

# Economic Opportunity and Inequality as Contributing Factors to the Arab Spring: The Cases of Tunisia and Egypt

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# **Economic Opportunity and Inequality as Contributing Factors to the Arab Spring: The Cases of Tunisia and Egypt**

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### **Abstract**

This study will take an economic historical approach to the Arab Spring in an attempt to discover why citizens across the Middle East and North Africa rose up against their respective governments and demand change. The study will focus, more specifically, on Egypt and Tunisia where the revolutions were successful in overthrowing Ben Ali and Mubarak. It will be shown that the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia as well as regionally was primarily the result of decades of economic stagnation and regression for the vast majority of citizens as well a notable increase in the levels of education across the populations. A plethora of concrete statistics, including but not limited to the Gini coefficient, unemployment rates, and GDP per capita, all combine to show that the Middle East and North Africa was not only a highly unequal place but also one where citizens found ample reason to demand meaningful change.

*To My Mom, Dad, Sister, and Brother*

*I would like to thank Professor Banuazizi for all of his help and guidance in completing this daunting and challenging endeavor. Without his leadership and ever-helpful knowledge this project would never have been completed.*

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Overview of the Arab Spring .....	4
Chapter 3: Alternative Explanations and Importance of Economics .....	16
Chapter 4: What are Economic Factors.....	21
Chapter 5: Case Studies.....	37
Case Study 1: Tunisia.....	39
Case Study 2: Egypt.....	52
Counter Examples: Saudi Arabia & India.....	72
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implications for Further Research.....	79
Appendix 1. ....	87
Appendix 2.....	97
Works Cited.....	99

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Ash-shab yurid isqat an-nizam*, the people want the fall of the regime. This simple expression used by Tunisian youth during the overthrow of the then president and dictator Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali captures the humble and yet complex nature of the Arab Spring movement that began in late December of 2010. The desire for change in the face of difficult circumstances is a natural human response. However, achieving this transformation in the face of ruthless authoritarian dictatorships is a bloody and challenging proposition. Revolution is an inherently convoluted and complex affair. Different groups with sometimes similar and oftentimes disparate ideals compete for change in the face of entrenched and powerful regimes based oftentimes on a plethora of reasons. The case of the Arab Spring, especially Tunisia and Egypt, showcase these complexities of revolution, both causal and perpetuating.

Additionally, a variety of explanations have been offered presented by scholars and the media, regarding not only the cause of the Arab Spring but also what its lasting effects will be. Some have emphasized the impact of the large youth populations, unemployment, social media, social discontent, women, general economic conditions, and increasing human rights violations, among numerous others. However, it is the position of this paper that the search for economic stability and opportunity in the face of economic uncertainty, which led to large-scale events

that were decidedly unpredictable in nature.<sup>1</sup> This is not, however, meant to dismiss the validity of other explanations regarding the causation of the Arab Spring, but is instead meant to place greater emphasis on the importance of the economic factors as a major cause of the uprisings.

Furthermore, the uniqueness of the region's political and economic systems will be examined including the widespread corruption, cronyism, and stagnation among many of the states where uprisings took place. Based on this analysis this study will conclude that while many factors were at play in the Arab Spring and there was certainly a great deal of variability across borders, it was the driving forces of economic inequality, unpredictability, and stagnation which in large part drove people to the streets and in some cases autocrats out of power.

This paper will begin in Chapter 2 with an overview of the Arab Spring uprisings across the region, including a detailed look at the economic precedents and policies which lead to widespread social discontent. In Chapter 3, this paper will address in greater detail the various competing explanations that have been provided across in the scholarly literature and the international media for the Arab Spring as well as why economic factors should be treated as primary. In Chapter 4, the critical economic factors will be more fully explained, as well as the historical economic corollaries that exist across the Middle East and North African region.

Chapter 5 will show why economic factors had a primary contributing factor to the uprisings and how they continue to plague the same countries in the region.

The analysis will focus on Tunisia and Egypt as a whole, as well as various

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<sup>1</sup> George Joffé, "The Arab Spring in North Africa: Origins and Prospects," *The Journal of North African Studies* 16(December, 2011): 508, accessed January 5, 2015, doi: 10.1080/13629387.2011.630881.



demographic groups in the two countries. Chapter 6 will take a more forward looking approach to the findings of this study and address not only how economic factors greatly contributed to the Arab Spring uprisings but also continue to plague these nations. Finally, Chapter 7 will conclude this study with a summary review of the findings and the implications for further research.

## Chapter 2

### Overview of the Arab Spring: Where Did It All Come From and What Exactly Happened?

Muhammad Al-Bouazizi, “a poor, unemployed, economically and socially oppressed Tunisian” was a street vendor who, now famously and tellingly, performed an act of self-immolation on December 17, 2010 in the rural town of Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, in protest of his subjugation and embarrassment at the hands of those in power.<sup>2</sup> Before his act he told his mother, “blame the time [we live in] and not me”.<sup>3</sup> This statement leaves the important question of exactly what time was he referring to and what was unique to this period in the Middle East and North Africa that drove him to perform such a drastic act? What was different about then as opposed to before? This action would serve as the catalyst “that would impeccably ignite not only the public square of Tunisia, but the streets of the other Arabic states [including] Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria”.<sup>4</sup> There existed a great deal of civil unrest throughout the region with large populations of dissatisfied and long-subjugated citizens who had suffered economically, and it was Bouazizi who ignited this flame of revolution.

Bouazizi was not, however, unique in his circumstance in the Middle East and North Africa. Most young people faced desperate and downtrodden lives, and while many had university degrees, in the face of no prospects for employment or

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<sup>2</sup> Najib George Awad, *And Freedom Became a Public-Square: Political, Sociological and Religious Overviews on the Arab Christians and the Arabic Spring* (Zurich: Lit Verlag GmbH & Co., 2012), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Farha, “The Arab Revolts: Local, Regional, and Global Catalysts and Consequences,” in *The Arab Uprisings: Catalysts, Dynamics, and Trajectories*, ed. Fahed Al-Sumait, Nele Lenze, & Michael C. Hudson (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 48.

<sup>4</sup> Najib George Awad, *And Freedom Became a Public-Square: Political, Sociological and Religious Overviews on the Arab Christians and the Arabic*, 1.

advancement numerous young people would “spend their days loitering in the cafes lining the dusty streets of [these] impoverished towns”.<sup>5</sup> Education did not lead to meaningful economic prospects and time appeared to wither away meaninglessly under the crushing tonnage of authoritarianism and economic stagnation.

Additionally, this circumstance was in no way unique to Tunisia, and the overall unemployment rate among the Arab youth population was double the world average in the decade preceding the Arab Spring and remained little improved over that period.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, “a mind-boggling fifty million jobs need to be created by 2020 to fully absorb the young people due to come on to the labor market” not counting those already looking for work, an unlikely prospect which will be explicated in later chapters.<sup>7</sup> While it is obvious where and when the revolution in strict terms *began*, the underlying large-scale facts and figures, which preceded the Arab Spring period, tell in more concrete terms why citizens chose then to finally revolt against long-standing authoritarian regimes. In other words, the actions of Bouazizi and others like him did not exist in a vacuum nor without historical precedents and context. They were not the actions of a man swept up in hysteria but a calculated act based on long-standing economic grievances with his government.

The Middle East and North Africa has long been a place of questionable human rights, low levels of freedom, and limited economic development for the

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<sup>5</sup> Rania Abouzeid, “Bouazizi: The Man Who Set Himself and Tunisia on Fire,” *Time Magazine*, January 21, 2011, accessed January 6, 2015, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2044723,00.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons From the Democratic Uprising* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons From the Democratic Uprising*, 32.

majority of citizens. According to Freedom House, the entire Middle East and North African region is currently characterized by a dismal 2% freedom rating as a percentage of the population.<sup>8&9</sup> With a regional population of over 405 million people that translates to about 8 million free people in the region, a decidedly bleak overall number. This is especially telling when compared to other regions of the world, as in Europe where 86% of the 614 million people are characterized as free, in Asia where 38% of the 3.9 billion people are considered free (a region which includes the failed and tyrannical state of North Korea and oppressive communist state of China), and the Americas where 71% of the 953 million people are characterized as free.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, if taken as whole since the beginning of the Freedom House studies in January of 1973 until the present only one country has ever been granted 'free' status, Israel, with the vast majority landing in the 'not free' category and ever more regressing to that status as of recent.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, the recent trends throughout the region have been less than encouraging, especially in the years immediately preceding and following the revolutions. The general movement globally in 2011 was a decline in freedom and the Middle East and North Africa, despite the protests, was not immune to this trend.<sup>12</sup> This included not-free scores of 5.5/7 (with 7 being the worst possible

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<sup>8</sup> "Middle East and North Africa," Freedom House, accessed January 5, 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa#.VKtZyMa4lBw>.

<sup>9</sup> **These data can be further explored in the appendix under Figure 2.1.**

<sup>10</sup> "Country Ratings and Status by Region, FIW 1973-2014," Freedom House, accessed January 2, 2015, [freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VKtakFpSxll](https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VKtakFpSxll).

<sup>11</sup> "Country Ratings and Status by Region, FIW 1973-2014," Freedom House, accessed January 1, 2015, [freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VKtakFpSxll](https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VKtakFpSxll).

<sup>12</sup> David J. Kramer & Arch Puddington, "The Arab Spring and Freedom's Future," Freedom House, January 18, 2012, accessed January 8, 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/arab-spring-and-freedom's-future#.VLFZ-8a4lBw>.

score) for the vast majority of Middle Eastern and North African states for not only the years prior to the 2011 uprisings but also the years after, with very few showing any meaningful upward trend.<sup>13</sup> While the scope of political development and change for the region in the years after the revolution is for the most part outside the realm of this study, it is important to understand just how oppressive the region was and continues to be for most citizens.

Economically, the same lack of opportunity and freedom existed and continues to exist throughout the Middle East and North Africa, especially when compared to other global regions. The 2014 Index of Economic Freedom, published jointly by the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal, gave the Middle East and North Africa an overall economic freedom score of 61.4 out of a possible 100, a number which was in many ways artificially bolstered by the very high rankings bestowed on the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain.<sup>14</sup> In general, North Africa ranked exceptionally low with all states scoring in the 50-59.9 and the Arabian Peninsula scored marginally better with more states, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel scoring in the 60-69.9 bracket.<sup>15&16</sup> What these numbers in their simplest form show is the general conditions of limited economic opportunity that existed prior to the Arab Spring and continues to exist across the region, especially in countries where protests and uprisings took place.

Furthermore, what these telling statistics and analysis from Freedom House

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<sup>13</sup> "Country Ratings and Status by Region, FIW 1973-2014," Freedom House, accessed January 2, 2015, [freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VKtakFpSxll](http://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VKtakFpSxll).

<sup>14</sup> "2014 Economic Freedom Heat Map," Index of Economic Freedom, The Heritage Foundation & The Wall Street Journal, accessed January 6, 2015, <http://www.heritage.org/index/heatmap>.

<sup>15</sup> "2014 Economic Freedom Heat Map," Index of Economic Freedom, The Heritage Foundation & The Wall Street Journal, accessed January 6, 2015, <http://www.heritage.org/index/heatmap>.

<sup>16</sup> **These data can be further explored in the appendix under Figure 2.2.**

and Index of Economic Freedom serve to show is how overtly subjugated the majority of citizens who live in the Middle East and North Africa were and continue to be. It would be wrong, however, to overly focus on the sole catalyzing power of these praetorian states. While the statistics are telling, there is far more nuance to be discovered underneath these large and simple numerical characterizations. However, a fuller exploration of the economic factors at play will be presented in Chapter 4.

We may ask, what exactly happened across the region? Where and how did people revolt? What did they want? Revolution is seldom a simple affair and demands and circumstances certainly vary across borders and between people. As was explained earlier, the Arab Spring began in a small rural town south of Tunisia and quickly spread throughout the region. Next the revolution moved to Egypt, which suffered from many of the same systemic maladies as Tunisia. From Egypt “protests sprang up elsewhere in the Arab World from the Persian Gulf to North Africa” and even led to the killing of longtime and despotic Libyan leader Muammar al-Gadhafi.<sup>17</sup> A region long known as impenetrable to the westernization and liberalization of its policies and economic systems was going through a decided shift in its politics and policies at the hands of angry and motivated citizens.

Additionally, voices from those protesting further capture the wants of the Arab Spring. As the BBC reported in December 2011 in extensive interviews with protestors of various demographics, socioeconomic statuses, and nationalities across the Middle East and North Africa, there were numerous telling quotes of

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<sup>17</sup> Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch, “Introduction,” in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, ed. Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 2.

wants and expectations.

Ahmed Raafat Amin age 22 of Cairo, Egypt stated,

“Our country's condition was getting worse and worse. There was corruption, torture, injustice, inequality and no freedom [...] the regime succeeded in isolating us as individuals for years. Once we stopped thinking as individuals and started thinking as a group, change became possible [...] we need [...] more jobs and development plans”.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Aiman Abubaker Ahmed Abushahna age 43 of Misrata, Libya stated,

“On 19 February, I felt something was going to happen - the revolution was definitely coming [...] we do not need any more corruption nor more destruction of this country [...] all I want is a happy future when my children live in a democratic country where they will be safe and free”.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, Amel Gaaloul (no age given) of Tunis, Tunisia argued,

“We're all very happy that Ben Ali has left the country. We're singing and dancing. We were hoping he would leave earlier but at least he is gone [...] we are now hoping for a fair and transparent government. Anything can happen now”.<sup>20</sup>

What these expressive statements capture is not only the wants of the protestors but also their hopes and dreams for the future. For too long suffering, stagnation, and a lack of social mobility had been the norm, and at long last change was a real possibility. As Woodrow Wilson once stated, “the seed of revolution is repression,” and this seed was finally beginning to blossom in this long economically repressive region.

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<sup>18</sup> Dhruti Shah, “The Big Stories Affecting You in 2011,” BBC News Middle East, last modified December 26, 2011, accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16275176>.

<sup>19</sup> Dhruti Shah, “The Big Stories Affecting You in 2011,” BBC News Middle East, last modified December 26, 2011, accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16275176>.

<sup>20</sup> “Tunisians React as President Steps Down,” BBC News Africa, last modified January 14, 2011, accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12196242>.

Furthermore, there were certain groups throughout the region who had been subjected to deplorable economic conditions and bleak social prospects, notably the youth population. The political impact of the youth in the Middle East and North Africa should not be taken lightly as there exists a dramatic youth bulge, the largest one in the world when compared to other regions.<sup>21</sup> Statistically, in Tunisia over 42 percent of the population is under 25, in Libya this number is 48 percent, it is 51 percent in Egypt, and 57 percent in Syria.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, youth bulges were especially pronounced in states “that experienced the most widespread and powerful protests during the Arab Spring.”<sup>23</sup> Later in the case studies section of Chapter 5 the important correlative power of economic factors and their impact on the region’s youths will be more fully explored, especially the driving power of economic dejection on a highly educated and employable youth population. However, as the Arab Youth Survey published by the ASDA and Burston-Martseller argues, “it can be argued that the decisive factor – the tipping point – that triggered regional unrest stems from the continuing fallout of the global financial crisis”.<sup>24</sup>

For now, however, it is important to fully understand the mindset of the Middle East and North African region’s youths prior to the onset of the Arab Spring. ASDA’s Burson-Marsteller has conducted numerous telling Arab Youth Surveys in the years before as well as the years after the Arab Spring. For now a focus on the

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<sup>21</sup> Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch, “Introduction,” in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, ed. Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>23</sup> Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>24</sup> ASDA’s Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, “Third Annual ASDA’s Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey: Arab Youth Survey 2010/2011,” last modified 2011, accessed March 1, 2015, [http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2010/files/AYS\\_2010\\_white\\_paper.pdf](http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2010/files/AYS_2010_white_paper.pdf).



attitudes and opinions of Arab Youths before the revolution will be focused on, while the changes, similarities, and differences in opinions after the revolution being discussed in a later Chapter, after a full exposition of the different means which propagated the revolutions is undertaken. In the 2009-2010 Arab Youth Survey numerous sentiments were captured which show the growing discontent Arab Youths had with their place in society.

Young people in the entire Arab world were negatively affected by the global financial crisis of 2008, parts of which do not remain fully recovered to this very day.<sup>25</sup> This was especially true for the youth population of North Africa where they felt the affects of the economic downturn the hardest, especially in the realms of employment and the ability to accrue savings without accumulating personal debt.<sup>26</sup> Further proving this, among the concerns Arab Youths had going forward, the top three in 2009-2010, for surveys administered in late 2009, on the eve of the Arab Spring were the rising cost of living, a shortage of affordable housing, and unemployment.<sup>27</sup> There was a palpable fear of economic stagnation and of slipping into abject poverty, and the policies of the various governments throughout the region only perpetuated these anxieties.

Shown in the 2010-2011 Arab Youth Survey, for surveys administered in mid to late 2010, immediately before the beginning of the Arab Spring, these anxious attitudes of Arab youths continued to grow. The substantial concern regarding the

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<sup>25</sup> ASDA'A Burson- Marsteller Arab Youth Survey. "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper," last modified 2010, accessed January 8, 2015,

[http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2009/downloads/asdaa\\_whitepaper\\_online.pdf](http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2009/downloads/asdaa_whitepaper_online.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper," 9.

<sup>27</sup> "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper," 13.

rising cost of living was persistent and was especially severe in Egypt, where 77% showed grave concern, as well as Bahrain, where 68% responded with worry.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, similarly to the 2009-2010 survey there remained a high concern regarding unemployment as well as the economy in general in 2010-2011.<sup>29</sup> The ASDA'A went so far as to argue, "it can be argued that the decisive factor – the tipping point – that triggered regional unrest stems from the continuing fallout of the global financial crisis".<sup>30</sup> This argument further captures the growing discontent large segments of the population had with the economic policies of their governments in the years preceding the Arab Spring. So while indeed the uprisings took on a rapid and unpredictable nature, there were certainly a great many concerns which had been developing and perpetuating for years throughout the Middle East and North Africa which propagated the decision to revolt.

To fully grasp a study about a regional revolution it is equally important to grasp where the revolutions were successful, where they were not, and why. James L. Gelvin, a professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles has identified four clusters of results from the Arab Spring. The first of which consists of Tunisia and Egypt, "where militaries, siding with protestors and not with autocrats, eased the ouster of the latter from power".<sup>31</sup> This was further bolstered by both states having relatively powerful militaries, with Egypt's being the largest in the

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<sup>28</sup> "Third Annual ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Top 10 Findings," last Modified March 15, 2011, accessed January 8, 2015, [http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2010/files/AYS\\_2010\\_white\\_paper.pdf](http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2010/files/AYS_2010_white_paper.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> "Third Annual ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Top 10 Findings," 14.

<sup>30</sup> "Third Annual ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Top 10 Findings" 16.

<sup>31</sup> James L. Gelvin, "The Arab World," in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, ed. Mark L. Haas & David W. Lesch (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 247.

Arab World.<sup>32</sup> In these states the Army stood against Mubarak and Ben Ali resulting in a more rapid and complete removal from power and transfer of leadership. This does not mean, however, that these revolutions were caused by the militaries. Conversely, the militaries simply aided in the transition of power. The second cluster identified by Gelvin includes areas where “regimes fragmented, pitting the officers and soldiers, cabinet minister, politicians, and diplomats who stood with the regime against those who joined the opposition”.<sup>33</sup> States where this took place include Yemen and Libya, both characteristically “weak states” where decidedly weak national identities existed and continue to be virtually nonexistent.<sup>34</sup> The lack of any strong nationalistic sentiments caused a much easier fragmentation of the dissatisfied populace and the lasting effects continue to the present where Libya remains in a state of political turmoil and in Yemen the government collapsed on January 23, 2015.<sup>35</sup>

The third cluster, identified by Gelvin, includes Algeria, Syria, and Bahrain “where regimes maintained their cohesion against the uprisings”.<sup>36</sup> What these three regimes had in common was a cohesion within the ruling coalition that was able to respond and remove factional elements while avoiding any splintering within the government. In other words, the ability to maintain cohesion and placate the angry populaces with economic entitlements allowed these states to avoid the fates of those states in clusters one and two. The fourth and final cluster, as argued

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<sup>32</sup> James L. Gelvin, “The Arab World,” 247.

<sup>33</sup> James L. Gelvin, “The Arab World,” 247.

<sup>34</sup> James L. Gelvin, “The Arab World,” 248.

<sup>35</sup> Shuab Almosawa & Rod Nordland, “U.S. Fears Chaos as Government of Yemen Falls,” *The New York Times*, January 22, 2015, accessed January 24, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/23/world/middleeast/yemen-houthi-crisis-sana.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/23/world/middleeast/yemen-houthi-crisis-sana.html?_r=0).

<sup>36</sup> James L. Gelvin, “The Arab World,” 249.

for by Gelvin, includes states in which there was no overthrow of the government. Additionally, in these cases using the word 'uprising' would be a fallacy, as they were more protests than anything else in which citizens demanded change and not an overthrow of the current regime.<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly the remaining states which fit into this cluster include five of the seven remaining monarchies in the Middle East and North Africa: Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. This notion has been further contended for by respected sociologist and political scientist Jack A. Goldstone who argues, that in these monarchical states blame was shifted adeptly to prime ministers and other government officials and not the monarch, thus insulating the monarchs from protesters and their demands.<sup>38</sup> Put more simply, the monarchs acting as chief of state were able to pass the buck to their political chiefs of government.

What this four-part typology by Gelvin demonstrates is the differentiation in results across borders that occurred during and after the Arab Spring across the Middle East and North African region.<sup>39</sup> While certainly there was not a uniformity of result, there was still a common reasoning for revolution from the eyes of many protestors, especially those in states where the revolutions were successful. In general, what the Arab Spring has reaffirmed is "the importance of people power, the sense that taking to the streets and demanding change can really make a difference, and that the powerful are so only as long as people believe they are

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<sup>37</sup> James L. Gelvin, "The Arab World," 249.

<sup>38</sup> Jack A. Goldstone, "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies," *Foreign Affairs* (May-June 2011), accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67694/jack-a-goldstone/understanding-the-revolutions-of-2011>.

<sup>39</sup> **These data can be further explored in the appendix under Figure 2.3.**

untouchable”.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, one must be careful not to paint the Middle East and North African region with the brush of uniformity. There is a great amount of variance culturally, civically, and religiously, especially between the ideological conservatives, pragmatic conservatives, and liberal Islamists, as well as secularists, across the region. These important variances both across and within borders will help determine the difference between states in the case studies section in Chapter 5.

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<sup>40</sup> Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring That Wasn't* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), vii.

## Chapter 3

### Why should Economic Factors be Considered as Primary?

Since 2011 there has been a surge of arguments presented by scholars and members of the international media attempting to explain the causes of the Arab Spring. Many of these alternative explanations will be presented in this chapter to aid the reader in fully digesting the complexity of the regional revolution and it is additionally not the goal of this study to refute any single one. However, as later case studies and figures will illuminate, the importance of the preceding economic factors in starting the revolution must not only not be ignored but are also among the most important.

The first and perhaps most popular argument for what caused the Arab Spring was the power of social media, especially in the hands of technologically savvy youth. The Internet is certainly a uniquely mobile and rapid tool through the wide use of the multitude of different mobile and home based devices. Beginning with research conducted in 2009-2010, “More than 80% (of Middle Eastern youths) used the Internet at least several times a week, and 56% claim[ed] to surf the web every day. Only 6% of Arab youth say they never use the Internet.”<sup>41</sup> Additionally, according to the Arab Youth Survey, “social media is becoming increasingly influential [and] more young Arabs are getting their news from social media while trust in websites and social media as reliable news sources has risen sharply”.<sup>42</sup> Some studies have gone so far as to characterize social media as directly responsible

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<sup>41</sup> “2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper,” 18.

<sup>42</sup> “Third Annual ASDA’A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Top 10 Findings,” Last modified 2013.

for the Arab Spring, characterizing the Arab Spring fallaciously as a “Facebook Revolution”.<sup>43</sup>

However, while social media and communication technology more generally certainly aided citizens in communicating their wants, opinions, and protest locations, and the ability to rapidly communicate and work around government-imposed censorship measures can assist in perpetuating or igniting a revolution. These technologies were not developed for purposes of people’s protest in the first place. It is also important to keep in mind that large segments of the population that participated in the revolutions did not engage actively in social media, especially the older class of citizens. In this sense social media and its related technologies are more complementary and not causal. As Wolfsfeld et al. argued in a recent

*International Journal of Press and Politics* article,

“social media may function to sustain and facilitate collective action, but this only one channel of communications among many, and processes of political communications cannot be regarded as a fundamental driver of unrest compared to other structural factors”.<sup>44</sup>

This is shown to be the case if we compare states where the revolutions were successful with those in which major protests did not take place. In the Gulf states, where uprisings, if they occurred, were not successful in overthrowing the incumbent governments, “social media were used by protesters as by the regimes, arguably even more so than in Egypt, Tunisia, or Syria”.<sup>45</sup> This is especially true given the much higher standard of living and increased wealth in these Gulf oil-

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<sup>43</sup> James L. Gelvin, “The Arab World,” 66.

<sup>44</sup> Gadi Wolfsfeld, Elad Segev, & Tamir Sheafer, “Social Media and the Arab Spring: Politics Comes First,” *The International Journal of Press & Politics* 18(2013): 119, accessed January 31, 2015, doi:10.1177/1940161212471716.

<sup>45</sup> Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that Wasn’t* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 111.

producing states. Social media, Internet, and cell phone use were rampant and yet no toppling of a regime occurred. In other words, the necessary driving precursor for action did not exist in the wealthy states within the Middle East and North African region.

Additionally, an alternative explanation for the Arab Spring has been a focus simply on the relative size of the youth population throughout the region. While it is indeed true that there is a notable youth bulge, as was shown earlier in Chapter 2, this, similar to social media and information technology, takes on a primarily complementary role. It was not the mere fact that many protesters were young, it was the demands they had as a result of their often-humiliating treatment by authoritarian regimes coupled with increased access to education which was the catalyzing factor. They were demanding economic empowerment and did so with a great deal of youthful energy and zeal.<sup>46</sup> In other words, undoubtedly having a great many young people marching, protesting, and demanding change aided in toppling a number of regimes. However, it was not the simple fact that they were young which brought about this transformation.

A third explanation for the onset of the Arab Spring is the well-known *contagion effect*, in which revolution spreads like a virus from population to population regardless of demands.<sup>47</sup> Especially interesting and thought provoking has been the causal linkage between social media and the contagion effect at the

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<sup>46</sup> Mahmood Monshipouri, *Democratic Uprisings in the New Middle East: Youth, Technology, Human Rights, and US Foreign Policy* (London, UK: Paradigm Publishers, 2014), 45.

<sup>47</sup> Buttonwood, "Political and Market Turmoil: Contagion Effect," *The Economist*, February 18, 2011, accessed January 24, 2015, [http://www.economist.com/blogs/buttonwood/2011/02/political\\_and\\_market\\_turmoil](http://www.economist.com/blogs/buttonwood/2011/02/political_and_market_turmoil).



hands of young people. Some have argued that it was ideas through social media that jumped at literal light speed across borders from computer screen to computer screen illuminating populations to their plights and igniting a revolutionary spirit rapidly. However, while indeed ideas and values were shared through various media outlets, what this argument fails to account for is why this time came as the one where revolution finally occurred. Values had been shared for decades in coffee shops and cafes across the region and certainly citizens were unhappy with numerous aspects of their lives before the advent of widespread social media. However, this was not the causal factor as some have argued, it was a contributing one.

A final alternative explanation which has been proposed for the onset of the Arab Spring is that citizens, especially in states where the revolutions were successful, were simply dismayed with their long-standing autocratic political leaders. As examples, Hosni Mubarak had been in power in Egypt since 1980, Ben Ali in Tunisia since 1987, and Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya for over 42 years. As a 2012 report presented by a bipartisan subcommittee of the British Parliament argued, the revolution was brought about by,

“resentment of authoritarian rulers that had denied freedom of expression and limited opportunities for participation in civil and political life; long-standing 'emergency laws'; a malfunctioning or absent justice system; and a repressive security state apparatus that was responsible for myriad human rights abuses, including torture and killings”.<sup>48</sup>

This explanation provides the most persuasive competing causal explanation of the

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<sup>48</sup> “The Arab Spring Uprisings: The Causes of the Arab Spring,” *Parliament of the United Kingdom*, July 19, 2012, accessed January 24, 2015, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmfaaff/80/8006.htm>.

root cause of the Arab Spring when compared to the economic causes. However, as will be shown in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, it was indeed economic factors that were primary and social/political factors were secondary as major concerns, especially given the bleak economic prospects and a constant of economic repressiveness, corruption, and cronyism within each government.

Moreover, recent global precedent existed for action and revolution, and as the previous section demonstrates many scholars and members of the media have found alternative explanations to explain this sudden shift. However, the economic conditions, which existed in the Middle East and North African region in the years prior to 2011, especially in Tunisia and Egypt, contributed significantly to the Arab Spring and are likely to continue to plague this region in the coming years unless serious reform measures are taken.

## Chapter 4

### What Exactly Are Economic Factors: The Mix of Macro and Micro

Certainly the very term ‘economics’ brings up a tremendous number of complex statistics and an even larger number of complicated formulae. This paper’s goal, as it a fully qualitative political science paper, is not to explain the methodologies and mathematics behind economic variables. Instead, it is a targeted use and understanding of a plethora of diverse statistics that will fully demonstrate the importance of economic grievances in promulgating the Arab Spring. Additionally, it is important to illuminate and reason a number of these variables to provide the academic and scholarly background to follow the arguments provided later in the case studies section. What this chapter will focus on is a targeted selection of macro and micro economic variables and utilize these to fully showcase the situation in the Middle East and North African region prior to the advent of the Arab Spring, and thus fully demonstrate the vast importance of economic variables in providing the impetus for action in the Arab Spring.

The important question to address now is why economic variables? What was uniquely empowering and dire about the economic situations in the Middle East and North Africa that would lead to widespread revolts and protests challenging long-standing powerful and entrenched regimes? As Ilhem Allagui and Johanne Kuebler of the *International Journal of Communication* argue, the citizens in the region were mobilized as a result of “the pain they shared due to difficult socioeconomic conditions [specifically] unemployment [and] inequalities among

classes”.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, as Nadia Hassine of the World Bank argues, “deteriorating standards of living, high and rising unemployment, and growing perceptions of exclusion were among the many reasons that prompted the Arab streets to rise in early 2011”.<sup>50</sup> There existed, since the large-scale state economic planning of the 1980s, a long and predictable path to “inequality of opportunity in economic” prospects as well as great deal of economic disparity across rural-urban borders and between socioeconomic groups.<sup>51</sup> In other words, North Africa and the Middle East before the Arab Spring was a highly unequal place with a very small number of *haves* and an ever-growing number of *have-nots*. Logically, it was the increased feeling of subjugation at the hands of self-serving and autocratic governments the provided the main impetus for action for many citizens across the region. Simply put, the “Arab revolutions were fueled by poverty, unemployment, and [a] lack of economic opportunity”.<sup>52</sup>

Thus fully understanding the vast income and economic inequality that existed historically, especially in the decade preceding the uprisings, throughout the region is vital to understanding what started the revolutions and protests. Based on this understanding the World Bank argues, “high inequality threatens a country’s political stability because more people are dissatisfied with their economic status,

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<sup>49</sup> Ilhem Allagui & Johanne Kuebler, “The Arab Spring and the Role of ICTs,” *International Journal of Communication* 5(2011): 1436, accessed January 31, 2015, doi:1932-8036/2011FEA1435.

<sup>50</sup> Nadia Belhaj Hassine, “Economic Inequality in the Arab Region,” *World Development* 66 (2015): 532, accessed January 1, 2015, doi:10.1016/j.worlddev/2014/09/011.

<sup>51</sup> Nadia Belhaj Hassine, “Economic Inequality in the Arab Region,” *World Development* 66 (2015): 532.

<sup>52</sup> Adeel Malik & Bassem Awadallah, “The Economics of the Arab Spring,” *World Development* 45(2013): 296, accessed January 5, 2015, doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.12.015.

which makes it harder to reach political consensus among population groups with higher and lower incomes”.<sup>53</sup> In general the Middle East and North African region was a challenging place to live and find meaningful work, had the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world when compared to any other region<sup>54</sup>, and the lowest youth labor participation globally.<sup>55&56</sup>

Facundo Alverado and Thomas Piketty of the Paris School of Economics pointed out, “there is no doubt that income inequality is extremely large at the level of the Middle East taken as whole [and] the share of total Middle East income accruing to the top 10% income receivers is currently 55%” leaving 45% of the regions citizens with vastly less available income.<sup>57</sup> When this fact is then taken in conjunction with a selection of pre-Arab Spring Gini coefficients the true degree of inequality in the region begins to take shape. The values of the Gini coefficient range from ‘0’ representing perfect equality to ‘1’ representing perfect inequality. To take as a point of reference the state with the worst current global Gini coefficient is Namibia, in Western Africa, with a rating of .59 as of 2010 followed by Zambia, in Southern Central Africa, with a rating of .57 as of 2010 as well.<sup>58</sup> Conversely, the states with the most equal Gini ratings are all located in Northern Europe, and

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<sup>53</sup> The World Bank, “Income Inequality,” accessed January 31, 2015, [http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/beyond/beyondco/beg\\_05.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/beyond/beyondco/beg_05.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> **These data can be further explored in Appendix Figure 5.1.**

<sup>55</sup> **These data can be further explored in Appendix Figure 5.2.**

<sup>56</sup> The United Nations, “Youth Population and Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa,” accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/roudi.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Facundo Alverado & Thomas Piketty, “Measuring Top Incomes and Inequality in the Middle East: Data Limitations and Illustration with the Case of Egypt,” *Paris School of Economics*, April 13, 2014, accessed January 31, 2015, <http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/AlveradoPiketty2014MiddleEast.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> World Fact Book, “Distribution of Family Income: GINI Index,” *The Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html>.

include Norway and Denmark, which both have scores of .25, as well as Sweden and Finland, which have scores of .26.<sup>59</sup>

The Middle East and North African region, when compared to these extremes, was certainly an unequal place based on their respective Gini coefficients. Egypt and Tunisia, both of which will be treated in more detail later, had average Gini coefficients of .308 and .377 respectively in the five years preceding the Arab Spring, which is a high-medium ranking of inequality.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, Morocco's was .409 as of 2008, Yemen's was .377 as of 2005, Algeria's was .355 as of 1995, and Iran was .445 as of 2006<sup>61</sup> all of which also fall in the high-medium ranking of inequality, especially when compared to their global peers.<sup>62</sup> What this regional snapshot fully captures is the absence of any states where a good deal of income equality existed. The vast majority of citizens in the Middle East and North African region were stuck in downtrodden economic situations for decades prior to the onset of the Arab Spring and were unable to improve their personal economic standing. This, while the rich and powerful, especially each state's political elite, continued to increase their vast wealth.

Another telling statistic for the lack of economic opportunity in the Middle East and North Africa prior to the onset of the Arab Spring is the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) figures as well as the poverty rates among the citizenry. As

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<sup>59</sup> Inequality Watch, "The rise of income inequality amongst rich countries," December 13, 2011, accessed January 31, 2015, <http://inequalitywatch.eu/spip.php?article58>.

<sup>60</sup> World Fact Book, "Distribution of Family Income: GINI Index," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html>.

<sup>61</sup> All of these dates represent the last published Gini coefficient for each state

<sup>62</sup> World Fact Book, "Distribution of Family Income: GINI Index," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html>.

a starting point it is certainly true that across the many states throughout the Middle East and North Africa there is a great disparity with how each individual economy functions, whether it be driven by oil, natural gas, tourism, manufacturing, or a host of other industries. However, this uniqueness of each state's economy does not remove the overall trend of decidedly low per capita GDP figures, and the combination of this statistic with high levels of income inequality only exacerbates the case for the lack of economic opportunity for the majority of the region's citizens. In other words, not only were the vast majority of citizens extremely poor but they also continually looked at the few wealthy of each state gain more and more economic power and influence.

After the removal of Qatar's GDP per capita, which stands in 2013 at a global leading \$102,900 and United Arab Emirates, which also stands relatively high at \$42,000, the rest of the region was decidedly bleak prior to the onset of the Arab Spring (two states where there were little to no protests).<sup>63</sup> Beyond these regional outliers, the rest of the Middle East and North African state's GDP per capita figures were extremely low. Important examples from 2009 include: Yemen with \$1,252 per capita, Egypt with \$2,461 per capita, Algeria with \$3,771 per capita, Libya with \$10,455 per capita, Morocco with \$2,861 per capita, and Syria with \$2,065.<sup>64&65</sup> This

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<sup>63</sup> World Fact Book, "Country Comparison: GDP Per Capita," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>.

<sup>64</sup> The World Bank, "GDP Per Capita: Country Comparisons," accessed January 31, 2015, [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2005+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-first&sort=asc&page=1](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2005+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-first&sort=asc&page=1).

<sup>65</sup> **A complete chart of the regions GDP per capita rates can be found in Appendix 4.2**

is especially revealing when compared to the global average in 2009 of \$10,400.<sup>66</sup> Additionally the per capita GDP figures taken five years before in 2005 illuminate a trend of lack of real development and economic opportunity for these state's citizens.

In 2005 Yemen's GDP per capita stood at \$831, Egypt with \$1,249, Algeria with \$3,038, Libya with \$7,864, Morocco with \$1,948, and Syria with \$1,588.<sup>67</sup> This is once again revealing when compared to the global average in 2005, which stood at \$9,500.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, when the entire developing nations of the Middle East and North Africa are taken in conjunction the average GNI per capita in 2009 stood at \$3,456.<sup>6970</sup> While indeed on its façade there was a bit of economic growth in the region over those five years, what is masked is the way in which the increased growth was not only distributed throughout each state but also the still bleak overall per capita figures. What the Gini coefficients from the region show, is that despite general economic growth the new monies being invested into these economies were not finding their way into the hands of the citizens which desperately needed them.

Based on the Gini coefficient and GDP per capita the basic picture of the lack

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<sup>66</sup> World Fact Book, "Country Comparison: GDP Per Capita," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>.

<sup>67</sup> The World Bank, "GDP Per Capita: Country Comparisons," accessed January 31, 2015, [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2005+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-first&sort=asc&page=1](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2005+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-first&sort=asc&page=1).

<sup>68</sup> World Fact Book, "Country Comparison: GDP Per Capita," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>.

<sup>69</sup> The World Bank, "Middle East and North Africa: Developing Only," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/region/MNA>.

<sup>70</sup> Developing states in the Middle East and North Africa include: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, The West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.



of meaningful economic development and opportunity in the Middle East and North African region is quite notable. Furthermore, what captures an even more telling snapshot of the challenging preceding economic situation is the poverty and unemployment rates throughout the region. While there are numerous metrics to consider while calculating poverty rates, including what constitutes a reasonable per-day income. For the purposes of this study the accepted figure of earning less than \$5 per day and \$2.5 per day, as proposed by the World Bank and United Nations, will be utilized.

As the World Bank data shows, numerous states in the Middle East and North Africa exist in a state of abject poverty. As of 2005, 61 million of Egypt's 71 million citizens lived on less than \$5 per day, a poverty rate of over 85%. This number failed to improve in 2008 where over 63 million of the country's 75 million citizens lived on less than \$5 per day, a poverty rate of over 84%.<sup>71</sup> Additionally when the poverty figure of less than \$2.5 dollars per day is taken the situation remained equally as bleak, with 37% of the Egyptian population in 2005 and 32% of the population in 2007 living below this level.<sup>72</sup> The situation around the entire region follows this pattern. In 2005 in Yemen, the last time data was sampled for this state, 18 million of the country's 20.1 million citizens lived on less than \$5 per day, a poverty rate of 90%.<sup>73</sup> When \$2.5 a day instead of \$5 per day is taken the figures remained equally

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<sup>71</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>72</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>73</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

bleak, with a poverty rate of 53%, or around 10 million Yemeni citizens.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly in Morocco as of 2007, 20.3 million of the state's 30.6 million citizens lived on less than \$5 per day, a poverty rate of 66%.<sup>75</sup> When \$2.5 is used, 7.6 million Moroccans, or 25% of the population, lived below the poverty line.<sup>76</sup>

Additionally in 2004 in Syria, the most recent available date of measure, 12.9 million of the over 17 million Syrian citizens lived in poverty below \$5 a day, a deplorable rate of 73%, and 29% lived on less than \$2.5 a day.<sup>77</sup> In Jordan as of 2006, the poverty rate for those living on less than \$5 stood at 49% and increased in 2009 to 50% and improved slightly to 42% in 2010.<sup>78</sup> Here the rate of those living on less than \$2.5 per day was notably better, averaging 6% from 2006 to 2010.<sup>79</sup> However, this does not negate the still very high levels of overall poverty throughout the country. Additionally, what these graphs created by the World Bank showcase in telling fashion is the continued rise in the number of millions of poor people living in the Middle East and North African region over the past more than 25 years, specifically those living on less than \$5 dollars a day and has remained relatively flat for those living on less than \$2.5 a day.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>75</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

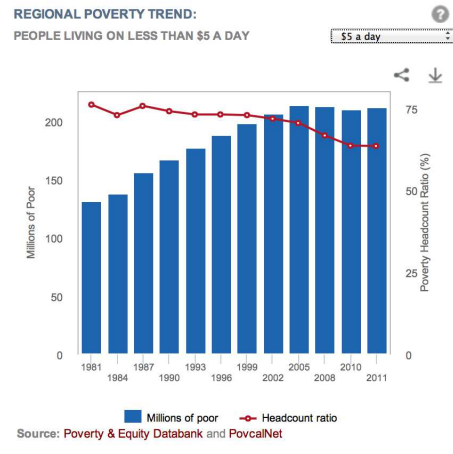
<sup>76</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>77</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

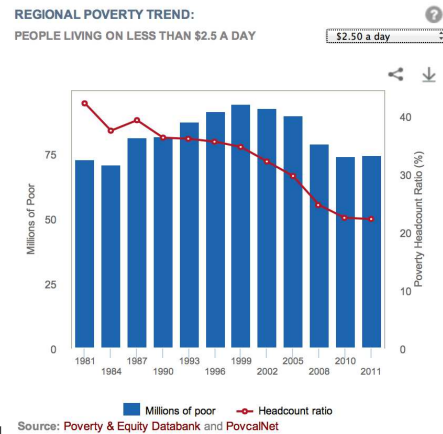
<sup>78</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>79</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Inequality Database," accessed January 31, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>80</sup> **Additional and up-to-date information on those living on less than \$2.5 and \$5 per day can be explored in Appendix 4.2.**



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What this telling sampling of poverty statistics demonstrates is just how bleak the economic situations for the vast majority of the citizens in the Middle East and North African region was, especially in those states that were subject to massive protests, uprisings, and regime changes. Additionally, there are numerous devastating effects that can result from such pervasive low levels of income. According to the United Nations Millennium Project those living in poverty suffer from a lack of basic health care, higher rates of disease, malnutrition, lack of social mobility, diminished prospects for personal growth, social frustration, as well as many others.<sup>83</sup> What this linkage highlights is the true mobilizing and devastating effect a lack of economic growth and prospects can have on a population of citizens, and nowhere was this truer than in the Middle East and North Africa before the onset of the Arab Spring. Simply put, the vast majority of the citizens in this region were extraordinarily poor and when coupled with the high levels of inequality, as

<sup>81</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Equity Regional Database: The Middle East and North Africa," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/MNA>.

<sup>82</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Equity Regional Database: The Middle East and North Africa," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/MNA>.

<sup>83</sup> The United Nations, "UN Millennial Project," accessed January 31, 2015, [http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/resources/fastfacts\\_e.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/resources/fastfacts_e.htm).

demonstrated by the Gini coefficient, and sluggish economic prospects, as argued for in with the GDP per capita data, the entire region's economic prospects were deplorable and stagnated.

A final statistic to consider in showing the role of economic factors in promulgating the Arab Spring is the extremely high unemployment rates that existed in the many years prior to the onset of the uprisings. Regionally speaking, in 2010, "MENA recorded the highest unemployment rate of any region in the world [and] [further] escalating unemployment and inflation became universally observable forces of strain".<sup>84</sup> To start, in Syria in 2005 the unemployment rate stood at 9.2% and worsened in 2008 to 10.9% and in 2011 worsened even more to 11.5%.<sup>85</sup> Similarly in Morocco in 2005 the unemployment rate was 11% and improved marginally to 9.6% in 2008 before settling at 9% in 2011 on the eve of the revolution.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, this pattern continues for all of the developing states in the Middle East and North Africa.

In Jordan in 2005 the unemployment rate stood at 14.9% and improved slightly to 12.7% in 2008 before rising to 12.9% in 2011.<sup>87</sup> Additionally in Algeria in 2005 the unemployment rate was 15.3% before improving slightly to 11.3% in 2008

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<sup>84</sup> Fahed Al-Sumait, Nele Lenze, & Michael C. Hudon, "Introduction: Broadening Conversations on the Arab Uprisings: Crossing Disciplines, Approaches, and Geographies," in *The Arab Uprisings: Catalysts, Dynamics, and Trajectories*, ed. Fahed Al-Sumait, Nele Lenze, & Michael C. Hudson (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 12.

<sup>85</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

<sup>86</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

<sup>87</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

and settling at 10% before the uprisings broke out.<sup>88</sup> The pattern of extraordinarily high rates of unemployment continues in Libya, a state which did have a marginally high GDP per capita rate when compared to its peers. However, in 2005 the rate stood at 19.8% remained relatively unchanged in 2008 falling to 19.1% and decreased slightly to 18.2% in 2011, meaning not much of country's GDP was filtering to many of the citizens, especially those who were without jobs.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, in Yemen the disastrous pattern of high unemployment rates continued with 16.1% of the population being out of work in 2005, 15% in 2008, and 17.7% in 2011.<sup>90</sup> What these unemployment statistics prove is the general lack of well-paying and stable jobs in the region.<sup>91</sup> Unemployment has the distinct ability to drain hopefulness, energy, and drive out of a country's citizens. As Jonathan Wadsworth, a labor economist at the London School of Economics, argues, "people are hit particularly hard by the economic and emotional effects of unemployment [...] [and] the longer the period of unemployment, the bigger the effect".<sup>92</sup>

Now that a plethora of important large scale economic statistics have been analyzed, this study will now introduce a number of non-regional and complementary examples of revolutions and uprisings in which similarly challenging economic situations existed for the majority of citizens so as to further

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<sup>88</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

<sup>89</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

<sup>90</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

<sup>91</sup> **A complete chart of the regions unemployment rates can be found in Appendix 4.2.**

<sup>92</sup> "The Jobless Young: Left Behind," *The Economist*, September 10, 2011, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/node/21528614>.

prove the validity of these measures. However, the goal of this subsection is not to simply argue that economic factors were the causation of these other non-period revolution, but to introduce a broader base of examples to aid in realizing the mobilizing power economic grievances can have across history and regions. This is also not to say that the economic challenges identified in these non-linear instances are the same as other economic factors that precipitated other revolutions and hyperinflation, increased and unfair taxation, staple-good shortages are just a few of these elements. However, no matter the grievance identified, they fall under the overarching and powerful umbrella of economic factors and have a decided impact on a given country's citizenry.

The first of these examples were the economic situation in the lead up to the American Revolutionary War (1776) French Revolution (1789). While certainly there have been a plethora of well-reasoned scholarly arguments regarding the root-causes of these two revolutions, it is the goal of this section to merely illuminate the often strong correlation between a population's economic grievances and popular uprisings. Indeed strong cases can be made that either of these revolutions were social, political, and cultural in nature, however, economics played a large role in both and this understanding adds to the overall persuasiveness of the argument for the preponderance and importance of economics in the Arab Spring. In other words, historical linkages add to the modern interpretation.

The American Revolution, as argued for by noted Columbia University Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, was caused by colonists "hurt financially by the new policy of strict imperial control" and thus "[a] major emphasis [was] placed

upon the clashing of economic interests”.<sup>93</sup> Now certainly a great many historical scholars have contended that there were other causes for the American Revolution than economics, especially political foundations. However, it cannot be denied that the clash of American colonists, especially the “disenfranchised proletariat” of farmers, shopkeepers, and the like, with their mother country over economic issues was a decisive part of the appeal to engage in a revolution.<sup>94</sup> The simple call for ‘No Taxation without Representation’ is at its center an economic grievance coupled with a political solution.

In the events of the now famous Boston Tea Party in 1773 the colonists’ anger and frustration with the economic situation at the hands of their British overlords came to a full head and “the British trading company became the involuntary host at a tea party costing 15,000 pounds”.<sup>95</sup> This was a culminating result of the prevailing English economic theory of mercantilism, which “utilized the colonies as an economic appendage of the mother country” and was meant to keep overseas economies fully subordinate to England.<sup>96</sup> This in turn caused a great deal of predictable frustration and strife within the colonies. Simply put, the colonists were discontented with their economic subjugation by the crown. A parallel shared by both the Tunisian and Egyptian populaces, and something which will be fully explained in the next chapter.

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<sup>93</sup> John Braeman, *The Road to Independence: A Documentary History of the Causes of the American Revolution: 1763-1776* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1963), 3-4.

<sup>94</sup> John Braeman, *The Road to Independence: A Documentary History of the Causes of the American Revolution: 1763-1776*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, “The American Revolution Reconsidered,” in *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, ed. Esmond Wright (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 110.

<sup>96</sup> Louis M. Hacker, “The First American Revolution,” in *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, ed. Esmond Wright (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 118.

In other words, the removing of the perceived dictatorial, tyrannical, and overbearing leader, in King George III, was the political solution to the economic problems faced by the American colonists. From this there is a distinct similarity to the cases of the Arab Spring, where a removal of the perceived problem of out of touch and corrupt leaders was the solution to the region's citizen's economic woes. Simply put, the English government exerted absolute control over the limited American economy, banned the importation and exportation of certain goods, and artificially limited the full productivity of the American populace, thus disenfranchising a great many citizens and propagating their calls to revolt.<sup>97</sup> As historian Herbert L Osgood, a leading figure in the imperial school of American history, aptly argues, "what was true of the American Revolution must be true in the case of any other similar movement".<sup>98</sup>

Another notable case, which adds to this historical correlation, is the economic grievances held by the French citizenry in the lead up to the 1789 revolution. Additionally, similar to the American Revolution, there are a plethora of well-reasoned arguments for different underlying causes for the French Revolution. However, as has become a notable and predicable pattern there were a number of significant economic factors which led to the French citizens deciding to revolt against the crown. As noted scholar Florin Aftalion of Cambridge University argues, "the direct cause of the French Revolution was the inability of the Royal Treasury to

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<sup>97</sup> Louis M. Hacker, "The First American Revolution," in *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, ed. Esmond Wright, 119.

<sup>98</sup> Herbert L. Osgood, "The Imperialist Interpretation: The American Revolution," in *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, ed. Esmond Wright (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 66.



resolve its problems” which included the “state living beyond its means since the beginning of the seventeenth century”.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, C.E. Labrousse, the leading French authority on the economic history of the Old Regime and the Revolution, argues, “the financial consequences of that long pre-Revolutionary recession and the Revolutionary economic crisis were grave [...] as a result of the recession and the crisis [...] the amount which the taxpayer was paying became too heavy a burden”.<sup>100</sup>

What this translated to for the majority of the French population was a system of taxation which was both “complex and inequitable”.<sup>101</sup> In this arrangement of taxation nobles and clergy were exempt and the rest fell on the ‘third estate’.<sup>102</sup> What this disproportionate burdening did was create a vast amount of inequality within the state, something shared by a number of modern states before the Arab Spring shown through the Gini index. So while the wealthy and powerful enjoyed a privileged and legally protected position in society, the vast majority of French Citizens were left to pay the burdensome debts accumulated by the royal government, all this while the royals and their close confidants maintained lavish and opulent lifestyles (a strong parallel shared by the Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes). Simply put, “what produced this crisis and made it so serious” was a combination of a plethora of economic frustrations including perceived arbitrary

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<sup>99</sup> Florin Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, trans. Martin Thom (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

<sup>100</sup> C. E. Labrousse, “The Crisis in the French Economy at the End of the Old Regime,” in *The Economic Origins of the French Revolution: Poverty or Prosperity*, ed. Ralph W. Greenlaw (Boston, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1958), 68.

<sup>101</sup> Florin Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 11.

<sup>102</sup> Florin Aftalion, *The French Revolution: An Economic Interpretation*, 14.

subjugation and a lack of upward social mobility.<sup>103</sup> Something shared by not only the American populace on the eve of the American Revolution but a great many citizens in the Middle East and North Africa on the eve of the Arab Spring.

In sum, there is little doubt, based on the economic factors identified earlier in this chapter as well as through historical linkages that economic factors can and do have a powerful motivating ability for a population. In the case of the Arab Spring it was indeed these economic grievances that contributed significantly to the popular uprising and call for change. Simply put, people were frustrated and dismayed with the general lack of economic opportunity their government allowed for them. Levels of education correlated weakly to economic advancement and people were often locked into low paying socioeconomic classes. The long downward trajectory of economic growth, a lack of upward mobility, and a corrupt economic system perpetuated problems which could only be remedied by a new form of governance, one responsible to the people's want of strong and reliable economic growth and increased access to prosperity.

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<sup>103</sup> Frédéric Braesch, "The Sources of Social Conflict in 1789," in *The Economic Origins of the French Revolution: Poverty or Prosperity*, ed. Ralph W. Greenlaw (Boston, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1958), 88.

## Chapter 5

### The Cases of Egypt and Tunisia

Up until this chapter this study has taken a notably broad view of the Middle East and North African region in both social and economic terms, treating the area as a whole. The present chapter will focus on two particular countries in the region: Egypt and Tunisia. Egypt and Tunisia serve as two examples of not only successful revolutions, in the sense that in both countries the autocratic rulers were overthrown, but also as countries in which economic factors played a key role in the uprisings that led to changes in their regimes. In the case of each country, in addition to the general economic trends, special attention will be focused on the role of the youth, the more highly-educated segments of the population, and women.

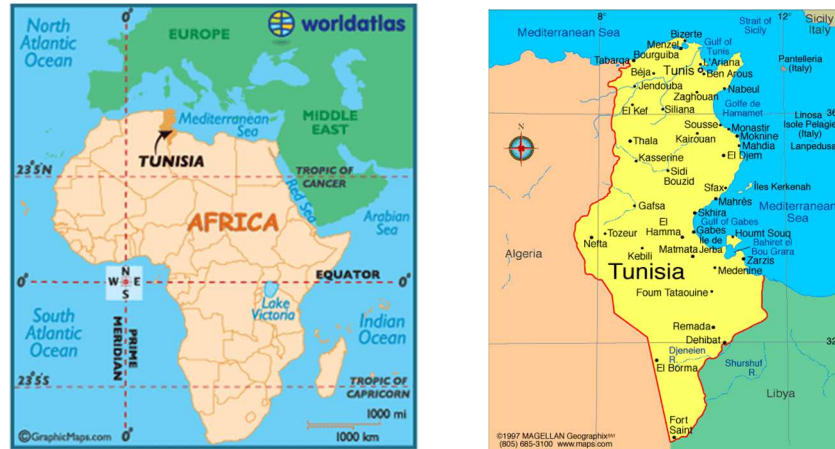
What these studies will aim to show is that the one of the major and motivating factor across many different sections of the Egyptian and Tunisian populations was the lack of economic opportunity. It was not, however, economic factors by themselves which drove the populations of these states to rise up in 2011. A drastic increase in education and the resulting want for opportunity coupled with a lack of meaningful prospects for personal economic advancement was a decisive factor in driving Tunisians and Egyptians to revolt. Corruption was a daily part of life, the ability to find employment was bleak, and citizens felt a general sense of hopelessness about their future economic prospects. In a general sense the demonstrations emphasized economic grievances, specifically unemployment,

inflation, and the increasingly high cost of living.<sup>104</sup> This is inversely comparable to the states of Saudi Arabia, where an expansion of educational opportunity has been met by robust and durable economic opportunity, and India where there is a lack of economic and educational opportunity, and in both states there has not been a widespread popular revolt, two counter examples which will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

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<sup>104</sup> Michele Penner Angrist, "Morning in Tunisia: The Frustrations of the Arab World Boil Over," in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 75.

## Case #1- Tunisia- Where it all Began



As was noted at the beginning of chapter 2, Tunisian citizen Muhammad Al-Bouazizi in an act of defiant self-immolation began a regional cascade of events now being characterized as the Arab Spring. This act was microcosmic, dramatic, disturbing, and reflecting of the frustration many average Tunisian citizens were feeling. As a recent paper published by the International African institute in conjunction with the Royal African Society and World Peace Foundation contended, Bouazizi's "act of self-immolation and subsequent death struck a chord and created enormous outrage, leading thousands [...] out onto the streets of Sidi Bouzid in solidarity [...] to protest about unemployment and poor living conditions".<sup>105</sup> However, even more important than the act itself were the reasons behind why Bouazizi did it.

Life in Tunisia was comfortable and easy for a very select few of the political elite, headed by the defiantly corrupt autocrat Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who headed the state from 1987, after a bloodless coup d'état, until 2011. Simply put,

"The Tunisian revolution took the world by surprise. Never before in the

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<sup>105</sup> Alcinda Honwana, *Youth and Revolution in Tunisia* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2013), 2.

history of the modern Arab World had a grassroots revolt toppled an entrenched dictator of [...] Ben Ali's caliber and longevity without recourse to any established ideology, organized social movement and political party, or foreign intervention".<sup>106</sup>

So while the uniqueness and unpredictability of this revolution is certainly important, what is equally if not more important is understanding what conditions and factors led the long subjugated Tunisian citizenry to revolt against a well-entrenched dictator.

As argued in the previous chapters, it was the long-standing economic situation within Tunisia which finally pushed the disadvantaged segments of the Tunisian population to take on a risky and uncertain uprising against their oppressor. Besides the economic factors, a number of other explanations about the root causes of the Arab Spring have been offered in the growing scholarly literature. Some have gone so far as to label this the "Facebook Revolution", the "Internet Revolution", or the "Twitter Revolution".<sup>107</sup> As it was argued for before, these media technologies were mere mobilizing factors for the downtrodden population. Certainly they aided in disseminating information and grievances, especially among the technologically savvy youth population. However, the same economic problems would have existed among the Tunisian citizenry with or without access to the communication technologies. Additionally, means of communication between citizens had existed long before the uprisings took place, including newspapers, telephones, and social gathering spaces such as coffee shops, bars, and restaurants.

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<sup>106</sup> Nouri Gana, "Introduction: Collaborative Revolutionism," in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, and Prospects*, ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>107</sup> Nouri Gana, "Introduction: Collaborative Revolutionism," 5.

While indeed the rapidity of social media based communication may have increased the pace of the revolution it did not overtly cause it.

Furthermore, much of the scholarly literature has also argued for the overt mobilizing power of the want for political rights by the Tunisian citizenry. However, as a recent article by the *Middle East Research and Information Project* argues, “most Tunisians tolerated the government’s repression. As the press never ceased to remind them, a vigorous economy that could generate new jobs depended on Tunisia’s ability to attract foreign investment in a competitive regional environment”.<sup>108</sup> However, as this economic growth slowed and left more and more people poor and destitute the acceptability of the Tunisian populace with the empty promises of the Ben Ali government waned dramatically. The change Tunisians sought was economic in nature and not political.

To aid in this assertion it is important to grasp the overall economic trends that led to the uprising in Tunisia before undertaking a more nuanced approach to the role of the different segments of the population in the uprisings. In addition to the general unemployment, GDP per capita, and Gini coefficient statistics that were presented earlier, there are a number of other descriptive statistics which further capture the direness of the economic situation for the vast majority of Tunisians in the years before the revolution. According to Transparency International, under the direction of the United Nations, as of 2011 on the eve of the Arab Spring, Tunisia ranked 73<sup>rd</sup> globally in corruption and there had been a dramatic uptick in ‘crony

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<sup>108</sup> Christopher Alexander, “Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia: Back from the Democratic Brink,” *Middle East Research Information Project* 273(2014), accessed March 27, 2015, [http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205/authoritarianism-civil-society-tunisia?ip\\_login\\_no\\_cache=62381526659d9ab18c85deffc9635f9b](http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205/authoritarianism-civil-society-tunisia?ip_login_no_cache=62381526659d9ab18c85deffc9635f9b).

capitalism' in the years preceding the uprising. Ben Ali caused this in large part with his near monopolistic power over the corruption apparatus of the state.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, what Ben Ali and his closest allies clung to was that despite perceived shortcomings in the matter in which they ran the state domestically, the services provided by the state were still more than adequate and in some cases far better than their regional counterparts. This was something that was widely accepted by large sections of the Tunisian citizenry for decades.<sup>110</sup> However, "the provision and quality of public service (health care, social security, education, and so on) hitherto a showpiece of the Tunisian state, declined as a consequence of unemployment, rising prices, [and] inflation" in the decade prior to the uprisings.<sup>111</sup> The lack of available capital and tax revenue from the lower classes of citizens put more and more strain on the central government operated social safety system.

Additionally, the Ben Ali family and its closest allies rendered the two anti-corruption bodies of the state, the National Audit Office and Disciplinary Financial Court, completely powerless. Bribery and nepotism within the government had become commonplace features of doing business, and "public procurement contracts were often awarded to government cronies and a few influential clans

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<sup>109</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Trends in the Middle East and North Africa," *The United Nations & CHR Michelin Institute*, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-trends-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-2007-2011/>.

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Alexander, "Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia: Back from the Democratic Brink," *Middle East Research Information Project* 273(2014), accessed March 27, 2015, [http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205/authoritarianism-civil-society-tunisia?ip\\_login\\_no\\_cache=62381526659d9ab18c85deffc9635f9b](http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205/authoritarianism-civil-society-tunisia?ip_login_no_cache=62381526659d9ab18c85deffc9635f9b).

<sup>111</sup> Sami Zemni, "From Socio-Economic Protests to National Revolt: The Labor Origins of the Tunisian Revolution," in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, and Prospects*, ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 129.



around the president [who] owned most of the country's businesses".<sup>112</sup> Ben Ali, his family, and close supporters enriched themselves in the face of grave economic problems and a disgruntled citizenry.<sup>113</sup> Falling international investment and troubling economic indicators did little to change the ways in which the Ben Ali family acted. As one United States diplomatic cable stated, regarding a dinner held with the family of Ben Ali, "the opulence with which El Materi and Nasrine [his wife] live and their behavior make clear why they and other members of Ben Ali's family are disliked and even hated by some Tunisians. The excesses of the Ben Ali family are growing".<sup>114</sup> These extravagances, from the perspective of many impoverished Tunisians, only added fuel to the already smoldering frustration many had with the way in which the government was providing opportunities.

It went as far as the Ben Ali family controlling most major industries including but not limited to: cement production, media, petroleum procurement and refining, insurance, construction, domestic and international shipping, air transport including the airports and national flag carrier Tunsair, numerous luxury car dealerships, and telecommunications. At its height Ben Ali and his family controlled over a third of national GDP, a truly astounding figure considering that a small family controlled such a vast share with a national population of almost eleven

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<sup>112</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Trends in the Middle East and North Africa," *The United Nations & CHR Michelin Institute*, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-trends-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-2007-2011/>.

<sup>113</sup> Michele Penner Angrist, "Morning in Tunisia: The Frustrations of the Arab World Boil Over," in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 76.

<sup>114</sup> Julia Clancy-Smith, "From Sidi Bou Zid to Sidi Bou Said: A Longue Duree Approach to the Tunisian Revolutions," in *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, ed. Mark L. Hass and David W. Lesch. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 24.

million people.<sup>115</sup> The rich-poor divide was so powerful that as of 2000, the last year this statistic was calculated, the top 10% of the Tunisian population controlled 31.5% of the GDP while the bottom 10% controlled a derisory 2.3%, and it has been suggested across the scholarly literature that this gap continued to widen throughout the decade prior to the uprisings.<sup>116</sup> This thus left the vast majority of Tunisian citizens on the periphery of success, unable to gain a meaningful leg up in personal economic growth due to Ben Ali's overarching control of the national economy.

As a result of the above inequalities, the vast majority of Tunisians, despite the façade of social safety provided by Ben Ali's regime, were unable to increase their personal economic standing due to the very configuration of the economy. Ben Ali and his closest confidants had organized the state economic structure in such a way as to protect their massive wealth at the expense of the citizenry. The expanding wealth gap in the decade prior to uprising only exacerbated this situation for many Tunisians. Change in the corrupt and self-serving structure of the economy was not going to come about out of the benevolence of their leader, it was something that would have to be demanded and brought about by themselves.

Now that a broad overview of the challenging economic situation in Tunisia has been fully expounded, the first of these frustrated and subjugated subgroups that will be analyzed is the youth population. Generally speaking the GDP growth of

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<sup>115</sup> Emma C. Murphy, "Under the Emperor's Neoliberal Clothes! Why the International Financial Institutions Got it Wrong in Tunisia," in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, and Prospects*, ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 49.

<sup>116</sup> The World Fact Book, "Africa: Tunisia," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, last updated 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>.

Tunisia had been in a steady decline since 2006 and was having a great deal of difficulty keeping pace with the large number of educated youths entering the working population every year.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, there existed, and continues to exist, a notably large youth bulge in Tunisia<sup>118</sup>, which has made advancing job and economic growth to this large segment of the population evermore important to maintain a peaceful state.<sup>119</sup> From 2002 until 2004 the unemployment rate for those with a secondary education in Tunisia stood at 35% and then increased to an astounding 38% in 2005. In 2006 this number improved slightly to a still astonishing 36% before declining to 40% from 2008-2010, and then declined again to 43% in 2011 on the eve of the uprisings.<sup>120</sup>

These unemployment numbers are similar to the overall unemployment rates for Tunisians with a tertiary (post-secondary) level of education as well. In 2008, the first year data from the World Bank is available for this subset of the population, the rate stood at 26%, in 2009 the rate increased to 28%, in 2010 it further increased to 32%, and in 2011 on the eve of the uprising the rate decreased slightly to a still terrible 31%.<sup>121</sup> If taken as a point of comparison for those with a tertiary education as of 2008 the unemployment rate in Europe and Central Asia taken as a conglomerate was 20% and among OECD members the rate was 23%.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> These data can be further explored in figure 5.3.

<sup>118</sup> These data can be further explored in figure 5.4.

<sup>119</sup> The CIA World Factbook, "Africa: Tunisia," accessed February 15, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>.

<sup>120</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>121</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>122</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

Thus, when compared to its global peers Tunisia was far behind in creating positive levels of available employment to its most highly educated group of citizens. Those with the highest prospects and desires for well paying and stable employment were among the most unemployed demographic within Tunisia. As Ragui Assaad of the Humphrey School of International Affairs argues, “simply by having large numbers of people who are very frustrated at their inability to turn their education into productive jobs, [...] really exacerbated the problems”.<sup>123</sup>

Additionally, the Tunisian state under Ben Ali spent a good deal of money on education expenditures, averaging 6.2% of GDP or 38<sup>th</sup> place globally and matching the percent of GDP expenditure of the United Kingdom.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, from 1980 until 2010 Tunisia ranked 19<sup>th</sup> globally in educational attainment, averaging a 4.07 year increase over the period.<sup>125</sup> However, most youths saw little growth in economic prospects from this expenditure. Consequently, although young Tunisians saw the expansion of higher education as a “positive development that created tremendous opportunities, massive unemployment and underemployment [...] foreclosed those opportunities”.<sup>126</sup> Subsequently, while Tunisian youth were receiving good educations across a number of academic disciplines, including many in business, law, and engineering, the necessary matching types of employment were not available, which led to an angry population of youths. Many trained lawyers and engineers had nowhere to practice and utilize their newly minted skills,

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<sup>123</sup> Ragui Assaad, “Demographics of Arab Protests,” in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 237.

<sup>124</sup> The CIA World Factbook, “Africa: Tunisia,” accessed February 15, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Filipe R. Campante & David Chor, “Why was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26(2012): 169.

<sup>126</sup> Alcinda Honwana, *Youth and Revolution in Tunisia*, 28.

and were stuck instead working low-paying jobs or not working at all, relying on a constantly shrinking state support apparatus.

The above numbers are even more telling, especially when compared to the aggregate number of youth unemployment, no matter the level of education. From 2003 until 2005 the unemployment rate for all youths stood at 31% then improved slightly to a still notably high 28% from 2006 until 2008 and then went up to 31% in 2009 before decreasing to 28% again in 2010 and then went up astronomically to 43% in 2011 on the eve of the revolution.<sup>127</sup> Overall, Tunisia is the tenth worst state in the world for overall youth employment flanked above and below by Croatia and Montenegro and is in the same realm as Namibia and South Africa.<sup>128</sup> Additionally, according to a 2010 study by the United Nations, 39% and 24% Tunisian youth were still unemployed 18 months and 3 years after their graduation from primary school respectively during the decade which proceeded the uprisings.<sup>129</sup>

While there is indeed a slight variance between the years in the total number of youth unemployed, what these statistics show, in a general sense, is just how extraordinary the unemployment rates were for the not only the region's youth but also for those with high levels of education.<sup>130</sup> Additionally, what this trend in a lack of employment for not only Tunisia's educated youth but also the uneducated youth

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<sup>127</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>128</sup> The CIA World Fact Book, "Country Comparison: Unemployment Youth Ages 15-24," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, last updated 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2229rank.html?countryname=Tunisia&countrycode=ts&regionCode=afr&rank=10#ts>.

<sup>129</sup> The United Nations, "Youth Population and Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa," accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/roudi.pdf>.

<sup>130</sup> **A comparative table of Tunisia's unemployment rates between youth and educated youth can be found in Appendix 5.5.**

show is that there was a distinct lack of 'blue-collar' jobs available to help drive economic growth. Thus, each youth's prospect for personal success and advancement was immensely small, no matter their level of education, especially when compared to their educated peers globally.

Education in its social goal is meant to increase the prospects for personal economic advancement over the course of one's working life. By educating the Tunisian youth population Ben Ali in many ways set his own regime up for a popular revolution. For the same reason uprisings against the central government do not occur in the poorest slums of Mumbai or Lagos, where one's main concern is survival, is the reason the educated and unemployed youths of Tunisia revolted against Ben Ali. Poverty in and of itself is not a powerful enough driver to revolution proven by the vast number of impoverished people that live around the globe, numbering about 1.2 billion. Instead it must be coupled with other economic grievances and education to truly push a population to revolt. In Tunisia this was certainly the case.

What this highly motivated youth population further demonstrates is the complementary power of social media. Globally the youth population has increased its use of social communicative technologies greatly over the past decade, especially in the realm of online communication. In Tunisia there is little doubt Internet access aided in disseminating grievances among the population and was a powerful tool in aiding large swaths of the citizenry to know that others shared in their frustrations. However, it were these palpable economic frustrations that drove youths to their computers in the first place. Unemployment and education pushed young people to

communicate digitally and then revolt in the streets.

When compared to the youth population, the aggregate female population in Tunisia faced similarly bleak economic circumstances in the years prior to the revolution. The total unemployment rate for Tunisia's females, no matter their age or education level, stood at 18% from 2001-2002, before improving slightly to 17% from 2003 to 2005, and then improved slightly again to 15% from 2006 to 2010, before declining significantly to 22% in 2011 just before the uprisings occurred.<sup>131</sup> &<sup>132</sup> While indeed these aggregate numbers appear lower than those of the youth population, they are still extraordinarily high overall figures, especially when Tunisia considered itself under Ben Ali as a progressive state for women's rights.

In his often publicized public policies Ben Ali,

"intuitively understood how to bend the Western-inflicted liberal rights lexicon to suit his autocratic ends, [...] he trumpeted support for women's rights activities, contrasting his regime's stable secularism with Islamists, whom he portrayed as reactionary to terrorists and stubbornly opposed to women's rights".<sup>133</sup>

However, while these general political rights were marginally more secure in Tunisia, when compared to its regional and global peers, women's economic growth potential was in general quite limited.

Furthermore, the revolt from the Tunisian women's perspective was not primarily caused by political concerns, as some scholars have argued. Since the 1950's women have held an average of 50% of the seats in parliament and have

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<sup>131</sup> **A comparative table of Tunisia's unemployment rates between men, women, and the total population can be found in Appendix 5.6.**

<sup>132</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>133</sup> Monica Marks, "Women's Rights Before and After the Revolution," in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, and Prospects*, ed. Nouri Gana (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 234.

guaranteed political participation for well over 60 years.<sup>134</sup> Simply put, “Tunisian women’s trailblazing and advantageous legal status is considered an exception in Muslim countries”.<sup>135</sup> So while political rights were well established in Tunisian society for women, their rights to economic opportunity and growth were decidedly lacking, especially shown through the high unemployment rates over the decade preceding the revolution. Moreover, according to the International Labor Organization, women on average in Tunisia earned a good deal less than their male counterparts and unemployment rates remained much higher for women than men.<sup>136</sup> So while political participation was guaranteed across both genders, economic opportunities which were already lacking for male Tunisians were even lower for female Tunisians.

By guaranteeing fundamental political rights while not providing for the necessary avenues to economic growth for women, Ben Ali’s government exacerbated his own demise in much the same way as his treatment of the youth population. Providing for political participation was much easier and palatable to a greedy autocrat than relinquishing control of his wealth grip on the upper echelon of the economy. Thus, while guaranteeing political participation appears on its façade a move toward progressivism, in reality it was, in the same way as increased education, a failed stopgap in preventing women from realizing their true potential

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<sup>134</sup> Muhamad S. Olimat, “Introduction: Democratization, Arab Spring, and Arab Women,” in *Arab Spring and Arab Women: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Muhamad S Olimat (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 12.

<sup>135</sup> Zeineb Touati & Sami Ziltni, “Social Networks and Women’s Rights Activism in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia,” in *Arab Spring and Arab Women: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Muhamad S Olimat (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 165.

<sup>136</sup> International Labor Organization, “Country Profile: Tunisia,” accessed February 16, 2015, [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11110:0::NO::P11110\\_COUNTRY\\_ID:102986](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11110:0::NO::P11110_COUNTRY_ID:102986).



for personal economic advancement. One the population of Tunisia came to full realization of in early 2011.

Now that not only a general exploration of Tunisia's economy prior to the Arab Spring has been explored, but also a number of sub-sects within the population, it has become clear just how dire the economic situation for the majority of the state's eleven million citizens was and how strong a causal factor this was when compared to political grievances. Certainly, as has been argued by numerous scholars, the use of various media technologies aided in disseminating information and grievances that people, especially youths, had. In sum, aside from numerous economic challenges which pervaded all aspects of life, what led the Tunisian citizens to rise up against their long-entrenched dictator, especially a dictator who exerted such long-standing control over the economy for personal gain, was a massive increase in the education of Tunisian society and generally widespread long-standing political rights coupled with a complete lack of prospects for economic advancement.

## Case #2- Egypt- A Mix of Bad and Worse



From the middle of January 2011 until February, when Hosni Mubarak finally relinquished control of the government, “millions of Egyptians demonstrated in the streets to demand as many chanted, ‘isqat al-nizam’, ‘the fall of the regime’”.<sup>137</sup> The citizens of Egypt were, much like their Tunisian counterparts, angry at a governmental system broken and irresponsible to the wants and needs. Thousands of irritated and irate citizens collected in Tharir Square demanding change in the face of an entrenched and powerful autocracy.

Egypt, which saw the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in February of 2011 after 29 years in power, shows the importance of the lack of economic opportunity, corruption, and cronyism in causing a revolution to occur.<sup>138</sup> And again similar to the case of Tunisia, numerous scholars have argued for a number of factors in causing the uprisings against Mubarak’s regime. Some have even contended that the relatively impressive GDP growth figures, when compared to its regional

<sup>137</sup> Dina Shehata, “The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak’s Reign Came to an End,” in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 142.

<sup>138</sup> BBC News World, “Arab Uprisings Country by Country: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-12482291>.

counterparts, and foreign direct investment, which was being aggressively invested into the Egyptian economy from numerous states and multi-national corporations, as proof that this was a purely political revolution. However, as this chapter will attempt to show, “the impressive growth rates masked widening income inequalities and fell short of the aspirations of the young and educated generation who would take to the streets in 2011”.<sup>139</sup>

However, political participation in Egypt had been on a strong path to normalization, especially shown in the 2005 election cycle. The “2005 election season in Egypt has been characterized as a “new departure” within the Egyptian political sphere” and brought 88 members of the long repressed Muslim Brotherhood party into the 444 seat lower house.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, these 2005 “parliamentary elections came in the wake of important formal changes to the Egyptian Constitution, particularly the decision to allow direct, multi-candidate presidential elections as stipulated by the May 2005 amendment to Article 76,” an amendment which was supported on its façade by Mubarak.<sup>141</sup> Beyond these structural changes women, in a similar manner to Tunisian women, had maintained an important position in Egyptian politics during the decades prior to the uprisings, especially in maintaining support for different political groups and drumming up

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<sup>139</sup> Lin Noueihed & Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 100.

<sup>140</sup> Lisa Blaydes & Safinaz El Tarouty, “Women’s Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization,” *The Middle East Journal* 63(3)(2009): 368, accessed March 26, 2015, doi: 10.3751/63.3.11.

<sup>141</sup> Lisa Blaydes & Safinaz El Tarouty, “Women’s Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization,” *The Middle East Journal* 63(3)(2009): 368, accessed March 26, 2015, doi: 10.3751/63.3.11.

votes with other women.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, when compared to many of its regional peer states women in Egypt as well as Tunisia had more normal political lives, actively participating in local and state politics. Thus, the political life of many Egyptians was following a path to positive change in the years before the uprisings, especially when compared to economic advancement over the same period.

Furthermore, as has been a popular mantra across numerous academic communities, many have attributed the uprisings in Egypt to social media and increased telecommunication and Internet access. As Richard N. Haass argued for in a recent article for *Foreign Affairs*, specifically regarding the revolution Egypt and the region more generally,

“Indeed social media are a [...] factor, but their role has been exaggerated. It is hardly the first disruptive technology to come along: the printing press, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and cassettes all posed challenges to the existing order of their day. And like these earlier technologies, social media are not decisive: they can be repressed by governments as well as employed by governments to motivate their supporters”.<sup>143</sup>

Would, however, the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia have taken on such a powerful zeal without these communication technologies? The explosion in available rapid communication technologies did indeed aid in the dissemination of information within and across states both before and during the revolutions and motivated youths could share their frustrations effectively.

The ability to share grievances and ideals has always been a powerful motivating factor for uprisings. Without the more recent advent of social media

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<sup>142</sup> Lisa Blaydes & Safinaz El Tarouty, “Women’s Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization,” *The Middle East Journal* 63(3)(2009): 379, accessed March 26, 2015, doi: 10.3751/63.3.11.

<sup>143</sup> Richard N. Haass, “Reflections on the Revolution in Egypt,” in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 115.

however, it is highly plausible that motivated citizens in Egypt and Tunisia would have still communicated their grievances with the best available means of the day, as Richard Haas argues for in the previously paragraph. Thus, it is much clearer that social media, while attractive in its explanatory simplicity, played only a complementary role, granted one that was far more rapid in its usefulness than the newspaper or other more dated communication technologies. In other words, in the Egyptian revolution social media acted as a fan which helped the flame of the revolution burn hotter and faster, in a much similar way to Tunisia.

According to Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren in their book *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era*, in a striking similarity to Tunisia and “despite living in one of the largest and most diversified economies in Africa [and the Middle East], many Egyptians were on low incomes” with the overall number increasing from 16% in 2000 to 21% in 2008.<sup>144</sup> Additionally, by 2008 over 2.5 million people were living on less that \$1.25 a day, which is considered ‘extreme poverty’ by the United Nations and is not suitable to maintain a healthy, stable, or comfortable life.<sup>145</sup>

While compared to other states in the Middle East and North Africa the amount of available data on poverty in Egypt is more limited, especially when compared to Tunisia. There is still, however, a comparative pattern that emerges. Looking back to 2000, 19% of the population was living on less than \$2 per day and

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<sup>144</sup> Lin Noueihed & Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era*, 100.

<sup>145</sup> Lin Noueihed & Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era*, 100.

in 2005 this number increased to 20% of the population.<sup>146</sup> When this is taken in conjunction with Noueihed and Warren's argument above for the high levels of 'low incomes' it shows that a vast proportion of the Egyptian population was not reaping any benefits from the perceived flourishing and resilient diversity of the Egyptian economy. In fact, poverty levels measured on a purely national comparative level to required levels of income to maintain a reasonable quality of life were astoundingly high.

In 2000 the poverty headcount rate stood at 16.7%, in 2005 it regressed to 19.6%, in 2009 it further lapsed to 21.6%, and in 2011 right before the onset of revolution it increased further to 25.2%.<sup>147</sup> Thus, a pattern of increased poverty over the decade prior to the revolution continually made life more difficult for an already fragile Egyptian population. Living in poverty has a noted negative effect on a population group, and this was true in Tunisia as well as Egypt. Poverty can act as a driver of malnutrition, social stigmatization, decline in academic performance, and exacerbate a lack of meaningful academic prospects during one's adolescence and young adulthood.

Additionally, while Egypt did indeed have reasonably high GDP growth this money was not finding its way into the hands of most of Egypt's population, demonstrated earlier though the Gini coefficient, which averaged .308 or a high-medium ranking of inequality. This is further shown when as of 2008 the top 10% of Egyptian income earners controlled 26.6% of the GDP while the bottom 10%

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<sup>146</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>147</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

controlled only 4% of the GDP.<sup>148</sup> This is a quite comparable figure to Tunisia's wealth gap demonstrated in the previous section. By exerting control over large sectors of the economy both Mubarak and Ben Ali removed the ability for most of their populations to improve their prospects for economic growth and stability. They were not benevolent dictators working to maintain their power by quelling citizen's economic grievances through increased access to wealth and economic safety, something many oil-producing states, especially Saudi Arabia, chose as a path to prevent revolt. To the contrary, they expanded their personal fortunes at the expense of most of the citizenry, leading to a poor and destitute population.

Furthermore, the pattern of economic dejection is shown through the unemployment statistics for the population as well. From 2000 until 2010, unemployment averaged 10% and never fell below 9% and spiked to 12%<sup>149</sup> on the eve of the revolution in 2011.<sup>150</sup> As this follows a similar path as Tunisia, granted with marginally lower unemployment rates overall, it is important to fully articulate the impact which unemployment can have on a population. As was pointed out earlier in chapter 4, unemployment can have a devastating effect on a given state's population leading to large portions of the population to feel hopeless, disenfranchised, frustrated, alienated, angry, and can decidedly reduce any feelings of nationalism or community with one's government. This in turn aided in quickly mobilizing the Egyptian population to act and rise up against Mubarak. In other

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<sup>148</sup> The World Fact Book, "Africa: Egypt," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, last updated 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

<sup>149</sup> **These Data can be further explored in Appendix 5.7.**

<sup>150</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

words, had the levels of unemployment been much lower, especially among certain groups of the population, particularly the educated, the odds of a widespread and popular revolution would have been greatly decreased.

Another important macro factor, which is directly comparable to Tunisia, was the high levels of corruption and cronyism within the Egyptian government. While Mubarak had attempted, at the behest of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to on its façade privatize more of Egypt's industry and economy in the early 1990s, to avoid a looming credit and debt crisis.<sup>151</sup> These actions, "were perceived by Egyptians as no more than a ploy by Mubarak and his cronies to line their pockets at the expense of the people".<sup>152</sup> Reasoning founded on the Egyptian peoples repeated witnessing of the excesses of the Mubarak government. A similarly which the Ben Ali regime engaged in as well, spending lavishly in the face of impoverished citizens. Additionally, these "structural adjustments [of] reduced spending" [adversely affected] factory workers, landless peasants, government employees, and those who produce goods for the local markets, as opposed to for export [the] most".<sup>153</sup> The system was creating a divided two-tier society where "the majority of the Egyptian population was increasingly marginalized [and] a small minority prospered like never before".<sup>154</sup>

According to Transparency International in conjunction with the CMI Michelin Institute, these perceptions of the population were far more right than

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<sup>151</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End," 139.

<sup>152</sup> Lin Noueihed & Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era*, 101.

<sup>153</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End," 139.

<sup>154</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End," 139.



wrong as,

“Experts agree that corruption in Egypt is pervasive and has taken many forms, ranging from bribery and facilitation payments in order to get things done in different sectors (e.g. police, customs, education), to kickbacks paid by companies to public officials in order to receive government tenders, trading in influence, embezzlement of public funds, money laundering as well as political corruption and widespread nepotism”.<sup>155</sup>

Additionally, when a proportional number of small and medium business owners were surveyed in 2007, 47% reported paying bribes to government officials to receive government contracts or mere government approvals to open and run their business, emulating a Mafioso style system of government corruption in which doing business was akin to dealing within a system of racketeering, payoffs, and corruption.<sup>156</sup>

This long-standing culture of corruption in Egypt goes back decades.

According to Transparency International in its annual Corruption Perception Index, in 2010 Egypt ranked 98<sup>th</sup> globally with a low rating of 3.1 out of a possible perfect 10, in 2005 Egypt ranked marginally better at 70<sup>th</sup> globally with a still low rating of 3.4, in 2000 Egypt ranked 68<sup>th</sup> globally, however this figure masks the overall rating of 3.1 which is considered quite low.<sup>157</sup> These rankings are in the same realm as Swaziland, Tonga, Kazakhstan, and Gambia, all states known for extraordinarily high

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<sup>155</sup> Transparency International, “Corruption Trends in the Middle East and North Africa,” *The United Nations & CHR Michelin Institute*, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-trends-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-2007-2011/>.

<sup>156</sup> Transparency International, “Corruption Trends in the Middle East and North Africa,” *The United Nations & CHR Michelin Institute*, accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-trends-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-2007-2011/>.

<sup>157</sup> Transparency International, “Corruption Perception Index,” *The United Nations & CHR Michelin Institute*, accessed February 24, 2015, [http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi\\_early/0/](http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi_early/0/).

levels of governmental corruption.<sup>158</sup> What this historical snapshot of Egypt's levels of corruption shows is that not only was it regionally and globally atrocious but also that the levels did not improve in the ten years prior to the Arab Spring.

Additionally, these high levels of corruption and cronyism are directly comparable to the precursor situation in Tunisia where citizens were subject to the self-serving whims of Ben Ali. Corruption was removing large amounts of available money from the economic systems of Egypt and Tunisia and redirecting it to Mubarak and Ben Ali and their closest allies. When many young Egyptian took the streets in 2011 they were chanting, directed at the state's political elites, "They are eating pigeon and chicken and we are eating beans all the time".<sup>159</sup> Citizens who were subjected to the extraordinarily high levels of corruption in 2000 were dealing with the same challenges in 2010, and coupling this with the multitude of other statewide economic challenges left a citizenry ripe for revolution.

Economic challenges such as unemployment are not powerful enough on their own, however, to bring about a popular revolution, shown by many states globally which struggle with stubbornly high unemployment rates, such as Greece, Spain, or much of Central Asia. However, when a small minority of powerful autocrats continue to build their personal fortunes at the expense of the vast majority of citizens, citizens which are struggling with a variety of challenging economic conditions, then the possibility of a revolution becomes much more real. As more and more Egyptians and Tunisians were left on the sidelines looking in at a

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<sup>158</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perception Index," *The United Nations & CHR Michelin Institute*, accessed February 24, 2015, [http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi\\_early/0/](http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi_early/0/).

<sup>159</sup> Annia Ciezaldo, "Let Them Eat Bread: How Food Subsidies Prevent (and Provoke) Revolutions in the Middle East, in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 233.

future free from economic concern and larger sections of the population gained more education the prevailing system of autocratic governmental control of the economy was no longer sufficient. Living on minuscule daily incomes while witnessing the extravagance of the Mubarak regime showed Egyptians that the only way to guarantee personal economic stability and growth was to change the system in which they were living.

A final statistic which is important to grasping to full context of the economic situation in the years preceding the uprising in Egypt was the very high levels of inflation in from 2000 until 2011.<sup>160</sup> According to the Federal Reserve of Boston, inflation is “sustained rise in the general level of prices” and “high inflation adversely impacts economic performance” especially for a given countries mass of citizens.<sup>161</sup> In Egypt, beginning in 2000 inflation averaged 3%, a relatively ‘healthy’ number overall.<sup>162</sup> However, over the next decade there would be multiple years of dangerously high inflation including 2003 with 7%, 2004 with 12%, 2006 with 7%, 2007 with 12%, 2008 with 12%, 2009 with 11%, and 2010 with 10%.<sup>163</sup> This pattern showcases a major increase in inflation in the seven years prior to the Arab Spring in Egypt. Citizens who were already dealing with a lack of available unemployment and wage parity were now struggling to pay for basic staple goods as the prices of these commodities continued to dramatically increase year after year.

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<sup>160</sup> **These data can be further explored in Appendix 5.8.**

<sup>161</sup> The Federal Reserve of Boston, “The Impact of Inflation,” last updated 1997, accessed March 1, 2015, [http://www.bostonfed.org/economic/nerr/rr1997/winter/hell97\\_1.htm](http://www.bostonfed.org/economic/nerr/rr1997/winter/hell97_1.htm).

<sup>162</sup> The World Bank, “WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>163</sup> The World Bank, “WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

A population lacking the ability to buy the goods necessary to maintain a modest and comfortable life while also contending with the inability to find employment to purchase increasingly expensive products logically will challenge the system and perpetuate these anxieties. This is especially powerful when coupled with the high number of citizens living in poverty in both Tunisia and Egypt. The small wages one was earning were losing their relative value more and more each year. A hungry stomach coupled with the value of one's minimal income and savings losing its value due to poor governmental economic policies is a powerful motivating factor. Once the Egyptian and Tunisian populace fully realized prior to the start of the uprisings.

The economic situation and prospects for youths in Egypt was extraordinarily bleak. In a similar circumstance to Tunisia, there existed a notable youth bulge in Egypt<sup>164</sup>, with 50% of the population being under the age of 24 with a national median age of 25.1 years old including a 49% dependency rate for those under the age of 25.<sup>165</sup> In other words, nearly 50% of the young population was completely dependent on their parents or the government for life essentials.<sup>166</sup> In the MENA region and especially in Tunisia and Egypt, as opposed to its global counterparts, this youth bulge created a highly dangerous situation for Mubarak and Ben Ali. As Ragui Assaad contends,

“In East Asia and Southeast Asia with their open economies and good education systems, they’ve been able to use the youth bulge to their

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<sup>164</sup> **These data can be further explored in Appendix 5.9.**

<sup>165</sup> The CIA World Factbook, “Africa: Egypt,” accessed February 25, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

<sup>166</sup> The CIA World Factbook, “Africa: Egypt,” accessed February 25, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

advantage. In the Middle East, unfortunately, it's turning out to be a challenge because of the government's inability to put together economic policies that make use of these human resources".<sup>167</sup>

Removing the possibility for youths to gain economic independence increases the feeling of dejection and anger with the system perpetuating this challenge. The upper echelon in Egypt, similarly to Tunisia, maintained their corrupt control over many sections of the economy. This while Egyptian youths struggled to find employment basic enough to support themselves financially. Increased educational opportunity drove a general understanding of proper economic order and rights and amplified the youth understanding of how a progressive and modern economy should provide for its citizens.

Beginning in 2000 the total youth unemployment rate stood at 26% and then regressed to an average of 29% from 2001 until 2004 before increasing again to 34% in 2005.<sup>168</sup> Then from 2006 until 2010 the youth unemployment rate averaged 28.5% before increasing dramatically to 36% in 2011 on the eve of the revolution.<sup>169</sup> Overall, Egypt ranked as the 41<sup>st</sup> worst state in the world for youth employment out of a possible 147 states, ranking in the same realm as Ethiopia and Dominica.<sup>170</sup> These numbers are even more telling when youth women and youth male unemployment figures are compared. Beginning in 2000, the unemployment

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<sup>167</sup> Ragui Assaad, "Demographics of Arab Protests," in *The New Arab Revolt*, ed. (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 237.

<sup>168</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>169</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>170</sup> The CIA World Fact Book, "Country Comparison: Unemployment Youth Ages 15-24," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, last updated 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2229rank.html?countryname=Tunisia&countrycode=ts&regionCode=afr&rank=10#ts>.

rate for male youths stood at 17% and for females was an astonishing 46%.<sup>171</sup> From 2001 until 2005 the average unemployment for male youths was 21.6% and for youth females was an astounding 50.1%.<sup>172</sup>

From 2006 until 2009 there was little improvement, with youth male unemployment averaging 17.25% and females averaging 53%. Finally in 2011 on the eve of the revolution the rate for youth males stood at 24% and for females a remarkably telling 65%.<sup>173, 174</sup> What these statistics show is not only that unemployment for Egypt's youths was high but also that it had been that way for the more than decade preceding the revolution. As Dina Shehata in an article for *Foreign Affairs* argued, in the years prior to the uprising "labor and youth unrest grew" exponentially.<sup>175</sup> Thus, when these rates of unemployment are taken in conjunction with the high levels of youth education in Egypt, as will be shown next, a truly telling picture of economic dejection comes to light.

While indeed the overall unemployment rates described in the previous few paragraphs is a telling statistic, what can be argued as even more important were the relatively high levels of higher education among Egyptian youths and the corresponding unemployment rates. According to the World Bank, "during the last two decades, the evolution of educational attainment in Egypt has been one of

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<sup>171</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>172</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>173</sup> **These Data can be further explored in Appendix 5.10.**

<sup>174</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>175</sup> Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh: How Hosni Mubarak's Reign Came to an End," 142.

democratization of access, particularly at the basic and secondary levels”.<sup>176</sup> There had been exponential gains in the overall levels of education among the most recent generation of Egyptians, especially when compared to the parents and grandparents.

Additionally and similarly to Tunisia, Egypt had been a global leader in increases in school attainment from 1980-2010 ranking 14<sup>th</sup> globally with an average increase of 4.43 years over that period.<sup>177</sup> However, with these gains in education came increased want for access to meaningful employment and personal economic growth and a new understanding of one’s place in society. As Peter Tikusis and Anton Minkov argue in their article *Political and Socioeconomic Origins of the Arab Uprisings*, In Egypt and Tunisia and the MENA region more generally, “the expansion of education in the last two-decades has not been matched by corresponding improvements in the skilled-labor market”.<sup>178</sup> This was further compounded by the lack of employment opportunities in the informal sector as massive reductions in Egypt’s and Tunisia’s social safety programs, including the National Employment Fund in Tunisia, made finding even low paying employment a major challenge.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Lire Ersado, “Education in Egypt: inequality of opportunity across three generations,” *The World Bank*, December 18, 2012, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/education-egypt-inequality-opportunity-across-three-generations>.

<sup>177</sup> Filipe R. Campante & David Chor, “Why was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26(2012): 169.

<sup>178</sup> Peter Tikusis & Anton Minkov, “Political and Socioeconomic Origins of the Arab Uprisings,” in *The Arab Uprisings: Catalysts, Dynamics, and Trajectories*, ed. Fahed Al-Sumait, Nele Lenze, & Michael C. Hudson (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 85.

<sup>179</sup> Jack A. Goldstone, “Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies,” *Foreign Affairs* (May-June 2011), accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67694/jack-a-goldstone/understanding-the-revolutions-of-2011>.

To capture this understanding of one's understanding of their position in society the Arab Youth Survey published by ASDA'a and Burson-Marsteller provides an important snapshot of opinions based on large-scale surveys. According to the Arab Youth Survey, young people in the entire Arab world were negatively affected by the global financial crisis of 2008, parts of which do not remain fully recovered to this very day.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, youth in North Africa, specifically Egypt, felt the affects of the downturn the hardest.<sup>181</sup> Among the concerns for Arab Youths, especially Egyptian and Tunisian youths, the top three in 2009-2010 were the rising cost of living, shortage of affordable housing, and unemployment, all decidedly economic concerns.<sup>182</sup> There was a palpable fear of economic stagnation and of slipping into poverty, and the policies of these various governments only perpetuated these anxieties.

So where did this new understanding of the economic rights of citizenship begin? Arguably, the vast increase in available education aided in creating a young citizenry with a better understanding of the world around them and the true meaning of economic success. Educated Egyptians and Tunisians looking to wealthy oil-producing states, such as Saudi Arabia and The United Arab Emirates, and European neighbors across the Mediterranean brought a new found understanding of the proper organization of an economy.

Attendance rates for education, similarly to Tunisia, had greatly expanded in

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<sup>180</sup> ASDA'A Burson- Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper," last modified in 2010, accessed March 1, 2015,

[http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2009/downloads/asdaa\\_whitepaper\\_online.pdf](http://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/2009/downloads/asdaa_whitepaper_online.pdf).

<sup>181</sup> ASDA'A Burson- Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper," 9.

<sup>182</sup> ASDA'A Burson- Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual White Paper," 13.



the twenty years prior to the uprisings. Beginning with primary school attendance rates from 2008-2011, the net attendance ratio for males averaged 88.6% and 87.2% for females. For secondary school participation over the same period the net attendance ratio was 70.5% for males and 69.5% for females.<sup>183</sup> Additionally, the literacy rate for male youths prior to the Arab Spring stood at 92.4% and was 86.1% for females.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, “college completion rates among the same groups have more than doubled from 7% in 1988 to 17% in 2006”<sup>185 &186</sup>

Overall, Egypt had also successfully managed to close the gender gap at the secondary and higher education levels across the majority of the population.<sup>187</sup> This is not to say, however, that Egypt stood as bastion of education and there still existed large rural/urban divides in not only the quality of education available but also the overall levels of education attainment. As the World Bank argued, “through no fault of their own, a large number of Egyptians from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have the resources they need to get a good education and a fair shot at success in life,” an ideal further proven by the overall high levels of youth unemployment expounded earlier.<sup>188</sup>

Beginning in 2008, the first time the World Bank studied and published unemployment statistics for those with tertiary (post-secondary) education, the

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<sup>183</sup> The United Nations, “Statistics, Egypt,” *UNICEF*, accessed February 28, 2015, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/egypt\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/egypt_statistics.html).

<sup>184</sup> The United Nations, “Statistics, Egypt,” *UNICEF*, accessed February 28, 2015, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/egypt\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/egypt_statistics.html).

<sup>185</sup> **These Data can be further explored in Appendix 5.11.**

<sup>186</sup> Lire Ersado, “Education in Egypt: inequality of opportunity across three generations,” *The World Bank*.

<sup>187</sup> Lire Ersado, “Education in Egypt: inequality of opportunity across three generations,” *The World Bank*.

<sup>188</sup> Lire Ersado, “Education in Egypt: inequality of opportunity across three generations,” *The World Bank*.

total rate was 32%, with a subgroup rate of 32% for women and 31% for men.<sup>189</sup> In 2009, the total rate increased to 36%, with 34% for women and 38% for men.<sup>190</sup> In 2010 the rate further increased to 40% total, with 42% for women and 37% for men.<sup>191</sup> Finally, on in 2011 on the eve of the uprisings, the rate decreased slightly to a still deplorable 32%, with 41% for females and 25% for males<sup>192,193</sup> Thus, those with the highest levels of education were suffering from some of the highest unemployment rates compared to other subsets of the Egyptian population. The group most primed to be successful financially were suffering the most.

Additionally, in Egypt “the education system [was] not preparing young people with the skills for the modern workplace and career guidance in general, is not available [which has] create[d] frustration among youth about their future and their role in society as productive individuals”.<sup>194</sup> As Francis Bacon asserted, “knowledge is power” and large educated sections of the population were becoming aware of the deplorableness of their economic situation. Thus in the simplest of terms, what this exploration of educated unemployment rates across genders proves is that, much like their regional counterparts in Tunisia, Egyptians had little to be enthusiastic about with regards to their government’s prevailing economic policies. The rich were getting richer at the expense of large sections of the

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<sup>189</sup> The World Bank, “WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>190</sup> The World Bank, “WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>191</sup> The World Bank, “WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>192</sup> **These Data can be further explored in Appendix 5.11**

<sup>193</sup> The World Bank, “WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt,” last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>194</sup> Holly Young, “Egyptian Education System Doesn’t Prepare the Youth for Modern Jobs,” *The Guardian*.

population and the poor were getting educated and poorer, a pattern certainly predisposed to starting a revolution.

Education is a powerful societal tool. It can inspire vast increases in technology, social theories, economic durability, and equality. However, in Egypt and Tunisia education was not used in this manner effectively. Autocratic control over the economy and a lack of opportunity gave youths a false sense of hope going forward for economic improvement. What in its purest form should be a tool of opportunity and personal growth was instead a part of the changing societal system which brought down the regimes of both Mubarak and Ben Ali. Generally speaking, as contended by Tikuisis and Minkov, “the effects of higher education, although by itself not a direct cause for political violence, can be compounded by the large number of youths and a weak job market,” and this was especially true in Egypt and Tunisia.<sup>195</sup>

Furthermore, taken as a whole the overall unemployment rate for Egyptian females shows a longstanding level of economic dejection with little improvement. According to a study by *The Economist* in the immediacy after the revolution, “In Egypt, the Arab world's powerhouse, women may work outside the home, go to school and university, and are free to vote and run in all elections. But in education and the labor market, women still greatly lag behind”.<sup>196</sup> This social structure was similar to Tunisia prior to the Arab Spring as well. Thus, while both states were

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<sup>195</sup> Peter Tikuisis & Anton Minkov, “Political and Socioeconomic Origins of the Arab Uprisings,” in *The Arab Uprisings: Catalysts, Dynamics, and Trajectories*, ed. Fahed Al-Sumait, Nele Lenze, & Michael C. Hudson (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 85.

<sup>196</sup> *The Economist*, “Still Struggling: Women in Egypt,” October 21, 2011, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/10/women-egypt>.

progressive in the political policies, in reality this did little to increase the real quality of life of most Egyptian and Tunisian women. Political rights did not beget meaningful personal economic success, something which is necessary to maintain a peaceful and durable order in society.

Starting in 1998 and taken in two year intervals the unemployment rates were: 20%, 23%, 24%, 24%, 24%, 19%, 23%, and finally in 2011 stood at 23%<sup>197</sup>.<sup>198</sup> This is especially interesting when coupled with the available education statistics for the decade preceding the Arab Spring. Women's literacy increased from 68% in 2000 to 77% in 2009 and net enrolment of girls in primary education as a percentage of the total population of possible female students rose from 86.4% in 2000 to 93.8% in 2009.<sup>199</sup>

What this pattern fully demonstrates is that women saw little to no improvements in their economic quality of life over this period, this while the levels of political participation and education continued to increase. As Nadine Sika in her article *An Egyptian Spring for Women* argued, "in the past two decades two contradicting trends occurred: higher education and unemployment. Women attained higher levels of education, and with this came higher expectations for better standards of living".<sup>200</sup> Thus, as women were becoming more socially conscious to the levels of economic dejection they were subjected to, their want for change in the face of these highly undesirable economic circumstances was purely

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<sup>197</sup> **These data can be further explored in Appendix 5.12.**

<sup>198</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>198</sup> **These data can be further explored in Appendix 5.13.**

<sup>199</sup> Nadine Sika, "An Egyptian Spring for Women," in *Arab Spring and Arab Women: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Muhamad S. Olimat (London, UK: Routledge, 2014), 65.

<sup>200</sup> Nadine Sika, "An Egyptian Spring for Women," 65.

logical and based in a new found want for personal economic advancement.

This follows the same pattern as the youth populations in both Tunisia and Egypt prior to the onset of the uprisings. Increased access to social and economic information through education was remapping the way many citizens viewed their place in society. Through the lens of education both youths and women were discovering why autocratic control was no longer in their best interest economically going forward. To change their personal situations, more would have to be done by the central government than guaranteeing political rights or providing access to increased education.

Furthermore, these unemployment statistics hide an even deeper level of economic disadvantage for women in Egypt, as a significant percentage of women who were 'employed' prior to the Arab Spring did so in jobs characterized as 'unpaid family work'. According to a study by the American University in Cairo, "A large proportion of women, approximately 34% in 2007 of the total female labor force, [were] engaged in unpaid family work. This percentage is much higher than the corresponding percentage of male workers in unpaid family work (8.1%)".<sup>201</sup> Additionally, it was also exceedingly rare in Egypt for women to be employers of others, with only 3.12% of the total female work force acting as employers as of 2010.<sup>202</sup> Thus, even when women did find paying work it was rarely a well compensating or high-level profession and left little room for real social mobility or

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<sup>201</sup> The American University in Cairo, "Research on the Economic Participation of Women in Egypt," *The Social Research Center*, accessed February 28, 2015, [http://www1.aucegypt.edu/src/wsite1/research/research\\_economicparticipation.htm#Work%20Status%20of%20Women](http://www1.aucegypt.edu/src/wsite1/research/research_economicparticipation.htm#Work%20Status%20of%20Women).

<sup>202</sup> The American University in Cairo, "Research on the Economic Participation of Women in Egypt."

increased levels of income. The glass ceiling with which Egyptian women were forced to operate within was nearly unbreakable.

This portrait of economic dejection for the vast majority of Egyptian women is revealing and significant when compared to their political rights. It has been a popular position from many scholars and media outlets to assert the Egyptian uprisings occurred due to primarily political factors. However, this is negated by the policies of the Mubarak administration for inclusive political participation for women, a notable similarity to the policies of Ben Ali's government. In the year 2000 the Mubarak administration established the National Council for Women, which "reaffirmed the regime's support for women's development in the Egyptian public sphere" and in 2010 prior to the start of the uprisings women were granted a minimum quota in parliament.<sup>203</sup> While arguably the level of political participation, especially when compared to western-liberal states, was low it was still markedly higher than the levels of economic empowerment available and much higher when compared to the vast majority of Arab states.

However, as the uprisings showed, guaranteed political rights were not enough to quell the grievances many citizens, especially women, had with both Mubarak and Ben Ali's governments. Voting and participating politically can be a powerful motivating factor for feeling included in one's government. However, the corrupt and crony based economic policies in both Tunisia and Egypt negated this feeling of meaningful inclusion. The inability to find stable well-paying jobs, the increased costs associated with rampant inflation, and the inequality of the

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<sup>203</sup> Nadine Sika, "An Egyptian Spring for Women," 63.

economic system perpetuated a feeling of exclusion for many citizens.

Furthermore, the continued challenge with which the Egyptian economy and political system have had since the fall of Mubarak illuminates the importance of economic factors in starting the revolution. If the women, youth, or citizens in general had simply wanted a political transformation of their society away from autocracy to democracy or some other form of governance then the ousting of Mubarak would have spelled the end of protests. However, this has not been the case. Economic challenges have continued to plague the Egyptian state since 2011 and the population remains in a state of economic flux as the government attempts to sort out the myriad of economic problems left by Mubarak corrupt government.<sup>204</sup>

As the above number of economic statistics are taken as a whole it becomes clear just how desperate and deplorable the economic situation in Egypt was prior to the onset of the Arab Spring. Youths, the educated, women, and the population as whole was subject to a corrupt economy growing at far too slow a rate to keep up with population growth and the influx of more and more well educated citizens. The rich were getting richer and the poor getting poorer, the haves gaining more at the expense of the have-nots. The system was one of political and educational rights with no prospects of durable personal economic security. One could vote and read but could not count on being able to buy affordable staple goods or gain meaningful employment.

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<sup>204</sup> "African Economic Outlook: 2014: North Africa," *The African Development Bank Group, OECD Development Center, & The United Nations*, last updated 2014, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.afdb.org/en/annual-meetings-2014/programme/african-economic-outlook-2014/>.

Additionally, as this second case study illustrates there existed a great many similarities between Egypt and Tunisia in the decades preceding the uprisings. It was these highly comparable antecedent economic situations which had a drastic effect on the populations of both Tunisia and Egypt, and it was these numerous economic grievances which finally pushed the populations of both states into full-scale revolution. Egyptians and Tunisians wanted a fair and reasonable opportunity for success and their current leaders, Mubarak and Ben Ali, and their cronies denied the vast majority, except for a select group of powerful confidants, this humanistic right.



### **Counter Example: Saudi Arabia**

The assertions of the Egyptian and Tunisian cases, that education coupled with unemployment and a myriad of other negative economic circumstances will lead a population to revolt against its government, cannot stand on their own. To better illustrate the plausibility of this argument the counter example of Saudi Arabia will be explored as an instance where there are high levels of education, at least for men, and relatively high levels of economic opportunity as well as a strong social safety net. In Saudi Arabia the current form of government has remained durable and there has not been a popular revolt by angry and dejected groups of the population.

One of the more persuasive of the alternative explanations for the causation of the 2011 uprisings across the Arab world was the powerful motivating factor of a lack of political opportunity. That it was a revolution for freedom, political rights, and even democracy. However, this is an oversimplification and overgeneralization when applied to the population in general. In fact, the very countries where the revolutions and protests took place demonstrate their decided economic basis. It was certainly not a coincidence “that most oil-rich countries in the Arab world experienced neither bread protests in 2008 nor [economic] inspired uprisings in 2011” something which was further perpetuated by the financial clout of the Gulf monarchies, specifically Saudi Arabia.<sup>205</sup>

Compared to its regional counterparts Saudi Arabia has a far more resilient economy and provides better general opportunities to its citizenry, at least

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<sup>205</sup> Lin Noueihed & Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era*, 25.

economically speaking. While the hyper-conservatism of the Saudi Arabian state is certainly an interesting diversion from the more progressive states of Tunisia and Egypt, what this helps to exemplify is that the form of governance is less important to maintaining a durable and relatively peaceful state than is providing economic opportunities. Saudi Arabia's GDP per capita was notably higher than either Tunisia or Egypt averaging well over \$40,000 during the decade preceding the Arab Spring.<sup>206</sup> Additionally GDP growth has remained robust throughout the same period, averaging 6.9% from 2003 until 2011.<sup>207</sup>

Furthermore, the overall unemployment figures for Saudi Arabia were notably lower during the ten years prior to the regional uprisings when compared to Egypt and Tunisia. Beginning in 2000 the unemployment rate, as a percentage of the total labor force, stood at 4% and since then averaged 5.5% from 2001 until 2015.<sup>208&209</sup> In having a well employed population with relatively well-paying jobs the majority of the Saudi Arabian populace did not feel the same levels of disenfranchisement and frustration that their Egyptian and Tunisian counterparts faced. The policies of the Saudi government reinforced a general feeling of benevolence from King Abdullah, something greatly lacking from Mubarak and Ben-Ali, especially in his educational reforms and cash distributions.

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<sup>206</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Saudi Arabia," last updated 2015, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>207</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Saudi Arabia," last updated 2015, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>208</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Saudi Arabia," last updated 2015, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>209</sup> **These Data can be Further Explored in Appendix 5.14.**

The robust program of education reform brought about by King Abdullah, in response to the previously weak national education system, further compounds these strong economic statistics. King Abdullah, “made education reform and expansion the hallmark of his reign [and] Saudi Arabia is in the midst of a massive, ambitious, nationwide program to build more schools and universities, get more students to them, [and] make the curriculum relevant to the job market.”<sup>210</sup> Realizing that maintaining a regional position of economic output required a more educated population the Saudi leadership acted strongly. However, the main point of divergence from Egypt and Tunisia was the Saudi Arabian economy was large and resilient enough to absorb new classes of educated citizens.

The leadership of Saudi Arabia, unlike its Egyptian and Tunisian counterparts, fully realized that an aggressive expansion of education must be coupled with durable economic growth to maintain a peaceful populace. While the expansion of education in Saudi Arabia is a more recent phenomenon, the level of growth has been notable. The entire state only had 100 public high schools and 500 teachers in 1970, by 2005 there were 4,200 high schools and 79,800 teachers.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, when compared to its global counterparts Saudi Arabia spends a great deal more money, as a percentage of GDP, on education, outpacing Germany and the United States and spending three times more than Singapore.<sup>212</sup>

Additionally, as told by Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, “as Egyptians fought

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<sup>210</sup> Thomas W. Lippman, *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Uncertain Future of an American Ally* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2012), 125.

<sup>211</sup> Thomas W. Lippman, *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Uncertain Future of an American Ally* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2012), 126.

<sup>212</sup> Thomas W. Lippman, *Saudi Arabia on the Edge: The Uncertain Future of an American Ally* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2012), 129.

each other in bread queues and soldiers were drafted in to bake loaves, energy-rich Gulf states like the UAE and Saudi Arabia were seeking to buy up millions of hectares of farmland” to diversify their economics for the benefit of their respective citizens and quell the possibility of economic revolt.<sup>213</sup> These oil rich states, especially Saudi Arabia, realized that an economically stable and growing society is one that is far less likely to revolt against the state’s leadership. A notion further exemplified by the February 2011 announcement by the late King Abdullah, that he would spend \$35 billion in payments to the country’s citizens as a means to “shoring up popular support among the 18 million Saudis and fending off unrest”.<sup>214</sup> Thus, even those states with relatively resilient and powerful resource based economies, especially Saudi Arabia, were still cognizant of the power a population with little personal economic growth can wield in a revolutionary scenario and sought to quell this angst with further investment in their own population’s wellbeing, benevolence and foresight decidedly lacking from the regimes of Ben Ali and Mubarak.

What the example of Saudi Arabia has aimed to show is that education coupled with a lack of matching economic opportunity can drive a population to revolt. If both education and economic opportunity remain high, as is the case with Saudi Arabia. In other words, a well-educated population enjoying relatively stable economic advancement, as in Saudi Arabia, has far less reason to want to change the system they are living in, no matter the political order of the state.

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<sup>213</sup> Lin Noueihed & Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era*, 25.

<sup>214</sup> MSNBC News Service, “Saudi King Offers Billions in ‘gifts’ to Citizens,” *NBC News*, February 23, 2011, accessed March 10, 2015, [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/41733661/ns/world\\_news-mideast\\_n\\_africa/t/saudi-king-offers-billions-gifts-citizens/#.VP89czpSxII](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/41733661/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/saudi-king-offers-billions-gifts-citizens/#.VP89czpSxII).

## **Chapter 6**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In the words of Vladimir Lenin on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution, “a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, not every revolutionary situation leads to revolution” and there is little doubt the economic situation throughout the Middle East and North African region created a situation primed for revolution. As was shown in chapters 3 and 4, there was and remains a great deal of oppressive economic conditions throughout the Middle East and North African region. When compared to its global regional peers, including the developing states in Europe as well as the developing states of Southeast Asia, the MENA region has the highest composite unemployment rates and showed little improvement in the decade preceding the Arab Spring.<sup>215</sup>

In general, “Unemployment rates in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen (the MENA 7) have remained stubbornly high, particularly among youth”.<sup>216</sup> The entire region was bordering on depressive levels of unemployment and the majority of citizens were stuck in a positive feedback loop of a lack of employment opportunity. In fact, the unemployment rates for many of the MENA state’s citizens were far greater than even the rates during the Great Depression in the United States during the 1930s, where the unemployment rate

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<sup>215</sup> **These data can be fully explored in Appendix 2**

<sup>216</sup> Lili Mottaghi, “The Problem of Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa Explained in Three Charts,” *The World Bank*, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/problem-unemployment-middle-east-and-north-africa-explained-three-charts>

peaked at around 20%.<sup>217</sup>

Additionally, while the general economic factors of inflation, composite unemployment, poverty, GDP per capita, GDP growth, the Gini coefficient, and economic freedom were all restricted, there were numerous segments of the populations, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, which were especially limited in their prospects for meaningful economic growth. The educated, youths, and women were three of the most economically constrained groups in the region. Unemployment for these groups remained exceptionally and stubbornly high, as did their prospects for economic independence and the ability for one to earn a reasonable living wage. The structure of the state, one built on corruption and cronyism, greatly limited the ability of these population subsections to attain personal economic fulfillment.

Furthermore, youths throughout the region were enjoying the ability to attain high levels of education based on increases in government spending on education, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. However, this was in no way leading to an increase in income or employment. Thus, levels of frustration with their governments increased greatly over the ten years prior to the onset of the Arab Spring. In the words of Nelson Mandela, “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” and nowhere was this more adeptly exemplified than in Egypt and Tunisia. To further this assertion, the Arab Youth Survey has illuminated these concerns both before and after the Arab Spring. In the years prior to the Arab Spring the survey consistently identified economic factors as the preeminent concerns of the region’s youths, with rising costs of living,

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<sup>217</sup> Richard H. Pells, “Great Depression,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/243118/Great-Depression>.

unemployment, and a fear of reaching an economic tipping point of no return among the most consistently reported anxieties.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, a distinct lack of affordable housing and reasonably priced food were also often-reported concerns among the region's youth as well.<sup>219</sup>

These trends have continued since the end of Arab Spring among the region's youth as well. Compared to concerns regarding the economy, general welfare, and prosperity many other concerns received far less attention and worry by youths in the Middle East and North Africa in the post-Arab Spring surveys. Additionally, the rise of Islamist movements, transportation, and road safety ranked well below economic concerns in both the 2012 and 2013 Arab Youth Surveys, which confirms that the reasons for which the Arab Spring revolutions were undertaken have not yet been resolved.<sup>220</sup> Thus, as economic concerns were identified both prior to and after the Arab Spring as the main anxieties of the region's youth it can be asserted that economics was a powerful driving factor for revolt. In other words, the concerns voiced over the period were not simply topic de jour for the region's youths, they were real life concerns that pervaded all aspects of their lives.

Additionally, an interesting pattern of positive emulation was identified well before the Arab Spring among the region's youth and continued from 2012 to 2013. Many of the MENA's youths did not feel as though their current governments were providing them with the quality of life they wanted, and instead many turned to

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<sup>218</sup> "Third Annual ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Top 10 Findings," Last Modified March 15, 2011.

<sup>219</sup> "Third Annual ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, Top 10 Findings," Last Modified March 15, 2011.

<sup>220</sup> "Arab Youth Survey 2013," 18.

other states as a source of inspiration for what a proper example of economic fulfillment and growth could be. Especially prevalent in the surveys were the United Arab Emirates and France, 30% and 17% respectively, which ranked highest in answering, “which country in the world would you most like your country to be like” both before and after the Arab Spring.<sup>221</sup> This demonstrates a want for many of the region’s youths to attain economic independence and success. France and the United Arab Emirates both have stable and growing economies, provide a great deal of economic opportunity to their respective youth populations, and rank highly in levels of economic freedom, both ranking in the top third of all states according to the Index of Economic Freedom.<sup>222</sup>

The fact that the revolution and political strife continues in many states proves the revolution was not simply a political one with political qualms, but was based on economic grievances that continue, especially in Egypt and Tunisia and even Libya, to this very day. In other words, if this had been a purely political revolution in nature then a simple transition away from autocracy and to democracy would have satisfied the populations. However, as the past more than three years has demonstrated that is not the case, Egypt remains in a state a decided flux, Tunisia is only recently settled into a constitutional form of governance, and Libya remains a lawless failed state.

According to the *African Economic Outlook Report* published in 2014 jointly by the African Development Bank Group, the OECD Development Center, and the

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<sup>221</sup> “Arab Youth Survey 2013,” 22.

<sup>222</sup> 2015 Index of Economic Freedom, “Country Rankings,” *The Heritage Foundation & The Wall Street Journal*, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking>.



United Nations economic concerns going forward will continue to place the greatest strain on the new systems of government in place thorough North Africa. The report identified that, “one of the principal causes for concern [going forward] in North Africa is unemployment, especially among the young, and particular young graduates and women.”<sup>223</sup> Additionally inflationary pressures in North Africa subsided in states where toppling of regimes did not occur. However, in Tunisia and Egypt inflation remains high especially in the face of rising government debt obligations, which have been used to try and restart their stagnant economies.<sup>224</sup>

Moreover, to begin with Egypt, according to a Central Intelligence Agency report published in 2015, since the fall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 the various leaders of Egypt’s often-changing government,

“backtracked on [World Bank recommended] economic reforms, drastically increasing social spending to address public dissatisfaction, but political uncertainty at the same time caused economic growth to slow significantly, reducing the government’s revenues. Tourism, manufacturing, and construction were among the hardest hit sectors of the Egyptian economy, pushing up unemployment levels, and economic growth remains slow”.<sup>225</sup>

Thus, while the government has attempted to address the rightly perceived reasons for why the revolution occurred, it has been tremendously challenging to successfully do so. Investment remains weak and unemployment among various demographic groups remains dangerously high, as does inflation, currently standing

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<sup>223</sup> “African Economic Outlook: 2014: North Africa,” *The African Development Bank Group, OECD Development Center, & The United Nations*, last updated 2014, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.afdb.org/en/annual-meetings-2014/programme/african-economic-outlook-2014/>.

<sup>224</sup> “African Economic Outlook: 2014: North Africa,” *The African Development Bank Group, OECD Development Center, & The United Nations*, last updated 2014, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.afdb.org/en/annual-meetings-2014/programme/african-economic-outlook-2014/>.

<sup>225</sup> The World Fact Book, “Africa: Egypt,” *The Central Intelligence Agency*, last updated 2015, accessed March 9, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

at 10.2% with minimal GDP growth of 3.3%.<sup>226</sup>

Additionally, there were over twenty days of notable protests in 2014, highlighting the continued dissatisfaction of the Egyptian populace with its government and the want for more than mere political transformation. While there was a great deal of euphoria and optimism after the ousting of Mubarak, this hopefulness has turned into a continued general feeling of dejection and dismay at the lack of increased economic opportunity in the past more than three years. Certainly remaking an economy as destitute as Egypt's was at the time of the fall of Mubarak is no simple or easy task and requires a great deal of capital expenditure from the government as well as foreign sources. However, the continued calls for change in economic policy and the want for personal economic opportunity by Egyptian citizens, especially the youth and female population, will continue to plague the state until a meaningful solution for economic stability is created. In other words, no Egyptian government is truly safe from the Egyptian citizenry until the populace has jobs, cheaper food, and currency stability.

Conversely, Tunisia has been a relatively more successful case of democratic transition than has Egypt, especially recently in 2014. The government moved from the corrupt autocracy of Ben Ali relatively smoothly to a new constitution, which was formally ratified in January 2014. Additionally, once the post-revolutionary dust settled during 2012 and 2013 the economy has begun to recover strongly under new leadership and the government has explicitly stated it will focus on, "bringing down high unemployment, and reducing economic disparities between

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<sup>226</sup> The Economist, "The World in Number: Countries, Egypt," last updated November 20, 2014, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/21632246-egypt>.

the more developed coastal region and the impoverished interior”.<sup>227</sup> The World Bank, based on its understanding of new Tunisian stability, has pledged numerous Development Policy Loans totally \$1.2 billion as well as \$1 billion in technical assistance operations loans.<sup>228</sup> This fully demonstrates the new found comfort the global investment system has with the Tunisian government and will continue to aid in the states continued transition to a peaceful economically stable state, one where the Tunisian citizens can enjoy the rights of personal economic fulfillment.

The present study points to a number of directions for further research. The assertion that the Arab Spring was based on widespread economic grievances is a notion that can certainly be challenged by those who believe in its more political or communication based nature. However, the correlative strength of economic challenges, high levels of education, and corrupt governments must not be overlooked. Finally, the hypothesis that deplorable economic conditions can and will inevitably lead to a popular uprising can be used to try and predict future revolutions.

In sum, it was the aim of this study to show that a population long suffering economic dejection under a corrupt autocratic system will eventually revolt against their government. In the case of the Arab Spring, especially Egypt and Tunisia, this was certainly the case. Populations as a whole and certain segments more specifically were stuck with few prospects for growth and success, this while the

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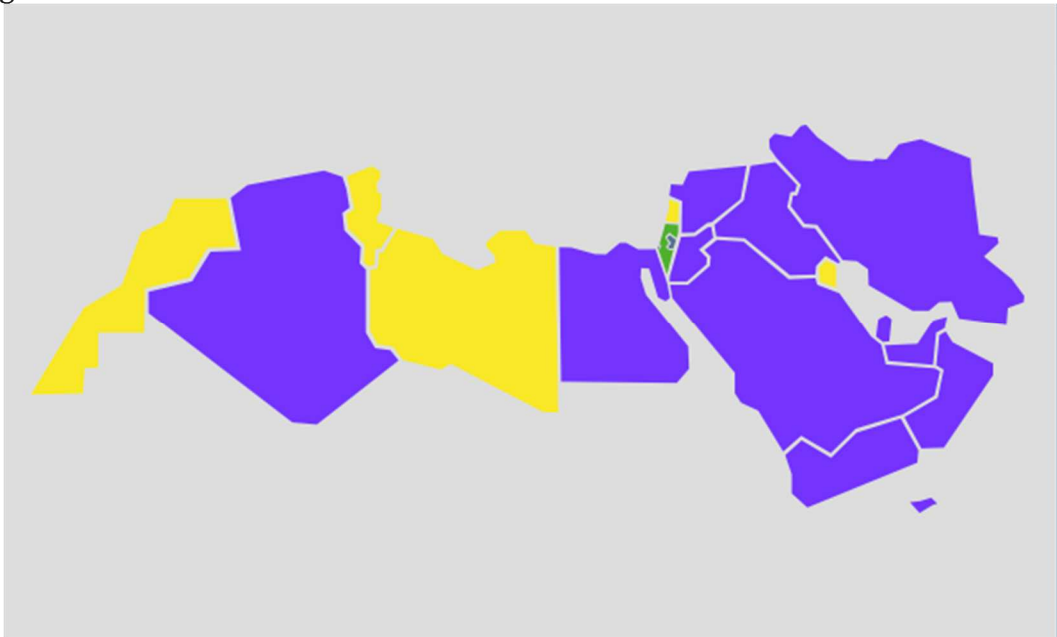
<sup>227</sup> The World Fact Book, “Africa: Tunisia,” *The Central Intelligence Agency*, last updated 2015, accessed March 10, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>.

<sup>228</sup> The World Bank, “A Spotlight on the World Bank in Tunisia,” December 11, 2014, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/brief/a-spotlight-on-the-world-bank-group-in-tunisia>.

average citizen witnessed the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Entire estates were built on cronyism and corruption and something as simple as starting a small business took on a mafia style system of payoffs and racketeering. In the words of Victor Hugo, "All the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come" and in the case of the Middle East and North Africa the time for economic change in the face of entrenched autocracy had come.

## Appendix

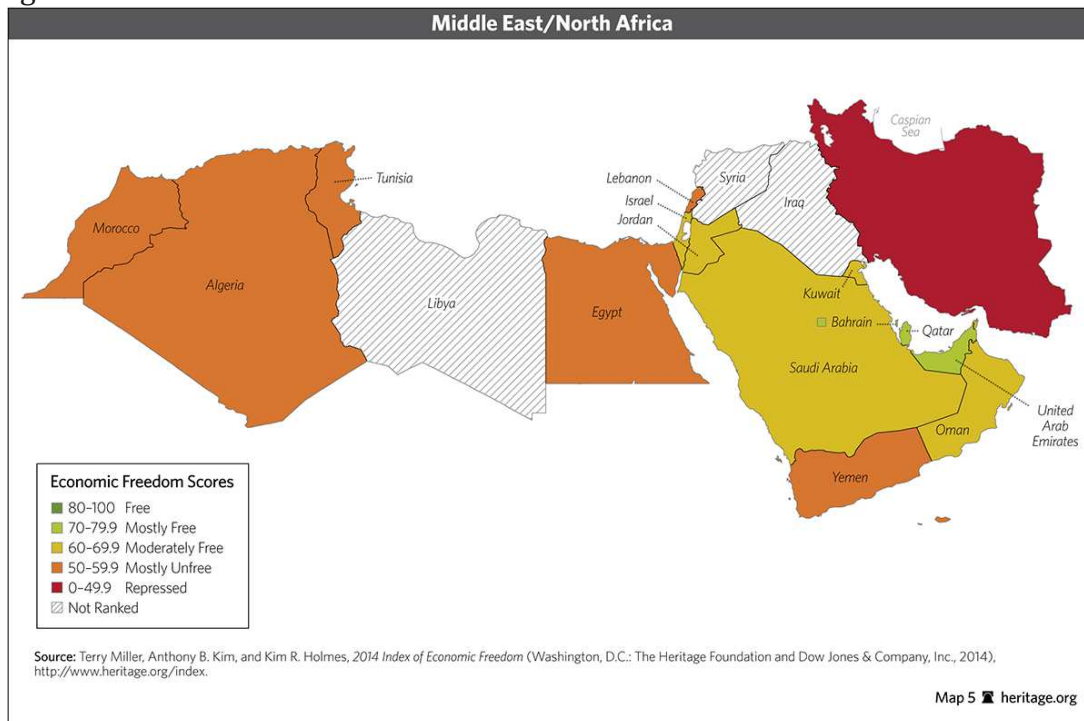
Figure 2.1-Levels of Freedom in the Middle East and North Africa



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Yellow- Partly Free; Purple- Not Free

Figure 2.2- Levels of Economic Freedom



230

229 Freedom House, "Middle East and North Africa," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa#.VOIRGzpSxll>.

Figure 2.3- Results of the Arab Spring Across the MENA Region

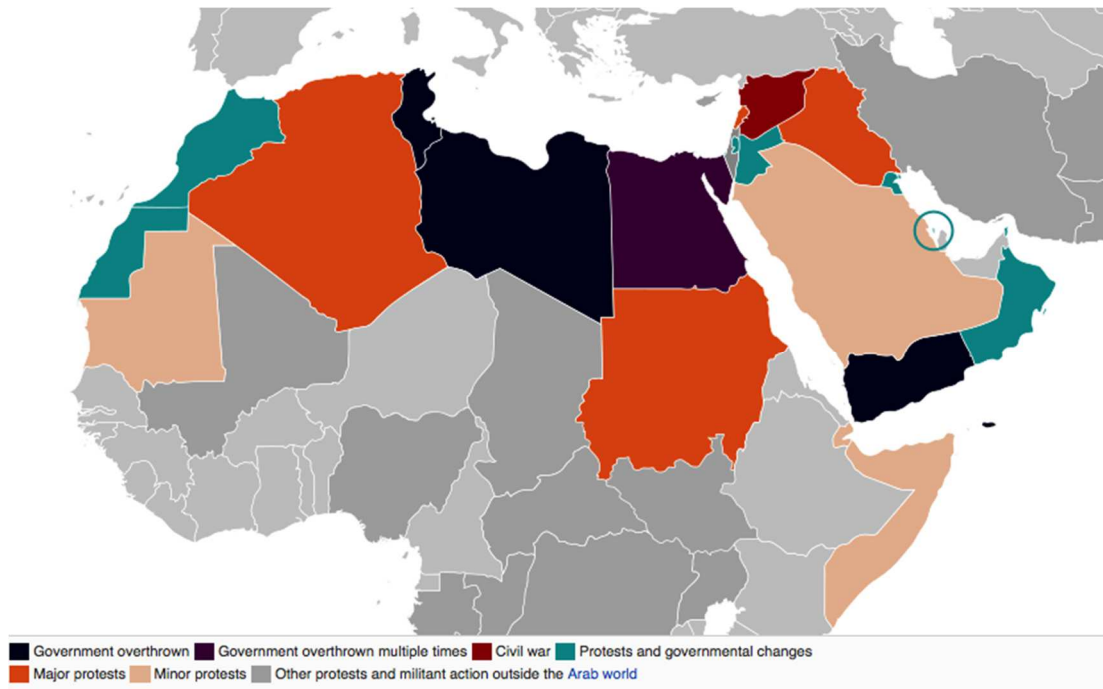
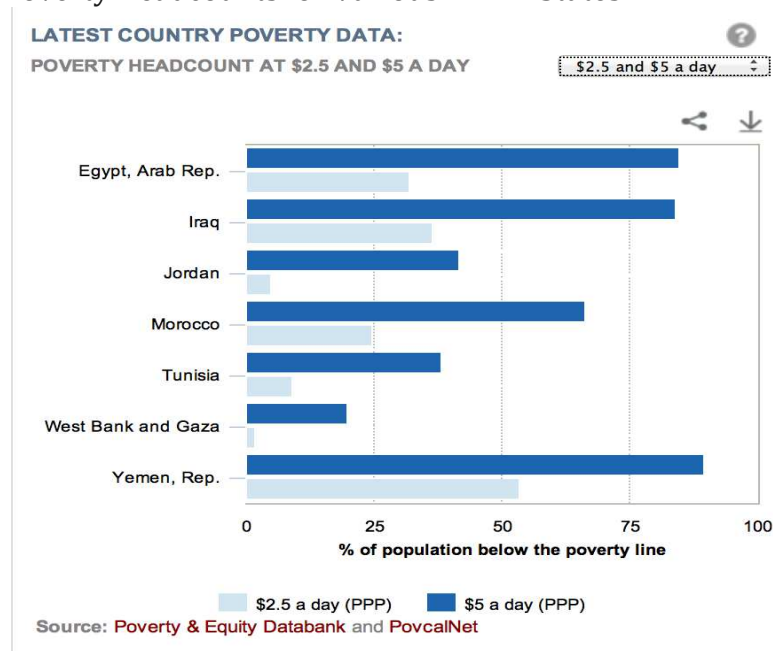


Figure 4.1- Poverty Headcounts for Various MENA States



231

<sup>230</sup> The Heritage Foundation, "The Middle East and North Africa," *The Wall Street Journal*, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/01/middle-east-north-africa-overall-level-of-economic-freedom-decreases>.

<sup>231</sup> The World Bank, "Poverty and Equity Regional Database: The Middle East and North Africa," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/MNA>.

Figure 4.2- Historical Regional GDP Per Capita Data (In US Dollars)

	Egypt	Tunisia	Algeria	Yemen	Iraq	Jordan	Morocco	Libya	Syria
1999	\$1,393	\$2,426	\$1,522	\$448	N/A	\$1,740	\$1,386	\$5,985	\$992
2001	\$1,452	\$2,281	\$1,702	\$546	N/A	\$1,824	\$1,285	\$5,404	\$1,263
2005	\$1,249	\$3,219	\$3,038	\$831	\$1,824	\$2,326	\$1,948	\$7,864	\$1,588
2007	\$1,757	\$3,806	\$3,845	\$1,210	\$3,091	\$3,022	\$2,416	\$12,418	\$2,065
2009	\$2,467	\$4,162	\$3,771	\$1,252	\$3,701	\$4,026	\$2,861	\$10,455	N/A
2011	\$2,972	\$4,305	\$5,271	\$1,253	\$5,848	\$4,666	\$3,044	\$5,685	N/A
2013	\$3,314	\$4,316	\$5,360	\$1,473	\$6,862	\$5,214	\$3,092	\$11,964	N/A

232

Figure 4.3- Historical Regional Unemployment Rates as a Percentage of Working Population

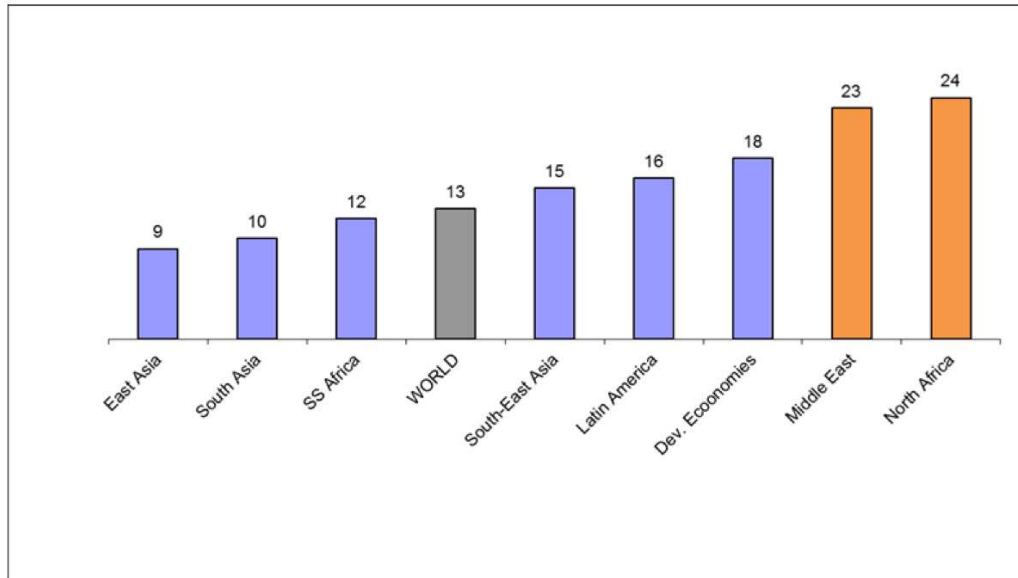
	Egypt	Tunisia	Algeria	Yemen	Iraq	Jordan	Morocco	Libya	Syria
2001	9.4%	15.1%	27.3%	14.0%	18.4%	15.8%	12.5%	20.0%	11.6%
2003	10.4%	14.5%	23.7%	14.3%	29.9%	15.4%	11.9%	20.0%	10.3%
2005	11.2%	14.2%	15.3%	16.1%	18.0%	14.9%	11.0%	19.8%	9.2%
2007	8.9%	12.4%	13.8%	15.3%	16.9%	13.1%	9.8%	19.4%	8.4%
2009	9.4%	13.3%	10.2%	14.6%	15.2%	12.9%	9.1%	18.9%	8.1%
2011	12.0%	18.3%	10%	17.7%	15.2%	12.9%	8.9%	18.2%	11.5%
2013	12.7%	13.3%	9.8%	17.4%	16.0%	12.6%	9.2%	19.6%	10.8%

MENA Region Total Unemployment as of 2013- 12.7%<sup>233</sup>

<sup>232</sup> The World Bank, "GDP Per Capita: Current US\$," last updated 2015, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>.

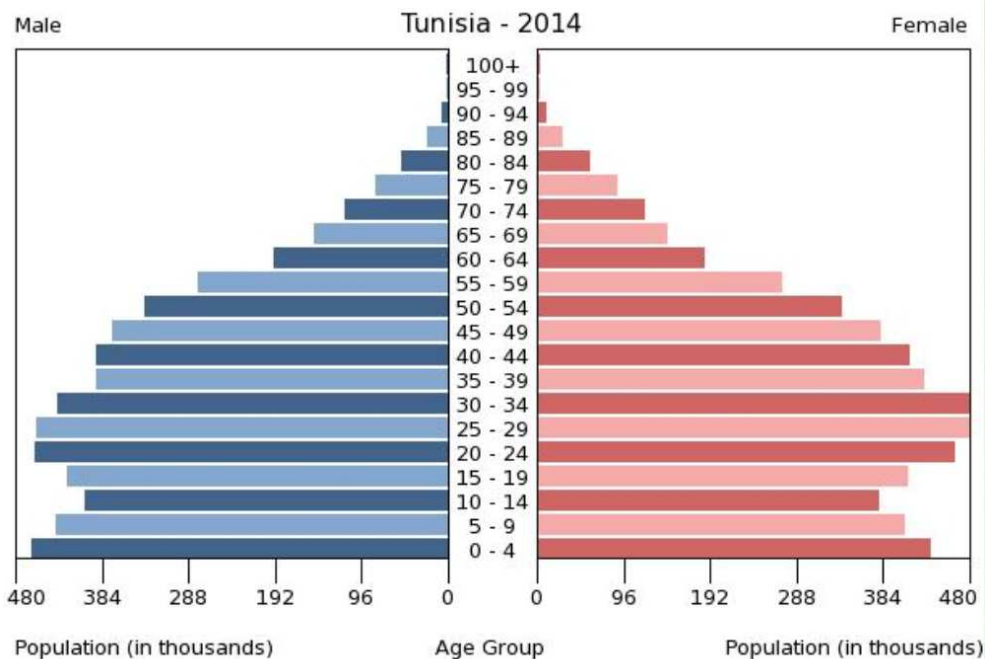
<sup>233</sup> The World Bank, "Data: Unemployment Totals: % of total labor force (modeled ILO estimate)," last updated 2015, accessed February 7, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?page=1>.

Figure 5.1- Youth Employment in the Middle East and North Africa  
Percent of labor force ages 15 to 24 in 2009



234

Figure 5.2- Tunisian Population Pyramid Showcasing the Notable Youth Bubble



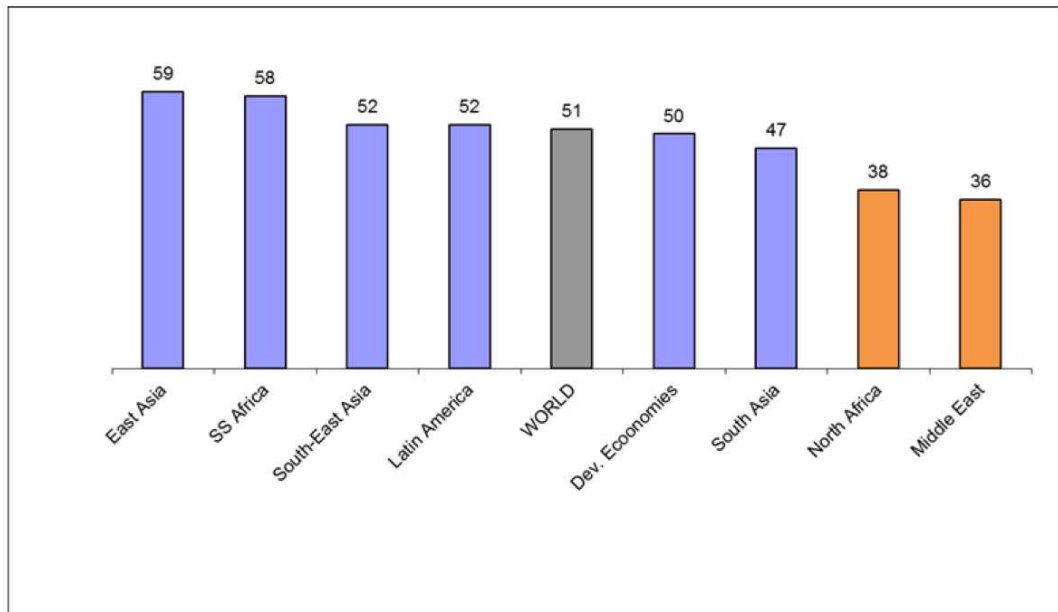
235

<sup>234</sup> The United Nations, "Youth Population and Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa," accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/roudi.pdf>.

<sup>235</sup> The CIA World Factbook, "Africa: Tunisia," accessed February 15, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html>.

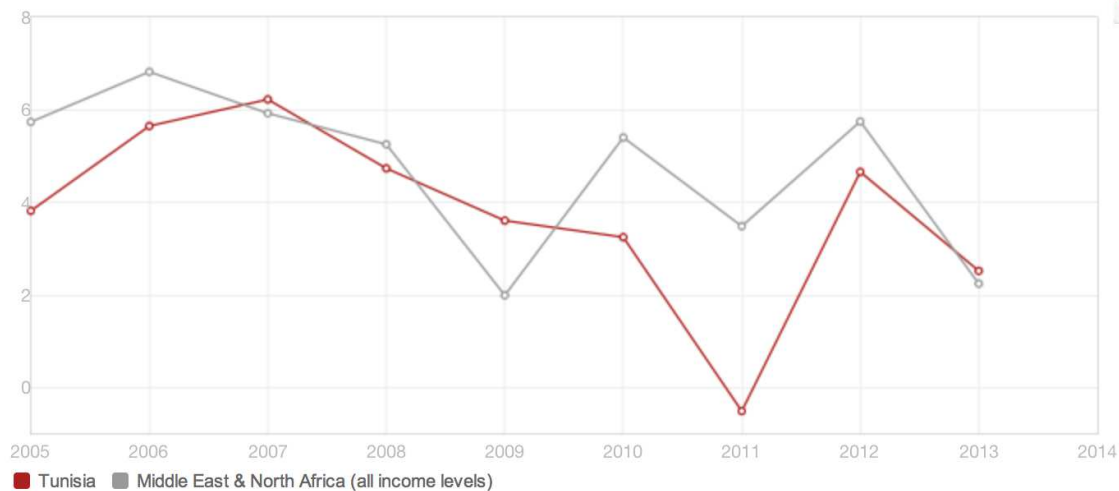


Figure 5.3- Youth Labor Force Participation the Middle East and North Africa  
Percent of youth ages 15 to 24 in 2009



236

Figure 5.4- Tunisia's GDP growth rate compared to the Middle East and North African Region

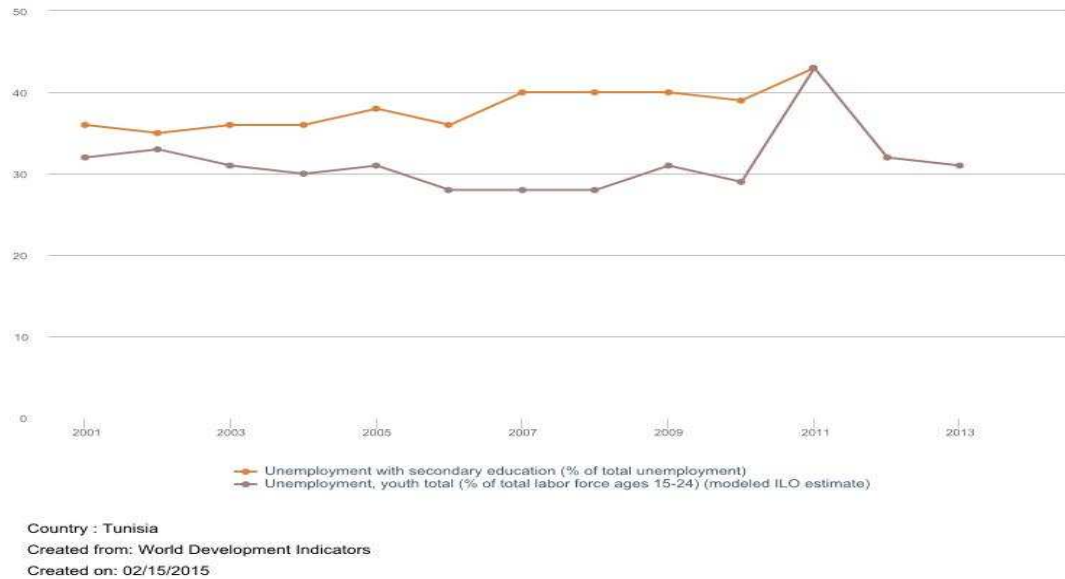


237

<sup>236</sup> The United Nations, "Youth Population and Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa," accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/roudi.pdf>.

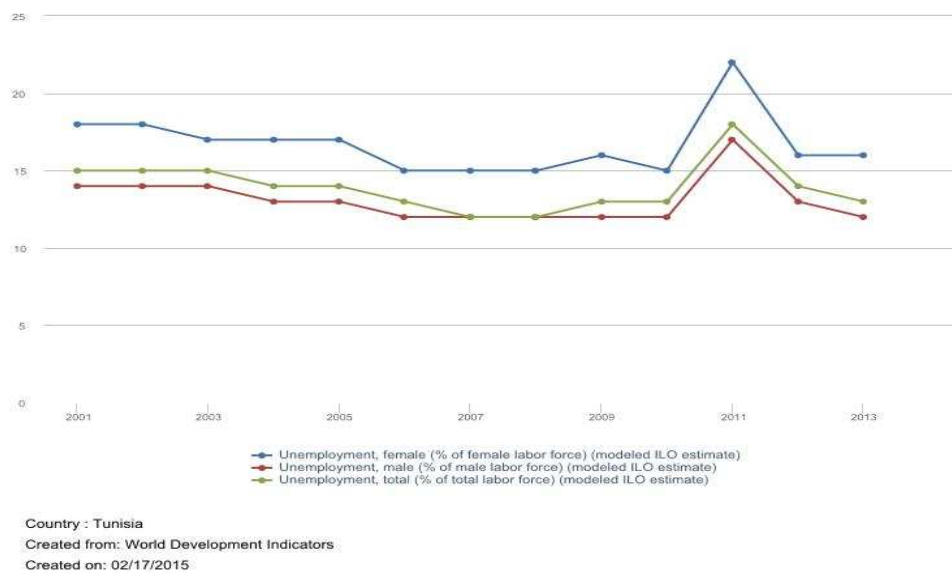
<sup>237</sup> The World Bank, "Tunisia," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia>.

Figure 5.5- Youth Unemployment Rates in Tunisia



238

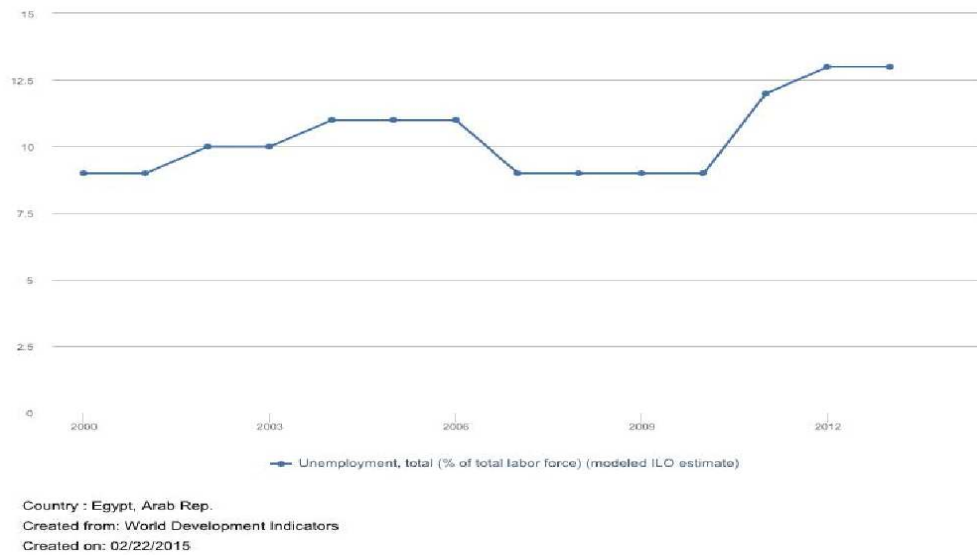
Figure 5.6- Comparative Chart of Total Unemployment, Male Unemployment, and Female Unemployment in Tunisia from 2001-2014



239

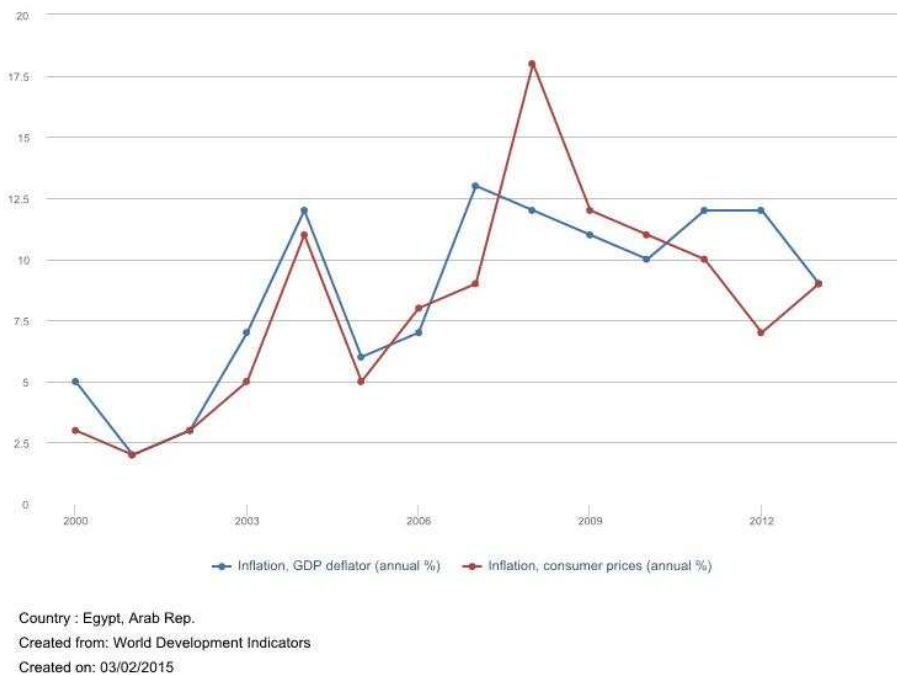
<sup>238</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

## 5.7- Historical Egyptian Unemployment for the Entire Population



240

## 5.8- Historical Inflation for Egypt from 2000-2011

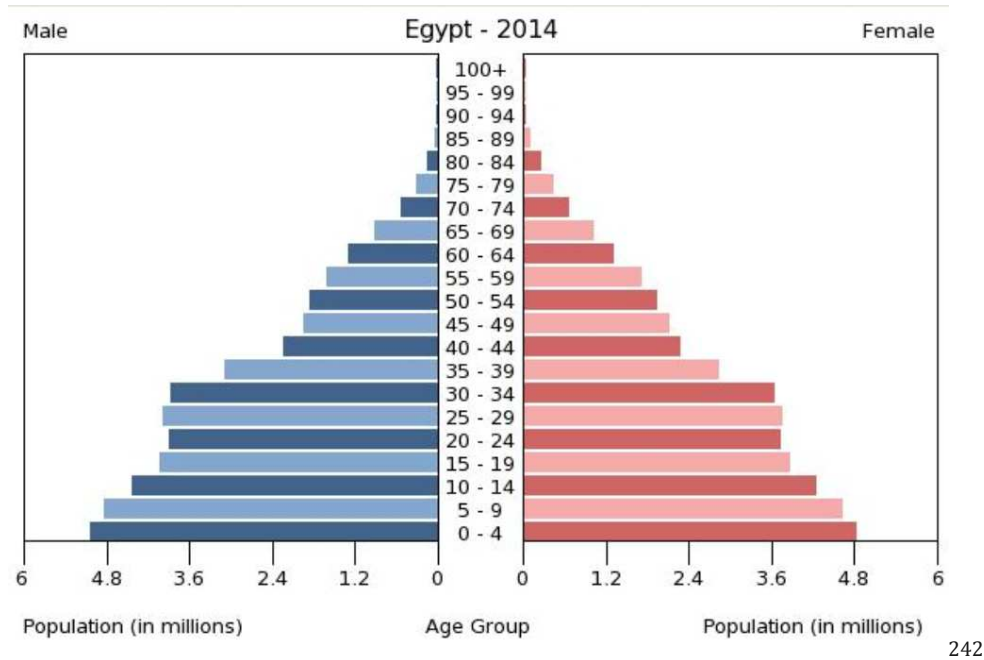


241

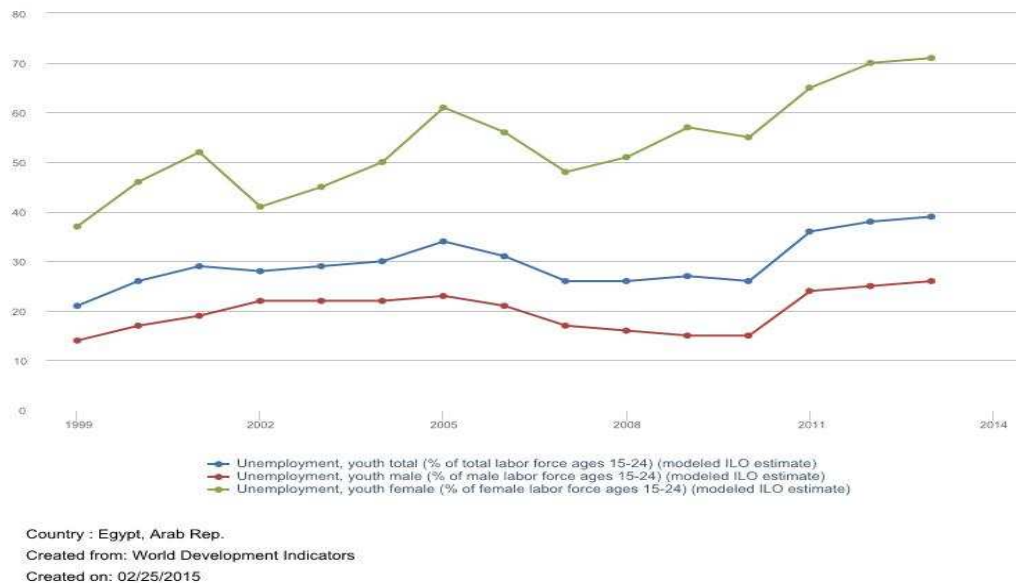
<sup>239</sup> The World Bank, "World Data Bank: World Development Indicators," last updated 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>240</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

## 5.9- Population Pyramid for Egypt Showcasing Notable Youth Bulge



## 5.10- Comparative Chart of Egypt's Youth Unemployment- Total, Male, and Female

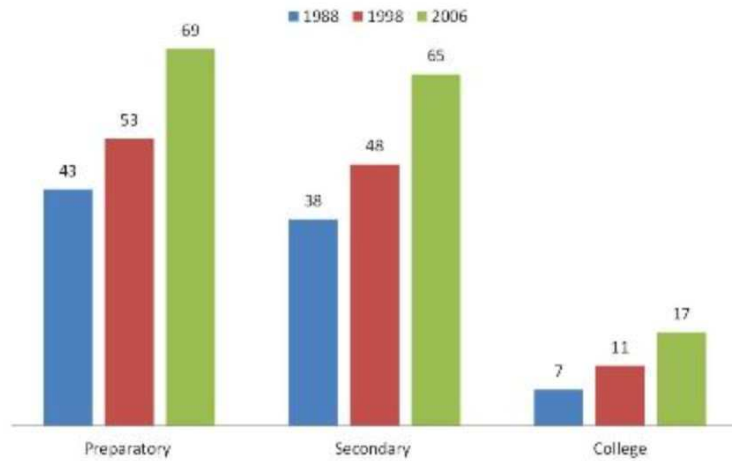


<sup>241</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>242</sup> The CIA World Factbook, "Africa: Egypt," accessed February 25, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

### 5.11- Historical Education Levels in Egypt

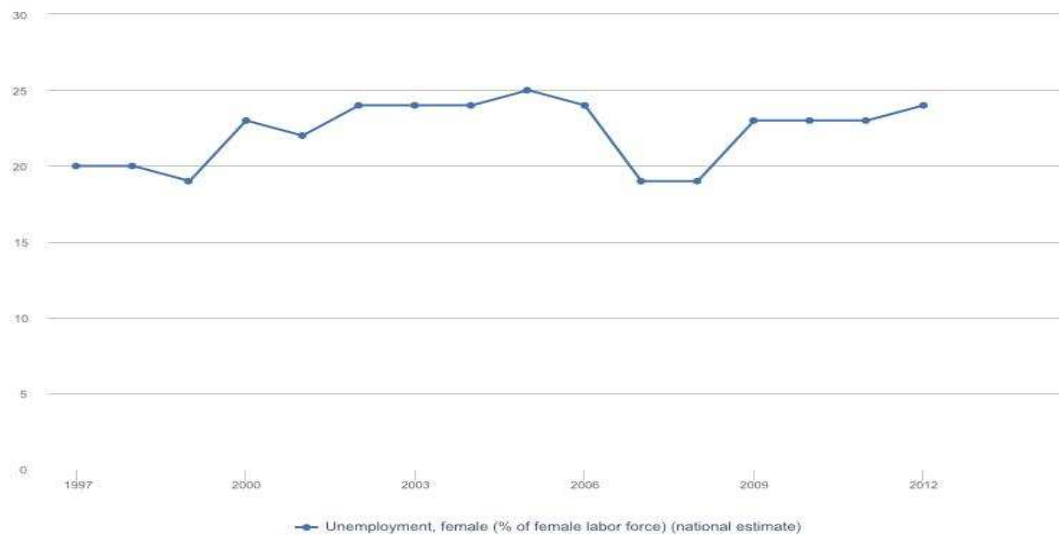
Figure 1: Educational Attainment among 21-24 year-old cohorts (%)



Source: Egypt Labor Force Survey in 1988, 1998 and 2006.

244

### 5.12- Historical Female Unemployment in Egypt (Total Population)



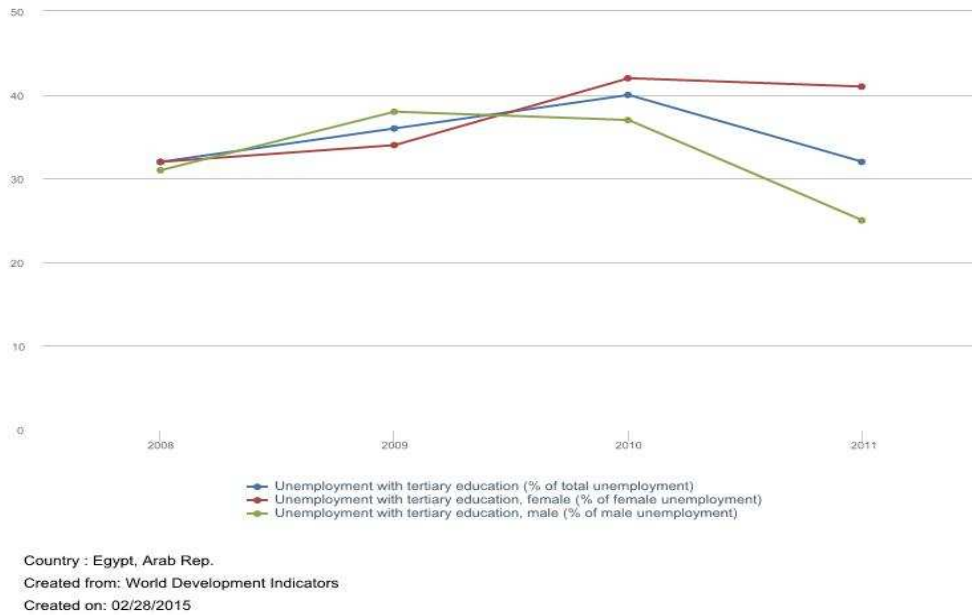
Country : Egypt, Arab Rep.  
Created from: World Development Indicators  
Created on: 02/28/2015

245

<sup>243</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

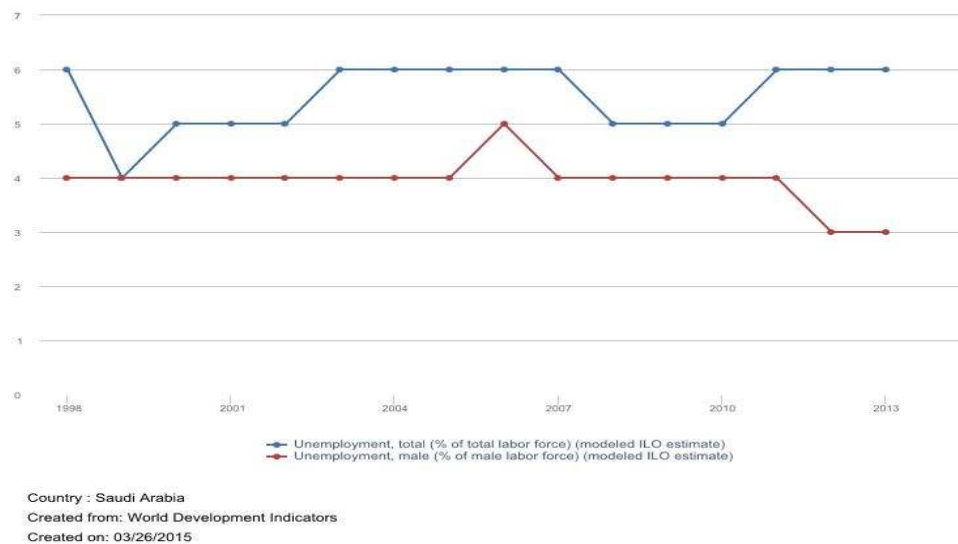
<sup>244</sup> Lire Ersado, "Education in Egypt: inequality of opportunity across three generations," *The World Bank*, December 18, 2012, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/education-egypt-inequality-opportunity-across-three-generations>.

### 5.13- Unemployment rates for those with a tertiary education in Egypt (Male, Female, and Total)



246

### 5.14- Unemployment rates in Saudi Arabia (Population as a whole and Males)



247

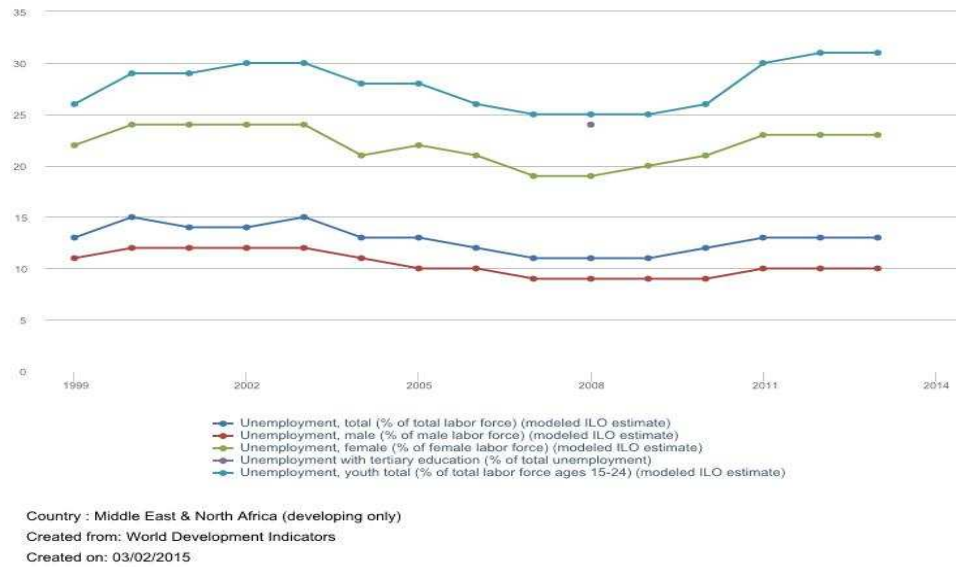
<sup>245</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>246</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Egypt," last updated 2015, accessed February 21, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

## Appendix 2

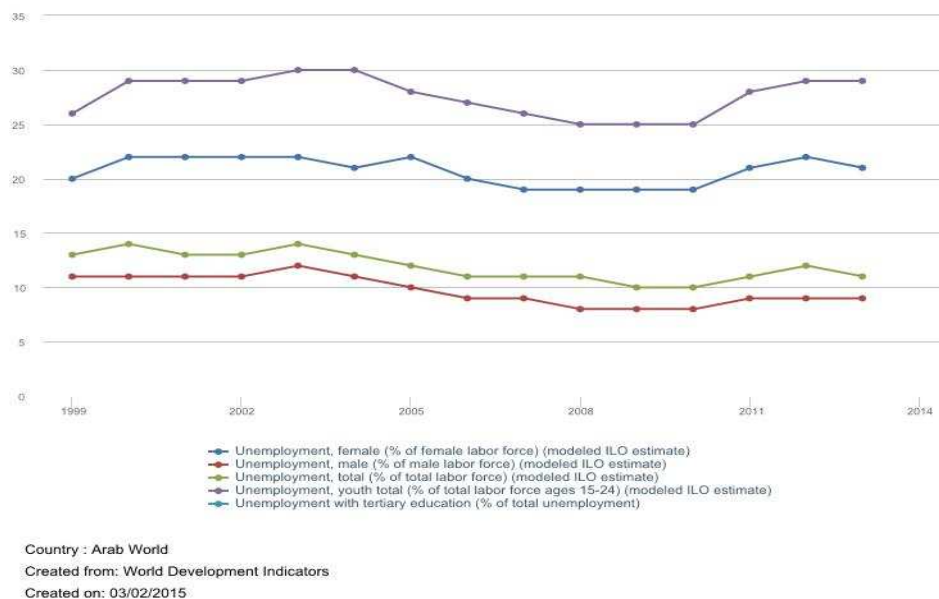
### Additional Graphs Showing Entire MENA Region and Other Regions

#### 2.1- Composite Unemployment Rates for MENA



248

#### 2.2- Composite Unemployment for the Arab World

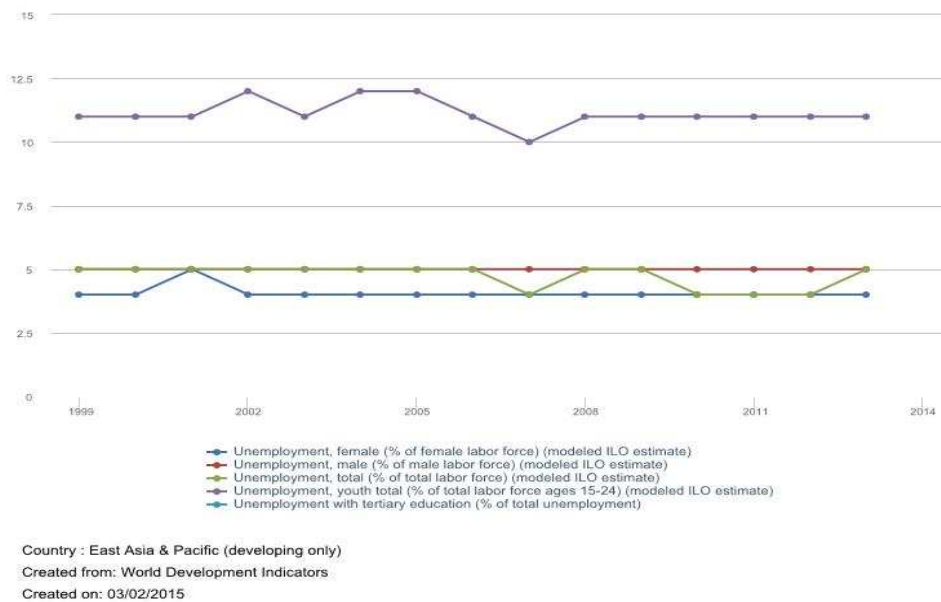


249

<sup>247</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators: Saudi Arabia," last updated 2015, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

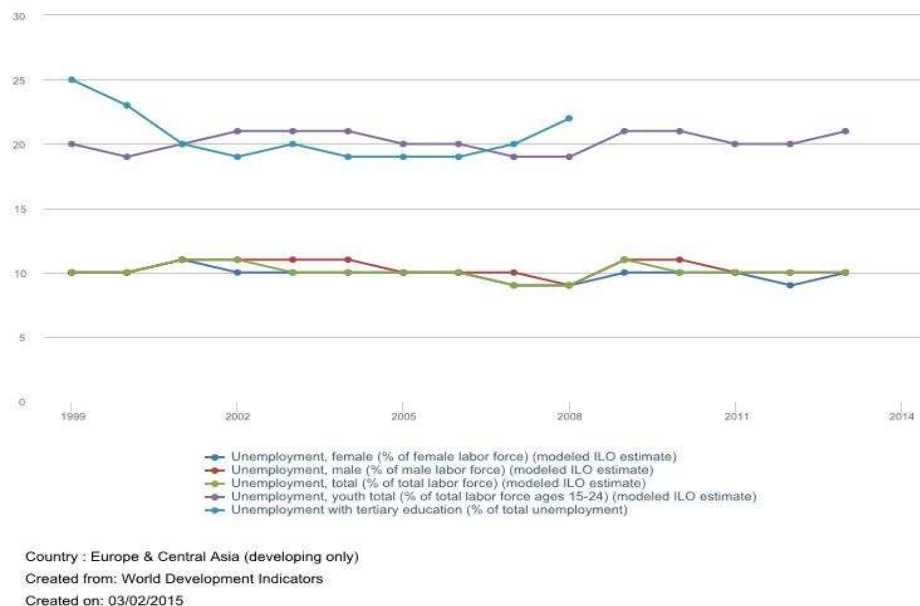
<sup>248</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators" last updated 2015, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

### 2.3- Unemployment Levels for The East Asia and Pacific Region- For Comparison (note the much lower overall levels of unemployment).



250

### 2.3- Composite Unemployment for Developing States in Europe and Central Asia- For Comparison



251

<sup>249</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators" last updated 2015, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

<sup>250</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators" last updated 2015, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.



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<sup>251</sup> The World Bank, "WorldDataBank: World Development Indicators" last updated 2015, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#>.

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