Lakhal, 2022) (Ahdia, 2022).

Women's Involvement in Politics

Women's involvement in socio-politics is one of the defining characteristics of Tunisia's post-Arab Spring transformation. Tunisia has demonstrated this by promoting freedom of opinion and maintaining equality between men and women, including in socio-political spheres. In fact, according to Ayu Maulida Alkholid and Firmanda Taufiq (2021), Tunisian women played a significant role in the Arab Spring revolution. They argue that women's involvement in the revolution stemmed from experiences of injustice, discrimination, and the constraints of patriarchal culture.

Although women were granted some protections prior to the Arab Spring through the Code of Personal Status (CPS), many obstacles remained, such as restrictions on the freedom to wear the hijab. After the Arab Spring, however, women achieved notable progress, including securing 59 seats in parliament. This indicates that Tunisian women have become actively involved in the democratization process. Consequently, Tunisia's political system has become more inclusive and responsive to the interests and rights of women, fostering greater gender justice (SAIDIN and ALFITRI, 2020).

In 2018, Tunisia made history when Souad Abderrahim was elected as the first woman to serve as Mayor of Tunis, winning 33.8% of the vote and defeating her rival, Kamel Idir, from the secular party Nidaa Tounes. Interestingly, Souad Abderrahim ran as an independent but was supported by the Ennahda party, a moderate Islamic party. Ennahda successfully made a breakthrough by recognizing Tunisia's political realities and positioning itself as a "democratic Islam" party, promoting equality between women and men (Muhajir, 2021).

Tunisian women have also undergone significant transformations in the legal field, particularly when viewed from an Islamic perspective. This is evidenced by the lifting of the ban on interfaith marriage for Tunisian women. In 2017, following the Arab Spring, Tunisia allowed Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men. Furthermore, in 2018, Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi proposed equal inheritance rights for men and women, ensuring that women receive the same inheritance as men. These developments give Tunisian women greater rights compared to women in many other Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East region (SAIDIN and ALFITRI, 2020; Susila Wati and Burdah, 2023).

Education

The transformation of Tunisia's education sector after the Arab Spring encompasses several key aspects, such as improving infrastructure. Driven by a desire to enhance the education system and meet the aspirations of the community, Tunisia has undertaken significant reforms. Among the primary areas of transformation is curriculum reform. The education system in Tunisia is making adjustments to align with the needs of modern society and global developments. The revised curriculum places a stronger focus on critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, with an emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education. Furthermore, the new curriculum incorporates democratic and human rights values to prepare students to become active and responsible citizens (Jules and Barton, 2018; Bouguerra and Aboulkacem, 2016).

In addition to curriculum reform, Tunisia has made substantial efforts to increase access to education. Following the revolution, greater attention was given to improving education opportunities for underserved groups, including children in rural areas and minority communities. Aid programs, scholarships, and policies to reduce the cost of education were introduced to ensure that education is accessible to all segments of society. To support these efforts, the government has collaborated with international institutions to enhance educational infrastructure. Many schools have been renovated or newly constructed to provide a better learning environment.

In addition, educational technology is being introduced into classrooms, with efforts underway to improve students' access to digital resources. The transformation of education in Tunisia also includes enhancing the quality of teaching through improved teacher training programs. These programs aim to develop teachers' pedagogical skills and professionalism, enabling them to address the challenges of modern education and meet the diverse needs of students. Following the Arab Spring, community involvement in education has also increased. Many civic organizations and local communities now play an active role in supporting education initiatives, including literacy programs and skills training (Zemni, 2014).

The transformation of Tunisia's education system after the Arab Spring reflects significant efforts to achieve better and more inclusive education. Despite facing various challenges, the steps taken demonstrate a commitment to building an education system capable of producing a generation prepared to face global challenges and contribute to the country's development. By continuing to address these obstacles, Tunisia has the potential to achieve sustainable progress in the field of education (Mokhtari, 2017).

Despite significant progress, Tunisia continues to face challenges in the education sector. There remains a gap in the quality of education between urban and rural areas, as well as persistent unemployment among graduates. Additionally, ongoing political and economic instability has affected funding and education priorities. These challenges align with the findings of Bouguerra and Aboulkacem (2016) and Abdelmadjid Mokhtari's (2017) study, which indicated that conditions in learning, teaching, and educational leadership in Tunisia have not significantly improved since the Arab Spring. One notable issue is that French still dominates academic circles and remains the language of choice for the Tunisian elite.

Teachers have expressed that the lack of clear policy and reform is a key factor in the slow pace of educational improvement. As a result, Tunisia's post-Arab Spring education system remains highly centralized. Furthermore, according to *ibid.*, There

is a significant gap and poor communication between Tunisian policymakers and education stakeholders. This disconnect has contributed to a mismatch between the education system and the job market.

Although Abdelmadjid Mokhtari's study highlights several challenges related to Tunisian education, it also contains some ambiguities. On the one hand, Mokhtari pointed to the implications of the Arab Spring revolution as a significant momentum for change. For example, he noted that Tunisia's post-Arab Spring education reform began in 2013, even though it was somewhat delayed. He also emphasized that Tunisia urgently needs new and efficient education policies and reforms, particularly in addressing corruption, job preparation, and the adoption of the English language. Furthermore, Mokhtari highlighted that 51.9% of Tunisian educators believe the Arab Spring has created an environment conducive to developing education policies and reforms, including those related to job preparation (ibid.).

Conclusion

Since the Arab Spring hit Tunisia in 2011, changes in the socio-political, legal, and educational fields have highlighted Tunisia's unique dynamics and developments compared to other countries in the Middle East region. These changes appear to be ongoing, influenced by both internal socio-political dynamics and global factors. Tunisia's social, political, and legal order is expected to move in a more open and balanced direction, shaped by the culture of Tunisian society itself. Although some observers view Tunisia's democracy as declining under Kais Saied's leadership after the 2018 elections, this article emphasizes that the dynamics and process of democracy continue to indicate progress toward better reforms. Tunisia has reformed its political and constitutional system, expanding the powers of the president to enhance the country's stability in implementing government and development programs. Tunisia's social and political transformation is fundamentally supported by the transformation of the constitution, which serves as the foundation of the country's political framework. Tunisia's social, political, and legal developments reflect a transformation movement that is somewhat similar to Indonesia's political history. Tunisia's education system, post-Arab Spring, also underwent a transformation, despite facing complex challenges. Thus, this article concludes that the transformation of a country, including Tunisia, is determined by the dynamics of its socio-cultural, political, legal, and educational structures.

Declaration of competing interest

There are no known conflicts of interest.

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