



REFINING DEMOCRATIZATION THEORY: THE TUNISIAN REVOLUTION AS A DEVIANT CASE STUDY



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Abstract: The thesis starts with a literature review on democratization and two key subcategories: transition and consolidation. The literature indicates a strong consensus on at least five variables that influence the democratization process. The second part of the thesis exists out of a deviant case study of the Tunisian Revolution between 2010 and 2011. This case study aims to assess to what extent the case study deviates from the theory discussed in the first part. The deviant case study will be used to refine the democratization theory and the set of variables that influence the process of democratization. The most notable results of the deviant case study are: (1) Two variables are poorly explained in the literature on democratization and (2) three of the five variables mentioned by the literature are not met in the case study.

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“Events, past and present . . . are the true, the only reliable teachers of political scientists . . . Once such an event has happened, every policy, theory, and forecast of future potentialities needs re-examination”

- Hannah Arendt

Introduction

In December of 2010, a revolution in Tunisia, North Africa, initiated a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. This transition from non-democracy to democracy, also called democratization, was remarkable because of three reasons: in the Arab world, this was the first grassroots revolution that put an end to the authoritarian regime; the transition occurred independently of foreign influences; and out of the thirteen states across the Middle East and North Africa, it was the only one to make the transition to democracy and to undertake steps to consolidate it (Gana, 2013; Deane, 2013). This process of democratization warrants a closer study of the three main phases of democratization: (1) how a non-democracy moved to introduce a democracy (the transition phase), (2) what is required to realize this (introducing minimal democracy), (3) and how democracy can be maintained (the consolidation phase).

This thesis addresses the following research question: does the case study of the Tunisian revolution deviate from democratization theory, and if so, to what extent? This question comes during a time in which the political paradigm of democracy is under pressure and faces challenges across the globe (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2021; Kleinfeld et al., 2021, pp. 4-7; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022). The Tunisian revolution shows the potential of democracy. It achieves this by discussing how the democratization process, from non-democracy to consolidated democracy, can be established in a country and region (Middle-East and North Africa (MENA)) which for centuries, has relied on a political system built around one leader, monarch, or tribe chief, and despite the absence of three key variables (see below). The discussion of these variables shows what both non-democratic countries, as well as established democratic countries, need to look out for, in order to achieve, maintain or develop, their democratic institutions.

The origins of democratization theory lie in the research on democratization between 1974 and 1995 when more than 50 states across the globe made the transition to a democratic political system. Samuel P. Huntington dubbed this period “the third wave of democracy” (1991). The literature that these studies have produced suggests the existence of five key variables that influence the process of democratization (Carothers, 2007; Doorenspleet, 2004). These are (1) The level of economic development, (2) the concentration of sources of national wealth, (3) identity-based divisions, (4) historical experience with political pluralism, (5) Non-democratic Neighborhoods. However, when analyzing the case study of the Tunisian Revolution, it shows that the outlook on the future of democracy may be predicated on an incomplete set of key variables.

The thesis is divided into two parts: a literature review and a case study. The literature review focuses on a qualitative analysis of the literature on democratization theory. This theory can be divided into two topics: the phases of the democratization process and the variables that influence this process. Preliminary research indicated that democratization can be divided into three sub-categories: (1) transition, (2) introducing minimal democracy, and (3) consolidation. These are dubbed here as “the three phases of the democratization process”. Furthermore, the literature described five variables that influence the democratization process and that either have a positive or a negative influence. However, additional

investigation of the literature showed that it may be useful to add a sixth variable: “change agents”. The literature showed that change agents, social- and political actors, significantly influence the democratization process and should be considered as a variable on its own, rather than intertwining it with the other variables, as the literature has done thus far (Pickel, 2002; Foley and Edwards, 1996; Landman, 2005).

The second part of the thesis analyzes the case study using the deviant case method. This is a method of analyzing case studies originally formulated by Jason Seawright and John Gerring (2008). The benefit of using this method is that it allows for an in-depth investigation of how one case study deviates from an existing theory. The deviations that the analysis produces can be used to refine the existing theory and formulate suggestions for future research. Because the research is limited to a single case study, it is not possible to test the insights this thesis produces by subjecting them to a wider sample of case studies. However, the deviations that the single case analysis produces lend themselves to be tested against a wider population of case studies to legitimize the variables and suppositions that this thesis finds. One of the more important findings of the case study is that the six variables are in need of another, explanatory variable: catalysts.

Basic concepts

The initial research for this thesis focused on one key theory: democratization. The research on this subject furthermore indicated two essential sub-categories of democratization: transition and consolidation. As a result, the following chapter is divided into a review of the literature that belongs to these three categories. The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, to clearly define democratization, transition, and consolidation. Second, to discuss the most popular theories of these notions. At the end of this chapter, the reader will have a clear idea on the following subjects: *what* is democratization, *how* can it be achieved, and *when* is democratization completed. As always, clear and concisely explained concepts form the building blocks of our understanding of a theory. As a result, the first concept to be tackled is that of “the political system”. If democratization is a sub-category of democracy, then democracy is a sub-category of the political system. Explaining this notion, although it is a basic and well-known notion, helps to understand and clarify the essential elements that are involved when talking about democratization, transition, and consolidation.

The political system

A political system can be understood as one of many existing functions of a society, which task is to make decisions that are collectively binding (Baraldi et al., 2021). Viewed as a function of society whose main focus is issue-based, a government will occupy itself with core questions that pertain to improving the source of the issue. As a result, politicians, civil servants, and policymakers focus their work on three questions: (1) “what is it that needs changing”, (2) “what changes need to be implemented” and (3) “how do we implement these changes”? (Ibid). Examples of other ‘systems’ within a society or of a society are the economic system, the system of public security, and the educational system. In the context of political system transformation, a system refers to the rules and procedures according to which a government organizes society.

Merkel et al. capture the definition of the political system very elegantly by satisfying both theoretical and real-world descriptions of a political system:

“A political system, which constitutes the core of system-theoretical thought, refers to the totality of structures (institutions) and rules (procedures) that places political and social actors (political parties, associations, organizations, individuals) in rule-guided interactions with one another in order to fulfill system-preserving functions and reproduce them constantly in a circuit-like manner” (2019, p. 19).

This notion is especially important when discussing the variables that influence the democratization process. Democratization of a previous undemocratic political system is essentially about regime change:

“Regime change fundamentally involves institutional transformation. Regimes are the formal and the informal institutions that structure political interaction, and a change of regime occurs when actors reconfigure these institutions.” (Snyder & Mahoney, 1999, p. 103).

In sum, regime change should be understood as *changes* of the institutions and procedures within a political system that *alter* the way social and political actors interact and that *transforms* the way that these actors fulfill their respective functions and how they reproduce them to preserve the political system (see also Snyder and Mahoney, 1999, p. 103; Lawson, 1993, p. 186). Institutionalization is a process in itself during which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability.

Defining a ‘regime’

The following two definitions, each with a separate meaning, illustrate the disparate perspectives on the notion of the regime. “A regime is the name usually given to a government or sequence of governments in which power remains essentially in the hands of the same social group” (Calvert, 1987). This, one could say, is the popular conception of the regime. The other definition is more accurate and corresponds to Merkel’s definition of the political system. It defines a regime as “principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors converge in a given issue area” (Krasner, 1983, p. 1). As such, transforming an authoritarian system into a democracy signifies changing the authoritarian principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures, i.e. the regime, to becoming democratic. From these definitions, we can draw three inferences. First, a change in government does not necessarily constitute a regime change. Second, new governments that are established within the framework of the existing regime are of the same character for they follow the same formal and informal rules. Third, for an authoritarian government to make the transition to democracy, both the regime and the government must be subject to democratization. If the government leaves but the regime remains authoritarian, then the new government will be subject to the same formal and informal rules and principles that characterize authoritarianism. As Krasner remarks, the regime includes the rules and decision-making procedures that organize political power (pp. 2-3, 276).

Defining authoritarianism

Although theory on authoritarianism is strictly speaking another field of study than democratization theory, the starting point of democratization is the non-democratic political system. According to Juan J. Linz, authoritarianism is a political system with “limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology” that is being led by one person or a group who maintains power within

ill-defined political and constitutional limits (2000, p. 160). Linz his definition is focused on how power is exercised and organized, which ideology underlies authoritarian rule, the relation with society, and the role of citizens in the political process. To understand when an authoritarian state makes the transition to democracy, it is important to understand the sources of legitimacy that an authoritarian regime uses to cement its rule. Because, unlike a democratic regime, an authoritarian regime does not draw its power from universal suffrage i.e. national elections that are free, fair, and transparent. For an authoritarian government, there exist other sources of legitimacy. The most prevalent sources of legitimacy are economic legitimacy, religious legitimacy, and Louisian legitimacy (Cavatorta, 2013). These notions will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

One of the most prevalent sources of legitimacy mentioned in the literature is economic development (Cavatorta, 2012; Korany, 1986; Luciani, 1987; Deane, 2013; Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004). Economic legitimacy means that an authoritarian state depends on the strength of the economy to legitimize its rule. Economic success provides the government with an image of being effective and makes it easier to convince oppositional parties, both in parliament and in society, that the government is what is best for the country's overall welfare. However, when the strength of the government is tied to the economy, the rule of power is vulnerable to external market forces and other events that might adversely affect the economy. In other words, when the economy fails, people will start to question the competence of those in charge. In addition, dormant critiques on the government will regain traction when the government has lost its primary source of legitimacy (Deane, 2013, p. 8).

According to Albrecht and Schlumberger, one of the largest dangers for an authoritarian government that used the economy to legitimize its rule is an economic crisis. They add that economic power, such as income from oil and gas, determines the allocative power in an authoritarian state where financial power often translates to political power (2004, p. 376). The assumption is that the scarcer both financial and natural resources become, the greater the likelihood of political change (Ibid, 372). Financial power can also be used to "legitimize" the political system by subsidizing liberal and social developments such as financing basic food requirements and consumer goods without implementing real constraints on the power of the ruling elite (Ibid). An example of this type of legitimacy is the system of petrolism maintained by most Arab oil states. Their economy is closely tied to the production and price of oil which is a crucial source of power and legitimacy.

The second source of legitimacy is religious legitimacy. This type of legitimacy occurs when the seat of power is rooted in religion as well as the ideology that certain family's, classes, and persons should rule and others, particularly religious, social, and cultural classes, should not (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004; Gilly, 1990). Obvious examples are the Islamist States who base their rule, laws, and policies on Sharia law, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Less obvious are regimes and governments who draw legitimacy and support from particular sectarian or religious groups. One example is the Assad government whose Ba'athist party rallied support from the Ba'athist minority throughout Syria.

Dubbed here as *Louisian legitimacy*, the third source of legitimacy is when the authoritarian ruler claims they are the embodiment of the people (Lawson, 1993, p. 196). They do not need a democratic political system because, as the argument goes, the government speaks and acts on behalf of the people. Therefore, what the government wants is what the people want. Any opposition to the government is ipso facto opposition against the state and the people itself and can be considered treason (Apter, 1962, p. 158). This narrative corresponds to "limited pluralism", a key characteristic of authoritarianism described

by Lawson. Limited pluralism is understood here as referring to the attempt of a single party to represent an entire political community that consists of different social, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and the inability to do so (Lawson, 1993, p. 194). The core issue is that a one-party government can hardly represent all interests of a heterogeneous society. This narrative allows the government to act as if it was directly mandated by the populace and to accuse any oppositional actors of treason against the state and its people. Furthermore, authoritarian governments that actively pursue this type of legitimacy perturb the distinction between state, regime, and government by enforcing the idea that the government is the embodiment of all three at the same time. In sum, not differentiating political office from the person holding the office is a hallmark of the authoritarian system and a slippery slope to corruption (Baraldi et al., 2021).

Literature review

Democratization is the process of implementing democratic rules and procedures within a non-democratic political system until its constitutive structural and procedural elements have been reformed. It covers the process from the absence of democracy, in this case, authoritarianism, to a full-fledged liberal democracy (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008; Gunther et al., 1995; Diamond, 1997). Democratization theory is a field of study that is focused on the transition from non-democratic regimes to democratic governments. Its theories outline ideas, hypotheses, and arguments that aim to identify and explain the most important factors that influence the transition of a non-democracy to democracy (Doorenspleet, 2004, p. 312). The task of this section is to reduce a complex real-world phenomenon, democratization, to a comprehensible and tangible framework that can be used to compare the deviant case study too. The comparison between the case study and the democratization theory discussed here will distinguish to what extent the case study corresponds and to what extent it deviates.

Because democratization essentially is the moving towards a full-fledged liberal democracy it is useful to revisit the roots of the concept. Defining democracy, again, might appear a trivial step when discussing democracy-related subjects. However, as W.B. Gallie had argued in his analysis of “essentially contested concepts”, democracy is “the appraisive political concept par excellence”: For some regimes, acquiring the status of democracy is the highest value attainable (2019, p. 184). In the contemporary global order, the western dominated international system values democracies as something good and non-democracies as bad, or at least, unreliable. States and authoritative international institutions, such as the World Bank, attach certain benefits to their definition of democracy to promote good governance and democratic reforms (see Santiso, 2001). As a result, how democracy is defined can have real-world consequences.

One of the most widely accepted definitions of democracy comes from Robert Dahl’s seminal work “polyarchy: participation and opposition” (Dahl, 1971; Schedler, 1998; Doorenspleet and Kopecky, 2008; Whitehead, 1988 & 2002). Dahl argues that there are two main theoretical requirements of democracy: competition and inclusive suffrage. A political regime is democratic once both of Dahl’s requirements have been met. From this, it follows that the process of democratization, following Dahl’s definition, should focus on introducing competition and inclusive suffrage.

The first requirement is met when the political system includes institutions and procedures that allow citizens to express their opinions on alternative policies at a national level and enables citizens to impose constraints on the power of the executive (e.g. ruling party, president, prime minister, etc.). In practice,

competition entails (Doorenspleet, 2004, p. 322): that at least one executive is chosen by way of competitive popular elections where the electorate has alternative choices concerning leadership and policies; the electorate itself has the opportunity to run for executive office and the alternative choices to the executive and oppositional movements are not undermined or otherwise suppressed.

The second requirement, inclusive suffrage, refers to the right of all citizens to participate in selecting national leaders and policies. This requirement emphasizes the universal, equal, and non-discriminatory dimensions of the right to vote, and to be able to run for public office, which should be enjoyed by every citizen (Ibid, pp. 322-323). Only minor and necessary restrictions on political participation should be maintained such as age, health, and no criminal background. Doorenspleet (Ibid) breaks down the level of inclusiveness in four categories, as per the example of Coppedge and Reinicke (1991): 1) complete absence of popular suffrage; 2) suffrage is largely restricted when more than 20 percent of the population are denied voting rights; 3) when less than 20 percent are denied voting rights, there exists partial suffrage; 4) presence of universal suffrage or suffrage with minor restrictions.

Transition

Simply put, within the category of democratization, a transition refers to the shift from one type of political regime into another. More formally, “the interval between the dissolution of the old regime and the installation of a new regime” (Doorenspleet and Kopecky, p. 700). In the context of the theory on democratization, it refers to the process of democratization of a non-democratic political system to a minimal democracy. A transition is an uncertain phase in the history of a state since its processes are often inconclusive and the direction in which the transition will lead can be uncertain. According to Laurence Whitehead, the democratization process involves “many false starts, misjudgments, detours, and unintended consequences” as well as authoritarian legacies that could potentially perturb the democratization process (1988, p. 28).

Based on the literature of democratization theory, the democratization process can be divided into three phases: (1) the transition (from non-democracy to democracy); (2) establishing minimal democracy, and (3) the consolidation of democracy (Merkel, 2009, p. 136). A transition period is characterized by the following occurrences (O’Donnel et al. 2013, p. 1): (1) the rules of the political game are not defined and continuously contested, (2) actors struggle to meet the interest of those they represent, (3) the rules and procedures that give shape to the new political system also determine: (a) who will be the winner and the loser; (b) who is allowed to enter the political arena; (c) and which resources can be used legitimately within the political arena. These are not to be viewed as variables but rather as dimensions of every phase of democratization.

Initiating the transition to democracy

A popular subject of debate within the field of democratization theory is how the transition process is started. In the literature on democratization theory there exist different views on the starting phase of the transition. One widely held view states that democracy should first obtain a foothold within the authoritarian regime by introducing liberal rules and procedures (O’Donnel and Schmitter, 1986; Bos, 1996; Rüb, 1996; Przeworski et al., 2000). According to O’Donnel and Schmitter (1986), the democratization process should start with the implementation of liberal policies by the authoritarian regime. They argue that national elections are too vulnerable to corruption, fraud, and opportunism by the political- and social elite who make up the authoritarian regime or who have deep connections.

Instead, they argue in favor of introducing democratic rules and procedures such as an independent judiciary, political and civil rights, and fair and equal treatment of all persons before the law (Carothers, 2007, p. 16). This view is supported by Diamond et al., who argue that a transition to democracy in authoritarian political regimes largely depends on the willingness of the political elite to realize those changes (2014). According to the classical theory of transition, liberalization often was the result of internal divisions within the regime (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski et al., 2000; Bernhard, 2020).

Another popular view states that the transition to democracy can be initiated by a large group of the electorate and independent of the political elite or the organization of national elections (Haggard 2016; Fukuyama, 2014; Arato & Cohen, 1994). This claim is corroborated in studies on civil society movements throughout Central- and Eastern Europe in the decades after 1980 (Andrew Arato & Jean Cohen, 1994). These studies show that the initiation of democratic and liberal reforms and the subsequent transition to democracy does not necessarily follow from divisions within the leadership of the state. Instead, what they show is that the transition can also be initiated by pressure from below. Disadvantaged groups or their representatives pose a threat to the authority and legitimacy of the government because they publicly challenged the capability and legitimacy of the government (Haggard et al., 2016, p. 8). Moreover, once the costs of repressing these demands have passed a certain threshold, the ruling elites are prone to compromise or even relinquish power in favor of democratic challengers. The pattern that this creates, according to Haggard et al, is "mass mobilization followed by authoritarian withdrawal" (Ibid).

The end of a transition has been reached with the adoption of an agreement on democratic rules and when all the relevant political actors accept those rules and act accordingly (Ibid, p. 701; Gunther et al., 1995). In practice, such an agreement can include the adoption of a new constitution and new free elections with an emphasis on competition and inclusive suffrage (see also Whitehead, 2002, pp. 26-27).

The process of consolidation

Once an authoritarian system has transitioned to a minimal democracy the democratic actors that are part of the democratic system are faced with "unbounded uncertainties" and their efforts shift, from establishing competition and inclusive suffrage to developing those institutions that strengthen democracy (Schedler, 1998, p. 99). A minimal democracy can evolve into a full-fledged liberal democracy by being competitive and inclusive but, in addition, "also displays no major violations of civil and political liberties, has little or no endemic corruption that undermines state institutions, and ensures the rule of law for all citizens" (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008, p. 700). Consolidation thus understood is about addressing the issues of democratic quality and the deepening of all dimensions of democracy. Deepening liberal democracy means solving issues of "governmental performance, public administration, judicial systems, party systems, interest groups, civil society, political culture, and styles of decision making" (Schedler, 1998, p. 100).

The development of minimal democracy into a liberal democracy is also referred to as "the process of consolidation". In other words, the existing democratic political system evolves into a full-fledged liberal democracy, extending the minimal requirement of competition and inclusive suffrage to the protection of civil liberties, ensuring the rule of law for all citizens, and the rooting out of all practices of corruption. Per definition, consolidation always occurs after the transition process has been completed, although it can happen that the end of the transition phase overlaps with the beginning of consolidation. However, it is difficult to determine when a country has achieved a full-fledged liberal democracy (Ibid, p. 701). There

exist at least two views on when a minimal democracy has consolidated into a full liberal democracy. These views differ from one another because they propose different requirements that need to be met for a minimal democracy to evolve into a liberal democracy.

The first view proposes that all relevant actors must act in accordance with the democratic rules (Gunther et al., 1995). Larry Diamond suggests that in a consolidated democracy, the most significant political actors must comply with the democratic and constitutional rules of the game. These rules must be viewed as legitimate by these actors as well as the majority of the population (1999, pp. 75-77). Deconsolidation, on the other hand, occurs when this requirement is not met and is considered as a regression of democracy. Deconsolidation occurs when "...commitment on the part of significant actors to the rules of the constitutional game" declines (Ibid, p. 74). The second view on consolidated democracy is more complex. Proposed by Stepan and Linz (1996), it describes the use of certain rules and concepts such as a "vibrant civil society" and "institutionalized political parties and party systems". Measuring these concepts empirically is difficult since they are abstract and difficult to quantify. Stepan and Linz define a consolidated democracy as five inter-relating conditions or 'arenas', each with its organizing principle (1996, p. 7). The arenas cannot function properly without at least a minimum of support from the other arena's (see Linz and Stepan, 1996, pp. 5-15). It is not necessary to expand on this conception, since Dahl's definition is most widely accepted and, due to its brevity and simplicity, is most practical to use. For the purposes of this thesis, it suffices to know what type of other views on consolidation exist and how complicated it can be to define and measure conditions for democracy and its consolidated state, liberal democracy.

Consolidation is the last phase of the democratization process; however, it is not the end. The process of democratization is open-ended (2002, p. 27). It is a continuous "progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics" (Ibid). One of the reasons that it never ends is because, similar to conceptualizing democracy, conceptualizing democratization is heavily influenced by context, facts, values, and interpretation. As a result, Whitehead argues, conceptualizing democratization is an 'interpretivist' perspective. This is a research perspective that allows the researcher to 'interpret' certain elements of the theory, on the assumption that involving the researcher's interpretation helps understand the social reality (Dudovskiy, n.d.).

Six key variables of democratization

The following six key variables are based on the democratization literature. Formulating explanatory factors or variables that influence the stability of democracy or the democratization process is not a novel venture and has been excellently expressed by Thomas Carothers (2007, p. 240) and Renke Doorenspleet (2004, pp. 318-321). However, most scholarly discussions of such variables remain limited to a few variables such as "economic development" and "the political elite" (see the separate discussion of the variables below). Naturally, the sources consulted for this research remain within a certain limit and it is not excluded that there exist more complete defined sets of variables that influence the democratization process. In her paper on "The 'Sequencing' Fallacy", Carothers describes five key variables which, as the separate discussion of each variable below show, agrees with a considerable number of literatures.

1. *Level of economic development*: The degree of economic wealth of a state increases the chances of democratic consolidation after the transition.
2. *Concentration of sources of national wealth*: where the better part of the economic wealth is generated by a few concentrated resources, countries generally struggle with democratization.

3. *Identity-based divisions*: Countries with a heterogeneous society, composed of different ethnic, religious, tribal, or clan groups can impede the democratization process.
4. *Historical experience with political pluralism*: the degree of experience with political pluralism influences if democratization is easier (a lot of experience) or more difficult (little to no experience).
5. *Non-democratic neighborhoods*: Democratization is more difficult for a state when its neighboring states consist of non-democratic political systems.

In addition, a large body of literature pointed toward an additional variable not covered by Carothers: “change agents”. This sixth addition is explained on page 14.

Carothers emphasizes that these are not to be viewed as “preconditions” without which democratization cannot occur (2007, p. 24). Rather, they should be viewed as facilitators which, when some of them have a positive influence on democratization, significantly increases the likelihood of a successful democratization. The reason that these facilitators cannot be seen as preconditions is because there exist cases where democratization occurred despite in contrast to one or more of these variables. For example, Carothers refers to India, Panama, Suriname, and Botswana as countries that have transitioned to democracy despite their poor economy. At least one successful democracy, Norway, has concentrated sources of wealth. Furthermore, there are examples of successful democratization despite the presence of identity-based divisions, and the absence of historical experience with pluralism and democratic neighborhoods can also be found (see *Ibid*, p. 25). It can be concluded that these examples of democratizations are either deviations from what can otherwise be considered as legitimate preconditions, or the takeaway is that these examples demonstrate that the aforementioned five variables are incomplete. Confirming this claim would require a quantitative large-N analysis of all the aforementioned examples in order to establish what made their democratization successful. This is something that Carothers does not include. However, the facilitators Carothers referred to are widely mentioned throughout the literature on democratization theory, thereby establishing their legitimacy. As the deviant case study of the Tunisian Revolution will show, it too belongs to the list of examples that Carothers mentioned. Therefore, the case study examined here will be a small progress towards establishing the legitimacy of the current five variables and whether it is necessary to expand it or not. What follows is an explanation of the set of variables mentioned by Carothers as well as the “missing variable”: change agents.

1. Level of economic development.

Poor countries are unlikely candidates for democratization since “a society divided between a large, impoverished mass and a small, favored elite would result in either in oligarchy... or in tyranny” (Lipset, 1959, p. 75). Rich countries have most likely already made the transition, and the middle-income states are the most likely candidates for democratization (Huntington, 1991, pp. 30-33). The latter countries are situated in what Huntington calls “the political transition zone”. Most of the states that have transitioned to democracy during the third wave between 1974 and 1990 were situated in the transition zone (*Ibid*). According to Seymour M. Lipset, states with a higher level of economic development experience that citizens have a greater willingness to believe in democratic values and they are more likely to support a democratic system (1959, pp. 69-105). Doorenspleet in “Democratic Transition”, has compiled a list of studies that have replicated Lipset’s study, all of them have established a positive relationship between economic development and democracy (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008). According to Rueschemeyer

et al., the robustness and frequency of these findings mean that any democratic theory must accept the positive correlation between economic development and democracy (1992, p. 244).

2. Concentration of sources of national wealth.

According to Albrecht and Schlumberger, one of the largest dangers for an authoritarian government that uses economic success and financial power to legitimize its rule is an economic crisis (2004). An authoritarian state's legitimacy, and the power of the political elite, can be completely dependent on its economic success. Several scholars confirm the dependency of authoritarianism on its economic success (Cavatorta, 2012; Korany, 1986; Luciani, 1987). According to Schlumberger, the quantity of resources is one of the essential determinants of economic status (2002). Economic power determines the allocative power in an authoritarian state where financial power often translates to political power (Albrecht and Schlumberger, 2004, p. 376). The assumption is that the scarcer resources become, the greater the likelihood of political change (Schlumberger, 2002). Financial power can also be used to "legitimize" the political system by subsidizing liberal and social developments such as financing basic food requirements and consumer goods without implementing real constraints on the power of the ruling elite. An example of this type of legitimacy is the system of petrolism maintained by most Arab oil states. Their economy is closely tied to the production of oil and price fluctuations and natural resources that can be a crucial source of power and legitimacy.

3. Identity-based divisions.

Cleavages between distinct ethnic groups, the locus of identity-based divisions, may have adverse consequences for economic development, the provisions of public goods, and democracy (Ogenyi & Nchare, 2022, p. 51). Furthermore, disparate ethnic identities may be played out and used as a social tool by political actors to strengthen their own position as politicians (Ibid, p. 52). Donald Horowitz shows that the questions concerning identity-based divisions, ethnic conflict, and the role of ethnic affiliations within social and political arenas require far more attention than this thesis has room for (see Horowitz, 2000, pp. xi-xii). As a result, the discussion of the role of identity-based divisions as a variable is necessarily limited and therefore inconclusive. However, a brief discussion of identity-based divisions as a concept, in accordance with referring to additional literature which emphasizes its importance, should suffice in establishing its viability as a variable.

One general characteristic of authoritarian rulers in African states is that the government is rooted in African nationalism and culture whilst the legitimacy of opposition parties is often undermined by portraying them as "alien, capitalistic, and a relic of imperialism" (Lawson, 1993, p. 198). However, the existence of national unity and intrinsic "Africaness" has firmly been swept aside by Ibingira (2019, p. 249). He points out that most African countries are characterized by the plurality of distinct social groups, ethnicities, and cultures. Stepan and Linz add: "the empirical and emotional fact is that many human beings in the contemporary world have for a long time identified with more than one culture and history, have intermarried, have friends of different nationalities, and have moved back and forth within the state" (1996, p. 33). In sum, a single-party system that enforces unity cannot apply its distinctive norms and principles, translated to rules and procedures, without thereby alienating one or more distinct groups without the presence of multiple political parties that represent different groups (Lawson, 1993, p. 198).

As can often be seen in a country where specific social and political groups are suppressed by the government, "those denied a fair say in running the affairs of their state have sought to change incumbent regimes by force" (Ibid). By disregarding the interests of certain distinct political and social groups, a state risks triggering an oppositional movement, be it in the shape of revolution, rebellion, or mass protests. This applies to the democratization process as well, when one or more different social groups feel left out of the democratization process. The failure of accurate representation has the potential to result in social movements that will seek to overturn the policies and practices that have led to limited social pluralism and demand more governmental- and institutional representation of their interests.

4. Historical experience with political pluralism.

According to Samuel Huntington, a state requires equal levels of institutionalization and civil society (Huntington, 2006, pp. 5-6). A democracy with a highly active and mobilized civil society across from weak political institutions often regresses into instability, disorder, and sometimes even revolution. Raymond Hinnebusch concurs with Huntington and notes that a state is strong when it has both strong institutionalism and a strong civil society (2019, p. 47). When a state has strong institutions, it can regulate group competition peacefully. In weak states, on the other hand, group conflict increases when the state is weak in terms of power and inclusion of different groups. Moreover, Huntington emphasizes that a politically active civil society might pose a risk to the state "in the absence of strong and adaptable political institutions such increase in participation means instability and violence" (2006, p. 47). In addition, Huntington writes: "...political institutions must be sufficiently strong to provide the basis of a legitimate political order and working political community" (Berman, 1997, p. 402).

In his book "Political order in changing societies" (2006), Huntington makes the inference that violence and instability in political regimes are largely owed to rapid social change and mobilization of new groups into politics simultaneously with a lagging development of political institutions. In other words, a democracy with a strong civil society but a weak degree of institutionalism is more likely to be subject to social and political instability and potentially a social mobilization against the state. Changes in social- and economic spheres such as urbanization, an increase in literacy and education, industrialization and mass media expansion can undermine traditional sources of political authority, such as economic- and Louisian legitimacy, as well as political institutions (p, 5).

Limited social pluralism means that the government fails to adequately represent and account for the plural and diverse composition of its society (Lawson, 1993, p. 194; Linz, p. 2; Albrecht and Schlumberger, p. 372). As Gilly notes: "State-party regimes are characterized by an intrinsic difficulty, almost an inability, to absorb political change without entering into a regime crisis... By identifying the ruling party both with the state and with the nation..." (1990, p. 385). Some authoritarian regimes will even take this Louisian legitimacy so far that they reject the necessity of parliamentary opposition and an electoral system in order to "preserve the unity of the state". After all, when the ruling party is the embodiment of the electorate, there is no need for other political parties. The need for pluralism and representative institutionalism is succinctly described by Lawson who notes "what virtually all contemporary states in all parts of the world share ...are the conditions of the mass polity which are characterized by a high degree of social and cultural diversity – they are pluralistic rather than unitary" (1993, p. 198).

5. Non-democratic neighborhoods

The “wave” of democratization had swept over eastern Europe in 1989 within roughly four months (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008, p. 706). First Poland in August, then Hungary, East Germany, and two months later Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria in November, and Romania in December. “...Cross-national empirical studies show indeed that there is a clear clustering of democratization around the world” (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008. See also Starr, 1991; Gasiorowski, 1995; O’Loughlin et al., 1998 and Gleditsch, 2002). This clustering of neighboring countries who made the transition to democracy within a short period induced several scholars to study the hypothesis that if one country has made the transition to democracy, neighboring countries are more likely to make the transition as well (Huntington, 1991; Lipset, 1994; Pridham and Vanhanen, 1994; Doorenspleet, 2004). The effects of transitioning to democracy not only provide more political alternatives for neighboring countries (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 76) but also influence “political expectations, crowd behavior, and relations of power within the regime almost overnight” (Lipset, 1994, p. 6).

6. Change agents

Any democratization theory needs to identify change agents: social and political actors that have the capacity to induce change and exert pressure (Pickel, 2002, p. 109; Foley and Edwards, 1996, p. 46; Landman, 2005, p. 33). Social groups and individuals that form subgroups of civil society are often pointed out as key change agents in political processes (Snyder and Mahoney, 1999, p. 385; Bernhard, 2020, p. 342; Foley and Edwards, 1996, p. 45). These social and political actors include individuals, institutions, and organizations with particular interests and influence. For any political or socially induced change, civil society is a key explanatory factor. A large body of literature discusses civil society as a variable within the process of democratization and democracy (Bernhard 1993; Ekiert 1996; Kennedy 1999; Kubik 1994; Osa 2003; Ost 1990; Arato and Cohen, 1994; Arato, 1981; Habermas, 1989). Many social and political change agents, that criticize and oppose the government, originate from civil society. Civil Society essentially signifies the bodies of people that come together according to a certain structure, for example a union or protest group. The precondition for civil society is minimal: it exists in every country where groups of people gather together to discuss common social and political interests. As result, assuming that civil society plays a role in democratization, it is a variable within the democratization process.

Michael Edwards notes in his book, aptly titled “Civil Society”, that there does not exist a consensus on what civil society means (2009, pp. 2-5). The aforementioned authors each provide their own definition of civil society. However, one does not have to look beyond the definition from Edwards, which is general enough to account for the similarities that the different definitions share:

“The power that people have to shape their societies is usually channeled through their day-to-day participation in voluntary associations and communities; churches, mosques, and synagogues; labor unions, political parties and other expressions of “normal life”.

Moreover, Michael Bernhard provides further useful insights into the relationship between civil society and democratization (2020). One important insight is drawn from a literature analysis of studies on civil society and social movements throughout Central and Eastern Europe since 1980 (p. 344). Bernhard identifies groups and individuals from within civil society as potential key change agents within political processes. That means that they have the capacity to influence the outcome of the political process through individual or collective attempts to represent and achieve their interests in relation to the government. In sum, the findings of Bernhard’s research and the other literature mentioned above, show

that change agents have the potential to influence democratization by actively engaging with political processes such as the establishment of a democratic political system.

Case study: The Jasmin Revolution (17.12.2010 – 2011)

The root cause of the Jasmin revolution originated in a long history of nepotism, corruption, and economic opportunism by those in power (King, 2003; Deane, 2013; Fitouri, 2021; Perkins, 2014; Gana, 2013; Gelvin, 2015). Involving local civil servants to the elite social and political strata such as the infamous Ben Ali family and ranging from national business opportunities to the international trade sector. The kleptocratic behavior left Tunisian middle- and lower-class drawing the short straw. A rising unemployment rate, rising costs of living, and a government whose liberal words did not match its authoritarian actions eventually drove many Tunisians to dissent, anger, and ultimately, revolution. A revolution, as many sources would later describe, that started with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, the images of which quickly spread across the Tunisian social media.

Based on the literature, it becomes clear that it is difficult to pinpoint one or two concrete key factors that caused the revolution and as well as bringing it to a successful end. As Gana notes, the revolution exists out of an amalgamation of “dispersed endeavors” and “micronarratives” across different groups of people during different times and in different locations (2013, p.2). Deane uses the term “diffuse horizontal networks of associations” to capture the dispersion of gatherings and protests through time and geography (2013, p. 14). Gana uses another useful term: “collaborative revolutionism” (2013, p. 2). Collaborative revolutionism is oftentimes the result of domestic, private, and non-organized activities. The notion rests on everyday individual revolutionaries that collectively undermine the authoritarian power without actually being a collective. Both notions from Deane and Gana accurately refer to a revolution that was years in the making, and that originated in a way that was very decentralized, both through time and space.

The case study is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a chronological account of the Revolution that starts on the 17th of December 2010 and ends on the 14th of January 2011. The chronological account is based on eyewitness reports, news articles, academic peer-reviewed publications, and books that specifically address the Jasmin Revolution. The second part delves deeper into several themes such as corruption and popular dissent and explains why the revolution happened when it did and not earlier.

The run-up to the revolution (1959-2010)

Habib Bourguiba (1959-1987) created the institutionalized authoritarian political processes and practices, a monolithic party and state structure, and created an authoritarian political culture. These institutionalized processes and culture were maintained and enhanced by his successor Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. Under the reign of Bourguiba, Tunisia sought to emulate the European socialist and economic modern developments. Areas such as healthcare, education, and women’s rights developed well beyond the other Arab states. Still, despite this introduction of modernity and progress, Tunisia remained authoritarian, and his party maintained political hegemony. Since 1956, Bourguiba slowly began to amass political power until he became president for life in 1975 (Gana, 2013, p.3).

Part of the authoritarian structure Bourguiba created, which would last until the Jasmin Revolution, was the creation of a unified political identity. Bourguiba sought to create a unified political identity among the heterogeneous mix of Phoenician, Roman, Carthaginian, Berber, Arab, Muslim, Turkish-Ottoman, Maltese, French, Italian, Jewish, and Mediterranean heritages (Chomiak and Entelis, 2012, p. 82). He aimed to create a central political-national identity by strategically selecting chief historical moments in the country's history. Academics and historians were assigned to construct and strengthen this national narrative. However, under the influence of processes of modernization (the rise of individualism, freedom of religion, the wave of democracy, and globalization) and the development of new norms, values, and new group consciousness the family was no longer the locus of civil society. Modernization involves the increase in awareness of one's group as distinct from other groups. Groups have become more aware of themselves as being a group with distinctive interests and their relation with other groups (Huntington, 2006, p. 37). In other words, groups have become more aware of their identity and their own interests.

Bourguiba was deposed, quite abruptly, in 1987 by his prime minister, Ben Ali, who had Bourguiba declared mentally and physically unfit for office by a team of doctors. Ben Ali's political party, the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD; Democratic Constitutional Rally), was the largest party and had no real opposition to fear. The initial prospects for the state looked good as Ben Ali made quick work of addressing social, economic, and cultural issues. He further appeared to intend to move the country in a more liberal and pluralistic direction. One of his promises was that the new government would create a plural political landscape that would be more accommodating to political rivals, both secular and religious. The new government formalized this promise in the so-called "National Pact" (Perkins, 2014, p. 194). The Pact was a formal agreement between the government and several social organizations in which the government promised to "remedy political shortcomings of the past through pluralism, respect for human rights, and explicit guarantees of basic freedoms" (Ibid). Prior to unveiling the National Pact, Ben Ali invited a range of political representatives, leaders of civil society, and other prominent national figures to join deliberations on formulating a "statement of political philosophy and objectives on which all could agree". However, all of this occurred prior to the first elections since Ben Ali's presidency that would be held in 1989.

However, aided by the existing authoritarian framework created by his predecessor, Ben Ali acquired complete control over the state and his political party. Ali amended the constitution multiple times in order to cement his power. Practically continuing the cycle of authoritarianism initiated by Bourguiba; "Bourguiba raised Tunisia's authoritarian scaffold, Ben Ali concretized its structure" (Chomiak and Entelis, 2012, p. 77). Hence, some critics referred to Ben Ali's 23-year rule as "Bourguibism without Bourguiba" (Gana, 2013, p.4). In 1998 Ben Ali won the right to run for a third term as president. In 2002 he permanently rolled back an earlier degree that made it impossible for someone to become president for life. A degree that was very popular with the electorate. Winning his fifth term in 2009, Ben Ali was already preparing to run for a sixth term in 2014. The 2004 and 2009 election campaigns showed no progress of pluralism, expansion of basic liberties, or socio-economic reforms. Having won every election in a landslide, both the RCD as the ruling party and Ben Ali's presidency did not face any threat from the political opposition and thus were in no way incentivized or forced to pursue a different course (Perkins, 2014, p. 214).

One of the main sources of dissatisfaction with the regime were the derelict economic conditions. At the beginning of the 2000s, the costs of living increased due to high consumerism which also caused the inflation rate to rise from 2.7 to 4-5 percent by the end of 2010 (Perkins, 2014, p. 215). The average personal debt skyrocketed to a value equivalent to more than 2,000 dollars per household. In addition,

the government tinkered with statistics and applied a beneficial definition of poverty to place the economy in a more favorable light. For example, whereas the government praised itself for its growing middle-class, in truth, about half of this middle-class belonged to “a floating middle class”, who often faced the risk of falling into poverty because they had little in the way of income or job security (Ibid, p. 216). Economic circumstances became even more challenging when the economy was hit by the recession in 2008. Its manufacturing exports to the EU, its most important trading partner since 1995, dropped off. At the same time, the agricultural sector, which employed about a quarter of the population, experienced a steep drop in production due to droughts. These circumstances reduced the growth rate of GDP from a steady 5 percent growth rate since the 2000s to a meager 1.3 percent at the beginning of 2009 (p. 217).

9/11 offered Ben Ali an opportunity to triple his police forces, essentially making Tunisia a police state. Ben Ali sailed on the global and national fear and the threat of terrorism to create a police and surveillance state. The ensuing human rights violations, abuses of democracy, and freedom of speech were masked as efforts to protect Tunisia against the terrorist threat (Gana, 2013, p. 5). As Gana quotes: “to say that Ben Ali’s regime exaggerated the Islamist threat and exploited the fault lines of the global war on terror to entrench him in power is to be accused of the crassest understatement (Ibid). By 2009 Ben Ali had expanded his security apparatus significantly. Critics of the regime, potential uprisings, and protests were curbed with measures ranging from personal surveillance and threats to detention and physical abuse. The unbelievable size of the security apparatus, which employed roughly one hundred thirty thousand agents, about one for every eighty Tunisians, made it very effective in suppressing the population (Ibid). As a result, there was no Tunisian who was not aware of the omnipresence of state agents and the ease with which one could be detained for expressing dissent or criticism.

The rise of revolution

Most of the news articles that reported on the Jasmin Revolution refer to Bouazizi’s self-immolation as a catalyzing event that tipped the scales from the status quo to nationwide protests and riots (p. 10). The 27-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi was a fruit- and vegetable vendor in Sidi Bouzid. He dropped out of high school to support his family. He did not possess the necessary vendor’s permit, nor the money for the bribe necessary to buy one, and therefore he was often harassed by local police. On the 16th of December police officers, paired with insults and physical abuse, confiscated his cart. Bouazizi went to the office of the governor to complain but the office refused to receive him. Following this rejection, Bouazizi bought a canister of gasoline and went to the square in front of the city hall. There he poured the gasoline over his body in the gasoline and set himself on fire.

The day after Bouazizi’s act could be seen as the first day of the Jasmin Revolution, and indeed of the Arab spring. A crowd of vendors, youths, activists, lawyers, and several politicians from opposition parties demonstrated in front of the city hall of Sidi Bouzid. The news of Bouazizi’s self-immolation and the ensuing protests went viral through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and got picked up quite quickly by Al-Jazeera, which greatly contributed to bringing the news to the international community. Al-Jazeera, Facebook, and Twitter played a crucial role in circulating news of different protests in the southwestern region of Tunisia during a time when the state media deliberately ignored the concentrated efforts of civil disobedience and protest in Sidi Bouzid, Tala, and Kasserine (p. 7). As a result, these independent media played an important role in inciting revolt by actively reporting on the emerging signs of mass discontent. Furthermore, the role of social media and cellphones strongly exacerbated the way news traveled from the initial revolt in Sidi Bouzid to major cities like Sfax, Sousse, and, by the end of December 2010, Tunis (p.9). Facebook became

the primary communication platform through which civil society organized and coordinated its protests, like the sit-in on the Qasbah Government Square in Tunis. Yet, Al-Jazeera, Facebook, and Twitter being what they are, mere instruments of communication and news reporting, were intermediaries for the protestors who took to the streets in order to rid themselves of the Ben Ali regime (p.9).

Thanks to social media and Al-Jazeera, the wave of protests spread throughout the major cities of Tunisia. Even when the regime cut internet connections, videos of demonstrations were still directly sent to Al-Jazeera. Although there had been protests before the Jasmin Revolution, the news of Bouazizi's attempted suicide very quickly became a nationwide symbol of protest against the detrimental effects of government oppression and its malpractices. Dissatisfaction grew into anger, anger into outrage and outrage moved people, organized through social media, to take to the streets to demand socio-economic reforms, basic liberties, and justice for the years of suffering at the hands of the government. It was clear that the majority of the population was done to poor economic circumstances, a suppressive authoritarian regime, and the increasing unemployment rate.

During the first weeks of the demonstrations, two incidents could be seen as kindling that increased the momentum of the revolution. In a town nearby Sidi Bouzid, five protestors were shot by police after a violent clash between protestors and police officers. A few days later, in a town in Western Tunisia, Kasserine, 21 protestors were shot by government snipers. When Ben Ali personally sent an army unit to quell the uprising, the unit refused to open fire on the protestors. On January 13, the revolution reached Tunis where the Chief of Staff of the armed forces ordered the army to stand down. Ben Ali fled the country the next day. What motivated Ben Ali's sudden departure, whether it was fear of the public or the army, for example, remains unclear.

Post-revolution

Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia on January 14th, 2011. On January 15th the Constitutional Assembly met to invoke article 57 of the constitution which stipulated that the president of the Chamber of Duties, Fouad Mebaaza, temporarily occupies the presidency. The acting president appointed Mohamed Ghannouchi and Beji Caid Essebsi to form an interim government (Gana, 2013, p.7). However, the installment of an interim government did not put a stop to the protests. Countless demonstrations and other gatherings were held after Ben Ali's departure. Two of the most notable protests were the sit-ins on the Qasbah Government Square in Tunis (p. 23). The first one was organized after the first interim government was installed and was forcefully ended by riot police after five days. The second sit-in lasted for a total of 12 days, from February 20 to the 3d of March, and was peacefully ended by the protestors themselves after having achieved all of their goals. One of the goals of the sit-in was to force the government to formulate a new constitution and organize new elections (p.23). The fact that the interim government agreed to the demands of the protestors signaled a significant change in how the government responded to protests since the hegemony of Ben Ali and Bourguiba. Because of these protests, Tunisia organized national elections for the National Constituent Assembly later that year. In addition, the sit-in achieved a few other significant results: the resignation of prime minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, the disbanding of the state security apparatus, and the dissolution of the Constitutional Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique, RCD), Ben Ali's former party, on the 9th of March.

The first elections in the post-authoritarian era were held on the 23d of October 2011. Even though there were roughly 100 political parties and a multitude of independents that participated in the elections, the

majority of Tunisians voted for parties that already had established a name for themselves and who were known opponents of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. One of these parties, the Ennahda party, acquired the largest share of the votes, receiving 89 of 217 seats in the National Constituent assembly (pp.23-24).

The new government consisted of a coalition between the Ennahda party, the runner-up, the CPR, and Ettakatol (the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties). The new coalition government had been assigned with writing a new constitution and to hold new elections, either presidential, parliamentary, or a combination of both (p.25). The transition from decades of opposition to governing a state did not go without problems for the government. Not only did they have problems with a solid alternative for the neoliberal economic system that Ben Ali developed but the new government also lacked experience and an inability to quickly and smoothly adapt their tactics; tactics that stemmed from the decades of being an opposition party to the regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali.

However, under the new government, CSO's had considerably more influence, freedom, and their rights were better protected. In addition, CSO's specifically addressed the need for fewer restrictions and regulations on the activities of CSO's. They desired a renegotiation of adopting rules and regulations that would strengthen the robustness of civil society and increase its capacity to independently formulate norms of civic engagement. In addition, they sought to realize certain 'inalienable' rights such as the right to association, freedom of speech, and religion. CSO's as well as civil society in general had more influence on the institutional changes that the new democratic government would implement (Deane, 2013, p. 7).

However, now the aim of the revolution was largely achieved, the deposition of Ben Ali and a transition to a democratic political system, the unification of the Tunisian people, and the continuing difficult economic conditions re-emphasized pre-existing social, ethnic, and religious divisions. There existed two main divisions: (1) between the rural, poorer interior and the richer urban coastal area, and (2) between religious and secular groups (Deane, 2012, p. 16). Moreover, during Tunisia's transition to democracy certain social groups including, Salafists, Islamists, and secularists, attempted to exploit the situation for their own agenda. As a result, they frequently clashed with each other and other political and social groups as they attempted to influence the transitional process to shape Tunisia in their own view. Polarization between the different groups was particularly evident in the areas of social, human, and women's rights (Ibid).

Exploring recurring themes

One explanation of the willingness with which protests ensued when they did, is that Tunisia does have a history of uprisings and protests that goes back decades. The generations that came before the protestors of the Jasmin Revolution already had to endure similar sources of dissent under the Bourguiba regime (Gana, pp. 12-15). Corruption, self-enrichment, repression, and cooptation created resentment and political dissent amongst the population. Unions, civil society organizations, and civil rights groups were crucial in establishing a tradition of political dissent that would be carried on by future generations (Ibid). Examples are the Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT), Tunisian Human Rights League (Ligue Tunisienne de Droits de l'Homme, LTDH), Tunisian Communist Workers Party (Parti des Ouvriers Communistes Tunisiens, POCT), the National Union of Tunisian Women (Union Nationale des Femmes de Tunisie, UNFT), the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates, ATFD), and several Marxist, Trotskyist, Maoist, Leninist and Islamist groups which mainly consisted of university students. The latter student groups originated in the 1970s and the 1980s and student activists would remain active during the reign of Ben Ali.

Political dissension peaked in the 1980s and the 1990s as a result of violent repressions of the radical left, Baathists, trade unions, and the Islamists not long after (p. 13). These structured repressions resulted in human rights violations, imprisonment, torture, intimidation, and blackmail. The Human Rights League, founded in 1977 and strengthened by members from the labor union, contested the streak of violent repressions and the numerous types of violations committed by the Bourguiba regime. However, they came under the threat of political paralysis and internal divisiveness which was cemented after the strikes of the Ksar Hellal textile workers and the Gafsa miners. Their strikes cumulated in a general strike on January 26th, 1987, also referred to as "Black Thursday", as hundreds of protesters were arrested, injured, or killed (p.13).

The participation of students in the protests during the revolution has had a long history of activist and political dissension, going back to the leftist Marxist, Trotskyist, Maoist, and Leninist groups in the 1970s and 1980s. Later generations of students remained politically engaged and stood for democratization, human rights, and freedom of expression. Separate women movements also originated from the Bourguiba era. Although their organizations were not officially recognized by the regime, they were actively supporting the leftist groups and fought for the freedom of expression. These movements mostly gathered at the Tahar al-Haddad Cultural Center in Tunis and expressed their opinions through their own magazine, *Nissa* (or *Women*), which first appeared in the kiosks in 1985. In 1987 its publication was forbidden, and its publication halted. Later organizations, such as the UNFT and the ATFD, actively addressed human rights violations, the practices of the political police, and corruption.

In addition to this history of organizational activism, political dissent was also interwoven in Tunisia's culture (Gana, 2013, p.27). Cinema, theater, poetry, and music frequently gave expression to the political and social feelings of dissent and resentment towards the regime. During the reign of the French protectorate, the political critique was perhaps most famously expressed by poet Abul-Qasim al-Shabbi and playwright (who would become Minister of Education and later Minister of Culture under Bourguiba, Mahmoud al-Messadi (Ibid, p. 15). Their work gained traction during the post-colonial era, partly because the French comprised most of what was considered "native" Tunisian work, and partly because the publications by al-Shabbi and al-Messadi spoke to the generations that suffered under the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes. In the months before the revolution, cultural expressions of critique became more commonplace and even more outspoken, especially on YouTube and Facebook. Especially hip hop and rap music became popular as ways to express discontent against the Ben Ali regime (Ibid, p.19). A good example is the rap song by El General (Hamada Ben Amor) called "Rais Lebled" (Head of State), which was posted on Facebook. The song directly critiques the president, the violent repressions, and the corruption. Unsurprisingly, the song was banned, and El General was arrested on the 6th of January 2011.

The incentives that led to the Jasmin revolution

According to Gana, there is no one theory that does justice to explaining the events that occurred between December 17, 2010, and January 14, 2011 (2013, p.2). The predictability of Arab Revolutions or uprisings is very difficult because of the complex set of potential factors that may or may not lead to a revolution or uprising (Gelvin, 2015, p. 26). It is difficult to predict when part of the populace, or indeed the majority, experiences feelings of injustice, resentment, or anger towards the regime as a result of certain events such as low unemployment rates or an economic crisis. Although Bouazizi's act stirred up the population, it alone did not trigger the nationwide revolution (Gana, p. 12). In this section, I connect the revolution to what appears to be a history of dissent, resentment, and injustice suffered by the population.

Bouazizi was not the only case of self-immolation. Others would follow his example. Self-immolations followed in Algeria, Mauritania, and Morocco without triggering a revolution. Moreover, earlier that year in June, a fruit vendor in Monastir named Abdesslam Trimech called on the city hall after his fruit cart was confiscated by the police. When he demanded to see the mayor the latter refused a meeting. As a result, Trimech set himself on fire inside city hall. The primary difference between Bouazizi's self-immolation and the one in Monastir was the effort of activists and political opponents to capitalize on Bouazizi's death and to build a narrative around it that would speak to all Tunisians that were fed up with the regime. In contrast, one day after the funeral of Abdesslem Trimech, life in Monastir returned to normal.

Considering this, in addition to the other sources of dissent and the case of self-immolation, the self-immolation of Bouazizi occurred "at the right time" for protestors and political opponents who used the momentum created by the news and the images of Bouazizi's act to capitalize on long-standing resentments and rebellious inclinations of the Tunisian people towards the Ben Ali regime (Gana, 2013, p.12). The syndicalists and political opponents who were still resented over the farmer's protests in June of 2010 quickly developed slogans aimed at a larger audience in order to widen the protests. They developed populist slogans that would capture the feelings and grievances of the Tunisians. When they saw that their initial slogan was too abstract ("work, freedom, and national dignity") they developed new slogans criticizing specific individuals, among which the Ben Ali family, who were symbols of the endemic corruption and repression. According to Gana, these direct and concrete slogans were crucial in inciting the ordinary people of Tunisia to join the protests instead of "protests against abstractions such as neoliberalism, authoritarianism, cronyism, and so on" (Ibid, p.11).

Unbeknownst to many news articles that refer to Bouazizi's self-immolation as the spark that started the revolution, there was a simple, but crucial lie surrounding his story. Namely, local activists and syndicalists in Sidi Bouzid promoted a slightly different version of the story. In their version, Bouazizi was not a high school dropout, but an unemployed university graduate (Gana, 2013, p. 10; Gelvin, p. 47). The aim was to provoke the majority of unemployed university graduates into action. At the end of 2010, they accounted for 250,000 of the 750,000 job seekers in the country, making them one of the most important target groups for those who sought to rouse the population. This alternative version helped the earlier protestors in Sidi Bouzid gain sympathy and support throughout the nation as well as solidarity from the international public opinion.

Corruption

Wikileaks, the whistle-blowing website of Julian Assange, publicized a series of diplomatic communiqués which told the story of the exorbitant lifestyle and corruption of Ben Ali, his Leila Ben Ali wife, and her extended family, the Trabelsis (notoriously referred to as "The Family") (Gana, 2013, p.9). According to the article: "President Ben Ali's extended family is often cited as the nexus of Tunisian corruption" (Wikileaks, 2008). Property expropriation, large-scale fraud, corruption, financial mismanagement, and the occasional theft were common characteristics of the Ben Ali regime, his family, and of a political system without checks and balances. Corruption is a widespread phenomenon in the daily lives of Tunisians. For the right price, speeding tickets can be ignored (between 20 to 50 dinars), passport applications expedited, and customs can be bypassed (or demand a spontaneous "tax") (Ibid). Parents could even buy access to schools for children whose grades did not meet the requirements. All it took was bribing a clerk at the Ministry of Education.

The high-level corruption was part of a larger package of economic reforms implemented by the Ben Ali regime. These reforms were part of the regime's liberalization of the economy, the privatization of the economy was meant to bolster a "Tunisian entrepreneurial class that were eager to engage in globalized patterns of economic activity" (Gana, p. 21). During this process of neo-economic liberalization, the Ben Ali family firmly cemented their own economic interests by acquiring roughly 40% of the economy (Ibid). Although these reforms were effective in that they spurred economic growth, the main benefits befell the Ben Ali family and the higher entrepreneurial class in and around Tunisia and throughout the urban areas along the coast. In addition to money, the right connection could open the desired doors, such as getting a loan at the bank, access to a certain school, a grant for your child to a prestigious university, or a job at the government (Ibid). Another major source of indignancy amongst the Tunisian population was the contrast between rising unemployment and rising inflation on the one hand and the exorbitant displays of wealth and news of corruption among the Ben Ali regime and the Family. "The government has based its legitimacy on its ability to deliver economic growth, but a growing number of Tunisians believe those at the top are keeping the benefits for themselves".

Chomiak and Entelis also refer to Ben Ali's regime as a "corporatist-authoritarian system" (2012, p. 76). In this system, the government exercises extensive control over labor through corporatist mechanisms in any new market arrangements. The ties between patron and client, between rural notables and smaller farmer organizations, make sure the state is embedded in the countryside. On the other hand, civil society is strictly controlled. Larger subordinate groups were repressed or co-opted. Furthermore, the executive branch dominated a weak legislature and judiciary (King, 2003, 5–6).

According to the telegram published by Wikileaks, contacts at the U.S. Embassy pointed out that most of the non-performing financial loans handed out by banks were based on a banker's relationship with his customer, rather than a legitimate business plan (2008). In addition, most of these loans were extended to wealthy Tunisian businesspeople with close ties to the regime, who avoided payment as a result. One example of how the Ben Ali family immersed itself in the financial sector was that the position of presidency of the Banque de Tunisian was assigned to the wife of the Foreign Minister. In addition, one of the brothers of Ben Ali's wife, Belhassen Trabelsi, was appointed to the board. The way that jobs were awarded based on knowing the right persons, which meant knowing someone with power, illustrates a system where money and relationships meant power. And power, not the law or standard procedures, decided your prospects. One of the earlier major protests occurred in 2008, in the mining area of Gafsa, the people complained about how jobs in the Gafsa Phosphate Company were awarded based on connections and bribes (Gana, 2013, p. 22). The protests lasted for six months after which security forces violently ended the protests, killing several protestors in the process.

The longevity of authoritarianism

According to James Gelvin, there are two widely accepted explanations for the prevalence and longevity of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world (2015). The control over resources on the one hand and the influence of U.S. foreign policy on the other (Ibid, p. 8; Gana, 2013). A common source of income for Arab states is what economists refer to as "rent" (Gelvin, 2015 pp. 8-9). Rent is any source of income other than taxes such as the production, trade, and taxation of natural resources. States that depend on this "alternative" source of income are also referred to as "rentier states". Oil is one of the most prevalent sources of rent in the Arab world. Since the average Arab state is not dependent on the taxpayer for

money, but on the source of rent that it controls, which enhances the power of the regime (Huntington, 1991, p. 32).

Ben Ali's proclivity for presidential power was not only facilitated by his constitutional flexibility but also by one of Tunisia's main supporters, the United States, and its global war against terror (Gana, 2013, p. 4; Gelvin, 2015, p. 8). A cable was sent to the U.S. in 2009 by the U.S. Ambassador in Tunisia, Robert F. Godec, in which he stated that the U.S. should maintain its partnership and support of the Ben Ali regime in order to prevent Al-Qaeda to gain a foothold in the Islamic Maghreb. Ben Ali, aware of the U.S. crusade against terrorism in the middle east, reinsured the U.S. that he would be a most loyal partner in the fight against terrorism (Gana, 2013, p.4). For the U.S., indulging Ben Ali's authoritarian practices and human rights violations was a small price to pay if it furthered its cause against terrorism. In addition, authoritarian regimes that were strong and stable could more easily maintain a regional balance of power. This in turn improved the security and prospects of an uninterrupted supply of oil to the U.S. (Gelvin, 2015, p. 9).

Methodology

This section describes how the central question, and the theory of democratization discussed above, are empirically tested. This study uses qualitative research, through a literature review, in combination with the analysis of a single case study, through the use of a deviant case study. To guarantee the legitimacy of the theoretical concepts and their corresponding variables, the concepts are drawn from a wide array of literature, such as Huntington (1991) and Doorenspleet (2004), who have verified their findings through large-N analyses. The results of these studies are used to construct theoretical concepts and a set of variables against which the deviant case study can be measured. The literature review focused on two types of units of information: the theory on democratization and the Tunisian Revolution. The first focus includes peer-reviewed articles from academic journals and books published by university publishers. The second focus, the case study, is drawn from peer-reviewed articles, newspaper articles, webpages (e.g. Reporters without Border), reports by independent institutions and organizations (e.g. International Alert), and a series of telegrams between the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia and the U.S. Congress, published by Wikileaks. The literature and other types of sources have been selected on their relevance to the main categories that the research focused on e.g. democracy, transition, third wave, authoritarianism, and Arab Spring.

A preliminary literature review used keywords to collect sources through the databases of the Digital Library of the University of Twente, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The results that this preliminary research yielded, established a connection between democratization theory and the Tunisian Revolution, after which more specific inquiries could be made. These results initiated the description of theoretical concepts and their underlying variables. In other words, the theoretical concepts indicated what variables one should use when analyzing the case study to determine whether or not Tunisia deviates from the existing data produced in the larger N-analyses and why this deviation occurs. In order to describe the historical account so that it reflects reality as much as possible, different sources were used, relying more on newspaper articles than academic peer-review publications, since direct reports and interviews with subjects that were present during the Tunisian revolution or researchers and journalists who spoke with those subjects or otherwise reported directly on the events during the revolution, yields a higher truth value and more accurate historical account than interpretations of the events "after-the-fact". Two limitations of this strategy to gather literature and data are the lack of first-hand interviews with subjects

and a fragmented and limited consultation of the totality of available sources that recount the events and intricacies surrounding the Jasmin Revolution. In sum, the case study described here is a reconstruction of the events and the context of the Jasmin Revolution to the extent that it can offer an understanding of how the transition came about, why it did, and to what extent the case study deviates. Having done so, suggestions can be made on how to refine the existing theoretical framework on democratization.

The single case study

The original question that initiated the thesis was: does the case study of the Tunisian revolution deviate from democratization theory and if so, to what extent? Since there does not exist a similar case study of the Jasmin Revolution but there is a significant amount of “third wave literature”, including a large array of case studies, it became apparent that in order to establish the potential differences between the Jasmin Revolution and the third wave transitions this required a detailed idiographic approach by treating the Jasmin Revolution as a single case study. A single case study is defined as “the intensive qualitative or quantitative analysis of a single unit or a small number of units, where the researcher’s goal is to understand a larger class of similar units” (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, p. 296).

The effectiveness of a single case study as a case study approach has not been without criticism (Campbell and Stanley, 1966; Lijphart, 1971; King et al., 1994). These points of critique can be brought down to one main argument against single case studies, as Levy emphasizes (2008, p. 3): the inability of a single case study to narrow down a multitude of possible causal variables to show how one, or a set of variables, is the cause of the phenomenon under study. Donald Campbell changed his view on the value of single case studies (1975, pp. 178-193). Campbell realized that the single case study approach can produce propositions that have implications for other aspects beyond those under study. For example, for this case study, this would mean that the study offers insights on aspects such as protests, the contribution of social media to the organization of wide-scale, and dispersed protests, the effects of foreign influence on the political system, and the consequences for a regime of being a “rentier state”.

The deviant case study

A deviant case study aims to identify one or more concepts, hypotheses, or variables that deviate in some way from an existing theory, explain why that case deviates, and refine the existing theory by adding new concepts, hypotheses, or variables (Levy, 2008, p. 13). The use of a deviant case study is relevant when the results of a case study do not correspond to the results of an existing theory. At most, this indicates the existence of a case study that does not correspond to the claims of an existing theory even though it falls within the same class of cases that the theory refers to. In sum, a deviant case study lends itself to “disconfirming a deterministic proposition”; a goal that this method can be used for as long as it corresponds to the scope of the proposition that is to be disconfirmed (Ibid, p. 302). According to Seawright and Gerring, “the deviant case method selects that case that, by reference to some general understanding of a topic, demonstrates a surprising value” (2008, p. 302). A surprising value is one that is poorly explained in the literature. Furthermore, the analysis follows a so-called ‘Y-centered’ approach: we are working our way backwards from the observed phenomenon in order to find the explanatory factors that lead to the deviantness (Blatter and Haverland, 2012). It must be recognized that analyzing a single case, as opposed to a population of case studies, lacks generalizable conclusions.

When analyzing a deviant case study, there are two primary objectives (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, pp. 302-303): (1) the “deviantness” must be established by comparing the case study to the general theory used in the thesis, and (2) factors that explain the deviantness of the case must be identified. Although the deviant case study is an exploratory method of analysis, it can produce new explanations. If these can be

accurately measured as a set of variables across a larger population of cases the case study is no longer deviant, and a new cross-case analysis is necessary. According to Seawright and Gerring “in most cases, a deviant case study culminates in a general proposition – one that may be applied to other cases in the population” (Ibid). However, although initial deviantness can be established using the democratization framework, a cross-case analysis on a larger population of case studies cannot be completed within the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the focus will lie on proving deviantness and refining the set of variables used in the democratization theory.

As Levy affirms, once the deviant case study is completed, the refined theory should be tested against either a large-N- or small-N analysis (2008, p. 13). If future research proves that the explanatory variables are measurable across a larger population of cases as a set of variables then the theory should be expanded to reflect the new results of the deviant case study. In other words, once the explanatory variables have proved their applicability across a larger population of case studies it warrants its own theoretical model. However, there exists a risk of establishing independent and dependent variables as having effects that cannot be translated to other case studies (King et al., 1994, pp. 128-139). This would be fine in an idiographic case study where the objective is a descriptive analysis of a single case study for the purposes of explaining that case study. It is less appropriate for the deviant case study which makes use of a single case study because the analysis of the case study could demonstrate that it is not representative of other cases at all.

The main body of literature that has been consulted is based on qualitative research, case studies, and at least one large-N analysis of cases where non-democracies transition to democracy and assessed the extent to which they consolidated. In the case of this present research, the aim of the deviant case study is twofold: (1) it identifies one or more empirical deviances in the theory of democratization based on a detailed description of the Jasmin Revolution, and (2) refines the theory by expanding theoretical concepts and adding explanatory variables that were encountered in the analysis of the literature and the case study. It is also possible that no salient deviations can be established that demand one or more refinements of the democratization theory described here. However, a deviant case study that has not succeeded to establish any deviancy has still served the goal of “saving” the subject theory by neutralizing potential evidence contrary to the theory. Should that be the case, then the deviant case study has tested and affirmed the legitimacy of the theoretical proposition under study (Doorenspleet and Kopecký, 2008, p. 709).

Examples of deviant case studies

In “against the Odds: Deviant Cases of Democratization” Doorenspleet and Kopecký researched the transition process between a non-democratic state and a democratic state (2008). Doorenspleet and Kopecký’s aim is to show what makes deviant cases outliers. “Each case analysis is geared towards detecting important variables that can explain the unexpected transition to and consolidation of democracy (Ibid, p. 709). Despite not meeting the theoretical requirements that make them a likely candidate for democratization, these countries managed a transition from a non-democratic regime to a minimal democracy. By demonstrating that these “democracies against the odds” do not fit the structural requirements of democratization purported by modernization and diffusion theories, Doorenspleet and Kopecký show that future research on democratization should account for non-structural factors. The aim of this thesis fits well with the article by Doorenspleet and Kopecký as it aims to produce a better understanding of the context and changes of a case study that deviates from the democratization theory. This thesis also produces a more elaborate study of the variables that influence the democratization process.

Furthermore, a study by Richard Barret and Marin Whyte, “Dependency Theory and Taiwan: Analysis of a Deviant Case’ (1982)’, uses a similar research methodology in that they discuss the contemporary literature on dependency theory and assess a single case study using the deviant case method. The authors argue that the case of Taiwan contradicts two predictions made by dependency theory: “that foreign economic penetration leads to slow economic growth and also to heightened inequality” (p. 1064). Like the case of Tunisia, the authors found that the case of Taiwan merited a closer study because it deviated from an existing, widely accepted theory. Moreover, the authors admit that their conclusions do not disprove the dependency theory, but it does question its legitimacy and forces the reader to question some of its propositions (p. 1085). This is exactly what a deviant case study attempts to do: question an existing theory, produce suggestions for how the existing theory may be refined and offer propositions to be tested by future research that uses a larger set of case studies.

Limitations of the methodology

The scientific research methodology employed in this thesis is qualitative research. The thesis made use of two qualitative research methods, namely: a literature review and a type of single case study namely, the deviant case study. Qualitative research is a very useful method to use when the aim is to produce deeper insights about a problem and to illustrate and expand on its various dimensions (Queirós et al., 2017, p. 370). The literature review in this thesis encountered three limitations, all of which are known limitations of literature reviews (Salkind, 2022). First, due to the extensive amount of literature on democratization and associated subjects such as democracy, civil society, and authoritarianism, the selection of the literature risks being biased and limited to literature relevant or convenient to the goals of the researcher (Salkind, 2022, pp. 4-5). The second issue is with publications in a different language than the author’s. One such issue occurred when attempting to translate the seminal work by Wolfgang Merkel which is entirely in German but does contain valuable information on democratization. An attempt was made to translate it using simple free translating tools and some information was collected albeit fragmentary. Thirdly, the most time consuming, and arguably the most difficult, is the challenge of the literature review is interpreting the literature. Upon the reading of the literature, the researcher performs some kind of “internal synthesis” – meaning that the reader interprets what he or she reads subjectively.

There exist several known limitations of the single case study: “(1) difficult to establish cause-effect connections, (2) hard to generalize from a small number of case studies, (3) difficult to create a case study that suits all subjects” (Ibid, p. 379). The first refers to establishing relations of cause and effect of variables. The thesis essentially seeks to determine a degree of correlation between two sets of variables by comparing the variables of a theory with the case study. However, because the causal relation between two variables might be explained by a third or even a fourth variable, correlation between variables does not necessarily indicate causation.

Results

The discussion of the results focuses on commonalities and deviations between the case study and the democratization theory. The deviations, if present, refer to how the case study deviates from the theory and what causes those deviations to occur. The second part of this section looks at the six variables, discussing their relevancy for the case study, and finds that the case study indicates the presence of a seventh variable; one that is absent in democratization theory.

As the case study describes, the Tunisian revolution did not originate in a single event, such as Bouazizi’s self-immolation. Its origin, as well as the subsequent introduction of minimal democracy and

consolidation, lies in a combination of the structural variables discussed on pages 12 to 15. However, there *is* a direct cause as to why the revolution happened when it happened and that appears not to be structural. What rallied the population to stand up against the regime and demand a complete overhaul of the government, were not the feelings of resentment for the regime, the high unemployment rate, or the widespread corruption, but Bouazizi's self-immolation and the effect it had on social- and political activists. This single act served as a symbol that motivated the population to rise against the Ben Ali regime that suppressed and disturbed the life of the average Tunisian.

The democratization theory and the key variables formulated above lack an explanation on what will be dubbed here as "catalysts": one or more key events which directly produce certain consequences. The case study describes that the self-immolation of Bouazizi was not the only one and not even the first one that year. As a result, this could indicate that a catalyst, such as the self-immolation, also was not sufficient to initiate the democratization process. Therefore, it appears that in order for the Jasmin Revolution to have commenced, as well as the subsequent transition to democracy, it required at least one or more of the six key variables in conjunction with the catalyst. Following this line of reasoning, structural variables appear to be necessary but not sufficient to produce a transition to democracy. They are dependent on agency variables, in this case, the catalyst variable, to accomplish a transition to minimal democracy.

The way that the revolution came about, i.e. the combination of structural and agency variables (change agents), is not the only striking feature of the transition. The way that the new political climate was established was not merely exogenous to politics. In the weeks after Ben Ali had fled the country, we see a continuous bottom-up pressure from the electorate on the new political key players who are charged with the task of shaping the new political climate; the interim-government under the leadership of the newly appointed prime-minister Béji Caïd Essebsi. Moreover, the two sit-ins on the Qasbah Government Square were very conducive to organizing new elections (inclusive suffrage). The case study also described the extent to which CSO's were involved in shaping the new political climate, chief amongst which the adoption of the right to association, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. All of which was conducive to realizing inclusive suffrage. Simultaneously, this political engagement by social actors leveraged the organization of new political parties. The large number of political parties that participated in the elections demonstrated a high degree of competitiveness in the new political climate. At the same time, this fragmentation of the political landscape and a large number of votes that went to parties that did not even make the threshold to become an official political party indicates the presence of identity-based divisions that might undermine the democratization process.

The third wave literature presupposes basic democratic elements such as national elections and parliamentary opposition. According to the democratization theory, a transition to democracy would depend on the willingness of key political figures who would also be in charge of the transition. This corresponds only partially to Tunisia, where key figures in the transition process belonged to the oppositional parties. However, Tunisia deviates from the traditional outlook to the extent that social actors originating from civil society played a crucial role in bringing about the transition to democracy. Furthermore, the consolidation phase also witnessed a high degree of involvement of social actors. The incorporation of key representatives of civil society in shaping the new democratic landscape greatly enhances the relation between institutionalism and the representation of different social groups. This corresponds with the view of democratization theory, that the stability of a political system depends on the extent to which its institutions reflect the interests of its society.

7 key variables		
Theory	Correlation	Case Study
1. Economic Development.	yes	Income inequality, mass unemployment, inflation, corruption, nepotism.
2. Sources of national wealth.	no	Corruption, trade with the EU, agriculture.
3. Identity-based divisions.	partially	Groups with distinct identities adversely affected the consolidation phase but not the transition phase.
4. Political pluralism.	yes	Hegemonic party, absence of institutional pluralism.
5. Clustering.	no	Absent democratic neighboring states.
6. Change agents.	yes	History of activism, civil society, organized protests.
7. Catalyst.	yes	Bouazizi's self-immolation.

1. Economic development.

The relationship between economic development and democratization has been well documented (see p. 12). These sections describe the relationship between economic development on the one hand and the low unemployment rate, corruption, and nepotism on the other hand, which motivated a large amount of the population to demand more equality, transparency, and better economic opportunities. This is where the case study deviates from the popular claim that economic development increases the likelihood of democratization. For Tunisia, quite the opposite is true since the economy in Tunisia developed very unequally. Where the Ben Ali regime and its consorts abused their privileged position to acquire more wealth, the majority of the population struggled with job insecurity, rising living costs, inflation, and unemployment (Perkins, 2014, pp. 215-217).

In March 2012, "International Alert" organized a convention for Tunisia's CSO's. The goal of the convention was to "identify and discuss the role of CSOs in a state amid transition and to determine how best to maintain the solidarity of the revolution." (Deane, 2012, p. 16). The derelict economic conditions, discussed on page 16, were identified as the primary threat to the development of political, social, and economic change (Ibid). During that time, the government budget was stretched thin and struggled with measures to counter the economic decline. In addition, about 800,000 Tunisians were unemployed (about 18% of the *active* population). For some, especially those who suffered the most under the economic conditions, change and economic growth did not happen fast enough. The political and social tensions this created re-emphasized pre-existing political and social divisions (Ibid).

Paradoxically, this economic development is one of the structural variables that influenced, or rather incentivized, the population to protest the government. Therefore, we can conclude that economic development can work both ways: Economic decline can incentivize the population to demand government reforms. Economic growth sustained over a longer period can produce the benefits

formulated by Huntington and Lipset, e.g. belief in democratic values and a rising middle-class that is educated, better informed, and more politically active.

2. Sources of national wealth.

When the majority of the economy depends on a few resources, countries have more difficulty with democratization (Carothers, 2007). According to Carothers and others (Schlumberger, 2002; Huntington 1991), the number of resources is one of the essential determinants of economic success. This does not appear to apply to Tunisia whose economy leaned on multiple sources of income. This had mainly to do with its cooperation with the World Bank and its commercial partnership with the EU since 1995. The institution viewed Tunisia as the “best student... in the region” (Perkins, 2014, p. 203). The authoritarian regime itself also relied on a diversified portfolio. The Ben Ali family, including the Trabelsi’s, amassed a lot of capital by immersing themselves in the most lucrative deals and appointing themselves into lucrative positions with the government and affiliated companies.

3. Identity-based divisions.

The case study does not describe different inter-group conflicts based on religious, ethnic, or other backgrounds. Even though the Tunisian society is heterogeneous, any identity-based divisions that existed before the revolution did not significantly impede the revolution or the transition to democracy. To that extent, the claim of Carothers (2007) and Doorenspleet (204) that identity-based divisions impede democratization does not reflect the case study. However, we also see that during the phase of consolidation several ethnic and religious divisions had a polarizing effect on the process of consolidation as social- and political groups campaigned for different and contrasting policies. Polarization amongst several groups, most notably Salafists, Islamists, and secularists, around topics about social, human, and women’s rights increased tensions within society. The fragmentation of the political landscape, due to the number of political parties that participated in the elections exacerbated these tensions and undermined the development of progressive political and social reformations (Deane, 2012, p. 16).

4. Political pluralism.

The third variable referred to the argument that weak institutionalism across from a strong civil society results in political instability. This corresponds to the case study; the long history of authoritarianism and the hegemony by the political party of Ben Ali failed to realize political pluralism. In doing so, the regime insufficiently accounted for the heterogeneous composition of the Tunisian population. However, during the phases of the democratization process, social actors were actively involved in the shaping of the new political climate (see ‘Change agents’) and the newly elected government existed, most crucially, out of three political parties: ending decades of single-party hegemony. The competition and inclusive suffrage of the new democracy, as well as the involvement of social actors in the process of consolidation, is crucial to reflect the country’s heterogeneous composition and actively represent the interests of the different social groups.

5. Clustering.

Of all the key variables, clustering is the only one that is clearly not met. Tunisia’s neighboring states, Egypt and Algeria, were not democratic. As the notion of clustering states, states that have democratic neighbors

are more likely to democratize as well. Notwithstanding the way in which the Arab Spring jumped over to neighboring countries, the process of democratization appeared to be an isolated incident and remained limited to Tunisia.

6. Change agents.

According to Pickel (2002) and others (see pp. 14-15), change agents are social and political actors that have the potential to bring about change in a political system. The literature review of democratization during the third wave found the notion of civil society to play a key role in relation to political processes (Bernhard, 2020; Edwards, 2009; Arato & Cohen, 1994). The case study describes a variety of change agents who play key roles during all three phases of democratization. During the transition phase, a range of social and political actors was active: Mohammed Bouazizi, social and political activists in Sidi Bouzid, and social- and mainstream media. During the introduction of minimal democracy both social and political actors played key roles. Mohamed Ghannouchi and Beji Caid Essebsi who formed an interim government, and the activists who organized two sit-ins on the Qasbah Government Square; in doing so, they forced the interim government to organize national elections. During the consolidation phase, both political- and social actors continued to deepen democracy by introducing liberal democratic rules and regulations such as the right to association, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.

7. Catalysts.

This is the second variable that appears to be missing from the most common variables found in the literature on the transition phase. The case study clearly indicates the history of structural variables already present, which leaves one wondering why the transition did not happen before – either as a result of sources outside or inside the regime. A catalyst can be an event, person, or both, that clearly can be singled out amongst other persons and events because it plays upon existing structural variables. Absent quantitative studies where other democratization processes are analyzed by including this variable, it is impossible to ascertain whether this variable is necessary or sufficient in bringing about the transition to democracy. However, one can reason from logic, and based on the case study, that a catalyst without one or more structural variables, is merely an isolated incident because it does not play upon existing structural variables. For instance, imagine that Tunisia was governed by an authoritarian leader who satisfied the population to such an extent that there was an absence of social and political actors demanding change. Bouazizi's self-immolation would not be the symbol it was in the case study and there would be no change agents who would jump at the occasion to call for nationwide protests. As a result, based on this case study, this variable is dependent on the presence of one or more structural variables; making it a necessary variable, since structural variables depend on a catalyst to bring about a transition to democracy.

Conclusion

This thesis addressed the following research question: does the case study of the Tunisian revolution deviate from democratization theory, and if so, to what extent? The aim of this research question was: (1) to describe the predominant concepts and theories of democratization theory, (2) with an emphasis on key variables that influence the democratization process, (3) to provide a detailed description of the Tunisian Revolution, (4) to compare the democratization theory with the case study with a focus on where

the case study deviates from the theory, and (5) to refine the key variables of the democratization theory on the basis of the case study. In order to accomplish these aims, the thesis undertook a large qualitative literature research. The research made use of the Online Library of Twente University, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. The queries leveraged key terms such as democratization, transition, regime change, and authoritarianism. The research into the case study used the same search engines in addition to more mainstream media, in order to piece together the events that occurred in the advent of the Revolution in 2010 and the aftermath that lasted throughout 2011.

The Jasmin Revolution in Tunisia has been used as a case study in order to test the legitimacy of democratization theory by way of demonstrating the deviantness of a single case study analysis. More specifically, the thesis looked at what it considers as the three phases of democratization: (1) transition, (2) introduction of minimal democracy, and (3) consolidation. Furthermore, analyzing the case study has indicated the contemporary salience of democratization theory and its five variables. Moreover, the deviant case study found that the five key variables stand in need of expansion. More specifically, change agents and catalysts have proved to be key variables that influenced the phases of transition, the introduction of minimal democracy, and consolidation. Expanding the democratization theory with these two variables can help a researcher, as well as relevant social- and political actors, understand how the democratization process comes about, what might undermine it, and what might strengthen it.

The goal of the deviant case method was to test the literature on democratization theory. The expectation was that the application of the deviant method on the Jasmin Revolution would produce one or several deviations that could help refine democratization theory. The analysis of the Jasmin Revolution through the deviant case study produced two important deviations: (1) literature on the democratization process poorly explains the role of change agents as a variable in the democratization process; (2) democracy theory mainly employs structural variables without conceptualizing a more incidental type of variable: a catalyst.

A description of the case study and a deeper exploration of some of its key themes highlights the influential role of change agents. As social- and political actors, change agents have the capacity to be of influence in every phase of democratization. Without change agents, most of whom originated in civil society, not only would Ben Ali not have been forced to leave the country, but the transition to democracy would have been unlikely. Furthermore, the case study indicates that Tunisia's transition to democracy occurred despite the absence of three of the five variables proposed by the literature. However, the literature is also inconclusive on how many variables need to be present in order for the democratization process to occur. The presence of two of the five variables, economic development, and political pluralism, reaffirm their legitimacy as variables that influence the democratization process.

Furthermore, the case study indicates that these variables have been structurally present but without forcing a breakthrough in a potential transition away from authoritarianism. What appears to be missing then, is the seventh variable. A catalyst that brings about the necessary action to initiate a transition from non-democracy to democracy. As a result, the catalyst variable, in conjunction with the five variables, appeared to be a necessary variable. Expanding the democratization theory with two new concepts and adding two new variables potentially enhances the ability of political actors to understand the democratization process. In addition, the thesis helps understand the transition from a non-democracy to a minimal democracy and a consolidated democracy.

There are, however, several limitations to the methodology of this research. This thesis used two qualitative research methods: a literature review and a type of single case study, the deviant case study. The literature review has three limitations: (1, reader bias, 2) language barrier, and (3 reader subjectivity.

As has been pointed out by Levy (2008, p. 3), a single case study is unable to establish the causality of a set of key variables by proving that they apply to a larger set of case studies. Furthermore, the key variables that have been distinguished in the case study may very well be idiosyncratic of Tunisia and the context within which the case study took place. As a result, the wider application of the set of key variables established in the thesis remains uncertain. However, the analysis of the Tunisian Revolution as a deviant case study does have the potential to pave the way for future researchers to test the validity of the conclusions that this thesis has produced, against a larger population of case studies. In doing so, researchers could test the salience and legitimacy of a framework of democratization that employs the seven variables through a large-N analysis using case studies that employ the three phases of the democratization process as well as the seven variables.

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