11. Socioeconomic Factors and Political Mobilization in the Maghreb
Lessons from the Arab Spring

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11.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the socioeconomic factors that drove the popular uprisings in the Maghreb in 2011 in order to understand the entanglement of sociopolitical mobility and the existing power structures. The social, economic, and political outcomes of the uprisings were markedly different in the four countries examined, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Only two of the four countries had successful uprisings that ended in regime change, but with different outcomes. Whereas Tunisia has been following a path of transition to democratization, Libya descended into civil war and became a failed state with competing powers of authority. Although Algeria and Morocco experienced some popular unrest, the conditions there were not favorable for sustained protest movements and the protests were quickly subdued by regime action in the form of reform promises and a few concessions. This chapter explores these differences by tracing the evolution of governance and power structures to elucidate how they shaped socioeconomic factors in the latter two cases.

While the populations across the Maghreb shared similar grievances, their ability to politically mobilize differed. Preliminary findings suggest that the key socioeconomic factors leading to the popular uprisings against the incumbent regimes were similar. The primary differences between the revolutionary outcomes in Tunisia and Libya were largely due to variances in governance and power structures shaped by colonial experiences and post-independence politics. By contrast, preliminary findings suggest that the popular uprisings in Algeria and Morocco were easily quelled due to the 'politics of compromise'

and redistributive patronage, which diffused the protesters ability to effectively mobilize.

11.2 Economic Development and Lack of Democratization in the Maghreb

Sakbani asserts that the development of the modern Arab world has proceeded in four phases. The first phase started with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire during World War I and was dominated by the struggles for national independence between the two world wars. The second phase began with the various coups d'état in the region in the 1950s, which deposed the first generation of nationalist leaders and established militaristic leaders in their place, such as Boumédiène in Algeria (1965) and Gadhafi in Libya (1969). The 1967 war with Israel and the death of Nasser in 1970 ushered in the third phase in modern Arab development. This phase saw some regression to premodern norms and included a proposal to create an Islamic Arab state initially intended to unify Libya and Tunisia, and perhaps later include Morocco and Algeria. The plan was never executed due to ideological differences between President Bourguiba of Tunisia and Colonel Gadhafi of Libya. Instead, the leaders placed an increasing emphasis on the state's security apparatus in order to retain power. This phase lasted a little over 40 years until the uprisings of the Arab Spring in 2011 (Sakhbani 127).

All eyes were on the Arab Spring countries with the hope that a wave of democratization might finally sweep the region and break down the security apparatuses of Maghrebi states. Yet other criteria for democratization have to be present for such revolutions, which the Arab Spring uprisings are sometimes called, to succeed. Lipset argued there are four basic prerequisites for a country to democratize: wealth (or per-capita income level), industrialization, urbanization, and education (71). In this argument lies the assumption that with the increase in a state's economic development, citizens become less tolerant of repressive political regimes, creating better prospects for democratization (Lipset 80). Whereas some scholars are optimistic that the changes in class and social structure caused by industrialization and urbanization automatically lead to the emergence of a democratic society (Epstein et al. 552; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 423), other scholars question whether this type of modernization can explain the forces at work in this kind of regime

dynamic (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 77; Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave" 25).

Skeptics argue that economic development can bring about negative changes in the political domain. They contend that the transition to democracy can only come about in regimes with stable political institutions equipped to absorb the shocks of the volatile changes that often results from stringent economic reforms. If modernization happens too quickly, it can bring about internal instability that can lead to violent conflict, even civil war (Huntington, *The Third Wave* 70). Economic modernization may pose a serious challenge to autocratic systems, but it does not automatically bring about democratization (Huntington, *The Third Wave* 316). Some even assert that economic growth leads to less freedom and more dictatorship, as autocratic leaders have learned to circumvent the dangers (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 78).

In hindsight, it is evident that economic development has brought about increasing economic inequality in the Maghreb (Marks 959). The perception of economic hopelessness against the backdrop of daily harassment from local and national authorities helped spark the Arab Spring uprisings in the Maghreb and beyond. Whether this will prove to be a long-term effect of how autocratic regimes have mismanaged economic development reforms remains to be seen.

The unemployment rate among young people was high and rising across the Maghreb on the eve of the Arab Spring uprisings. In Libya, it was reported to be as high as 30% for the general population and 40% for the youth. Libya's oil industry has the capacity to generate enough jobs for skilled workers. Since foreigners filled most of those jobs, only about 30% were filled by Libyans (Sakbani 131). Youth unemployment in 2010 on the eve of the Arab Spring was 29.5% in Tunisia, 49.09% in Libya, 17.77% in Morocco, and 21.84% in Algeria. In 2019, the figures were 36.35% in Tunisia, 50.49% in Libya, 22.08% in Morocco, and 29.51% in Algeria.[1] Revolution or no revolution, the socio-economic situation has not improved for the youth.

11.3 The Entanglement Between Colonial Administration and Post-Independence Politics

There is an entanglement of postcolonial legacies and governance structures that informs society-state relations in the Maghreb. While each of the inde-

pendence movements has become the center of political power in its respective country, their origins differ. Maghreb independence movements proved important to the subsequent structures of power and politics in the newly independent states. In Algeria and Morocco, the independence movements became the new political leadership. In Tunisia, the labor movement was politically relevant but outside the government. In Libya, which had gained independence by international mandate, Gadhafi led a group of antagonists to overthrow the monarchy.

It came as a surprise to most Middle East scholars that the riots appeared when they did, after most had spent more time and resources researching the stability of autocratic regimes, rather than which factors or forces could lead to their collapse (Gause 81). Yet, Goldstone claims that there was an inherent weakness in Maghrebi regimes, making them vulnerable to revolution. He defines regimes across the Maghreb as sultanistic, characterized by dictators who expand their personal power at the expense of formal institutions (8). Although they may pretend to run quasi-democracies with elections, parliaments, or constitutions, in reality these regimes run their country in a constant state of martial law and by appointing loyal supporters to important government positions. According to Goldstone, sultanistic regimes across the Maghreb have been vulnerable to revolutions because dictators, such as Ben Ali, do not appeal to a specific ideology with which to capture the public's imagination (9). Another key element of sultanistic regimes is the use of various security forces that are kept under close command of the leader, often by dividing them into separate factions, so that no one faction grows too big or powerful.

There are several criteria for keeping control in sultanistic regimes. First, to prevent the rest of the population from organizing into political groups, sultanistic dictators use a pay-off system that subsidizes consumer goods such as electricity, gasoline, and food. This strategy was widely used in the Maghreb and was particularly effective at quelling protests in Algeria and Morocco during the Arab Spring uprisings. Second, intimidation and surveillance is used to control both the media and opposition to the regime. Third, the sultanistic dictator will control the military elites by separating the security forces into several branches with central command concentrated in the hands of the dictator. This makes the dictator the essential point of coordination of security and foreign military aid (Goldstone 9). However, it can be difficult for the regime to hold on to power because it is concentrated in the hands of one person, leads to rampant corruption, and often causes

high unemployment due to lack of redistribution. This makes the question of succession more acute and magnifies the sultanistic regime's vulnerability (Goldstone 9-10). The degree of regime weakness can be hard to assess. This depends on the balance struck between self-enrichment of the dictator and rewards given the to the elite. Although it is easy to identify countries with high levels of corruption, unemployment, and personalist rule, it is often difficult to detect the level of elite opposition to the regime along with the likelihood of military defection in case of a crisis. These elements will often not be demonstrated by these two groups until the opportune moment has arrived, simply because history has shown that if they are unsuccessful in overthrowing the current leader, harsh punishment will follow. Here we examine the entangled legacies of independence movements and post-colonial politics.

Tunisia

The first instances of Tunisians' involvement in politics during the colonial era came through their inclusion in the French leftist labor union Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), which operated in all the French Maghrebi colonies as sister unions of the CGT in France. The independence movement emerged through a partnership between Habib Bourguiba's Neo-Destour Party, formed in 1934, and the emerging labor union Union Generale de Travalleurs Tunisiens (UGTT). By 1932, a new phase of labor unionism had dawned with the legalization of union activity by the colonial administration (Bellin 255). The development of the UGTT was structured and steady. This meant a slow increase in regional unions while ensuring central control and coordination. By 1948, the UGTT had expanded the federations under its umbrella from the initial adherence of just the federation for Tunisian functionaries to other federations in the modern industries, farming, construction, etc. More importantly it had expanded its reach into the rural areas and extended to the majority of Tunisia's territory. The UGTT's political position and power were determined by its identification with the nationalist cause, its alliance with the Neo-Destour party, and its crucial role in winning independence (Bellin 263).

While independent Tunisia was initially proclaimed a kingdom in 1956 under King Mohammed VIII al-Amin, Bourguiba's original vision for Tunisia was republican in character with secular and populist tendencies. Through a series of decrees passed by the Constituent Assembly, the monarchy was

abolished, and Tunisia declared a republic after a vote on 25 July 1957. The most significant difference between independent Tunisia and other Maghrebi states was that it remained non-militaristic. Having witnessed the wave of military coups across the region, Bourguiba resolved to ensure the Tunisian armed forces would not have the capacity to coup. His task was facilitated by the fact that Tunisia had not had an independent army during the colonial era and therefore the military had played a minimal role in the independence movement (Grewal). The UGTT would face periods of repression and cooptation throughout Bourguiba's and Ben Ali's rule. Yet the trade union was never completely excluded. Its legacy and popularity across the country made it a necessary partner for the political leadership.

Ben Ali's sultanistic regime style had narrowed the base of elites during his rule to encompass mostly close friends and extended family. Corruption under Ben Ali's regime was designed to benefit businesses run by family members. By the end of 23 years of rule, it is estimated that the Ben Ali family owned 30-40% of the Tunisian economy (Lewis). Power and money were concentrated in the hands of the few rather than being dispersed across a larger segment of the political and economic elite. This left Ben Ali without a strong elite base to spoil the protests. The military had been sidelined in favor of the security forces, but neither were well-remunerated, and there was no clear line of succession for the continuation of the regime. While Ben Ali expanded the representation of opposition parties in the government from 12% in 1990 to 25% in 2009, it was still a one-party state (Paciello 2). Thus, the authoritarian structures embedded in the state were susceptible to pressure because of high levels of corruption and a narrow elite based on Ben Ali's family ties. It is reasonable to assume that party elites reckoned they could survive a transition and rebuild on the ruins of the ancien regime. This was evident with the success of Beji Caid Essebsi, former foreign minister under Ben Ali, and others, in creating new parties such as Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia) and gaining sizeable representation in the first elections. He would later succeed in becoming elected President of Tunisia in 2014 (Boubekeur 108). With no elite base to protect the regime and the military outside of the political playing field in post-colonial Tunisia, the torch fell to civil society when the revolution succeeded.

Libya

With Italy on the losing side of World War II, the Kingdom of Libya was declared a sovereign state on November 21, 1949. The consequences of the lack of central administration in Libya became clear during World War II with the revival of the hinterland tribes after the defeat of Italy in 1943. "Denied political expression by any other means, the Libyan, at war and vanquished, retained their political identities in kinship structures" (Anderson, The State 221). The final agreement on a united Libya was a result of complex international diplomacy and compromise, and on December 24th, 1951, it was proclaimed a constitutional, hereditary monarchy under King Idris (Bahgat 105). The legacy of Italian rule in Libya was a lack of central administration that would mar the country's political and socioeconomic development after independence. In Libya, oil has been the most important industry since its discovery in 1959. Although it was assumed that oil would bring wealth to the whole population, this turned out not to be the case. Oil extraction requires skilled workers, so there were only jobs for the skilled few. Another issue was that most other goods including foodstuffs had to be imported. Oil initially allowed the monarchy to extend patronage and revenue distribution. Eventually it became a corrosive process of political exclusion and rent-seeking, exposing a weakened state. King Idris's pro-Western leanings, Arab conservatism, and the lack of a power base led to a coup in September 1969 by the Free Officers Movement under the leadership of Colonel Muammar Gadhafi, who took full control of Libya.

After coming to power, Gadhafi relied on the military and security forces to consolidate his rule. By the end of the 1970's, the military and domestic security services had grown considerably and gained increasing influence. Gadhafi was wary of an organized hierarchical military, which he perceived as a threat. As part of his coup-proofing strategy, he would regularly reshuffle the command posts in the regular army and eventually divided the military establishment into two separate elements: the regular military, which included a navy, an air force, an army, plus special units; and what he called the "People's Army," based on his belief in the Bedouin practice of self-defense as laid out in his *Green Book*. The People's Army supplemented the regular army with reservists drawn from all over the country (Lutterbeck 40).

Libya evolved into a mixed-market economy under Gadhafi, but even so, there were significant obstacles to economic growth. Due to Gadhafi's various experiments and philosophies, industrialization had not yet occurred on

any significant scale beyond the oil industry on the eve of the Arab Spring. Instead, foreigners dominated the workforce, especially in the private sector, and there was no sign of a Libyan middle class. Furthermore, low population density, a dispersed political system, and extant tribal structures further compounded the economic problems. It is telling that while agreeing on little else, the tribes united against Gadhafi's rule in 2011.

Morocco

The sultanate in Morocco has always been respected as the office of leadership and the French bolstered the sultanate with military support and governmental reforms, thus keeping it relevant as a political power during colonial rule from 1912 to 1956. In fact, the young sultan, Mohammed V, became a symbol for the Moroccan independence movement when he was exiled by the French in 1953. While his return in 1955 paved the way for independence, which was declared in 1956, it was the direct action by an active political elite that achieved independence (Zartman 20). The Moroccan king has remained the final arbiter in politics through the institutions built up within the ministries of sovereignty, which gives the king the right to appoint the heads of several important ministries, including the ministries of justice and the interior. While there have been frequent bread and butter riots in Morocco over the past decades, the sultanate's legacy and hold on power through well-established patronage system that connects business to the monarchy is hard to overcome (Maghraoui 689). Thus, because of the entanglement of the sultanate with independence, there is no regime-independent symbol to unify Moroccans in the struggle for political and socioeconomic change. This partly derives from the severe oppression and state violence against regime dissidents that occurred during the 'Lead Years' from 1973 to 1988. The denial of political contestation and expression suffered under these repressive conditions stifled the emergence of a sociopolitical movement that could rival the monarchy.

Algeria

French colonial rule took the heaviest toll on Algeria. It was the only colony in the Maghreb where the bey or king was removed and the conquered territory was declared an integral part of France and organized as French départements (local administrative units) with a civilian government. The indepen-

dence movement led by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) became the ruling political party in newly independent Algeria. Its armed wing, the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), would later be converted into the regular armed forces of Algeria. Together they would form the power base for Algerian politics until 1990. The military dictatorship used the existing political institutions to create a system of patronage and rent-seeking. The FLN ruled with an iron fist, stamping out any challenge to its power, which mainly came from Islamic opposition groups. The election of the Islamist party in 1990 and the civil war that ensued may well be the primary reason that the Algerian Arab Spring uprisings were unsuccessful. The FLN, which returned to power in the 2002 election, skillfully manipulated the painful memories of the so-called lost decade to diffuse the protest movement.

11.4 Framing the Arab Spring Protests

The protests that erupted, first in Tunisia in December 2010 and then in Algeria in January, had their proximate causes in socioeconomic demands. The protests in Libya and Morocco did not occur until late February, inspired by the ousting of long-sitting dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, but these mostly focused on political demands. The calls for political reform in Tunisia came second as the protests grew in size and became more organized. Due to Libya's lack of institutional structure, the country was already on a path towards civil war before the international intervention, as protesters and militias devolved into their respective tribal and regional loyalties. In Algeria, the protests erupted on January 3 in reaction to the deregulation of the state-subsidized economy leading to shortages and raising the price of food. The government took swift action to avoid an escalation of protests by reversing the price hikes and implementing policies to lower the cost of food imports. This took the air out of the protest movement (Volpi 107). The Moroccan protests were framed as political reform, allowing the monarchy to coopt the process by promising initiatives to decentralize government decisionmaking to provincial and local governments and offering other non-substantive reforms.

In the beginning of the uprisings in Tunisia, the UGTT's leadership was careful to express demands within a socioeconomic framework and to avoid political declarations. While the protests were initiated by socioeconomic grievances shared among rural and urban populations alike, the political

mobilization against the regime was at first spontaneous and unorganized. This became evident as cracks in the opposition demonstrated that there was little consensus among the various factions as to where Tunisia should go from there. It was especially the disagreement among the angry youth, the older union activists, and Islamists that dominated the early days of the new nation. This lack of vision and planning led to the demise of the first successor government, which was replaced by one that was able to appeal more to the major unions (Anderson, "Demystifying" 3). Not until the UGTT had actively mobilized its membership did the revolution begin to take shape formally in terms of both political and economic demands.

This was a relatively peaceful process, and a surprisingly successful one considering the size and power of Ben Ali's security forces. Brooks argues that the military defected during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 due to organizational self-interest (205). Ben Ali's strategy to limit the political influence of the military, instead relying on police and security forces, may in the end have been the very reason he was successfully ousted. The rank-and-file mostly identified with the grievances of the protesters due to their low economic status. Therefore, having little to gain by protecting Ben Ali's regime, the officers and the rank-and-file refused to suppress the protesters and ultimately helped overthrow the regime.

While there were certainly socioeconomic grievances, the character of the protests in Libya was anti-regime. The strange division of Libya's military into a regular army and paramilitary units made the military's role in politics complex and dependent on the linkage of each unit to the reigns of power. Therefore, strong bonds existed neither between society and the military, nor between the military and the regime. In order to secure control, the most elite units of the regular army were commanded by close relatives of Gadhafi (Lutterbeck 40). There was very little, if any, coordination between these two armies, and conscription into either of the two was unregulated. Gadhafi's use of foreign mercenaries further complicated matters and makes it difficult to establish the status of the military vis-à-vis society at large (Lutterbeck 40). Certainly, the military's roles in both government and society were fractured. The lack of institutionalization and the broad irregular use of conscription and militarization of the population for the people's militia created the pathway to civil war when the protests broke out in 2011. It had created pockets of armed rebels in parts of Libya who had no connection to the regime. Meanwhile, the tribally based elite units, who had no raison d'être outside the regime, had high stakes in protecting status quo due to the high

levels of corruption, cronyism, and patrimonialism. As a result of this fragmentation of the armed forces, parts of the Libyan forces defected and parts of it, especially the elite forces of the general army, remained loyal to Gadhafi. Gadhafi remained in power, although with no official title, until he was killed during the Libyan Civil War in October 2011 (Lutterbeck 29).

The initial protests in Algeria were about socioeconomic demands due to the deregulation of the state-subsidized economy. They were quickly quelled as the military-backed regime undertook a series of constitutional reforms and lifted the nineteen-year state of emergency. The reforms offered were twofold: economic and political. As in the other Maghrebi countries, Algerian society currently consists of a mainly young population (70%) with a high school graduation rate of 90% (Cheriet 144). While there is a huge public sector in Algeria, it is not large enough to absorb such a huge youth bulge. However, the swift action to reinstate the subsidies diffused the protests. There were attempts to reignite the demonstration in February, but the organizing activists found little support, although protests did resume with youths clashing with police and over 70 strikes took place, rallying for improved working conditions in March 2011 (Volpi). While the regime was able to quell the movement at the time, the grievances were not resolved and protests seriously reignited in 2019 when the *ḥirāk* took to the streets demanding the departure of president Bouteflika and democratic change. This time they succeeded in removing the dictator, but not in unseating the regime. When Covid-19 struck Algeria, the regime used the pandemic to tighten restrictions on public gatherings, stifling dissent once again (Goldstein).

The reforms were successful in subduing social mobilization due to the political power the military exercises through its control of the presidency, for which it remains the power base. The military is the regime. For the military to be overthrown, significant factions within it would have to be willing to defect. Zeraoui argues that the civil war in the 1990s effectively depoliticized the Algerian public, which worries about avoiding a similar occurrence (136). It was not until after the fact, in April 2011, that President Bouteflika offered his Arab-Spring-inspired political reforms designed to increase citizen participation and deepen the democratic process. In reality, the initiative was merely the creation of a commission to organize a series of limited constitutional reforms that would permit opposition parties better access to national television and radio and facilitate the establishment of new political parties, neither of which inspired enthusiasm from the opposition (Volpi 112). These were not responses to specific political demands, but rather an attempt

to forestall further protests in light of the toppled regimes elsewhere in the broader region.

The Moroccan protests, while not anti-regime, were focused on political reform. The F20 movement (February 20th Movement) tried to mobilize the rural populations to join their cause, but the rural populations did not connect their socio-economic demands to the political demands of the urban-based activist group (Bergh and Rossi-Doria 199), making it easier for the *makhzen* (the power structures around the monarchy) to contain the protests. The F20 movement knew the boundaries of political activism in Morocco. There is a close connection between business and royal circles. The calls for the end of corruption by the F20 movement were mostly targeting individuals close to the monarch who are benefitting from their relationship (Maghraoui 688). They were careful to use slogans demanding political reform, and purposefully did not call for an end to the regime (Maghraoui 691). Instead, they called for a reduction of the monarchy to its 'natural' size (Darif 20). The Moroccan military is structured around tribal loyalty as part of the king's coup-proofing strategy to contain its political influence (Lutterbeck 31). The entanglement of the military and the state is thus most evident in the cases of Algeria and Morocco, where the loyalty is squarely to the state leadership. While this is an important piece of the explanation or the lack of success in the uprisings against the state, it is not the decisive factor. The carefully crafted system of patronage and, in Morocco's case, the 'politics of compromise' offer a better explanation for the lack of social mobilization in the population at large.

The presence of a large middle class has been identified as a key factor in the evolution of democratic tendencies (Ianchovichina and Dang, "Middle Class Dynamics"), but it is very difficult to determine the size of the middle classes in Maghrebi states due to lack of reliable data (al-Dardari 29). Despite the lack of data, Dang and Ianchovichina estimated that the middle class lay around 42% of the total population across the MENA region at the time of the Arab Spring uprisings. They arrived at this number using the vulnerability approach (Ianchovichina and Dang, "Middle Class Dynamics").[2] Using both subjective well-being data and objective expenditure data in synthetic panels to measure welfare dynamics, they have been able to measure middle class consensus across the MENA region. Middle class consensus and welfare dynamics are better measures of economic prosperity and political stability than the overall size of the middle class. (Ianchovichina and Dang, "*Welfare Dynamics*" S117). Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia all have a relatively large middle-class. Yet only Tunisia experienced a successful transition towards democratization.

Dang and Ianchovichina's findings suggest that while there was an increase in upward mobility for objective welfare in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia before the Arab Spring uprisings, the share of dissatisfied people increased only slightly in Algeria, drastically in Tunisia, while it decreased in Morocco (Ianchovichina and Dang, "*Welfare Dynamics*" S119). Thus, it is not clear that the presence of a middle class, as posited by modernization theory, is significant to democratization aspirations. If this were the case, then the Moroccan and Algerian Arab Springs should surely have been more vibrant.

The development of strong institutions that can manage the economy effectively to the benefit of all is a crucial element in the development and consolidation of a democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson 28). The entanglement of governance and patronage in the Maghreb as a whole has hindered an equitable distribution of resources. Goldstone argues that for a revolution to be successful there are a variety of factors that must occur simultaneously:

> The government must appear so irremediably unjust or inept that it is widely viewed as a threat to the country's future; elites (especially in the military) must be alienated from the state and no longer willing to defend it; a broad-based section of the population, spanning ethnic and religious groups and socioeconomic classes, must mobilize; and international powers must either refuse to step in to defend the government or constrain it from using maximum force to defend itself. (8)

Only Tunisia fulfilled these requirements. Regime change in Libya only occurred as a result of foreign intervention. It is hard to imagine how the civil war would have ended without it.

11.5 Resources, Patronage, and the Arab Spring

Oil wealth does not seem to have been a decisive factor in the success or failure of the Arab Spring uprisings in the Maghreb. Oil rents were not the primary reason for the failure of uprisings in Algeria. Other factors, such as national trauma and lingering fear of terrorism from the civil war coupled with soft coercion and policy concessions, seem to have played larger roles (Muradova 81). The backbone of the Algerian economy is the hydrocarbon industry. This allows the Algerian government to refrain from taxing its citizens. Oil rents are commonly used to appease social dissent. The flipside of the regime's reliance on oil prices to pay off society is its dependence on a volatile international

oil market (Muradova 69). Apart from the military, the most powerful group within the state is the national hydrocarbon company, Sonatrach, referred to as the 'state within the state.' It has acted as a principal instrument of power in Algeria (Muradova 70).

In Libya, the regime was unable to keep the masses under control because it lacked the patronage system to pay off its population with increased salaries, consumer good subsidies, and other financial handouts (Gause 86). Instead, Gadhafi's rule was upheld through the maintenance of a narrow elite based on tribal relations and skillful political manipulation pitting tribes against other tribes and against state institutions rather than paying off dissident groups with oil profits and foreign investments. In contrast, patronage systems were much broader in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and included limited political freedom that the regime granted to opposition groups to keep them engaged in the political system without relinquishing power. Thus, the access to revenues from oil had no direct bearing on the Arab Spring uprisings or their outcomes.

11.6 Conclusion

Whereas Tunisia and Libya cast off their old regimes in the Arab Spring, the popular uprisings in Algeria and Morocco ended almost as soon as they began. As shown in this analysis, the difference lies in the entanglement of governance and post-independence politics. Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco each had a vibrant civil society and a system of political alliance, a network of economic association, and various national organizations to draw on for support (Entelis 36). Libya had none of these elements due to Gadhafi's unusual non-structured government style and the lack of nation-building. The civil war continued after Gadhafi's death, as rivaling tribes vied for power. The lesson from the Libyan experience is the dangers inherent in the lack of strong government institutions coupled with an underdeveloped economy. While tribal groups were able to unite to end Gadhafi's regime, they have been unable to agree on a new government structure, leaving Libya divided between two rivaling factions. Thus, revolution in such scenarios leads to civil unrest and a failing state. Some prominent political figures from the Gadhafi regime in Libya have also been able to return through a realignment of political alliances (Asseburg 12).

Tunisia succeeded mainly due to its strong governmental institutions, a politicized and popular trade union, and a weak and disenfranchised military. While ruling elites have blamed external actors for influencing domestic power dynamics, in reality the power struggle has been between domestic politically relevant elites (Asseburg 13). A strong civil society without military intervention was the key to Tunisia's success. Yet the challenges facing Tunisians as they move forward with democratization are not over. Elements of the old regime are still dominant in the political sphere, and socio-economic problems remain, as no significant gains have been made. As a result, youth unemployment remains high and the younger population is restive. This has led to an increasing number of protests against the government, as Tunisians grow impatient with the rate of reform that can accelerate economic growth. The story of the Arab Spring uprisings is thus a cautionary tale: revolution does not guarantee socio-economic mobility. Political reform and democratic governance come before socioeconomic gains.

The lessons from the Moroccan and Algerian experiences draw on the difficulty in mobilizing rural and urban populations or different classes in a unified effort. The governments were quick to promise reforms to coopt the opposition and appease the protesters. By the time these realized that the reforms were useless, the momentum was lost. No significant political or economic change was achieved.

The colonial experience and the independence struggle varied across the Maghreb, but one important factor stands out. Whichever group or person carried the legacy of independence has prevailed during the Arab Spring. Even Libya, which was granted independence by the United Nations and therefore had no national symbol of unity to rally behind, has returned to its chaotic state in the hands of tribal rivalry for power. Tunisia was the only case of an independence struggle rising from a popular movement, that of labor. The UGTT, with its roots in both rural and urban areas, was well positioned to lead the charge of transition to democracy after the uprising of 2010-11. In Algeria and Morocco, the independence movements became the power structures. The question that remains for disaffected populations and political activists to ask themselves is: Who will lead the charge after the revolution? Thus, the ultimate lesson from the Maghrebi experience is that success or failure of popular uprisings is entangled with the historical legacy of the independence struggle and post-colonial politics.

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Notes

1 Statistics are from Statista.com.

2 The vulnerability approach assigns middle-class status to people with an income above a specific vulnerability line determined by the daily amount needed to ensure a person is less than 20% likely to fall into poverty in the next period.