WHY SMALL THINGS MATTER? THE MICRO-DYNAMICS OF INFORMATIONAL CASCADES IN NORTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Why do some symbolic acts of protest trigger mass mobilization while others do not? Why did riots following the public suicide of a young street vendor humiliated by local authorities in the Tunisian city of Monastir in March 2010 *fail* to escalate into mass mobilization while a quasi-identical event in the neighboring city of Sidi-Bouzid helped precipitate a successful revolution only few months later? This study examines four cases of successful and failed instances of social mobilization in Tunisia and Algeria in order to present two complementary arguments.

Using the signaling logic of informational cascade theory, this study first argues that successful mobilization needs the early involvement of respected local intermediate actors who identify an opportunity for political mobilization and use their prestige and networks to encourage other people to join mobilization.

Second, this work shows that successful social mobilization is the result of a surprise factor, which is fueled by the presence of moderate/prestigious actors during the early acts of protest, regime violence, and unusual media coverage. These factors create a perception of exceptionality, which breaks the locally available cognitive heuristic originally in favor of the regime, and allows for successful informational cascades to occur.

Résumé

Pourquoi est-ce que certains actes de contestation provoquent une mobilisation de masse alors que d'autres actes similaires n'ont pas le même effet? Pourquoi est-ce que les émeutes faisant suite au suicide d'un jeune vendeur ambulant humilié par les autorités locales dans la ville tunisienne de Monastir ont-elles échouées à se transformer en mouvement de masse alors qu'un évènement quasi-identique dans la ville de Sidi-Bouzid a réussi à précipiter une révolution quelques mois plus tard seulement? Ce travail examine quatre cas de mobilisation sociale en Tunisie et en Algérie et propose deux explications complémentaires.

En se basant sur la logique de signalisation développée dans la théorie des cascades informationnelles, ce travail affirme d'abord qu'une mobilisation sociale réussie requiert la présence en amont d'acteurs intermédiaires respectés qui identifient une opportunité de mobilisation politique et utilisent leur prestige et leurs réseaux pour encourager le reste de la population à se mobiliser.

Deuxièmement, ce travail démontre qu'une mobilisation sociale réussie est le résultat d'un facteur de surprise alimenté par la présence d'acteurs intermédiaires/prestigieux durant les premiers actes de contestation, par la violence des autorités et par une couverture médiatique inusitée. Ces facteurs mènent au développement d'un sentiment d'exceptionnalité qui casse les raccourcis cognitifs en faveur du régime partagés par la population et permet de la formation d'une cascade informationnelle réussie.

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Figures and Tables

Acronyms and Initializations

CLA: Conseil des Lyçées d'Alger (*Algiers' Lyçées Council*)

CNAPEST: Conseil National Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Enseignement Secondaire et Technique (*National Autonomous Council of Secondary and Technical Teaching Workers*)

CNCD: Coordination National pour le Changement et la Démocratie (*National Coordination for Change and Democracy*)

FLN: Front de Libération National (*National Liberation Front*)

FFS: Front des Forces Socialistes *(Socialist Forces Front*)

LADH: Ligue Algerienne des Droits de l'Homme (*Algerian League for Human Rights*)

LADDH: Ligue Algérienne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme (*Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights*)

LTDH: Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de L'Homme (*Tunisian League for Human Rights*)

MDS: Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes (*Movement of Social Democrats*)

MRN: Mouvement pour la Réforme Nationale (*Movement for National Reform*)

MSP: Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix (*Movement of Society for Peace*)

MTI: Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique (*Islamic Tendency Movement*)

MUP: Mouvement de l'Unité Populaire (*Popular Unity Movement*)

ONM: Organisation Nationale des Moudjahidines (*National Veterans Organization*)

PCT: Parti Communiste Tunisien (*Tunisian Communist Party*)

UGTT: Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (*General Tunisian Labor Union*)

UTT: Union des Travailleurs de Tunisie (*Tunisia's Workers' Union*)

RCD (Algeria): Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (*Rally for Culture and Democracy*)

RCD (Tunisia): Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (*The Constitutional Democratic Rally*)

SATEF: Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation (*Independent Union of Education and Training Employees*).

SNAPAP: Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique (*National Independent Union of Public Administration Employees)*

UNEA: Union Nationale des Étudiants Algériens (*National Union for Algerian Students*)

UNFA: Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes (*National Union for Algerian Women*)

Chapter One: Introduction

"First a drop, then a torrent"

Abū al-Qāsim ash-Shābbī (1909-1934), Tunisian Poet.

The Puzzle

The Arab uprisings that began in Tunisia in late 2010 have posed a puzzle for students of comparative and Middle Eastern politics defying predictions of previous scholarship on the durability of Arab authoritarianism. Moreover, while an increasingly large body of scholarship has attempted to uncover the causes underlying the historical uprisings in the region, few studies have examined the reasons why some Arab states have experienced successful uprisings while others did not.

Indeed, why do some symbolic acts of protest trigger mass mobilization while others fail? Why did the riots following the public suicide of a young street vendor humiliated by local policemen fail to escalate into mass mobilization in the Tunisian city of Monastir in March 2010 while a quasi-identical event in the neighboring city of Sidi-Bouzid led to a successful revolution less than a year later? Similarly, why is it that none of the hundreds of acts of protests that happen every year in neighboring Algeria fail to generate mass mobilization despite the wide state of disgruntlement shared by the population? In hindsight, the fall of corrupt and economically non-sustainable regimes often seems inevitable. The logic, however, of the early events that lead

to successful popular mobilization and regime collapse remains a theoretical puzzle. *In the absence of economic or political structural changes* such as a drastic increase in economic inequalities or a political external shock, why is it that some symbolic events succeed in creating informational cascades and trigger mass mobilization while other similar events do not? That is, in the more formal terms of informational cascades theory, "when is it optimal for an individual, having observed the actions of those ahead of him, to follow the behavior of the preceding individual without regards to his own information" (Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, and Welsh 1992, 992).

The goal of this research is to explain the reasons why some symbolic acts of protest succeed in triggering mass mobilization while other acts of protest do not. This dissertation attempts to identify the causal mechanisms that lead to successful informational cascades by examining how police violence, media coverage and the unexpected involvement of intermediate actors help generate a surprise factor which breaks the local cognitive biases/availability heuristic (shared by the population) and signals to everyone the presence of an opportunity for mobilization.

The Argument

Explaining popular mobilization in North Africa

Informational cascade theory offers an explanation of why individuals, acting rationally, abandon their own information in favor of inferences based on earlier actions of symbolic protest. For informational

cascade theorists such as Bikhchandani et al. (1992), Susanne Lohmann (1994) or Ruth Kricheli, Yair Livne and Beatriz Magaloni (2011), individuals living under authoritarian settings believe that their regime has the ability to violently repress any potential act of dissent. This private information shared individually by isolated citizens is corroborated by the fact that these citizens do not see any evidence of the contrary. Because of the state control over the media (notably local information) and preference falsification by fellow citizens, disgruntled individuals are unable to assess the real level of public dissatisfaction with the regime and have to rely exclusively on their private beliefs (about the invulnerability of the regime) (Bikhchandani et al. 1992 and 1998, Lohmann 1994, Kricheli et al. 2011). However, citizens gradually discount their private information when they receive public information showing the contrary. Symbolic acts of protest such as demonstrations, general strikes or political assassinations initiated by revolutionary entrepreneurs generate public information by advertising public discontent, and signaling in an explicit way to the rest of the population the presence of an opportunity for contestation (Bueno de Mesquita 2010, 446). The stronger the signaling effect of a particular act of protest is, the more importance individuals give to public information over their own private beliefs. Informational cascades occur when individuals finally discount their private information (about the regime's invincibility or popularity for instance) and bandwagon *en masse* around a specific act of protest (Bikhchandani et al. 1992 and 1998, Lohmann 1994, Kricheli et al. 2011).

This thesis argues that police violence, the involvement of intermediate

actors and early media coverage help overcome the informational challenge faced by citizens in authoritarian settings and explain why the riots initiated by local activists in Sidi-Bouzid spread to the rest of the country so quickly while other incidents failed to reach a national dimension elsewhere in Tunisia and in Algeria. My argument is that for symbolic events to be effective and have a wide resonance among the general population in a repressive setting, these events need to be perceived as exceptional - either in their nature or in the way they are framed in the early stages of mobilization - by the general population. Unusual levels of state violence, the involvement of intermediate actors commonly thought to be close to the regime (or at least neutral) and unexpected media coverage help generate new public information that breaks the existing cognitive bias in favor of the state and allow for mobilization to occur.

The following diagram summarizes the logic behind my argument.

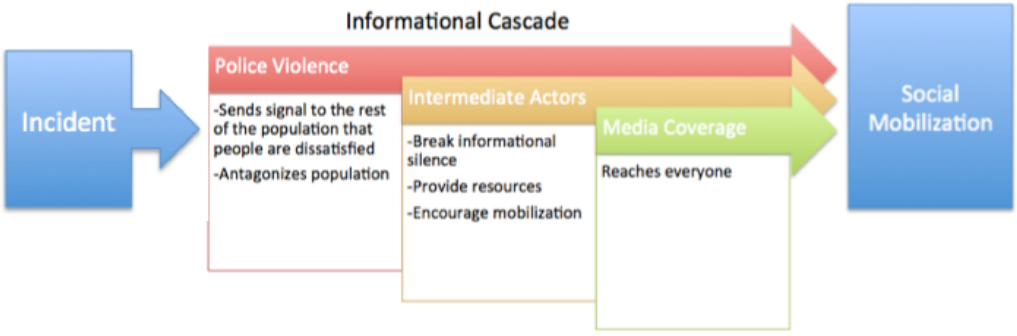

Fig. 1 *Causal factors of informational cascades.*

Successful informational cascades (and subsequent social mobilization) are the result of a surprise factor/perception of exceptionality, which is fueled by the presence of three independent variables. First, police violence breaks the local informational silence in the country and signals to the population that a

crisis is occurring. In particular, violence (often indiscriminate) by members of the security services forces neutral or uninformed members of the population to realize the severity of a specific political context and to take a political stance. Second, the unexpected involvement of respected intermediate actors also breaks the informational silence in the country by signaling to the population that important local actors are also dissatisfied with the regime and willing to mobilize against it. When seeing allies of the regime (or important actors usually tolerated by it) take the street, atomized citizens realize that their individual grievances are actually shared by important local actors whose involvement sends a powerful signal about the presence of an exceptional opportunity for contestation. Finally, media coverage (both by classic means of communication and new technologies) signals to the entire population the severity of a particular situation while providing what Rex Brynen et al. (2012) call the "connective muscle (240)" for social mobilization. All three factors create a perception of exceptionality, which breaks the local cognitive biases/availability heuristic originally in favor of the regime and allows for successful informational cascades to occur.

In the Tunisian case, the violent clashes between the population and the security forces that followed the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in 2010 were unexpected in their essence. Tunisia has been by far the most stable and tightly controlled country in the region and the symbolic dimension of the first clear act of popular defiance did not go unnoticed with the rest of the population. More importantly however, it is the nature of the actors involved in these

protests (notably the local branches of the Tunisian General Labor Union and the Bar Association) that increased the signaling effect of the early demonstrations and helped the rest of the population realize that the country was experiencing a special political momentum. Finally, international media coverage and the electronic involvement of a number of Tunisian activists also helped nourish the local informational cascade and encouraged social mobilization by informing the population about the severity of the political situation in the country.

In contrast, the conjunction of these three variables never happened in the Algerian case. Although often tragic, the numerous acts of protest (self-immolations, spontaneous demonstrations, wild-strikes, clashes between the population and the police) that happen every year in the country are not exploited by important political actors or reverberated by the international media and hence do not have the same signaling effect that the first demonstrations preceding the 2010 revolution had in neighboring Tunisia. More importantly, while the country's intermediate actors take strategic decisions not to exploit the numerous opportunities for social contestation occurring regularly in the country, the multiplication of these instances of popular anger dulls their signaling effect and makes it difficult for the average citizen to realize that the country is experiencing a special momentum for political mobilization. Without a clear signal that shows everyone the presence of a special window for political mobilization, Algerians are unable to simultaneously update their private information and engage in collective action at the national level. Thus, despite their dramatic character, the numerous instances of public protest that happen

every year in Algeria remain just that: isolated protest acts among hundreds of other protest acts that occur every year in the country.

Alternative Explanations: Historical Trauma, State Coercion, and Rentier Politics

The Algerian Civil War.

Scholars of durable authoritarianism offer an alternative explanation for the persistence of authoritarianism in Algeria and the absence of successful mass mobilization. In this perspective, authoritarianism persistence in Algeria is due to two factors: coercion and rentierism. In this formulation, it is commonly argued that after a brutal decade that left more than 200,000 dead in the 1990s, Algerians are perceived as less willing to engage in mass protest because they are afraid of the repercussions of a new revolution and do not want to re-experience the horrific events of the nineties. This explanation, however, does not explain why Algeria is the North African country with the highest number of popular protests (both violent and non-violent). It is interesting to note that the country witnessed more than one thousand different acts of protest in 2010 alone (Charef 2011), a level of political turbulence unmatched in the region. The deterrent effect of past traumatic events also seems to be challenged by popular mobilizations in countries with violent past events such as Syria in 2011 in relation to the Hama massacre for instance.

Other scholars highlight the role of rentier politics. Scholars of the Middle East such as Hazem Beblawi (1990, 89), Giacomo Luciani (1990, 75), Kiren Aziz Chaudhry (1997, 22) and Lisa Anderson (1987, 10) may link the

resilience of the Algerian regime to the oil factor and the ability of the government to insulate itself from its population while providing the security apparatus with more effective means for coercion. Algeria's considerable redistributive policies help limit social demands by providing citizens with significant patronage that diverts demands for democracy (Ross 2001, 333). Even when the redistribution of resources is unfair as it is the case in Algeria, disadvantaged citizens still benefit from the regime and therefore have more incentives to look for individual ways to improve their situation instead of mobilizing collectively (Luciani 1997, 76). Another important aspect highlighted by these authors is the repression effect of rentierism (Ross 2001, 334-6). As shown by Luciani (1997), "a state survives if it has the resources to do so (66)." Oil revenues allow the Algerian state to survive independently of its population. As pointed out by Eva Bellin (2005, 32), even if a rentier state is in poor economic health, it is still able to "pay itself first (32)" by prioritizing the military and the security forces. For these scholars, a clear explanation of the lack of massive mobilization in Algeria may simply be due to the fact that the Algerian regime has the ability to buy-off the acquiescence of its population while guaranteeing the loyalty of the security services. The rentier effect scenario, however, also fails to explain why instances of popular protest happen so often in the country. Since the end of the civil war in the early 2000s, Algeria has been witnessing hundreds of acts of protest every year ranging from instances of self-immolation, road blockades, and attacks on official buildings to wild strikes, mass demonstrations, and urban riots (Bertho 2012). Similarly, the

rentier approach fails to explain why mass mobilization (and high level defections) occurred in oil states with much smaller populations and higher levels of rent distribution such as Libya and Bahrain and should therefore explain the Algerian case (with its much larger population) even less.

Research Methodology

Concepts and Approaches:

Informational Cascades: For Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, and Welsh (1992), informational cascades occur when an individual decides to discard its private information after receiving a public signal that encourages him/her to change his/her behavior (992). For informational cascades to occur, early mobilizers need to convince the rest of the population that anti-regime sentiment is widespread and that successful mobilization is possible (Bueno de Mesquita 2010, 446). In order to be able to make their public statement, early mobilizers use symbolic events to overcome the lack of information and create momentum for mass mobilization.

Contrary to Olson's (1971) model which argues that people have an incentive to "free-ride" when others engage in collective actions, critical-mass theorists and students of informational cascades argue that the more people join popular mobilization, the more others are encouraged to bandwagon (Kurzman 1996, 154). Informational cascades occur when citizens receive new pieces of public information, which make them discount their private information and bandwagon around a specific act of protest.

Symbolic events: As noted by Bueno de Mesquita[1] (2010), symbolic events are absolutely crucial because they are the only tool that early mobilizers can use to communicate with the general population and generate public information in what Ginkel and Smith call "informationally frozen (303)" systems. Spectacular symbolic events are an attempt to solve the informational challenge shared by populations living under authoritarian settings by showing that the grievances of isolated individual citizens are actually shared by the rest of the population. Early mobilizers may use violent symbolic actions such as self-immolations, political assassinations, and terrorist attacks (Bueno de Mesquita 2010, 446), or non-violent ones such as demonstrations, road blockades, sittings in highly symbolic locations (such as presidential or royal palaces), general strikes and even naked protests in conservative societies[2]. Although the initial symbolic actions taken by early mobilizers do not threaten the regime directly, they fulfill an important role by helping revolutionary entrepreneurs raise awareness and signal the existence of shared anti-regime sentiment to the rest of the population (Kricheli et al. 2011, 8).

Early mobilizers: Early mobilizers are what Zeitz et al. (2009) call a "seed" or "an individual or small group who attempts to engage the crowd or take actions that the crowd wished to join in with (36)." Under authoritarian governments, early mobilizers engage in street protests despite having

[1] Bueno de Mesquita's article (2010) focuses mainly on violent symbolic actions used by revolutionary entrepreneurs to trigger informational cascades. The author does not examine non-violent actions symbolic actions such as demonstrations.

[2] See example of Moroccan policemen removing their clothes in public to express their resentment at the government. Online at http://www.goud.ma/إلى-ويخرج-الرسمي-زيه-ينزع-شرطي-عاريا-الشارع- (acيسب-ويسائه-رؤ_a3820.html Online. Accessed August 5th 2011.

incomplete information about the real level of popular dissatisfaction as well as high personal risks in order to send a message to the rest of the population (Kricheli et al. 2011, 5) and trigger mass mobilization. A more detailed definition of early mobilizers/intermediate actors is provided in chapter two.

Rest of the population: Members of the rest of the population mobilize when they see a new opportunity for contention and update their beliefs about the likelihood of the fall of a regime. People, however, bandwagon *en masse* on the protest initiated by early mobilizers only if they are aware of these protest actions and feel that revolutionary mobilization may succeed.

Government officials: Government officials are members of the government and the security apparatus (police, military, and secret services). These officials engage in a reciprocal game with activists and react to symbolic events by punishing the vanguard, offering concessions, or withdrawing from power.

Perception of exceptionality: A perception of exceptionality is what Kurzman (1996) refers to as "subjective perceptions of a breakdown (154)". Other scholars such as Goldstone (1991) define breakdown a "widespread loss of confidence in, or allegiance to, the state (10)". For McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), periods of increased contention force the different actors involved to monitor each other's actions closely and "engage in reactive mobilization on an escalating basis (97)". Thus, the sense of exceptionality is reinforced by the reactions of the various parties involved. As rightly noted by Tarrow (1998), "during periods of increased contention, information flows more rapidly,

political attention heightens, and interactions among groups of challengers and between them and authorities increase in frequency and intensity (146)". Ultimately, the perception of exceptionality by the population "proves self-fulfilling (Kurzman 1996, 165)".

Conceptual framework

A key puzzle of the Arab uprisings is the question of why, in the absence of a change in the repressive capacity of the state, individuals revolted against the local authorities in some instances and not others. In order to answer this puzzle, this research uses the rich literature on informational cascades to explain why people engage in collective action in some instances and not others.

As argued by Sidney Tarrow (2011) large scale, repetitive, politically important sequences like revolutions or democratization can be disaggregated into causal mechanisms that may be identified through the use of process tracing. In this perspective, this research sought to identify the causal mechanisms of informational cascades through the use of cross-case analysis between Algeria and Tunisia, within-case analysis in Tunisia and process tracing in both countries. By closely examining the chain of contiguous events that led to various instances of social mobilization in the two countries, I was able to explain variations in the development of informational cascades through the identification of incentives faced by individuals at the personal level (dispositional mechanisms), pressures coming for the outside (environmental mechanisms) as well as potential networks of brokerage (relational mechanisms)

(Tarrow 2011). In particular, the Bayesian logic of process tracing helped me identify and assess the existing causal mechanisms, while controlling for endogeneity and spuriousness, identifying original variables and addressing the potentially destabilizing problem of interactions effects (Bennett 2011).

Justification of the Comparison

The four cases examined in Tunisia and Algeria make for an interesting contrast. As argued by Collier (1993, 106), a small-N most similar case design offers a particularly effective way to identify new variables. On the one hand, a within-case analysis in the Tunisian case offers a striking most-similar case comparison between the city of Sidi-Bouzid where popular demonstrations following the immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010 quickly spread to the rest of the country, and the neighboring city of Monastir where, ten months earlier, similar protests following an identical incident did not spread to the rest of the country. On the other, the Algerian case allows for an interesting historical comparison between the successful regional social mobilization of 2001 in Kabylia and the failed mobilization of 2011. Lastly, the more general comparison between Tunisia and Algeria, two neighboring Arab countries with important political, economic and social parallels (notably a similar history of strong authoritarian rule) helps further refine the conclusions based on the individual cases.

In order to identify my causal variables, I have used standard ethnographic techniques such as participant observation and interviews

supplemented with background research on protest activities in the region. Because it is impossible to understand the dialectical[3] process of a popular revolution without having a clear understanding of the context and the incentives faced by all actors involved in the process, I have used a double approach based on interviews with both activists involved in symbolic protest actions and members of the security forces responsible of quelling them. This double approach allowed me to highlight tensions between the two discourses and ultimately identify a new theoretical angle while refining the existing theories on the question. I also had the chance to interview representatives of the media, particularly Al-Jazeera, whose role in the development of local informational cascades has been especially important.

Data collection: library resources; surveys; interviewing; statistical method

Because of my focus on the micro-origins of informational cascades and the dynamic nature of the phenomenon I was studying, drawing a random sample of respondents was not helpful for my research. I was therefore choosing my respondents based on a non-probability snow-ball sampling: I was selecting people based on their willingness to share information with me while building on their referral chains to develop trust with new interviewees and investigate interesting empirical angles more in detail.

[3] By dialectical, I am referring to the complex dialogue that occurs between government officials and activists during transitional periods highlighted by Schmitter and O'Donnell (1989). During transitions, new rules are invented, negotiated and agreed upon. Factors such as the divisions between hard and soft liners, the pre-authoritarian legacies, the perception by the different actors of each other's strengths and weaknesses shape the nature of the dialogue between the different parties and have an impact on the result of transition.

In line with most of the literature on informational cascades, I have examined a number of Tunisian and Algerian informational cascades through the interaction between the three actors identified above which are early mobilizers, the general public and government officials. In order to conduct my research, I was using both interactive data collection methods and non-conversational techniques (although the difference between the two was not always clear).

Interactive data collection methods included formal and informal interviews with activists involved in Algerian and Tunisian symbolic protest actions as well as government officials involved in quelling these protests and media representatives. When authorized to do so by my respondents, I have recorded my interviews but only transcribed key points and relevant quotes. Thanks to personal contacts with Tunisian students developed during my studies in Canada (notably during the anti-Ben Ali protests of early 2011 in Montreal), I had the chance to talk to a very wide range of actors involved in Tunisian politics including members of the security forces, government officials, union members, lawyers, local and foreign journalists, bloggers, public servants, smugglers, and the families of the victims of the various instances of popular protest which happened both before and after the revolution. Research in Algeria proved to be more of a challenge, as local interviewees were reluctant to speak. The nature of the questions I was asking, which in essence were exploring the reason[s] why Algerians were not in the process of overthrowing their own government, resulted in hesitation on the part of my contacts to speak freely.[4]

[4] Some of the contacts I approached even thought that I was "an agent of the West mandated to teach Algerians how to revolt."

Fortunately, contacts shared by the Overseas Research Center in Algeria (CEMA-Oran) were particularly helpful and allowed me talk to talk to a number of academics, human rights activists, union members, journalists, government officials, and digital activists whose refined insight was particularly useful for this research.

Finally, non-conversational data collection techniques were an integral part of my research and included the collection of traditional sources of information such as archives, government issued documents and newspaper articles and non-traditional source such as popular culture material (art, songs, jokes) and ephemera (including graffiti and posters) (Diana Kapizewski, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin L. Read, 2011). Lastly, given the importance of new media and digital communication technologies, I have also examined a number of electronic sources such as Facebook pages, personal blogs, tweets, and YouTube videos.

Literature Review

My research contributes to several bodies of literature the most important of which are the scholarships on social movements, durable authoritarianism, social media studies, and informational cascades. The following section will quickly summarize the literature on social movements and persistent authoritarianism before examining the relevance of the literature on informational cascades[5]. Finally, the last part of the section will summarize the

[5] Also referred to as herding behavior in other studies

debate on the role of traditional and social media before presenting its limits.[6]

Social Movements Literature. Most of the explanations provided in the traditional social movements literature fall within the framework summarized by Quintan Wiktorowicz (2004). Wiktorowicz cites early models by Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1957), William Kornhauser (1959), and Neil Smesler (1962) stressing the link between grievances generated by structural change and the development of mass mobilization. For the proponents of the grievances-based approach, the psychological discomfort generated by industrialization, economic difficulties and changing social values lead anxious citizens to engage in collective action and force change upon their government (Wiktorowicz 2004, 6). In *Why Men Rebel* (1970), Ted Gurr builds upon the early studies on social movements and links the occurrence of revolutions to the presence of relative deprivation, whether it is real or perceived. While poverty *per se* is not a sufficient condition for collective action, relative poverty is a powerful incentive for mass mobilization. Individuals engage in collective action when they think that they deserve more than what they already have. As noted by Wiktorowicz, however, these early studies assume that structural conditions are static (which is not necessarily the case) and fail to explain why revolutions rarely occur in extremely poor countries, where socio-economic grievances should be at the highest, but happen, instead, in mid-income countries with relatively better living conditions (Wiktorowicz 2004, 1-19).

[6] Herding refers to a situation "where people with private, incomplete information make public decisions in sequence (Anderson and Holt 2008, 335).

Another group of scholars pointed out by Wiktorowicz (2004) such as Charles Tilly (1978), Janine Clark (1995), Wiktorowicz (2001), and Ellen Lust-Okar (2001) attempt to answer the questions posed in the early literature by focusing on the importance of resources. Some movements are able to grow while others are not because they are able to benefit from the presence of material and organizational resources. These resources can be formal ones such as NGOs, student associations and political parties or informal ones such as social networks of material solidarity. Resources at the macro-level help individuals build bureaucratic organizations that can later be used to channel political contestation and challenge the state (Wiktorowicz 2004, 10-1).

While acknowledging the centrality of resources, a third group of scholars led by Sidney Tarrow (1998) emphasizes the importance of constraints and opportunities at the macro level. Factors such as the presence of unexpected allies or a decrease in the repressive capacity of the state create new opportunities and encourage the emergence of social movements (Wiktorowicz 2004, 10-4). For the representatives of this school, people take part in contentious politics when broad segments of society are able to take advantage of changing political opportunities, organize around "inherited cultural symbols" (19) and "build dense social networks and connective structures" (19).

Finally, Wiktorowicz points out recent studies by David Snow and Robert Benford (1988, 2000) and John Noakes (2000) that highlight the role of ideas and various socialization processes. Cultural framing – which is the ability of some groups to frame their core issues in a language that resonates with the

rest of the population, is given major importance. For the proponents of this school, movements successfully embedded in their social environment are able to develop more legitimacy and achieve higher levels of popular movements than other –less culturally sensitive – movements (Wiktorowicz 2004, 16).

While this literature offers important insights with respect to some of the general factors associated with the "Arab spring" uprisings, it is important to note that divergent developments in Tunisia and Algeria challenge much of the scholarship on social movements and popular protest in the context of Middle Eastern and Muslim majority states. Specifically, while grievances and access to resources (i.e. selective incentives) are important motivating factors for popular mobilization, they are rarely sufficient to explain the timing and success of mass protests, especially in the context of authoritarian regimes. In addition, structural factors do not explain why, in the absence of institutional change, some symbolic acts of protest succeed in creating informational cascades triggering mass mobilization while others fail to general popular momentum across social groups in civil society. Indeed, as my thesis' empirical findings suggest, variations in the political consequences associated with acts of symbolic protest is crucially determined by the actions, but more importantly, the perceptions of actors in civil society rather than institutional change at the level of the state.

Literature on Persistent Authoritarianism. The question of persistent authoritarianism has been explored extensively in literature on the Middle East and provides important insight with respect to the reasons behind the failure of popular mobilization in the region, albeit from different perspectives. Some

scholars such as Michael Hudson (1977), focus on culture whereas others such as Lisa Anderson (1984) emphasize more structural factors. For Eva Bellin (2005), one of the most prominent scholars on the subject, the lack of mobilization in the Middle East is primarily due to the uniquely strong repressive capacity of the state which stems from easy access to rent, international support by foreign patrons, the patrimonial nature of state institutions and the persistence of socio-cultural traumas fueled by stunning examples of failed popular mobilization such as the Hama's insurrection (or the Algerian civil war). Others scholars such as Stephen King (2009) and Lust-Okar (2004) highlight the role of limited liberalization for regime survival in countries like Morocco or Algeria which allowed local leaders to maintain their position by giving a limited role to the opposition. Other academics such as Vickie Langhor (2005) examine local institutions, notably NGO's, and show that these institutions "high jacked" mass mobilization by successfully defending specific issues at the expense of political parties. For Gregory Gause III (1995), persistent authoritarianism in the Arab world is due to a combination of domestic politics, notably Arab leaders' ability to negotiate with the local elites, as well as a number of international factors such as the prevalence of international conflict in the region, rent revenues (Ross 2001) and the manipulation of transnational ideologies. Steve Heydeman (2007) also focuses on local and international factors. He argues that Arab leaders use their proximity to the West and/or authoritarian countries such as China or Russia to upgrade authoritarianism and develop economic and political links with these

countries. Finally, other scholars such as Michael Herb (2005) emphasize the strength of Islamic groups in the region and link the persistence of authoritarianism to the fear of Islamic parties and the absence of a secular opposition.

It is important to note that this literature has greatly contributed to our understanding of the regionally specific factors explaining why the majority of Arab countries have continued to follow a trajectory of persistent authoritarianism. Nevertheless, my comparative analysis of Tunisia and Algeria argues against some key assumptions associated with the literature on persistent authoritarianism in the Arab world. In particular, my research develops a model that takes account of the mix of motives and strategies underpinning the response of rational actors to particular acts of protest in the context of the turbulent politics of North Africa and the Middle East; and it challenges the key assumption of this literature contending that the coercive apparatus of the state, however formidable, uniformly obstructs successful wide scale popular mobilization against authoritarian rule.

Informational Cascade Theory. The literature on informational cascades challenges both the scholarship on social movements and durable authoritarianism. It does so by tracing the causal mechanism by which individuals, acting rationally, overcome the 'free rider' problem and engage in collective action. Since the logic of informational cascades is applicable to many other areas such as consumer marketing, crime enforcement, medical studies and zoology, various scholars within those traditions study the importance of

informational signals and sequential decision-making for the occurrence of massive (and often unexpected) shifts in social behavior. As noted by Bikhchandani et al. (1992, 1998), students of Management use the logic of informational cascades to explain why companies invest in sequence when other important players do the same; criminologists use the same logic to understand why crime levels increase when individuals see other individuals break the law and even zoologists use models of social conformity to understand why female deer suddenly become interested in unattractive male deer when another female shows some interest (Bikhchandani et al. 1992 and 1998, 18).

As noted by Lohmann (1994, 46), Albert Hirschman (1970) argues that members of an organization (or company) who are dissatisfied with a decline in the quality of a product or a service have the choice between remaining loyal, expressing their dissatisfaction, or opting out for a new company or organization. All these decisions however are made in the hope that the action taken by an isolated individual will cascade and influence other members. Lohmann also notes that other scholars such as Mark Granovetter (1985) and Thomas Schelling (1978) further refined this concept in the following years by stressing the importance of the context in which a decision is taken. For these authors, individuals do not take their decisions in a vacuum but are embedded in a complex social setting where decisions taken by an individual are influenced by the actions taken by others individuals and influence in turn the future decisions of another set of individuals (Lohmann 1994, 47-8).

Most of the work on informational cascades that is most relevant to

political mobilization, however, comes from the world of Economic Studies. Rapid and mass changes in behavior such as mass revolutions or fashion trends are seen as the result of the presence of new pieces of information that shift people's behavior in sequence (Bikhchandani et al. 1992, 994) and ultimately transform the existing social equilibrium. Examples of social transformation following informational updates include mass/unexpected revolutions in geographically concentrated areas (Simmons and Elkins 2004, Lohmann 1994), but also the adoption of new technologies or fashion trends, the continuation of failed management strategies in big corporations, and even employers continuous rejection of job applicants previously rejected by other potential employers (Lemieux 2004, 19 and Bikhchandani et al. 1992, 994).

The informational cascade model developed by Bikhchandani et al. (1992, 1998) highlights the importance of the nature of early mobilizers. That is, information originating from respected people ('veterans' or experts) has more value than information generated by novices (Bikhchandani et al. 1992, 1002 and 1998, 10). The involvement of prestigious/respected community leaders in rural communities, for instance, significantly increases the adoption of new technologies in generally conservative settings (Rogers and van Es 1964 cited in Bikhchandani et al. 1992, 1003). The authors also highlight the fragility of informational cascades. Because herding behavior is induced primarily by the diffusion of a new piece of information, the movement can be stopped with the release of additional information (1004). Informational cascades may fail if after an initial signal has been released, people are still unsure about the nature of that

signal or receive a new conflicting one (1014).

In a subsequent article published in 1998, the same authors refine their original argument by further developing the concept of observational learning. Observational learning allows individuals to decide which behavior is better by examining the actions of others and saving the cost of direct analysis (Bikhchandani et al. 1998, 2). Because herd behavior is sequential, people use two kinds of information: private and public. The natural "predisposition to imitate"[7] within social groups means that once an informational cascade starts, individuals tend to privilege public information over their own private information, even when the two are conflicting (5). The more people adopt a behavior, the higher the impact of public information and the less importance is given to individual information (5). The authors also confirm that informational cascades are fundamentally fragile and may be reversed with new pieces of public information (7). Similarly, informational cascades are also less likely to occur when individuals are faced with many options or when the original signals are open to differing interpretations (7-8).

Another group of scholars, led by Susanne Lohmann (1994, 2004), studies the way these informational cascades succeed in creating mass mobilization. Lohmann uses a signalling game logic to show that in a repressive setting, collective action is hindered by the fact that individuals do not have access to information about others' preferences. Because protest is risky,

[7] Herd behavior includes medical practices (when in doubt, doctors tend to do what other doctors do), financial investments, and even sexual practices amongst animals: female deer for instance suddenly start showing their interest vis-à-vis an unattractive male just because another female happens to be in his vicinity (Bikchandani et al. 1992, 1009-11).

individuals refrain from mobilizing unless they expect a large level of participation, which in turn helps diminish the cost of their personal action. Members of the general population in particular, base their decisions on two pieces of statistical public data: the general number of early mobilizers who take the streets and the discrepancy between the expected turnout and the actual number of people who mobilize on a particular occasion (Lohmann 1994, 49-52). If these numbers show that collective action is occurring in a significant way, these individuals update their priors about the cost of taking action and join the first group of early mobilizers.

Individuals belonging to the same organization, however, do not have the same interests. Building on Mancur Olson's *Logic of Collective Action* (1971), Timur Kuran (1991), Gerald Marwell and Pamela Oliver (1993) (cited in Lohmann 1994, 47-8) stress the importance of group heterogeneity for collective action and show that while some members have a high incentive to engage in collective action, others do not. However, both engage in complex reciprocal games in order to evaluate the chances of a successful mobilization based on their perception of the existence of a critical mass of dedicated activists. In this perspective, early mobilizers have a particularly strong incentive to influence the rest of the population into mobilizing by spreading information about the existing level of dissatisfaction, articulating demands, and encouraging the creation of informational cascades. In a later article, Kuran and Cass Sunstein (1997) further refine this question and show that political entrepreneurs may trigger informational cascades by strategically using available cognitive biases to

push for a specific agenda even the information used have no relationship with reality (761).

Although not theorized as a clear independent variable, surprise, or rather the perception of exceptionality is a crucial element for successful informational cascades in the Lohmann (1994) model. In order for a particular event to have a significant signaling effect, this event needs to be perceived as exceptional by the general population. In this perspective, sheer turnout numbers do not matter per se[8]: even if large numbers mobilize in favor of regime change for instance, the level of mobilization needs to be unexpected in order to create an informational cascade. For Lohmann (1994, 50), the higher the ratio of actual turnout versus expected turnout the higher the probability of informational cascades to be successful.

The nature of the actors involved in a particular protest matters as well. Mobilization by moderates sends a more significant message than mobilization by extremists. Whereas the average citizen does not usually relate to actions taken by non-conformists extremists, that same citizen is highly sensitive to protest actions taken by similarly moderate individuals and is much more willing to bandwagon on protest activities (54-55, 64).

More recently, new studies[9] have focused on political mobilization in ways that are of particular relevance to the polished this logic by introducing

[8] Contrary to what have been argued by scholars such as James DeNardo (1985) or Kuran (1991).

[9] Other disciplines also examined the question of herding behavior and informational cascade. Marketing scholars such as Yi-Fen Chen (2008) showed for instance that herding behavior occurs frequently when people consult online recommendation sites before making a purchase (Chen 2008, 1977). Customer evaluations, or other clues of popularity (such as the number of hits for instance) (1978) play an important signalling role, help customers update their private

new variables. Using the same signaling model used by Lohmann, Kricheli et al. (2011) show that protests occurring in highly repressive environments have a higher ability to generate informational cascades because the signaling effect is higher under repressive regimes than under more moderate ones. Although protest actions are less likely to occur under tightly controlled environments, their signaling effect is such that successful informational cascades are more likely to occur (and massive protests to spiral successfully) once they happen. By the same token, even if the personal risk for early mobilizers is particularly high, these individuals still have an incentive to protest because their actions have a very high signaling effect (Kricheli et al. 2011, 5).

It is important to note that a number of scholars have highlighted the particularly contingent and unexpected nature of political mobilization under repressive regimes. Scholars such as Yotam Margalit (2005) and Charles Kurzman (2004) have argued against traditional explanations of revolutions. Margalit (2005), for example, has shown that far from being rare, opportunities for the coordination of mass mobilization such as riots, strikes, or targeted political violence are much more prevalent than commonly acknowledged in the literature (3). Contrary to what is held by Kuran (1991) or Lohmann (1994), Margalit shows that resistance to authoritarian regimes is a continuous process

information and generate an informational cascade. It is also important to note that the nature and importance of early adopters is subject to theoretical debate. While Kelman (1961) and Harmon and Coney (1982) (all cited in Chen 2008, 1979) have shown for instance that the credibility (understood as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) of early mobilizers is an important element of herding behavior and informational cascades, others such as Chen (2008) showed that in regards to herding behavior in book purchases for instance, "'recommendations of other consumers' influenced subject choices more than 'recommendations of an expert' (1989)".

and that most acts of civic dissent are actually not met with state violence and do not lead to informational cascades (3).

Similarly, Kurzman (2004) argues that massive popular mobilization and subsequent informational cascades are highly a-theoretical events that make prediction a difficult exercise. In relation with the Iranian revolution, the author examines a number of traditional explanations (economic, cultural, organizational) and shows that all these explanations are not fully convincing.[10] Kurzman then argues that revolutions are a-theoretical events that occur when individuals update their cognitive biases and realize that mobilization is *viable* (136) which in turn feeds the revolutionary logic in a self-reinforcing fashion. However, because revolutions create their own meaning while they occur, advance prediction is particularly difficult.[11]

Social Media Studies. Finally, while a growing body of literature has addressed the question of social media in increasing the likelihood of popular mobilization, there is strong disagreement with respect to the latter's role in facilitating informational cascades and popular mobilization. Prior to the Arab Spring, experts on social media differed about the role played by new means of digital communication for social mobilization. Building on the cases of the summer 2009 Green Movement in Iran and the Twitter revolution in Moldova, analysts were divided between enthusiastic proponents of social media such as

[10] The involvement of the clergy in the early days of the revolution has been overestimated for instance. Many members of the religious apparatus were actually against the revolution.

[11] Proponents of chaos theory such as Stephen H. Kellert (1993, x) and Charlotte Werndl (2009, 196-7) go even further and argue that although social systems are deterministic, changes may occur as a result of random events (or butterfly effect) that alter the existing equilibrium but are fundamentally unpredictable. In this perspective, revolutionary triggers may be seen as random events that cannot be scientifically predicted.

Clay Shirky, a writer and lecturer at New York University, and more dubious ones such as best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell or Evgeny Morozov.[12]

Shirky (2009, 2010), one of digital media's most enthusiastic fans, highlights the importance of new digital means of communication for the development of mass mobilization and argues that social media help coordinate mobilization. For Shirky, social mobilization such as the one seen during the green protest movements in Iran "was and is being shaped by social media" (Shirky 2010). While he agrees that protests movements are not triggered by social media, social mobilization organized and framed through participatory digital platforms are for him a new phenomenon, which is significantly different from other forms of mobilization that happened in the past (Shirky 2010).

Evgeny Morozov (2010) nuanced Shirky's optimism by pointing out the fact that new digital means of communication can also be used by authoritarian regimes to crack down on social movements. Using the case of Iran, Morozov argued that social media might actually empower anti-democratic governments who use social media to identify and harass opponents (Morozov 2010). Morozov wonders about what there is to gain "if the ability to organize protests is matched (and, perhaps, even dwarfed) by the ability to provoke, identify and arrest the protesters—as well as any other possible future dissidents?" (Morozov 2010). One of the most persistent critiques, however, came from Gladwell. Building on Doug McAdam's (1986) work on low and high-risk activism, Gladwell (2010) emphasized the importance of strong-tie

[12] Evgeny Morozov is a researcher currently based in Stanford.

connections (such as the ones that link members of a group who meet in real life) over weak-tie ones (such as the ones shared online by loosely connected individuals). For Gladwell, social movements need to be built on strong personal connections between friends or families. Social media which is characterized by an over-abundance of superficial links between digitally connected people is less effective than real life networks (Gladwell 2010).

A few months only before the Arab Spring, Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, John Kelly, and Ethan Zuckerman (2010), a group of scholars and analysts published a study of the role on new media in social mobilization. While "social media may reduce the transaction costs for organizing collective action, by facilitating communication and coordination across both physical and social distance" (Aday et al. 2010, 10-1) the authors shared Morozov's concern about social media use by repressive regimes (11), while raising the issue of slack-activism (11-12) also highlighted by other analysts such as Gladwell (2010).

The Arab Spring provided new arguments to proponents of both groups. Following the Tunisian and Egyptians revolutions during which new digital means of communication seemed to have played an important role, scholars interested in the question coalesced again into two distinct groups. Cyber-enthusiasts such as Clay Shirky (2011) were comforted by Philip Howard, Aiden Duffy, Deen Freelon, Muzammil Hussain, Will Mari and Marwa Mazaid (2011) who built on information collected from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to argue that:

> "social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring. A spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground. Social media helped spread democratic ideas across international borders (2)".

Howard and Hussain published another article few months later in which they reiterated their point before underlining the fact that:

> "social protests in the Arab world have cascaded from country to country, largely because digital media have allowed communities to unite around shared grievances and nurture transportable strategies for mobilizing against dictators. In each country, people have used digital media to build a political response to a local experience of unjust rule (Howard and Hussain 2011, 48)".

This view was shared by other analysts such as Zahera Harb (2011) also agree with the previous statement and credit social media for "facilitating the revolution" and "operating as a mobilizing tool."

A second group that was made up of both professionals and academics received claims made by the first group with much skepticism. Bill Wasik (2011), a senior editor of Wired magazine and self-proclaimed inventor of the flash mob (Wasik 2006) built on Malcolm Gladwell's discussion of weak and strong ties to argue that revolutions happen all the time and that the people involved in these revolutions use whatever technology is available. Similarly for Halim Rane and Sumra Salem (2012):

> "there is no positive correlation between levels of social media penetration and the emergence of social movements calling for political reform and regime change. Rather, the uprisings occurred in response to adverse social, economic and political conditions endured by people across the region, including decades of authoritarian rule, corruption, socio- economic injustices and a lack of rights, freedoms and opportunities" (108).

The most important critiques of the role played by social media during the Arab Spring, however, came from analysts interested in the role played by traditional mass media vs. social media. For Brynen et al. (2012), new means of digital communications played a "mobilizing, triggering, and momentum-maintaining role in the 2011 popular uprisings" (239) but do not explain the success of social mobilization during the Arab Spring (251). Similarly, and although they agree that new technologies played an important role "in terms of inter and intra-group communication as well as information dissemination" (Rane and Salem 2012, 97), Rane and Salem (2012) strongly disagree that new forms of digital communication are responsible for the success of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolution (102). Indeed for the two authors:

> "mass media were still the most dominant source of information about the uprisings even for those in the MENA region. One notable study reveals that among Egyptians, 81% relied on Egyptian state television as their main source of information about the uprising, while another 63% relied on Al Jazeera. Only 8% relied on social media" (Abu Dhabi Gallup Centre 2011) cited in (Rane and Salem 2012, 101).

Whereas Aday et al. (2010) were unsure about the role played by new means of digital communication prior to the Arab uprising when they argued "it is plausible that traditional media sources were equally if not more important [than new media] (3)" a subsequent article published in July 2012 by some of the authors clarified their initial position and stated that,

> "new media—at least that which uses bit.ly linkages—did not appear to play a significant role in either in-country collective action or regional diffusion during this period (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides and Freelon 2012, 3)".

Indeed, traditional media play a major role for social mobilization. They allow the content produced on the ground to be aired online and access a larger audience (Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) and (Cottle, 2008; McCurdy, 2012; Uldam and Askanius, 2012) all cited in (Hänska-Ahy and Shapour 2013, 32). Traditional mass media also give more legitimacy to the material produced by local militants by authenticating and substantiating it during periods of great political and informational confusion. Indeed, no matter how sensational, an un-edited video shared on a social digital platform is only one amongst thousands of others (often undated or incorrectly referenced). Traditional media verify, edit, translate, and vet footage, which is then aired both on new and traditional media platforms with an increased credibility (Hänska-Ahy and Shapour 2013, 35, 38).

More importantly perhaps, the previous authors highlighted the complementarity between old and new media and the difficulty of clarifying the exact role played by each platform (Aday et al. 2012, 3). Lynch (2011) argued that:

> "New social media and satellite television together offer powerful tools to protest organizers, reducing transaction costs for organization and presenting rapid and powerful channels for the dissemination of messages, images, and frames. In particular, they offer transmission routes for reaching international audiences and influencing foreign perceptions of stability or of the normative desirability of particular regimes. At the same time, they do not necessarily translate into enduring movements or into robust political parties capable of mounting a sustained challenge to entrenched regimes or to transforming themselves into governing parties" (302).

Hänska-Ahy and Shapour (2013) also noted the convergence between traditional and new means of information (where one platform compensates for

the shortcomings of the other (31)). However, as highlighted by the latter (2013), "social or broadcast media are not dualistic choices (29)". The two authors cite Jenkins (2010) who rightly emphasizes that ''we do not live on a platform; we live across platforms. We choose the right tools for the right job'' (cited in Hänska-Ahy and Shapour 2013, 29).

While the literature on traditional and social media has contributed to increasing our understanding of the role of the media during revolutionary times, this literature fails to clarify how traditional and digital media affect informational cascades. More importantly, the literature summarized above assumes that journalists and cyber-activists are able to consistently identify instances of political contestation when they arise. However, my research shows that media professionals and cyber-activists are blind to certain acts of political dissent and need to be guided by intermediate actors who decide which acts of protest are important and which are not.

Contributions to the Theoretical Literature

While the primary goal of my dissertation is to explicate the causal mechanisms by which informational cascades operate in North Africa in empirical terms, my study also tests the theoretical scholarship on social movements, collective action, and durable authoritarianism. Specifically, by focusing on the micro-dynamics of the early development of informational cascades, the main contribution of this work is the systematic theorization of "surprise/perception of exceptionality" as a key intermediate variable necessary for the development of successful informational cascades. Although the element

of surprise has been studied obliquely in previous studies, my research helped test and bring together a number of conclusions made in the literature in a much more systematic way.[13] The empirical findings of this research may also be of interest to students of crowd behavior by clarifying inter-group interactions[14] (notably Reicher and Potter's model (1985) (cited in Zeitz et al. 2009, 33-4)) and the logic of empowerment in elaborated social identity theory (see Reicher (1996) and Drury and Reicher (1999) (also cited in Zeitz and al. 2009, 34)).

On a broader level, my work also helped examine the dynamics of popular mobilization in Algeria and Tunisia thus making a useful empirical contribution to the study of the largely ignored Arab Maghreb. Because the region is currently undergoing an unprecedented wave of popular mobilization, my research results are of high interest not only to scholars of the Middle East and North Africa but also of other parts of the world where authoritarianism persists such as China, Cuba, parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. Finally, the study of the origins of successful informational cascades is also of particular interest to activists involved in protest actions against repressive regimes. By helping dissidents understand the broader political implications of the micro-dynamics of early mobilization, I hope that my work will help bring about change in some of these societies.

[13] As shown earlier, Lohmann (1994) examined the role played by surprise by showing the importance of early involvement by moderate actors as well as the ratio between turnout expectations and reality. Similarly, Kricheli et al. (2011) showed that the surprise factor is higher in repressive environments, which increases the odds for successful informational cascades to happen. Finally Kuran (1991) highlighted the often unpredictable character of informational cascades and regime collapse but did not attempt to theorize the surprise factor more in detail.

[14] Notably between parts of the popualtion and the police (seen as the out-group) for instance (see Zeitz et al. 2009, 35).

Chapters That Follow

Chapter two examines two quasi-identical cases of self-immolation, which occurred in Tunisia in 2010.[15] The comparison between the public self-immolation of Abdesslam Trimech in the city of Monastir in March 2010 and the dramatic suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi-Bouzid in December 2010 shows that the audacious involvement of local intermediate actors in the city of Sidi-Bouzid (notably union members and local lawyers) gave the first protests organized in the city the visibility necessary for the development of a successful informational cascade. In contrast, the examination of the case of Monastir will show that the strategic decision made by some actors not to engage politically and politicize the death of Abdesslam Trimech stymied popular mobilization in the city and killed the nascent informational cascade that was forming in the small coastal town.

The next chapter focuses on two recent instances of failed mobilization in Algeria in order to highlight the importance of intermediate actors in the failure of national mobilization. In January 2011, the protests initiated by the CNCD pro-democracy movement did not have the support of almost any of the country's intermediate actors. As the protests were largely led by fringe personalities, the various demonstrations organized by the movement in the winter of 2011 failed to take a national dimension and remained confined to very tiny circles in Oran and Algiers. In contrast, the involvement of local notables

[15] Because the two incidents happened at less than a ten months interval, the comparison helps control for the role of technology and the penetration of digital means of communications (which did not change significantly between mid-March and early-December 2010).

during the 2001 events in Algeria explains why the protests organized by Berber groups reached a massive dimension in Kabylia (which culminated in a one million member protest in the capital). However, the non-involvement of national intermediate actors prevented the extension of the protests to the rest of the country.

Chapters four and five examine the relationship between intermediate actors, police violence, and media coverage on the one hand and the development of a popular sentiment of exceptionality allowing for successful mobilization to occur on the other. In the Tunisian case, the success of Ben Ali's repression was such that the shock created by police violence (in a country that was supposed to be an island of calm in a tumultuous environment), the unexpected involvement of local actors and critical media coverage broke the cognitive bias shared by the population about the invincibility of the regime and allowed for a successful informational cascade to occur. Similarly, chapter five will show that despite the development of a significant mobilization dynamic in Kabylia in 2001, the absence of a perception of exceptionality outside of the region explains why the rest of the country did not get involved. Since the Kabyle population is widely perceived as historically restive by the rest of the country, the signal sent by the mobilization of 2001 did not resonate with the rest of the population and did not create a national informational cascade.

Chapter six examines the link between social mobilization and media coverage more in detail. After reviewing the theoretical debate on the relationship between traditional and digital media on the one hand and social

mobilization on the other, the chapter will present the different mechanisms through which social media and satellite television nourished the perception of exceptionality in the Tunisian case and the reasons why they failed to produce the same effect in Algeria.

Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes the methodological approach taken in this study and attempts to highlight the relative weight of the variables examined above. The final chapter also attempts to study the applicability of the argument defended in this essay to the three other countries of the Maghreb before presenting a number of theoretical limitations and concluding with potential future research projects.

Chapter Two: Tunisia's Intermediate Actors

"Kids! Get this in your head while you are still young. In life, never be too transparent"

Mohamed Chaabane, head of the UGTT regional union in Sfax[16].

On March 3rd, 2010, a young street vendor named Abdesslam Trimech whose license to sell food products was unfairly revoked by the municipality of Monastir, Tunisia, sprayed gas on his body and lit himself on fire in front of the town's general-secretary's office. The dramatic suicide of the 30 years old man created a considerable commotion amongst the coastal city's 80,000 inhabitants. His death, which was a direct consequence of the contempt of the local authorities that had revoked his license in order to give it to an associate of the regime, could have been easily avoided (or at least limited) if the fire extinguishers in the municipal office where he burned himself were operational. Following the dramatic gesture of the young father of two, hundreds of local inhabitants gathered and shouted angry slogans at the government. The following day, the governor ordered the transfer of the severely burned Abdesslam to a better-equipped hospital in Ben Arous, where the young man spent a week before dying on March 11th. On the day of his funeral thousands of protesters, a number of which had been clashing with the police during the preceding days (F. Trimech, personal interview, March 5th, 2012) accompanied

[16] M. Chaanbane, personal interview, March 15, 2012.

his coffin[17] to the town's cemetery while chanting angry slogans against the local government.[18] Despite the deep sense of injustice and humiliation shared by those who were attending the scene, the funerals ended peacefully and the city regained its calm on the following day.

Seven months later, a quasi-identical event led to a completely different outcome in the small city of Sidi-Bouzid. On December 17th, Mohamed Bouazizi, a young street vendor whose weight-scale was confiscated by the local municipal police, burned himself in front of the governorate's main entrance. As in Monastir, the suicide of the young street vendor was sparked by the contempt of the local authorities and as in Monastir could have been prevented if the governorate's fire extinguishers were operational. Faced with such a clear illustration of disdain and carelessness by the municipal authorities, inhabitants of the city quickly congregated around the location of the suicide shouting angry slogans against the government and the police. While the badly burnt Bouazizi was being transferred to the Burn and Trauma section of the same hospital where Abdesslam was sent a couple of months earlier (M. Bouazizi, personal interview, February 27th, 2012), a number of respected members of the community quickly mobilized to condemn the negligence and contempt shown by the local authorities. On the night of December 18th, violent clashes erupted between the city's youth and members of the police that were called in reinforcement the night before. Night confrontations lasted for two days before

[17] See video of events at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sd8yAMI2no (accessed August 1st, 2012).
[18] See video of events at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c7pv8HFfok (accessed August 1st, 2012).

spreading to neighboring cities and villages, paving the way for three uninterrupted weeks of national mobilization and the fall of Ben Ali's regime.

This chapter examines the reasons why despite the presence of structural conditions favorable to revolutions, the protests following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi spread from Sidi-Bouzid to the rest of the country in December 2010 whereas the protests following the suicide of Abdesslam Trimech in the neighboring city of Monastir remained geographically limited just a few months prior. Indeed, the economic conditions of the country did not change between March 2010, when Trimech killed himself, and December 2010, when Bouazizi set himself on fire. Despite their relatively superior economic situation, the inhabitants of Monastir were as dissatisfied with the regime as the rest of the country as evidenced by the considerable gathering around Abdesslam's funerals and the relatively high number of young men who died during the 2010/2011 revolution. What made Bouazizi's death so special? Why did the international media get involved so quickly? And why did the inhabitants of Sidi Bouzid turn violently against the local representatives of the state security apparatus whereas the inhabitants of Monastir did not?

This thesis' point of analytical departure is that structural economic conditions necessary for a social revolt were present in Tunisia at least since the late nineties when economic inequality and exclusion became particularly blatant. Reasons for social mobilization (in the sense given to it by Hudson

Meadwell (2008)) were indubitably present for years.[19] However, the immediate cause leading to social mobilization occurred in Sidi-Bouzid and not in Monastir despite the presence of quasi-identical conditions. Why then did mass mobilization occur around the case of Mohamed Bouazizi but not the one of Abdesslam Trimech?

This chapter will show that successful mobilization needs intermediate actors who identify opportunities for mobilization and translate them into action. Intermediate actors help raise demands, and actively seek to signal to the rest of the population the presence of an opportunity for contestation. In Sidi-Bouzid, the UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union) and the lawyers union were both a transmission belt and a driving force (Erdle 2010, 203) in the revolution. They contacted the media, filmed the confrontations between the population and the police, galvanized their colleagues in neighboring cities and did all they could to transform an isolated personal tragedy into a national political issue. In Monastir however, those same actors restrained from mobilizing around the self-immolation of Abdesslam Trimech. Not only did the regional union in Monastir not react to Abdesslam's tragedy in any significant way, but some of its members even actively tried to preserve the status quo by tempering spirits and slowing mobilization during the tense moments preceding the young man's funerals (F. Trimech, personal interview, March 5th, 2012).

The first part of this chapter will define the concept of intermediate actors and will examine the role they play in the development of opportunities

[19] Scholars such as DeNardo (1985) and Geddes (1990) highlight the fact that "the structural conditions often identified as root causes of revolution occur far more often than do revolutions themselves (Bueno de Mesquita 2010, 457)".

for political contestation. In particular, the first part will review the literature on intermediate actors and their relationship to political opportunities. This first section will then be followed by a historical review of Tunisia's most important intermediate groups (most notably the UGTT and the bar association) and their relationship to the state. Finally, a third section will compare the role-played by intermediate actors in Sidi-Bouzid and Monastir and will highlight the importance of agency for the development of informational cascades and social mobilization.

Mediating Political Action: The UGTT and the Bar Association

One of the most important studies on the role of intermediate actors has been conducted by Schmitter and O'Donnell (1986) who argue that transitions from authoritarian rule are the results of divisions between hard and soft-liners (referred to later in the text as intermediate actors). While hard-liners are made of a "nucleus of unconditional authoritarians (16)" that constitute the heart of the regime, soft-liners are other members of the regime[20] who for various reasons, are more open to the prospect of political liberalization. Although soft-liners/intermediate actors may at first be indistinguishable from the more conservative members of the regime, the "(…) increasing awareness that the regime they helped to implant (…), will have to make use in the foreseeable future, of some degree or some form of political legitimation" (16) transforms them into soft-liners/intermediate actors. Transitions occur when members of the first group are gradually sidetracked by soft-liners who identify opportunities for

[20] Or at least normally tolerated by the regime.

political transition and push for political liberalization (16). In the case of Tunisia, the workers' union and the bar association clearly fit Schmitter and O'Donnell's definition of soft-liners/intermediate actors. Members of the two associations were either directly part of the regime (as it was the case for the leadership of the UGTT or for a number of RCD lawyers) or tolerated by it.

Contrary to scholars such as Eva Bellin (2002) who see those social actors as monolithic, Schmitter and O'Donnell (1986) emphasize the fact that "soft-liners are themselves composed of diverse currents (17)". In particular, the authors note that while some soft-liners only want to push for a limited liberalization that will diminish social pressure while allowing them to maintain their privileges, others are more genuinely attached to the prospect of democracy (17). In the Tunisian case, it is important to note that neither labour nor capital are monolithic actors with consistent political behaviour. Rather, they are a mixed of various currents who disagree on the strategies needed to achieve their interest and may even disagree on the nature of those interests themselves.

For Meyer and Minkoff (2004), intermediate actors monitor their environment and wait for opportunities to mobilize (1470). Building on Gamson and Meyer (1996), Tarrow (1998) defines political opportunity as:

> "Consistent –but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure" (76-7).

Although Tarrow does not tackle the relative importance of each of those factors, he argues that shifting political alignments, divided elites, the presence of influential allies and state repression all contribute to the creation of

opportunities for social mobilization (77-80). McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) further refine this definition by noting "(…) opportunity attribution often emerges from competition among advocates of differing interpretations, one of which finally prevails" (95).

Opportunities for political transition can be found in domestic and/or international politics (Schmitter and O'Donnell 1986, 18). The Tunisian revolution case is a clear example of social mobilization stemming from domestic opportunities whereas other cases in the Arab world (such as the one in Libya for instance) are the result of international openings. However, as shown by Kurzman (1996, 154), opportunities may also be totally subjective: people may fail to identify opportunities when they exist or see some when they don't exist.

Intermediate actors also provide incentives to the rest of the population to overcome the challenges of collective action while their own involvement may encourage others to join popular mobilization (see Blumer (1969) cited in Kurzman (1996, 155)). In the Tunisian case for instance, such incentives include protection from state prosecution (by the bar association) or special access to venues for social mobilization (such as the use of UGTT buildings during the 2010/2011 protests). Finally, it is important to note that intermediate actors often have a double characteristic that ordinary citizen do not have. One the one hand, they have relative immunity from state repression through their national and international connections while maintaining legitimacy among the general population on the other.

Thus, intermediate actors nourish informational cascades in three important ways that are of particular relevance to developments in Tunisia: through their contacts with national and international media, through provisions of resources (both formal and informal) necessary for social mobilization and more importantly perhaps, through their own involvement which creates a perception of exceptionality that allow informational cascades (and subsequent mass mobilization) to occur. Indeed, the involvement of intermediate actors during periods of tension increases the attention of the media and local political actors and signals in an explicit way that part of the population is engaging in contentious politics.

In the case of Tunisia, lawyers and union members nourished the Sidi-Bouzid informational cascade by mobilizing their adherents, contacting the media and providing the rest of the population with formal and informal institutional resources. Before highlighting the specifics of the involvement of those two groups in Monastir and Sidi-Bouzid, the next section will present a historical overview of the two groups.

Intermediate Actors in Tunisia: History Matters

In regards to transitions, Schmitter and O'Donnell highlight the importance of individual actors who are respected among their peers and whose strategic action at critical junctures makes "alternative outcomes possible (25)". The Tunisian bar association and the Tunisian General Workers unions are two

examples of intermediate bodies, which played an important role in their country's transition in 2011.

Since the independence of the country, the Tunisian bar association (or Conseil de l'Ordre des Avocats Tunisiens) was able to resist domestication by the regime. Contrary to other professional organizations such as the Magistrates Association (Association des Magistrats Tunisiens) or the Journalists' Association (Association Tunisienne des Journalistes) who were dependent on the state because of the nature of their activities, the bar association was never directly dependent on governmental subsidies and was historically able to preserve an important degree of political independence (Erdle 2010, 216-7).

The independence of the association (which dates back to the Bourguiba years when the bar served as an informal outlet for banned political parties (Erdle 2010, 255)) continued under Ben Ali despite the president's attempts of intimidate or co-opt the Tunisian lawyers. Although the ruling party tried several times to destroy the independence of the association by creating parallel organizations within it or attempting to win the internal elections, the regime's representatives were never able to highjack the internal democratic process within the organization (L. Ben Mahmoud, personal interview, February 9th, 2012) as evidenced by the election of 2001 of Bechir Essid, a former political prisoner and outspoken critic of the regime at the head of the association (Erdle 2010, 256). Issues related to the international reputation of the country also forced the regime to restrain itself vis-à-vis the association (Garon 2003, 158). Because the independence of the judiciary was an important element

of Tunisia's international public relations propaganda, the state had no choice but to leave local lawyers with some room for dissent (L. Ben Mahmoud, personal interview, February 9th, 2012). At the height of regime repression in the mid-nineties, lawyers (and to some extent union members) were the only ones to still defy the regime. As noted by Lise Garon (2003), a number of lawyers such as Radia Nasraoui or Najib Hosni were uniquely bold in their defense of Human Rights activists. Even if the cost for criticizing the regime was still very high (i.e. the torture and sentencing to eight years imprisonment of Najib Hosni) support from colleagues as well as international connections gave partial immunity to die-hard lawyers willing to take the risk to criticize the regime (Garon 2003, 157). Even if they were never immune from state repression, dissident lawyers could still count on the support of international professional organizations such the American Bar Association, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights as well as various human rights organizations (Garon 2003, 158).

It is also interesting to note that the bar was the only association in the country where political militants ostracized by the regime were welcomed and this, in turn, created a deep sense of solidarity and loyalty amongst its members. Many leaders of the opposition were lawyers and could count on their colleagues support to continue voicing their criticisms of the regime (C. Tabib, personal interview, February 14th, 2012). This sense of solidarity was so strong that it even extended to the members of the association who formally belonged to the ruling party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) (L. Ben Mahmoud, personal interview, February 9th, 2012). A case in point about the particularly

solid sense of solidarity that exists within the Tunisian bar association is the fact that RCD members within the bar often took advantage of the anonymity of the voting process to vote against the candidates recommended by the regime (L. Ben Mahmoud, personal interview, February 9th, 2012).

Another organization that played an important role in Tunisia's history is the national workers' union. Given the union's considerable membership and its historical involvement at critical junctures of Tunisian history, the UGTT is probably the most important intermediate actor in the Tunisian case. As noted by Erdle (2010), the UGTT structure is comprised of 24 regional unions and 48 sectorial federations, each one of them led by a nine-member executive board. A national executive board made of 13 deputy secretaries-general (elected in national congresses) presides the whole structure (Erdle 2010, 209) and has the right to approve or reject the convening of strikes (210). With an estimated membership ranging from 300,000 (Erdle 2010, 211) to 750,000 (Mandraud 2012), the UGTT is the strongest organization in the country. It is, however, important to note that the union is far from being a monolith[21] and that there is considerable factionalism not only between the executives and the regional unions but also between those two groups and between sectorial representations.

[21] Most students of the Tunisian revolution highlight the permanent conflict between the radical/reformist union base and a leadership generally close to the regime. However, it is important to note that these two groups were far from being monolithic and were themselves divided into a myriad of currents and competing groups. Since the Djerba congress of 2002 in particular, the leadership was divided between Pro-RCD members (the majority) and a minority of more independent figures. (See Erdle 2010, 212). Similarly, regional unions were not all opposed to the regime. As it will be shown in great length in the next paragraphs some regional unions notably in the center of the country were at the front of political mobilization whereas others notably in the Sahel were more attached to the status-quo.

The history of union activism in Tunisia, covered in detail by Alexander (2010), goes back to the struggle of independence when the workers union and Habib Bourguiba, the country first president, fought together for the liberation of the country. Since the UGTT was Bourguiba's strongest ally[22] against the traditionalist Youssefist rival movement, Alexander (2010) notes that the country's first president quickly rewarded[23] the union by implementing a number of socialist leaning policies while offering the syndicate a significant number of seats in the new national assembly (38). However, increasingly radical demands by the union who was calling for the implementation of an ambitious social economic reform forced the president to take measures to weaken his old UGTT allies (38). Instead of a direct crackdown on the organization, Bourguiba initially preferred to resort to a divide and rule strategy by encouraging scissions within the leadership of the party while co-opting its most virulent figures: Ben Salah, a major figure of the union, was thus named Secretary of State for Social Affairs (Alexander 2010, 38). As observed by the author, a mix of personalized politics, based on encouraging competition between strong personalities, and co-optation quickly became the basis of Bourguiba's management style (40). Alexander (2010) adds that serendipity in the form of the death of a number of opponents as well as a failed Youssefist plot to assassinate him allowed Bourguiba to push for a new constitution in 1959

[22] The symbiotic relationship between the left and Tunisia's first president reached its peak when Ferhat Hached, head of the UGTT was asked to lead the nationalist movement by Bourguiba when the latter was arrested in 1952 (Alexander 2010, 32).

[23] To secure the UGTT's support during the tumultuous first post-independence years, Bourguiba approved the nationalization of major local industries, implemented a centralized economic program while pushing for a land reform plan that would see the creation of agricultural cooperatives (Alexander 2010, 38).

that gave the presidency significant powers while putting severe checks on individual and collective freedoms and liberties (Alexander 2010, 41).

With the failure of the socialist policies implemented after the independence becoming increasingly clear in the 1960s and 1970s, Bourguiba initiated an ambitious liberalization program aimed at addressing the economic challenges faced by the country (43). The economic reform encouraged by the president directly clashed with the interest of the union and other leftists interests in the country and made the country's workers' union "the main rallying point of the opposition, and the only serious counter-weight to Bourguiba" (Erdle 2010, 208).

In January 1978, tension between the presidency and the UGTT reached a peak. Following a number of attacks made on their office unions by the authorities, the workers union called for a general strike. Bourguiba's reaction was particularly brutal. On January 25th, the president sent hundreds of troops to the union's offices and declared a state of emergency (Rollinde 1999, 113). However, in line with Alexander (2010), it is important to note that despite the fact that the faceoff between the UGTT and the presidency was violently crushed by the police,[24] the leadership of the UGTT remained the *de facto* regulator of negotiations between the president and the leftist groups in the country (Alexander 2010, 46).

Thus, the fight between leftist groups (including the UGTT) and the presidency during the 1970s became the blue print of the way the government was to manage social unrest in the future. As highlighted by Alexander (2010),

[24] Security forces left 200 people dead and 1000 wounded (Alexander 2010, 47).

the president tried to address demands made in university campuses and factories by including the co-opted leadership of the UGTT in a broad national discussion in which the leadership of the union was supposed to "secure social peace" (Alexander 2010, 47).

Even if the president invested heavily in the country's infrastructures and social programs, the economic situation of the newly independent remained particularly fragile. By the early 1980s, the author notes that difficult economic conditions were once again fueling social unrest in the country, which forced the president to put the leadership of the UGTT at the heart of the negotiations between the government and leftist groups (Alexander 2010, 49). Even if the government waged a second violent crackdown against the union in 1984 by occupying the union's main offices and jailing a number of its leaders (50), rising challenges stemming from newly organized Islamic groups such as the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) forced the presidency to accommodate once again the leadership of the union. In the official discourse, the UGTT was officially portrayed as a counterbalance to the Islamists of the Nahda movement and a major partner for the reform of the economy (Erdle 2010, 209).

Following Bourguiba's impeachment, Erdle (2010) notes that Ben Ali pursued his predecessor's attempts to weaken the union by staffing the higher echelons of national executive board with pro-government figures (210). The author also observes that given the somewhat democratic nature of the election process within the union, the staffing was made through a combination of coercive and non-coercive measures ranging from election rigging and the

expulsion of critics, to increases in state subsidies in order to allow pro-government figures to stay in power (210). The latter proved particularly pivotal: by granting the top-echelon members of the union with privileged access to state rent, the government nurtured what Erdle (2010) calls "the clientelization" of the rank and file members of the organization who became increasingly dependent of its access to state rent (210).

Despite all the divisions orchestrated by the regime (both under Bourguiba and Ben Ali) and the co-optation of generations of top leaders, Erdle (2010) adds that the organization (notably its grassroots membership) was able to maintain not only a level of ideological vitality [25] but also partial organizational autonomy (208) that proved crucial in the early weeks of the 2010/2011 revolution [26]. Indeed, despite the regime's attacks against the independence of the union, continuous pressure from the basis of the organization allowed for the continuation of a relatively democratic tradition within the union, which permitted the regular election of oppositional figures at all levels of the organization (Erdle 2010, 212). As illustrated by Erdle (2010), the UGTT's 2002 extraordinary congress is a case in point. While a number of pro-regime incumbent members of the leadership were re-elected, a minority of opposition figures also won a number of seats that gave birth to a divided leadership made both of long-time cronies of the regime, such as Abdessalem Jerad (head of the union), and truly oppositional figures (Erdle 2010, 212).

[25] The first Gulf war gave the UGTT the opportunity to organize massive public demonstrations denouncing Western intervention in Iraq (Perkins 2004, 192).

[26] Even under the leadership of Isamïl Sahbani (the UGTT's most pro-regime general-secretary) between 1989 and 2000, dissident figures kept pressuring the leadership in order to have a real representation with the executive circles of the organization (Erdle 2010).

With the arrival of Abdessalem Jerad in 2000, the national leadership of the UGTT was stuck between the intransigence of the regime and the activism of rank-and-file members who were pushing for change within the country (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012). The pluralist nature of the leadership combined with constant pressure from rank and file members forced the leadership of the union to adopt a delicate balancing act throughout the 2000s. While the union's top executives were careful not to provoke the president, Erdle (2010) notes that the union's officials did manage to voice criticism of the liberalization policies conducted by the regime while establishing a number of contacts with the opposition (Erdle 2010, 213).

As it will be shown later in this chapter, the frontal involvement of the regional unions in the protest activities in the last week of December 2010 made the leadership of the UGTT realize that its survival was dependent on its support to the actions made by its regional satellites (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012). The next section of this chapter will show how rank and file members of the union were fully involved in the popular protests later in 2011 while the executive members of the UGTT (who desired to join the winning side but were uncertain of which result would be most probable) played a sophisticated ambiguous game in order to maintain plausible deniability until the very last moment.

Finally, it is important to note that other organizations such as the Tunisian Women's Association for Democracy, the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) did also voice criticism against Ben Ali's regime (Demers cited

in Garon 2003, ix) and were actively involved in the events that led to the departure of the president in 2011. Their elitist membership, however, and their lack of social entrenchment in the population prevented them from playing a major role in the fall of the regime. More significant perhaps is the conspicuous absence of the Islamists, ('the dog that didn't bark')[27] during the 2010/2011 revolution, which illustrates the terrible efficacy of Ben Ali's repression campaign led against religious movements between 1991 and 2010.

Unions and Lawyers: Bridging the Popular Divide

Interestingly, when asked about the most important actors of the Tunisian revolution, virtually all interviewees underlined the central role played by the regional representations of the UGTT. For Amel Bejaoui, a senior journalist at the official Tunisia Press agency:

> "local unions are the ones who accompanied street protests throughout the country. They took risks, spread information and supported [popular] mobilization." (A. Bejaoui, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)

Militants from the parts of the country most hit by police violence in 2010 and 2011 also emphasize the role of the unions. Shiheb Mihoub, a 27 year-old unemployed man from Sidi-Bouzid noted:

> "(…) unions charged the youth with energy. They provided us with advice and encouragement while supporting us with daily protests (…) their message was: 'go ahead. Do what you need to do and we'll help you if you need to.'" (S. Mihoub, personal interview, March 8th, 2012)

[27] Expression borrowed from McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001, 117).

Other interviews also highlighted the central role played by regional unions' members (specifically ones in the Sidi-Bouzid-Kasserine-Gafsa triangle) who supported and organized the first protests despite initial resistance from the central union. As emphasized by a UGTT senior official:

> "In Sidi-Bouzid, the first protests following the death of Bouazizi were organized and managed by local union members who actively sought to transform the incident from a personal tragedy into a political issue.'" (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012)

Indeed, it is clear that union members from Sidi Bouzid actively inflated the Bouazizi incident (T. Al-Hani, personal interview, March 8th, 2012). For Dhari Naceur, a 51-year-old member of the primary education union of Sidi-Bouzid:

> "The revolution was not spontaneous. It was actively exported by union members, lawyers and other members of the opposition to the neighboring governorates." (D. Naceur, personal interview, March 8th, 2012)

In particular, it was the local union members who accompanied Mohamed Bouazizi to the hospital,[28] contacted their colleagues in neighboring towns and villages and organized the first protest in front of the medical establishment where the severely burnt young man was being treated. The buildings where the regional representations of the union were located served as a departure point for the daily marches organized by union members (A. Homri, personal interview, January 24th, 2012). It was a Sidi-Bouzid union member who made the first speech in front of Bouazizi's suicide location, calling the crowd to "get rid of the fear in [their] hearts" (D. Naceur, personal interview, March 8th,

[28] The union members who accompanied Bouazizi to the hospital were Dhari Naceur (who incidentally raised the first political slogan in front of the crowd gathered in the town's central place), Attiya Athmouni, and Bahar Omari (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23, 2012

2012). His speech, which was filmed and widely broadcasted by Al-Jazeera and other channels in the following days, signaled the beginning of the popular insurrection in the center of the country.

Local workers were also the ones who capitalized on existing linkages with a number of national and international media outlets (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012) to nourish the informational cascade that was being created by police violence in the center of the country[29]. Not only did they contact a number of traditionally sympathetic radios such as Radio Kalima and Monte-Carlo, but they also reached out to the foreign correspondents of major satellite channels such as Al-Jazeera and France 24.[30] Union members were also the ones to take the initiative to mobilize on the Internet by filming and posting pictures and videos of the events and transmitting them to local and international journalists.

Although the role of the top executives of the union remained ambiguous until the very last moment,[31] the UGTT leadership quickly issued a number of statements denouncing the actions of the government in the center of the country (see Annex 1). The increasing tension, however, between the regional unions and the security services in the last week of December 2010 forced the leadership of the UGTT to take more concrete actions. In particular, the executive bureau realized that its survival was dependent on the support it

[29] Regarding the precise role played by the media and new digital means of communication, please refer to chapter 6.
[30] Atiiya Athmouni, a union member from Sidi-Bouzid, took the initiative to contact Al-Jazeera in Doha (A. Saadaoui, personal interview, January 25, 2012).
[31] It is also interesting to note that twenty-four hours only before his departure, Ben Ali still had hope that the leadership of the UGTT was going to be able to contain the events in the country as evidenced by his meeting with the Union's secretary general on January 13th.

was willing to provide to the regional actors who were involved in frontal confrontation with the security services (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012). The decision to start a string of revolving regional strikes seemed like the mid-solution for the top executives of the union who were able to satisfy the rank and file members mobilizing in the streets while avoiding to break-up abruptly with the regime by calling for a national general strike (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23, 2012).[32]

As emphasized by Schmitter and O'Donnell (1986) increasing hostilities between a regime and the opposition eventually force soft-liners/intermediate actors to side with the opposition when they realize that the two possible scenarios lead to the same outcome: the regime will be able to crush the opposition in which case the soft-liners *rapprochement* with the opposition will be punished anyways or the opposition forces will win in which case they better stick with the latter (24-5). The choice of revolving regional strikes proved decisive. The succession of strikes sent a strong and continuous message to the general population showing that the political situation in the country was out of the ordinary and that the country's movers and shakers were increasingly siding with the rioters. The regional strikes culminated in January 12th, 2011 when 80,000 protesters rallied around the UGTT in the city of Sfax (the country's second most important city) to denounce the violence of the

[32] The regime did not use its full repressive capacity against union members at first because they did not want to put the top-leadership of the union in an unbearable situation. In this perspective, regional union members in the Gafsa-Kasserine-Sidi-Bouzid triangle took advantage of their relative immunity to organize and export the protests in the rest of the country (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23, 2012).

crackdown instigated by the state. Many interviewees mentioned the symbolic impact of the general strike in Sfax as an important turning point. Beyond the exceptional attendance, the union-led event also encouraged other social groups to take an active stance against the regime. For a high-ranking UGTT official, the unexpected participation of "capitalists" (business owners) concretely signaled the universality of discontent in the country's second largest city (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012). For Abdelkarim Benabdallah, a 30-year-old Tunisian blogger "the strikes of the UGTT in Sfax, Souss, and Tunis played a major role" (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). For another Tunisian cyber-activist, "the UGTT protest in Sfax signaled to the arrogant North that there was no backing out" (M. Khadraoui, personal interview, March 30th, 2012). The two previous statements were shared by Dr. Hayoun Moez, Chief of Staff in the post-revolutionary government for whom "the protests in the city of Sfax sent a very big signal to the rest of the country" (H. Moez, personal interview, February 28th, 2012).

For their part, lawyers, acting independently, or as part of the bar association also proved to be critical in the few weeks preceding Ben Ali's departure. In Sidi-Bouzid, the majority of the local lawyers were members of the ruling RCD party (C. Tabib, personal interview, February 14, 2012 and A. Kilani, personal interview, February 28th, 2012). The involvement of those RCD lawyers, who quickly congregated near the location of Bouazizi's immolation moments after his death, sent a strong signal to the rest of the population and allowed for a successful informational cascade to occur.

A case in point about the importance of the lawyers' involvement in the early hours of the revolution is the role played by Khaled Aouaïnia, a respected lawyer from Sidi-Bouzid known for his defense of political prisoners such as militants arrested during the 2008 events in Gafsa, Islamic militants accused of terrorism and students. Less than a day after the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, Aouaïnia gave a public speech on the incident and was credited by many (including high-ranking members of the UGTT, the head of the Tunisian bar association and young rioters in Sidi Bouzid) as the one person who truly politicized an event that could have remained under the radar. Using his stature as a major legal figure in the city, he addressed the crowd that was gathered around the governorate where young Bouazizi lit himself on fire and publically criticized the government (K. Aouaïnia, personal interview, January 26th, 2012). Khaled's speech sent a clear signal to the rest of the population: Families and friends of the victim were not alone; they could go ahead and voice their grievances. His speech also highlighted the fact that the various demands made by the local protestors were justified and that they could count on the support of the lawyers associations if need be (C. Mihoub, personal interview, March 8th, 2012).

In addition to their direct involvement in the revolution, lawyers also used their institutional stature to pressure the government and try to limit the degree of violence used by the regime on the streets. At different points during the Tunisian revolution, local lawyers contacted the head of the bar association who then asked the presidency to stop the shootings (D. Mourou, personal

interview, February 9th, 2012). During the worst days of the revolution, militants regularly sought refuge from police violence inside the local tribunals (notably in Kasserine) while lawyers in Sidi-Bouzid (but also everywhere else in the country) formed human chains in front of local tribunals to protest against police violence (D. Mourou, personal interview, February 9th, 2012). Protesters also naturally turned towards local lawyers to seek legal advice and/or try to retrieve relatives arrested by the authorities (D. Mourou, personal interview, February 9th, 2012). As noted by Lina Ben Mhenni, a prominent 28 year old cyber-activist:

> "Lawyers gave legal advice to digital activists who were attempting to organize protests while leaking videos from areas where the latter were not allowed to enter." (L. Ben Mhenni, personal interview, January 19th, 2012)

Finally, coordination between the unions and the bar association was also important. Union members officially supported protests organized by the lawyers and denounced regime violence against them (see official statement of support issued by the General Union for Secondary Education in favor of the bar association dated on December 31st, 2010 – Annex 1) while lawyers provided union members with legal and administrative support throughout the three weeks of protest.

A Tale of Two Cities: Comparing Sidi-Bouzid and Monastir

The death of Abdesslam Trimech deeply shook the city as evidenced by the notoriety of the street vendor within the town's population. During my fieldwork in Monastir, wide ranges of interviewees (taxi drivers, doctors,

bloggers) were all familiar with the details of his tragic death and the subsequent events in the city. As in Sidi-Bouzid, a local informational cascade was created by the massive and unexpected influx of police agents that immediately followed the first popular gathering around the location of Abdesslam's self-immolation. As clearly explained by one UGTT interviewee:

> "(…) all of Tunisia's policemen flocked into the city. The unusual concentration of security forces signaled to the population that something special was occurring." (B. Ben Ahmed, personal interview, March 5th, 2010)

Yet, despite the striking similarities between the immolation of Trimech and Bouazizi, union members in Monastir had no difficulty explaining the fact that the revolutionary spark of the 2010/2011 events did not originate from their city. They usually explicate the lack of mobilization in Monastir by the "calmer nature of the inhabitants of the Sahel region" (personal interview, March 5th, 2012) or by the fact that the city (which benefits from tourism and industrial facilities) is better off than Sidi-Bouzid, Kasserine, or Gafsa, the three cities of the interior where the revolution first took hold. Both explanations, however, fail to explain the early termination of Trimech's informational cascade. While, the historical coastal town is indeed richer than the cities on the interior, local inhabitants shared the same grievances and frustrations than the rest of the Tunisian population. During the 2010/2011 revolutionary events, the city lost seven to ten people. It was a toll comparatively higher than the one in traditionally restive cities with similar populations such as Jendouba or El Kef that witnessed respectively five and seven deaths during the three weeks preceding the departure of Ben Ali (see Annex 2 for complete list of casualties

by region). The alleged "calmer" or "richer" character of the population also does not explain why thousands of angry inhabitants congregated on March 11th during Abdesslam Trimech's funeral. This unprecedented mobilization for a poor street vendor clearly illustrates the fact that the local population in Monastir was as frustrated with the regime as the rest of the population was. Finally, it is worth mentioning that even before the final year of the Ben Ali's regime, Monastir also witnessed popular riots in the past notably in 1996 when local youth rioted following the murder of a young man beat to death by the security services (Garon 2003, 115).

If cultural and/or economic arguments do not explain the failure of Monastir's 2011 informational cascade, what does? The vice-general secretary of the Monastir union came up with a series of excuses by putting the blame on the security services who "invaded the city" between March 3rd and 11th – without considering for a second that the same police forces did not impede their colleagues in Sidi-Bouzid from mobilizing– and even went as far as presenting perfunctory excuses such as the lack of official authorizations (B. Ben Ahmed, personal interview, March 5th, 2010).

Further interviewing however showed that the decision not to mobilize was consciously taken by the UGTT leaders who negatively assessed the consequences of mobilization.[33] As emphasized by one member of the syndicate, "Monastir is a touristic and industrial city with many foreign investors (…) we

[33] Rank and file members from activist unions such as Sidi-Bouzid or Sfax also highlight the links between the regional union in Monastir and the regime (D. Naceur, T. Al-Hani, personal interview, March 8, 2012). Monastir union was single pointed as the only one who did not mobilize during the revolution (D. Naceur, personal interview March 8, 2012).

[the UGTT regional union in Monastir] needed to safeguard those investments. (B. Ben Ahmed, personal interview, March 5th, 2012)". The same union member added that following the immolation of Abdesslam Trimech:

> "(…) the union was attempting to preserve the 'atmosphere' of the city so there would be no revolution like the one we just had. The union wanted to preserve the *social gains,*[34] because this city is a touristic area, where tourism is really important (…). The role of the union needed to be smart and political in order to maintain the reputation of the country and the union (…) the union dealt with the situation in an intelligent, calm, and diplomatic fashion so the city wouldn't spiral down into chaos." (B. Ben Ahmed, personal interview, March 5th, 2012)

It is thus rather clear that the UGTT in Monastir did not want to mobilize because they perceived that the results that may stem out of a confrontation with the authorities would not immediately serve their interests. Even after the revolution, various members of the union had no difficulty confessing that they just wanted to protect the economic advantages obtained in the past. Instead of encouraging mobilization, contacting the media, or their colleagues in neighboring cities, the union consciously decided not to escalate the situation. As emphasized by the father of Abdesslam Trimech, union members who came to pay they respects during his son's funerals:

> "(…) did not do anything. They came to pay their respects but were really defending the RCD. They were there as watchmen of the regime. They were guarding us." (F. Trimech, personal interview, March 5th, 2012)

[34] The head of the regional union in Sidi-Bouzid used almost the exact same words when attempting to explain Monastir's union lack of mobilization by saying that "[the UGTT in Monastir] tried to defend the status-quo as well as the [city's] social gains (T. El-Hani, personal interview, March 8th, 2012)".

For the leadership of the union however, even if the population of the city was deeply dissatisfied with the regime:

> "(…) the UGTT [in Monastir] had to maintain the special atmosphere of the country and preserve tourism. The union was also trying to protect Tunisia's international reputation as well the reputation of its workers." (B. Ben Ahmed, personal interview, March 5th, 2012)

One final element that may explain the failure of the informational cascade in Monastir is the relatively timid showing of local lawyers. Although many lawyers from the opposition mobilized on an individual basis around Abdesslam's death, in the absence of the leadership of the local union, these lawyers were in effect forced to remain isolated. In this perspective, it seems that for an informational cascade to succeed the way it did in Sidi-Bouzid, the involvement of lawyers needs to be complemented by the support of a more mass-based organization. However, it is worth mentioning that when popular mobilization following the death of Bouazizi reached Monastir later that year, those same lawyers raised pictures of Abdesslam Trimech in order to symbolically link the two events. In this perspective, the involvement of lawyers in the Tunisia revolution seems more like a necessary but not sufficient condition.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that informational cascades need to be nourished by intermediate actors who identify a specific opportunity for contestation and use their stature to reach the rest of the population. These

moderate actors create a "subjective sentiments of collective efficacy (Kurzman 1996, 153)" that break the local cognitive bias about the seeming ludicrousness of mobilization against the government and push citizen to take the streets.

The early abandonment of the informational cascade that followed Abdesslam's death in Monastir is due to the refusal of local intermediate actors (most notably the UGTT) to capitalize on that particular event and "export it" to the rest of the country. Similarly, the success of the informational cascade in Sidi Bouzid is due in large part to the involvement of those same intermediate actors who did all they could to politicize the self-immolation of Bouazizi, alert local and international media and spread the sense of frustration to the rest of the country.

As it will be detailed in chapter four, the involvement of those intermediate actors helped create a national informational cascade that signaled to the rest of the population that whatever personal frustrations they may have had with the regime were actually shared by the rest of the population. Police violence and unexpected national and international media coverage of the events further indicated to the rest of the population the presence of a historical opportunity for contestation.

The next chapter will built the failed mobilization of the Algerian CNCD in January 2011 and the semi-failed mobilization in Kabylia in 2001 to show that the lack of involvement of intermediate actors explains the interruption of informational cascades in the two cases.

Chapter Three: Algeria's Failed Mobilization

"Mobilization failed because [we] the youth and the elite did not get together (B.R. personal interview, April 27, 2012)".

In April 2001, the brutal death of a young Berber student at the hand of the local gendarmerie in the Algerian village of Beni-Douala led to weeks of rioting in the Kabylia region, one hundred casualties, and the development of a strong popular protest movement which culminated in a mass demonstration on June 14th when more than one million people congregated to express their dissatisfaction with the regime (International Crisis Group 2003). Despite their historic character, however, the 2001 protests remained roughly circumscribed to the Kabylia region and did not spread to the rest of the country. Ten years later, increases in the price of stable products triggered ten days of violent riots between January 4th and 15th, 2011 which claimed three lives and hundreds of arrests (RFI 2011). The concomitant revolutionary events in Tunisia and the departure of President Ben Ali encouraged a number of local personalities to create a loose coalition of pro-democracy activists called the CNCD (Coordination Nationale pour le Changement et la Démocratie), which then vainly attempted to exploit the events and induce a mass protest movement against the authorities. Both the popular riots of January 2011, and the

subsequent peaceful demonstration organized by the CNCD failed to generate mass social mobilization.

This chapter compares the national riots/CNCD protests of January 2011 (where social mobilization was a complete failure) to the 2001 riots in Kabylia (where social mobilization succeeded at the regional level but failed at the national one) to show that the non-involvement of national intermediate actors hindered social mobilization in 2001 and 2011. Contrary to the Tunisian case where respected intermediate actors provided a crucial support network to anti-regime militants while their own involvement sent a clear message to the general population about the presence of a historical opportunity for contestation, their Algerian counterparts remained stubbornly silent. None of the country's most relevant intermediate actors deemed it necessary to bandwagon on the popular riots of January 2011 or the subsequent demonstrations organized by the CNCD. In particular, I argue that the relative strength and cohesion of Algeria's political elite and their success in co-opting a host of actors and coalitions in civil society obstructed popular mobilization.

However, I also argue that intermediate actors did indeed play an important role in popular mobilization at a different historical juncture. Specifically, utilizing the case of the 2001 popular riots in Kabylia this chapter will show that the success of mass mobilization at the regional level in 2001 is the result of the involvement of local Kabyle intermediate actors who used their prestige and networks to galvanize the population. By the same token, the subsequent failure of mobilization to spread to the rest of the country is due to

the absence of national intermediate actors willing to capitalize on the protests initiated in Kabylia.

Unions, Berbers and Islamists: The Cooptation of Algeria's intermediate Actors

Intermediate actors are members of the regime, or actors normally tolerated by it, "with direct or indirect influence on strategic decisions of national relevance" (Werenfels 2007, 4). In regards to Algeria, this definition covers a wide range of civil and military actors whose prerogatives and relationship with each other are not always clear[35] (Marks 2009, 961).

As observed by Werenfels (2007), the core-elite of the Algerian regime is made of a number of generals, bureaucrats, and economic actors such as top executives in state owned enterprises who are in control of key positions within the country's political and military apparatus (57). The relationship between the military leaders and FLN bureaucrats who compose the Algerian deep state are complex: different factions, based on complex regional and economic interests which sometime date back to the war of liberation (2), compete for access to the state's rent distribution channels. The rivalry within the country's core elite reached its peak in the late eighties when reformists of the regime were able to successfully impose the liberalization of the country.

[35] Political and economic policy is the result of a complex (and often) obscure bargaining between a network of "décideurs" described by George Joffé (2009) as a "parasitic rent-seeking elite, preying mainly on the import trade, forming a kind of mafia that infiltrates political institutions. (…) Individuals within groups act as representatives of separate group interests within state institutions, causing faction-fighting that blocks the normal administrative pathways, although the different groups coalesce if their collective interests are threatened" (944).

The second circle is comprised of a number of interest groups traditionally affiliated with the regime that have the ability to influence policy or veto governmental decisions, the most important of which are the national Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA), the ruling party's numerous satellites, as well as religious and ethnically based parties and organizations.

The two million strong UGTA is the most powerful workers' organization in the country and the exclusive interlocutor of the government on many issues (Werenfels 2007, 66). Although the workers' organization does dissent at times with the government on issues that touch its core interests (such as the liberalization of the hydrocarbon sector unsuccessfully introduced by Bouteflika in 2002 or other liberalization policies spearheaded by the government in the nineties), it has always remained strongly supportive of the regime (Werenfels 2007, 66-7). As noted by Werenfels (2007), the alliance between the workers' union and the core-elite increased during the civil war when Islamic militants targeted the leadership of the union. The few moments of tension between the regime and the UGTA (notably in 2002) should not be seen as evidence of the nonalignment of the organization but really as illustrations of the internal political bargaining/balancing occurring *within* the regime (Werenfels 2007, 37).

While the UGTA has been largely co-opted by the regime, independent workers' unions (or Syndicats Auntonomes) have been able to maintain a relative independence vis-à-vis the state and have some legitimacy with the

population[36]. However, it is important to note that none of the autonomous unions is in favor of regime change and prefer instead a more progressive approach that would see the regime grant them more concessions (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6, 2012). The most important independent unions are the SNAPAP: *Syndicat National des Personnels de l'Administration Publique*, the SATEF: *Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation*, the CLA: *Conseil des Lyçées d'Alger* and, the CNAPEST: *Conseil National Autonome des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Secondaire et Technique*.

Members of the second circle include other influential state-led organizations (usually close to the ruling FLN party), such as the former combatants organization, the *Organisation Nationale des Moudjahidines* (ONM)), the country's national student union, the *Union Nationale des Étudiants Algériens* (UNEA) and the official Women's organization, the *Union Nationale des Femmes Algériennes* (UNFA). These associations serve as state-rent distribution channels as well as venues for social mobility (Werenfels 2007, 36). As observed by Said Arezki (2012), the numerous former combatants' associations for instance, received more than 17 billions dollars (via the Ministry for War Veterans) between 2005 and 2013 (an amount that is three times the amount allocated to nine other ministries) (Arezki 2012).

Regionally based groups and parties are also part of the second circle. The RCD (*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie* or Rally for Culture and Democracy) is a Berber based opposition party tolerated by the authorities,

[36] Or at the very least seem to have generally not compromised themselves with the government.

founded by Saïd Sadi, a controversial[37] Algerian politician and former presidential candidate. As noted by Roberts (2003), the RCD strongly rejects the Arab-Muslim conception of the Algerian state (which is widely accepted in the rest of the country) and calls for a strong form of French inspired secularism that is profoundly alien to the vast majority of Algerians (Roberts 2003, 295). The FFS (*Front des forces socialistes or Socialist Forces Front*) is the other Berber-based political party. Founded by Hocine Aït Ahmed, a historic figure of the Algerian independence movement, the party is based in the opposition but tolerated by the regime. Perhaps Algeria's sole truly Democratic Party, the FFS, is strongly attached to democratic rights and notably the importance of limiting the role of the army (Roberts 2003, 295). Although both the RCD and the FFS have non-Kabyle interests, both parties are largely based in Kabylia and are perceived (rightly or wrongly) as the voice of Kabyle interests (Roberts 2003, 294). In line with Roberts (2003), is also important to note that both parties represent only a fraction of the Algerian electorate and have managed to win less than 6% of the national vote in 1997 for example and just a little bit over the third in their home base in Kabylia (295).

Another influential network is the Kabyle *Coordination*s, which are informal groupings of traditional Berber notables based on ancient tribal structures and re-activated during the 2001 riots in Kabylia (Amrouche 2009, 145). During the Black Spring events, these village-based assemblies nominated delegates who presented a series of demands to the regime such as the departure

[37] Said Sadi, a fierce secular and prominent member of the 'Eradicators', a wide coalition of leaders who advocated the total annihilation of Islamic militants during the civil war. I would like to thank Islam Derradji for making this observation.

of the gendarmerie from the region and the recognition of number of social and political rights. Deeply rooted in their socio-cultural environment, the *Coordinations* were able to successfully coordinate massive social mobilizations in the spring of 2001 the most important of which saw more than one million people mobilize in Algiers in June 14th, 2001 (International Crisis Group 2003, 8).

Religious parties and organizations are another component of the country's elite second circle. Following the civil war, Algeria's Islamists were either co-opted, divided, or militarily subdued. As noted by Werenfels (2007), recognized Islamic movements are split between the MSP (*Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix*) present in the government and the MRN (*Mouvement pour la Réforme Nationale*) in the opposition, and have a "veto power" (Werenfels 2007, 70), particularly on social issues such as the reform of the education or the sale of Alcohol for which they have the ability to mobilize large parts of the population (70). The two parties have largely been co-opted by the regime (Cavatorta and Durac 2011, 36). Similarly, Algeria's traditional religious brotherhoods such as the Tariqa Rahmaniya and the Tariqa Tidjania have always been historically supportive of the regime (in part because of their traditional ideological and religious leanings) (Werenfels 2007, 67). The civil war strengthened the alliance between the country's 1.5 million Sufis[38] (Reuters 2010) and the regime that used the former to counter-balance the influence of Wahhabism in the country. Traditional religious leaders made significant political and economic gains in the last 15 years (Werenfels 2007, 68).

[38] Particularly popular in the rural areas of the country,

Finally, two organizations competing for the defense of Human rights in the country play an important role in the country. The *Ligue Algérienne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme* (LADDH) is an independent organization whose leaders are regularly targeted by the state. Conversely, the similarly named *Ligue Algerienne des Droits de l'Homme* (LADH) is closer to the regime.

The Aborted Cascade of 2011 in Context.

Popular mobilization in Algeria begun in January 5th, 2011 shortly after popular demonstrations started gaining momentum in neighboring Tunisia (Séréni 2012, 8). The violent protests (particularly in the suburbs of the capital) were directed against the high cost of living (*chèreté de la vie*) (B. Benzenin, April 5, 2012). Unrest quickly spread throughout the country and affected even the richest neighborhoods of the capital (Séréni 2012).

Following the departure of President Ben Ali a few days later, a group of Algerian activists attempted to take advantage of the historical window of opportunity created by the succession of popular revolutions in the region to create a new militant structure calling for democratic change named Coordination Nationale pour le Changement Démocratique (CNCD). Hoping to build on the political and socio-economic similarities between Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt to initiate a mass movement that would force the regime to make democratic concessions, the CNCD was loosely led by a small number of activists (notably Kaddour Chouicha, a university professor at the USTO, the honorary president of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights

(LADDH), and a number of other militants) whose goal was to federate the opposition on the one hand, while "breaking the silence in the country" on the other (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012). While some independent workers unions such as the SNAPAP, the CLA, and the SATEF, welcomed the initiative of the CNCD, disagreements over the goals of the movement materialized very quickly and prevented the involvement of other independent organizations such as the CNAPEST (another independent workers union whose leadership refused to join the organization) (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012). Disagreements over the goals[39] of the movement also nourished tensions with other supportive groups such as SOS-Disparus, a vocal NGO representing the families of the numerous victims of state violence in the nineties.

Despite the presence of a historical opportunity for contestation nourished by the unprecedented events in the region, few of the country's intermediate actors mobilized in favor of regime change. With the exception of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights and a number of independent unions, virtually all of the rest of the country's political actors stuck firmly behind the regime. The powerful UGTA, veterans associations, the national student association, women's organizations, local notables and traditional religious leaders all refused to answer the call of the CNDC (Werenfels 2007, 62). Traditionally restive actors such as the Kabyle

[39] "Système Dégage", the main slogan raised by protesters, lacked clarity (B. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5, 2012) "Who" is the system? Who needs to resign? Should it be Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the rather popular president of the country, or the coterie of generals that help him to stay in power?

Coordination and some independent unions also abstained from calling for social mobilization against the regime. Even the most virulent sections of the country's main union (UGTA) such as the railway workers refused to bandwagon on the protests organized by the CNCD. Neither did the numerous (and very vocal) citizen committees (for access to water, or employment for instance) (Y. B. personal interview, April 10, 2012). Thus, groups whose involvement could have initiated an informational cascade remained silent both during the popular riots of the January 5th 2012 and during the rallies organized by the CNCD. With no clear signal from the country' intermediate actors, the general population had no reason to update its private information about the presence of a historical opportunity for political contestation. The 2011 protests remained just one of the numerous acts of protest to which the country was accustomed for the past 15 years.

This political configuration was clear to ordinary Algerians. For Said Oussad, a 40-year-old journalist from Oran, "there is no transmission belt between the population and the state […] if there is no one to frame it, then there is no social mobilization (S. Oussad, personal interview, April 5, 2012)". For Kamel Daoud, a prominent journalist working for *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, the lack of national mobilization in the country is due to the absence of respected actors able to act as transmission belt, an independent civil society, and truly oppositional political parties (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6, 2012).

While the non-involvement of Algeria's intermediate actors is easy to demonstrate, what explains the reluctance of these actors to intervene? The

following section highlights three important factors that all contribute to the passivity of these groups when opportunities for social mobilization arise.

Oil Patronage and the Strategic Calculations of Intermediate Actors.

While revenues from hydrocarbon exports do not explain the multiplication of instances of popular mobilization in Algeria, they do partially explain the reluctance of Algeria's intermediate actors to bandwagon on the protests initiated by the CNCD in January 2011 (and/or during the quasi-concomitant popular riots which occurred in the country between the 5th and the 14th of January 2011). Of course, the link between oil revenues and the persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world has been extensively covered in the literature on the question. Beblawi (1990), Ross (2001), Gause (1995), and Bellin (2005) all sshow that revenues stemming from outside sources allow the state to strengthen its coercive means while nourishing a dense clientlistic system. In regards to the Algerian state, these revenues which increased considerably as of 2003, allowed the regime to multiply the range of existing institutional patron-client relationships (where a privileged access to state rent is exchanged for loyalty) while increasing the repressive ability of the state[40]. More importantly, the successful co-optation of the quasi-totality of the country's intermediate actors crucially prevented their involvement during the highly explosive first two weeks of January 2011. Without intermediate actors able to unify demands and act as a transmission belt with the rest of society, the protests

[40] Increase in oil revenues also allowed the state to consolidate its repressive means. The size of the police forces doubled between 2005 and 2010 (Mokdad 2010).

organized by the CNCD and/or the riots which occurred in the country between the 4th and the 15th January riots could not take a truly national dimension and remained confined to the fringe circles in which they were born (suspicious intellectuals in the case of the CNCD and a lumpen-proletariat of "(…) drunkards and thieves" in the case of the January 2011 riots (Sihem, personal interview, April 16, 2012).

As highlighted by Séréni (2012), revenues from gas and oil (which have reached an estimated 70 billion dollars in 2012):

> "are essentially used to feed a gigantic redistribution policy which showers, approximately everyone. Former combatants, families, gas, electricity and water users, car drivers, public transportation users, farmers, debtors, housing projects tenants, first-owners of a house, retired workers, bankers, entrepreneurs, and many others are subsidized one way or another by the public resources fed by oil revenues" (10).

In 2001 for instance, the country's oil stabilization fund, which is used by the regime to distribute subsidies, was endowed with more 74 billion dollars representing more than one third of the country's GDP (Economist Country Report 2012).

In this perspective, it is interesting to note that clientelism as an impediment to social mobilization was put forward by the data collected from interviewees. For Belkacem Benzenin, a university professor from Oran, clientelism, nourished by oil and gas revenues, buys the silence of elected officials while all of Algeria's "civil society has been cannibalized by the state and is completely infiltrated by the regime" (B. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5th, 2012). For Messaoud Babadji, another university professor from Oran,

mobilization failed because "the state had the means to shower the more virulent groups with money" (M. Babadji, personal interview, April 13th, 2012). Similarly, for Sihem Benzenin, an Algerian graduate student working on Algeria's unions:

> "The Algerian unions did not join the protests in 2010/2011 because they already have what they want. They were already powerful even before the Arab Spring and did not need to shake things up or increase their pressure on the regime. (S. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5th, 2012).

More importantly perhaps, the increase in hydrocarbon revenues, allowed the inclusion of additional actors, specifically regionalist groups and Islamists who could have ultimately threatened the survival of the regime (Werenfels 2007, 5-6). The expansion of the beneficiaries of state rent allowed the state to buy if not the support, but at least the tacit assent of a number of groups (notably the traditional notables, the religious brotherhoods, and the various state-led interest groups such as the former combatants national organization (ONM), the influential national workers' union (UGTA), the country's national student union, (UNEA), the women's associations who all want to benefit from the oil bonanza while it lasts. As noted by Werenfels (2007), a case in point of the strategy of inclusion of potentially disruptive groups adopted by the regime is the number of officially recognized war veterans in the country which increased from 24,000 in 1962 to a whopping 420,000 in 1999 (Werenfels 2007, 67).

Thus, immediately following the 2011 January 5-14 riots, during which thousands of youth rioted across the country to protest the increase in the price

of sugar and oil, the government (via the Ministry of Commerce) was able to react very quickly by cancelling the price increase in staple products (B. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5th, 2012), increasing salaries in the public sector and promising new state-subsidized loans for the country's youth. In this perspective, the regime had no difficulty answering many of the demands made by protesters. State transfers reached 15 billion Euros in 2012 with almost 3 billion Euros of subventions for staple products (Dris-Aït Hamadouche 2012, 62). As summarized by a prominent Algerian journalist "if people want access to water, the state installs it. If people want a new road, the state builds it (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012)". In some instances of popular protests, disgruntled citizens received even more[41] of what they have asked for originally (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012).

It thus seems clear that contrary to the Tunisian case where the powerful UGTT got frontally involved against the regime during the December 2010-January 2011 events, the rent-nourished absence of respected actors, whose involvement could have sent a clear signal to the rest of the population, prevented in part the development of local informational cascade and subsequent national mobilization.

However, oil revenue was not the only factor behind the reluctance of Algeria's intermediate actors to mobilize. The civil conflict of the nineties also weighed in the strategic calculations made by the country's most important political actors.

[41] Ironically, the Algerian state has so much money it has been distributing too much of it. A report by the IMF underlined the fact that Algeria's expansionist policy is not without danger (Loko, Kpodar and Diallo 2007**)**

The Trauma of Civil War and Political Disengagement

Far from creating a national trauma[42] that would have supposedly prevented Algerians from engaging in mass social mobilization as argued by some analysts of North African politics such as Bellin (2005), Thorne (2012), and the Economist Country Report (2012), the link between the civil war and the absence of national mobilization in 2011 (but also the major riots of 2001) should be read through the way it affected the nature and the calculations of the country's intermediate actors. Indeed, the civil war had three important consequences that prevented the mobilization of Algeria's intermediate actors.

First, the Algerian conflict led to the physical elimination (or exile) of an entire generation of consensual public figures whose absence is still deeply felt in the country ten years after the end of the civil war. There is little doubt that a key factor that explains the lack of mobilization from the country's intermediate actors is the fact that a significant number of local activists who could have acted as consensual figures at the national level and/or framed social mobilization were killed or went into exile during the country's civil war. Indeed, while the country's civil society is relatively active, it has never recovered from the assassinations that decimated its most illustrious members in the nineties and the wave of exiles that occurred in reaction to those killings (K.

[42] The psychological traumatic effect of the Algerian civil war does not explain the lack of national mobilization in the country in 2011. The very violent war of liberation against France that the country experienced in the fifties and early sixties did not impede Algerians from killing each other in the sixties and then again during the civil war (I owe this observation to Pr. Mohamed Mebtoul). In addition, it is worth noting that similar traumatic experiences in other Arab countries such as Syria in relation to the Hama massacre did not prevent the population from mobilizing.

Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012). The void left by the murder of prominent cultural or media personalities such as Abdelkader Alloula (a respected theatre figure), Cheb Hasni (to this day one of the Maghreb's most popular Rai music artists) or journalists (M. Babadji, personal interview, April 13th, 2012) such as Said Mekbel the Editor in Chief of Le Matin (Gèze 2008), is still deeply felt by the country's population. The country is thus left with very few consensual figures such as Talib Ibrahimi (a moderately religious nationalist who ran against President Bouteflika in 1999) who could use their stature to mobilize the population (Graïne 2004 and I. Derradji, personal interview, October 1st, 2012). [43]

Thus, many interviewees mentioned the absence of consensual figures able to translate popular dissatisfaction into social mobilization as one of the explanations behind the failure of the 2011 events. For a young artist who wished to remain anonymous:

> "the January 6, 2011 protests failed to reach a national dimension because the youth and the elite failed to connect. While the two groups acted together in 1988 [during the massive popular which forced President Bendjedid to initiate the liberalization of the country], this was not the case in 2011" (B.R. personal interview, April 27th , 2012).

Similarly for Kamel Daoud, a prominent journalist in the country:

> "because of the complete lack of credible social and political personalities**,** the demands expressed during the numerous acts of defiance against the state cannot not be federated" (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012).

[43] In this perspective, it is interesting to note that Talib Ibrahimi did not deem it useful to mobilize in favour of the CNCD in 2011 (I. Derradji, personal interview, October 1st, 2012).

Second, the decline of the soft-liners and the consolidation of the elite in the nineties also explains the absence of mobilization in 2011. As noted by Werenfels (2007), the democratic opening that followed the introduction of the 1989 constitution had important effects on Algeria's elites by allowing the formal inclusion of a number of groups previously kept outside of the country's first decision-making circle. While the Islamic FIS and Berber based political parties were the most important winners of the political liberalization of the late eighties, the new constitution also allowed the re-inclusion of ex-members of the elite who have been sidetracked in the two decades following the independence of the country (Werenfels 2007, 43). Although marginal, these actors had an important nuisance effect and could have potentially served as a transmission belt in 2011. As rightly pointed out by the author, the actors who were formally included in the political game following the opening of 1989 were able to preserve their influence in the following decades (44).

Indeed, Werenfels (2007) shows for instance that instead of widening the existing pre-1989 intra-elite divisions, the civil war and the increase in rent revenue as of the early 2000s reduced the intensity of the rivalries between the different factions while allowing the inclusion of new actors. In essence, not only did the civil war diminish the intensity of the existing divisions between the country's elite but it also forced the traditional elite to offer some space to new actors notably the Kabylia regionalist groups and moderate Islamists (Werenfels 2007, 3).

While Algeria's elites were deeply divided in the eighties (and still are today), the victory of the FIS during the elections of 1990 and their virulent criticism of the military apparatus forced those bitterly divided elite to agree at least on one element: their common survival (Derradji 2010). As illustrated by Schmitter and O'Donnell (1986), periods of political liberalization need a clear agreement between the reformist members of the regime and the opposition who both need to agree on a minimum level of common post-liberalization "vital interests" (37).[44] In Algeria, such an agreement could never be concluded when the liberalization of the country was initiated in the late eighties. As observed by Derradji (2010), the violence of the civil war and the virulence of the Islamic party FIS forced previously competing factions within the Algerian regime to unite in the face of a perceived common Islamic threat (Derradji 2011). While a hard-liners/soft-liner divide was clear at the end of the eighties and led to the country's first free and fair elections, the rise of Islamists combined with the rhetorical violence of the leaders of the FIS who promised to cancel the constitution and punish those who were responsible of the poor state of the country (read the generals) forced the soft-liners to side with the hard-liners of the regime in order to guarantee their physical survival (Derradji 2011). This common agreement reached in the beginning of the nineties survived the civil war and diminished the intensity of the existing fault lines within the country's movers-and-shakers. Soft-liners that could have mobilized in 2001 and 2011 respected the deal concluded with the hard liners of the regime during the civil war and did not undermine their former rivals (Derradji 2011).

[44]Quote cited in Werenfels (2007, 13).

Finally, the end of the war in 2001 marked the cementing of an inter-elite economic consensus that no one wanted to break again in 2011. As argued by a number of authors such as Werenfels (2007, 49) and Martinez (2000, 119), the civil war should be conceived as a big bargain over economic issues (even more so than ideological ones) and whose result was the creation of new economic status quo where all involved actors (including Islamists) won something. The win-win scenario was made possible by the sudden availability of new economic opportunities induced by the privatization of state companies, the deregulation of food products sale (Martinez 2000, 119 and Werenfels 2007, 49) and as of 2003, an increase in state-revenues thanks to rising international commodities prices. In this perspective, the inter-elite economic consensus achieved after the end of the civil-war made the country's intermediate actors ignore the different opportunities for social mobilization that were occurring in the country in the last decade (the most important of which were the Black spring of 2001 and the political momentum induced by the departure of Presidents Ben Ali and Mubarak in early 2011).

In summary, the civil war had three important effects on the country's intermediate actors. While most of the country intellectuals or genuine political mobilizers were killed in the nineties or forced to go into exile (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012) those who remained were unwilling to act as a transmission belt because most of them have seen their economic and political status consolidated during and after the civil war.

State Cooptation and the CNCD's Lack of Legitimacy

Finally, one last factor that explains the failure of the 2011 informational cascade in Algeria is the CNCD's lack of legitimacy. While the majority of the country's intermediate actors stood firmly behind the regime, the few remaining actors who decided to take advantage of the momentum created by the unprecedented revolutionary events in neighboring countries did not have the characteristics necessary to create an informational cascade. As shown by Lohmann (1994) in relation to the 1989 protests in Eastern Germany, the nature of the early mobilizers who get involved in the very early stages of social mobilization is crucial for the development of successful informational cascades. In particular, Lohmann argues that mobilization by moderates has a higher signaling effect than mobilization by extremists. Indeed, Lohmann (1994) showed that whereas the average citizen does not usually relate to actions taken by unconventional individuals, that same citizen is highly sensitive to protest actions initiated by similar moderate individuals or prestigious actors within his community and is much more willing to bandwagon on protest activities (54-55, 64) [45].

In this perspective, the events that took place in Algeria in early 2011 provide a stunning illustration of the importance of intermediate actors. In particular, the examination of the failed mobilization of early 2011 shows that the lack of credibility of the various actors involved with the CNCD is one of the

[45] Similarly, other scholars interested in herding behavior highlight the importance of the nature of early adopters for the establishment of a trend. Although they disagree on the exact nature of early adopters, Marketing scholars such as Chen (2008) argue that in regards to online purchases for instance, consumers are influenced more by the advice of fellow customers than by those of experts.

main reasons behind the failure of the pro-democracy movement to generate mass mobilization.

Indeed, while the CNCD movement was preparing its first protest, its leaders learned that Said Sadi, the controversial head of the RCD has already organized an independent demonstration at the same time. As clearly expressed by one of its founding members, the leadership of the CNCD felt then that they had no choice but to bandwagon on the initiative taken by the RCD (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012), a decision which later proved to be disastrous for the pro-democracy movement. The junction between the original leaders of the CNCD and the RCD discredited the movement in the eyes of the population. Whatever little credibility the movement could have had in the eyes of the general public in the beginning of January evaporated completely when the CNCD linked up with Said Sadi's very unpopular party. Indeed, not only was the RCD the representative of francophone, fiercely secular (and mostly Berber) groups circles alien to the vast majority of Algerians (Werenfels 2007, 76) but its leader, was a particularly unpopular character known for his links with France[46] and for his heavy support of the most radical/ decisions taken by the military junta during the civil war. After the first joint protest**,** the CNCD was suddenly perceived as a tool of the RCD. As underlined by a militant present in one of the CNCD's early meetings, "for the population, the CNCD is

[46] The RCD was perceived as having foreign support (notably from France) in part because Said Sadi appeared on French television (Y. B. personal interview, April 10, 2012).

marching for the RCD while for the media, the CNCD protests are actually organized by the RCD" (Elias2033UK 2011).[47]

For a member of the CNCD, the involvement of the RCD also broke the unity of the movement. The highjacking of the movement by the RCD led to the immediate withdrawal of the competing FFS (S. Mechri, personal interview, April 29, 2012) while creating major divisions within the CNCD supporters. Members of SOS-Disparus for instance (whose entire raison d'être was to put the light on the whereabouts of their families members kidnapped in the nineties could not march next to Said Sadi, a prominent *éradicateur*[48], who was supportive of the heavy handed methods of the government during the civil war (A. Derradji, personal interview, October 1st, 2012). An excerpt from a Facebook CNCD support page highlights the political dilemma that its members were facing in the beginning of 2011:

> "We are getting divided (…). Some members say that they will not march if Sadi is present. Other members say that they will not march unless Sadi is excluded from the protest!" (cited in Chibani 2011).

Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that for ordinary Algerians, the pro-democracy CNCD movement was seen as nothing but a bunch of conceited francophones who were at best completely disconnected from the population and at worst part of a scheme used by the regime to divert mobilization and identify real opponents. For local militants, the CNCD movement looked like "a group of arrogant morons in red coats who just wanted

[47] I would like to thank Islam Derradji for sharing the link to the video.
[48] *Éradicateurs* refer to the group of personalities and government officials who were in favor of a radical solution against Islamic militants. These officials sought to physically eliminate all of them through whatever means necessary.

to be on Facebook (H. B., personal interview, April 22nd, 2012)". The disconnect between the CNCD and the rest of the population was summarized by a young student from Oran who said

> "CNCD folks are a bunch of fake intellectuals who don't look like us. They say things in French that we don't understand" (B. R. personal interview, April 27th, 2012).

This point was shared by other interviewees such as journalist Amal El Saher for whom, "the general population did not mobilize around the leaders of the CNCD because they [the CNCD] were disconnected with the [social realities of the country] (A. El-Saher, personal interview, April 18th, 2012)" and Islam Derradji, a twenty-five year-old student specialized in Algerian politics; for whom the CNCD leaders were widely perceived as "as opportunists and not real opponents" (I. Derradji, personal interview, October 1st, 2012).

Similarly, many interviewees who seemed genuinely dissatisfied with the regime say that they did not join the CNCD because they knew that the leaders were all "sold-out" to the state.[49] For S. Benkada, ex-mayor of the city of Oran, the failure of the CNCD is due to the fact that the leadership of the movement was "discredited in they eyes of the population" with some major figures involved in the movement clearly "working for the secret services" (S. Benkada, personal interview, April 19th, 2012). This impression was corroborated by the fact that even during the protests, some of the CNCD militants seemed to have a rather strange relationship with the police with whom they were openly talking to in public (Anonymous civil society member, personal interview, April 22nd, 2012). Said Sadi was even seen marching in the

[49] « Vendus » in French.

protests with his personal bodyguards who were official members of the government's security forces (Al-Andaloussi 2011).[50]

In other words, the few actors who did mobilize in January 2011 had no traction with the population. The CNCD was perceived as an elitist movement (high jacked by the highly unpopular RCD) and removed from the concerns of the general population. In particular, the pro-democracy movement was seen as the expression of a minority of francophone, secular, and often Kabyle interests who did not carry any weight within the population.

Finally, once the state answered favorably the limited demands[51] made by the more moderate members of the CNCD, the movement imploded almost immediately (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012). While the most active independent unions (notably the SNAPAP, the CLA, and the SATEF) as well as a number of founding members (including K. Chouicha) considered that their goals were achieved and that mobilization had to be "paused" (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9th, 2012), the more revolutionary militants (now deprived of the (limited) institutional support of the unions and the league) failed to keep up the momentum (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9th, 2012).

[50] Being a former minister, Said Sadi is entitled to official bodyguards.

[51] For K. Chouicha, the CNCD (at large), refused to raise a slogan calling for the end of the regime because they felt that "it was not a good timing (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012).". It is also interesting to note that for him, the CNCD was not a failure because the different goals put forward by the movement were all achieved. Contrary to Tunisia where the main demand expressed by local militants was the departure of the president, the CNCD had far more modest goals, the more important of which were the "liberation of the young militants arrested by the police, the abrogation of the state of emergency, and a return to a normal environment for political freedoms (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012).

In summary, the involvement of the RCD proved to be particularly detrimental to the pro-democracy movement. For Kamel Daoud, the initiatives taken by the CNCD failed to take a major dimension because it was not able to connect with the population and because its perceived leader, Said Sadi, was particularly unpopular (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012). In particular, the regionalist character of the party (heavily rooted in the Kabylia region) as well as the controversial past of his leader (a fierce secular, close to France and who allegedly destroyed a mosque to build his villa (A. Derradji, personal interview, October 1st, 2012) all helped cement the popular impression that the CNCD movement was another twisted creation of the regime whose goal was to identify and punish those who planned on mobilizing against it. In the absence of an involvement of credible intermediate actors, the actions of the CNCD/RCD failed to create a perception of exceptionality that could have led to a successful informational cascade.

Kabylia's Black Spring of 2001 and the Failed Promise of a Revolutionary Cascade

The Determining Role of Regional Actors.

If civil society actors failed to generate popular mobilization during the Arab Spring of 2010, the Berbers of Kabylia also witnessed their attempts at revolution obstructed in 2001 after showing early promise. Indeed, the experience of the Berbers highlights the importance of the involvement of intermediate actors in the early state of informational cascades. The 2001 riots in Kabylia which claimed dozens of lives and lasted seven weeks, demonstrates

that the involvement of intermediate actors at the regional level was key in signaling to the population in Kabylia that an opportunity for protest was possible, and it led to a successful informational cascade at the regional level. However, the non-involvement of the national intermediate actors prematurely ended the powerful informational cascade that was successfully forming in Kabylia.

On April 16th, 2001 an eighteen year-old Berber student named Massinissa Guermah was arrested in the village of Beni-Douala in Kabyla by members of the local gendarmerie, who were investigating an aggression perpetrated few hours prior by a small group of students. While in the custody, the young man was shot by one of the policemen responsible of guarding him and died as a result of his injuries two days later (Alilat 2011, Robert 2003, 292 and Ruedy 2005, 279). The news of his death (which coincided with the anniversary of the 1980 Berber Spring) resonated strongly within the local population, which spontaneously mobilized to denounce the abuse of the local police. Between the 22nd and the 29th of April, daily confrontations between the police and local youth, chanting angry pro-Kabylia slogans, became particularly violent and quickly spread to the rest of the region. By the end of the month, the police had killed more than 38 people and arrested hundreds (ICG 2003, 8 and Ruedy 2005, 279).

In a gesture that will later be replicated by Presidents Ben Ali and Mubarak during the 2011 social unrest in their respective countries, President Bouteflika made a televised speech on April 30th in order to diffuse the tension

that was building in the region during the previous 12 days. As it was the case in Tunisia and Egypt, the televised speech had the opposite effect (Mortimer 2004, 193). The local population received the news about the creation of a commission whose mandate was to examine the roots of the insurrection with a lot of resentment and riots continued spreading in the region (ICG 2003).

After two weeks of spontaneous popular demonstrations, the conflict between the local population and the state took a new dimension with the involvement of *local* intermediate actors, notably the RCD and the FFS (the two Berber based parties in the region), and more importantly, local traditional leaders who were angered by the contempt of the central authorities and the level of state repression in the region. In reaction to the president's speech, Said Sadi's RCD withdrew from the government (where the party held two ministries (Mortimer 2004, 193)) on May 1st while the competing FFS organized a popular demonstration attended by more than 15,000 people on May 3rd (Roberts 2003, 288). On May 5th, new riots erupted in various cities of Greater Kabylia before reaching Lesser Kabylia two days later (Roberts 2003, 288). Fresh riots continued spreading in the region in the following days. By the third week of May, local notables frustrated with regime violence and the failure of the traditional Berber parties to bring about change formed a large coordination of districts locally called Coordination des Arouchs (ICG 2003).

The involvement of the traditional notables as well as a number of independent union workers and local academics (ICG 2003, 16) within the Coordination des Arouchs proved to be a turning point in the level and

dimension of the social mobilization that was occurring in the region. The involvement of local leaders generated a strong signal evidenced by the massive size of the first protests they organized on May 21st, which brought together more than half a million people on May 21st (Roberts 2003, 289). In the following days, families, children, traditional political actors, local notables all got involved in the protests against the regime. On May 24, a group of 10,000 women marched in Tizi-Ouzou (Roberts 2003, 289), another 200,000 marched in Algiers the following week while daily confrontations between the local youth and the police continued to occur in the rest of Kabylia (Roberts 2003, 289). The protests organized by the local intermediate actors culminated on June 14th, when the Coordination des Arouchs organized the biggest rally in Algerian history with more than one million demonstrators congregating in the country's capital (ICG 2003, 13).

In this perspective, the three ingredients necessary for a successful informational cascade were all present in Kabylia in 2001. First, police violence nourished popular reaction in a very important way. As underlined by the state commission mandated by President Bouteflika to investigate the causes of the riots:

> "(…) violence in Kabylia was provoked and kept going by the gendarmes, who repeatedly exceeded their authority and broke their own rules of engagement in firing live rounds at rioters when this could not be justified as "'legitimate self-defense'" (ICG 2003, 9).

Second, the intensity of the popular uprising in Kabylia in 2001 was nourished by the involvement of local intermediate actors whose participation in

the conflict against the regime sent a powerful signal and encouraged ordinary citizens to bandwagon. The involvement of the local parties, notably the FFS and the RCD, but more importantly, of the a new coalition of traditional notables signaled to everyone in Kabylia the presence of a historical opportunity for contestation and allowed for the formation of a successful informational cascade at the regional level. Finally, national and international media coverage also helped nourish the local informational cascade by signaling to everyone the gravity of the situation in late spring 2001. International calls by France, the European Union and the United States also nourished this impression by clearly signaling to the population that the events in the region were extremely serious.

The Reversal of the Information Cascade

Thus, the success of the local informational cascade becomes evident in the magnitude and the length of popular mobilization in the region. Not only were the demonstrations organized by the local notables attract hundreds of thousands people[52] but the violent face-off between the region's youth and the regime lasted seven weeks and led to spectacular concessions from the government, notably the departure of the security forces from the region and the official recognition of the Tamazight language (ICG 2003). Yet, despite the magnitude of popular mobilization, the successful informational cascade in Kabylia in 2001 failed to take a national dimension and trigger social mobilization in the rest of the country. Why is that the case?

Indeed, the previous question in puzzling. As noted by Hugh Roberts

[52] With one million people joining the demonstration, the June 14th rally in Algiers was was the biggest popular protest in Algeria's history (ICG 2003, 13).

(2003), although some of the demands made in 2001 were culturally based in Kabylia, the essence of popular grievances was nourished by the:

> "brutal contempt with which the authorities treat ordinary people and the humiliation heaped upon them. Socio-economic issues such as the lack of jobs and housing – which are also widely seen as expressing the authorities' arrogant indifference towards ordinary people – were quite naturally grafted onto the protest" (293).

For Ahmed Djeddaï, a member of the FFS, "the Kabyles 'have more or less the same demands as everywhere else'" (cited in ICG 2003, 12). Similarly for Le Sueur (2010), "the disturbances in Kabylia were less about Berber identity than about the failure of the government to offer true political reform, and a way out of the chronic economic malaise" (83-4). If demands expressed in Kabylia were universal, why then did the rest of the Algerian population refrain from bandwagoning on the protests?

The following paragraphs will show that the abandonment of the 2001 informational cascade in Algeria is due to the lack of involvement of national intermediate actors who refused to bandwagon on the protests initiated in Kabylia. For students of Algerian politics such as Robert (2003), the 2001 protests failed to reach a national dimension because the parties that mobilized (read the FFS, the RCD, and traditional notables) were essentially Kabyle parties whose call for mobilization was perceived by the rest of Algerians as a call for Kabyle groups only (293). This impression was corroborated by the fact that the RCD and foreign media framed the protests as a cultural struggle which "encouraged other sections of the Algerian population to regard it as a purely Kabyle affair (293)" inhibiting social mobilization and breaking the

informational cascade that was growing. The RCD was also perceived as being close to France and an advocate of a deeply unpopular secularist project; a sentiment nourished by the fact that Kabyls tend to be over-represented in leftist/secular/francophone groups in the country (Ruedy 2005, 240).

In the absence of a national actors willing to act as a transmission belt and able to frame the events in Kabylia as common to all Algerians, the government had all latitude to frame rioters as extremist Berber groups whose demands were foreign to those of ordinary Algerians. In line with the literature on informational cascades (Lohmann 1994), the abortion of the informational cascade in Kabylia is due to the fact that the non-Kabyle population could not identify with the regional intermediate actors who coalesced around the Coordination des Aroushs. The stasis of intermediate actors at the national level crucially nourished this perception. Actors that proved vital in the Tunisian revolution such as the country's main union or the bar association stood firmly behind the Algerian regime and refused to act as transmission belt. For all the reasons described earlier in this chapter, neither the Algerian workers union, nor any of the ruling party's numerous satellites were willing to confront the state. In the absence of national intermediate actors with whom all Algerians could identify, the protests remained largely limited to their birthplace.

In summary, the 2001 Kabylia events provide a striking illustration of the importance of the involvement of intermediate actors for the development of successful informational cascades. The participation of respected local personalities in Kabylia allowed for the development of an informational

cascade at the regional level. Social mobilization originating in Kabylia, however, did not take a national dimension in part because the intermediate actors *outside* of Kabylia refused to get involved.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that the absence of mass mobilization in Algeria in the last decade and the puzzling failure of the 2001 and 2011 demonstrations to spread to the rest of the country is due to the non-involvement of respected intermediate actors whose participation could have sent a clear signal to the population about the presence of an opportunity for contestation and triggered a national protest movement. The non-participation of the local elite is the result of the ambitious redistribution policy implemented by the regime since the end of the civil war (and the serendipitously concomitant increase in the prices of commodities in 2002) as well as the complex legacy of the civil war which allowed for the consolidation of an inter-elite political and economic consensus that no one so far is willing to break. In this regards, this chapter showed that the traditional variables used in the literature on persistent authoritarianism (notably on the effect of rent revenues (see Anderson (1987), Beblawi (1990), Karl (1997), Ross (2001), and Gause (1995)) and the legacy of past conflicts (Bellin (1995)) need to be translated first through the lens of local intermediate actors. Rent revenues and the civil war matter essentially through the way they impact the actions of intermediate actors (by giving them incentives to stick with the regime or to mobilize against it).

This chapter has also confirmed a number of conclusions drawn in the literature on informational cascades by showing that for a signal to be received by the population, the early political mobilizers need to be consensual/respected actors and that this, in turn, is historically and context contingent. Both during 2001 and 2011 riots, those who intervened lacked credibility and did not have the prestige necessary to initiate a successful informational cascade. During the 2001 events in Kabylia, the local intermediate actors who were respected locally were able to generate a successful informational cascade at the regional level but not at the national one because they did not have allies at the national level that could have created a similar dynamic with the rest of the population.

Similarly, the discredited CNCD could not act as transmission belt either. As summarized by a local pro-democracy activist who did not participate in the CNCD organized protests, "the youth flee as soon as they hear about the CNCD (B.R. personal interview, April 27, 2012)". Without the involvement of respected intermediate actors, the January 2011 riots and the subsequent protests organized by the fringe/unpopular CNCD remained irrelevant to the rest of the population.

Chapter Four: Tunisia 2001, Exceptional Times

Q: Why did you call reinforcement after Bouazizi's death [when you didn't have to]?
A: Well, we had to! Folks were abusing us [the police]. They were using the worst possible forms of violence!
Q: What did [the population] do?
A: They threw bananas at us.
Q: Bananas?
A: And apples.

Interview with T. Affi – head of the police union of Sidi-Bouzid[53]

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, mass mobilization in authoritarian settings does not happen accidently. Even if individual citizens are deeply dissatisfied with a specific regime, preference falsification (See Kuran 1991 and Ginkel and Smith 1999, 303) and the absence of independent media make them unsure about the preferences of the rest of the population (Lohmann 1994). Thus, before taking the streets, autonomous frustrated citizens need to receive a signal that forces them to update their private information by realizing that a significant number of other citizens are also dissatisfied and ready to mobilize against the regime. Public acts of protest such as demonstrations, strikes, and self-immolations (Bueno de Mesquita 2010, 446), are examples of spectacular events that help clueless citizen overcome their informational

[53] T. Affi, personal interview, March 9, 2012.

problem and realize that their individual grievances are shared by the rest of the population[54].

This chapter argues that in regards to the 2010/2011 revolution in Tunisia, the surprising involvement of intermediate actors described in chapter two, police violence, and an unusual media coverage of the protests occurring in the country clearly signaled the existence of anti-regime sentiment (Kricheli et a. 2011, 8) to the general population and allowed for a successful informational cascade to occur. In line with a number of studies made by critical mass and informational cascade theorists such as Kuran (1991), Marwell and Oliver (1993), and Lohmann (1994), Tunisians mobilized because they realized that other Tunisians were ready to mobilize and because they saw that the regime was not as strong as it seemed initially. Thus, the involvement of intermediate actors in the center of country, police brutality, and media coverage by both national and international TV networks such as Al-Jazeera and France 24 broke the informational blockade in the country and allowed individual citizens to update their private information about the strength of the regime and the general degree of popular dissatisfaction. Given the exceptionality of the events that were occurring the second-half of December 2010, both activists and non-activists who were disgruntled with the regime suddenly realized that the country was experiencing a special window of opportunity that needed to be seized.

[54] As emphasized by Kricheli et al (2011), the more repressive a particular regime is or the more calmer the political situation is under a dictatorship, the clearer the signal received by the population is because there are no other interferences.

After twenty-three years of repressive authoritarian rule, the regime of Ben Ali appeared immune to popular protest. Non-state information flows were almost completely censured and it seemed that there was no space or avenue for political mobilization in the country. However, as the following sections will show, the seemingly unexpected involvement of the national workers' union (UGTT) (and to lesser extent, the bar association) created an informational cascade by signaling to the population that dissatisfaction with the regime was a widely shared sentiment even among formal allies of the regime. In addition, the failure of the police forces to quell popular protests the way it was expected to by the general population, also helped break the cognitive bias shared by the population about the invincibility of the regime and showed that Ben Ali's system could be brought to an end. Finally, this chapter will show how unexpected media coverage as well as a number of communication mistakes of the authorities ended up cementing the informational cascade created by police violence and the intervention of intermediate actors.

Pre-revolutionary Tunisia: A locked-up country.

"It is a no problem country" (Clovis Demers, President of Human Rights Internet cited in Garon (2003, ix). "Tunisia has remained an inconspicuous island of calm in troubled seas" (Alexander 2010, 1). "Ben Ali's Tunisia has been fairly stable and largely un-noteworthy in international affairs. Certainly compared with its neighbors Libya and Algeria, Tunisia has rarely entered the headlines anywhere" (Harris and Koser 2004, 38). "Ben Ali is no

longer faced with well-organized, mass-based socio-political movements inside or outside the country, capable of threatening his bases of power or of forcing him to change the courses of policies" (Erdle 2010, 268). "[Tunisia] remains eerily passive" (Entelis 2005, 546). "Tunisia largely meets with western approval for being an outpost of moderation, stability, and liberal politics" (Sadiki 2002, 126). The country is "a fully modern country, with a remarkable level of socio-economic development" (Dris-Aït-Hamadouche and Zoubir 2007, 268).

This pre-revolution catalog of excerpts by foreign observers and academics alike on the alleged unwavering character of the Tunisian regime could of course go much longer and shows that both the Tunisian population and foreign observers internalized the idea that Tunisia was one of the Middle East and North Africa's (MENA) strongest regimes and that virtually nothing could challenge the authority of the president. Prior to the 2011 revolution, the apathy of the Tunisian population was so taken for granted that some scholars did not hesitate to flirt with crude culturalist arguments to explain the persistence of authoritarianism in the country. Alexander (2010), for instance, states that "the absence of violent conflict and the country's close political, economic and cultural ties to Europe have generated a political culture that shuns violence and emphasizes rationalism, negotiation, and rule-making under the direction of a strong national state" (111). Similarly, Lise Garon pointed at the natural "submissiveness" of Tunisians who "consent" to being victimized by the authorities without reacting (2003, xi): a view that has of course been negated by

the 2010-2011 events. Before clarifying the mechanism that led to the 2010/2011 unexpected revolution, the following paragraphs will first start by examining the mechanic of the surveillance state built by Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali in the last fifty years.

The Bourguiba years (1956-1987)

Even before the independence of the country in 1956, Alexander (2010) notes that the country's first President had a very clear vision about what the future of his country ought to be as well as the centrality of his role within it (37). While gradually weakening the UGTT (his formal allies during the struggle for independence), Bourguiba succeeded in building a far-reaching and sophisticated national party that encompassed all social classes (Alexander 2010, 6) and that later became the backbone of authoritarianism under Ben Ali. The regime relied heavily on state corporatism to strengthen its hold of the country (Brynen and Mekouar 2012) while using formal negotiations with local economic and social actors to formulate national interest and the policies necessary to achieve it (Alexander 2010, 6).

The divide and rule strategy used by the country's first president, however, reached its limits in 1978 when the country's national syndicate called for a general strike in order to protest against the arrest of one of its leaders (Rollinde 1999, 113). On January 26, the president sent the young Ben Ali (then at the head of the country's police services) to break the union. Confrontations between the police and union members left 200 people dead and more than 1000

wounded (Vermeren 2011, 183). Less than six years later, "bread riots" following Bourguiba's decision to raise the prices of staple products erupted across the country. Once again, Bourguiba was forced to call Ben Ali (then Ambassador in Warsaw) to crack down on the popular uprising leaving 143 people dead (Vermeren 2011, 183-4). However, despite the social and economic difficulties that the country faced in 1970s and early 1980s, and the intensity of the conflict between the UGTT and the presidency, it is important to note that the survival of the regime never really seemed to be in jeopardy (Alexander 2010, 2).

As noted in chapter two, the partial taming of the UGTT by the mid 1980s, allowed the president to dedicate all its energy to cracking down on the emerging Islamic political movement in the country represented by the Movement of the Islamic Tendency (MTI later renamed al-Nahda). Through a gradual and peaceful involvement in the political game, the religious movement (which was very popular among teachers, students and the petty bourgeoisie of Tunisian small towns) sought to Islamize the Tunisian political system in a non-violent fashion (Vermeren 2011, 279 and Erdle 2010, 232-4). Even if the organization accepted to make major concessions to the regime (notably on the question of women's rights) (Erdle 2010, 235), these gestures did not suffice to shield the movement from state repression. The following section will show how the Islamic challenge (as well as contestation from other segments of society) was virtually eliminated after Ben Ali's arrival to power.

Ben Ali's presidency.

With the eviction of Bourguiba and the arrival of Ben Ali in 1987, Tunisia went from being an authoritarian regime to becoming a full-fledged police-state (Garon 2003, 8). Although the disintegration of the political opposition was well in its way under Bourguiba, it is the arrival of Ben Ali to power (and its mix of co-optation and fierce repression) that effectively marked the quasi-full neutralization of the opposition (Erdle 2010, 230).

The 1988 congress of the president's party (now renamed Democratic Constitutional Rally or RCD), whose political bureau shrank from twenty-two to seven members all loyal to new president, gave Ben Ali full authority over the affairs of the country (Perkins 2004, 185). The president quickly moved to marginalize members of the bureaucracy who were known to be close to his predecessor while staffing the administration with loyalists. Duplicating the strategies used by his predecessor, Garon (2003) notes that the new president used the resources of the state and the administration as a tool to reward the supporters of the regime. Enticement in the form of promises of employment or promotion and material reward helped the ruling party strengthen its central position and consolidate its control of the population (1, 12).

The constitutional transformations introduced by the president after his coming to power reinforced the prerogatives of the presidency vis-à-vis all remaining political actors, including the government, the parliament and albeit to a lesser extent, the judiciary system as well (8). Building on a the sophisticated police system created by his predecessor, Garon (2003) observes that Ben Ali

quickly cultivated a complex network of police and intelligence services, the most visible of which were the *Sureté Nationale* and the *Garde Nationale* (12). Ben Ali also relied on neighborhood watch groups, citizen-spy brigades and the numerous members of the RCD to spy on the population and report any suspicious activities (12). By all accounts, police presence in Tunisia was impressive. While estimates of the total number of police forces vary between 80,000 and 133,000, the police/citizen ration remained exceptionally high at 1/67 to 1/112 (Hibou 2011, 81) which can be compared to 1/400 in Algeria (Le Soir d'Algérie 2008) and 1/717 in Morocco.

As emphasized by Hibou (2011), the ubiquity of the police was reinforced by the omnipresence of the ruling party's cells throughout the country. With two million members (roughly one party member for every five citizens), the presence of RCD representatives at all levels of the political, social and economical life of the country created a second layer of political surveillance and economic dependence (86). Thousands of local and professional cells supervised local social institutions (bars, cyber-cafés), managed access to state channels of economic redistribution such as social programs while keeping a close eye on sensitive groups such as Islamic sympathizers and unemployed youth (86). As pointed out by Hibou (2011), the RCD's main function was to act as mediator for state sponsored venues for social mobility (87). Even if the party did not have any formal means for financial redistribution, its role as an intermediary was absolutely central. Approval by the party meant easy access to state permits and administrative

procedures as well as aid programs such as sheep for Eid or Ramadan meals (89). The author adds that the ubiquitous presence of the police forces had another effect: The multiplication of surveillance institutions ranging from state security, the intelligence services, and the national guard, to customs services, fiscal services and even the health department (82) allowed the entrenchment of the idea that police was omnipresent and omnipotent and could not be escaped. Thus, by the mid-nineties, police repression was such that some scholars did not hesitate to compare the country to "Stalin's democracy" (Garon 2003, 1).

Although the institutionalized surveillance of the population affected all parts of civil society, it is important to note in line with Erdle (2010) that its weight was particularly heavy on religious institutions, universities, and the media, the three sectors that were identified by the regime as the most likely venues for political mobilization (300).

Stemming the Islamist Tide

Clearly aware of the popularity of political Islam in the country and marked by the victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, Ben Ali quickly moved to fully co-opt the UGTT (now virtually a part of the regime under Ismail Sahbani) as well as the remains of the old leftist opposition in order to have more latitude to wrestle with the Islamic challenge that his regime was facing. While Ben Ali was initially prudent vis-à-vis the movement, he quickly realized that the price for the continuation of the political hegemony of the RCD was the

annihilation of the Islamic movement, particularly after the 1989 elections[55] during which the Islamists of Al-Nahda (running as independents) won approximately 15% of the popular vote[56] (Perkins 2004, 189-190).

All through Ben Ali's twenty-three years in power, the Islamists were the first victims of the state security apparatus.[57] While severe checks were put on the activities of religious institutions,[58] Islamic militants were subject to fierce and constant pressure from the state authorities. Reports by national and international human rights organizations that regularly denounced the inhumane conditions faced by Islamic militants arrested by the regime are abundant: the following chilling excerpt taken from Hibou (2011) summarizes some of the tools used by the regime:

> "Mistreatment and torture (…); solitary confinement that sometimes lasts for years on end; overcrowded prisons; the absence of any bed or space to lie down; sleep deprivation; poor food and malnourishment; lack of sufficient water; the difficulty or impossibility of maintaining any contact with the outside world; poor hygiene and the spread of diseases; negligence or laxity in medical monitoring and sometimes even the complete absence of this or any medical care; development of drug addiction, the use of psychotropic and neuroleptic drugs; forced labour in conditions of near-slavery; the banning of prayer; systematic and humiliating body searches; promiscuity, sexual aggression and rape; a ban on studying or receiving letters or parcels; isolation, restriction of visiting rights and 'basket' rights (food and clothes brought by one's family), and so on" (4).

[55] Initiated by Bourguiba, the banning of Islamic parties from political life became total under his successor. By 1987, the Islamic movement was the only organization able and willing to compete with the ruling party both on ideological and organizational terms (Erdle 2010, 231).
[56] All other parties scored virtually negligible results with the MDS (the most organized leftist party) winning just a little bit over 1% of the popular vote (Perkins 2004, 189-190).
[57] It must also be said that Ben Ali fierce crackdown on local Islamic movements was in part supported by the mid and upper classes of the country who were deeply suspicious of any religious agenda that may threaten the secular life-style they have cultivated under Bourguiba (Perkins 2004, 210).
[58] Mosques were forced to close outside prayer times while religious Friday speeches could only be made by personalities vetted by the regime (Erdle 2010, 301).

As noted by Erdle (2010), activists who managed to avoid direct imprisonment were subject to tight administrative harassment that virtually condemned them to "social death and internal exile" (Hibou 2011, 6). ID and passport denials, mandatory regular registration at local police stations (236) kept constant pressure on the movement, which was virtually eliminated from the public life of the country until Ben Ali's departure in 2011[59]. After their release from prison, militants faced continuous persecution from the state's security services with regular surprise visits from the police (both during the day and during the night) (Hibou 2011, 6). While access to jobs with the public sector was completely forbidden, Hibou (2011) observes that work in the private sector was also subject to state harassment in the form of police intimidation, fiscal pressure or limitations by the health department (6). The only notable exception was the bar association where former prisoners could count on the support of their colleagues which allowed them to resume their professional activities (although with no hope of accessing public contracts).

Finally, it may also be worth noting that the international context, and notably the bloody war between Islamic militants and the army in neighboring Algeria also helped strengthen the regime. On the one hand, it gave the local authorities an excuse to increase their repression of any form of political contestation in the country (whether it was Islamically inspired or not): Rached Ghannouchi, the head of the Nahda movement stated for instance that the

[59] In this perspective, it is important to note the absence of organized protests by the Nahda during the 2010/2011 revolution. Although Islamic militants did certainly mobilize against the state, these militants were confronting the regime on a personal basis and not as part of the Nahda movement.

Algerian civil war did his movement "a great disservice" by giving the "adversaries [of the Islamic movement] the opportunity to appear threatened" (Perkins 2004, 193). On the other hand, as noted by Perkins (2004), the more chaotic the Algerian situation became during the nineties, the more calm and peaceful Tunisia seemed in comparison to both internal and foreign observers and the more supportive the population was of any measure taken by the government to maintain the peaceful situation of the country, including arbitrary arrests of alleged Islamic militants, unfair trials and torture (Perkins 2004, 194).

Repressing Avenues of Dissent in Civil Society

Under Ben Ali, local venues for public information were quasi-exclusively controlled by the regime, which was able to mislead both its population and foreign observers. Using the state Secretariat for Information and the Tunisian External Communication Agency (ATCE) and a press law that was one of the strictest in the region,[60] the president was able to neutralize the quasi-totality of local media outlets (Erdle 2010, 302). The locking-up of the public forum was made though a double strategy based on censorship and intimidation at the national level, and a mix of bribery and charm at the international one.

As noted by Garon (2003), threats (either direct or veiled) were used to force journalists into self-censorship; chief-editors were regularly fired or imprisoned for publishing news that displeased the government (44) while the country's national press agency, Tunis Afrique Press (TAP) was forced to

[60] Tunisia's press law allows for the imposition of heavy fines, the seizing of publications and even the imprisonment of journalists if need be (Erdle 2010, 302).

abandon the independent stance it claimed under Bourguiba and become nothing more than a registration chamber for the activities of the government (Garon 2003, 44).

The government also used state resources to reward loyal newspapers by providing them with financial assistance while eliminating public advertising from non-compliant newspapers (Erdle 2010, 302 and Garon 2003, 45). While some newspapers tried to resist the government by leaving the location of censored articles in their issues, financial and administrative obstacles quickly forced them to abandon this symbolic tool of contention (Garon 2003, 43). As observed by Garon (2003), the only venue for resistance was the non-publication by local newspapers of presidential or governmental activities (in favor of articles relating to social or development problems) and always with the risk of seeing advertising offers being reduced (48).

Ben Ali also used a sophisticated patrimonial system to reward friends and allies in the media field. In particular, the liberalization of the audio-visual scene in 2003 allowed for the distribution of a number of media licenses to local and foreign associates of the regime (Chouikha 2007). Larbi Chouikha (2007) notes for instance that the French head of Canal Horizons Afrique was a close friend to high-ranking officials, while the CEO of popular private radio Mosaique FM was "noted for his total and zealous allegiance to the regime (Chouikha 2007)" While the regime imposed heavy limitations on the nature and the content of the programs allowed to be broadcasted locally it also retained the technical ability to turn off the transmission of television programs when these

programs "threatened public order, good mores and the security of the country" (Chouikha 2007). However, as rightly pointed out by Chouikha (2007), limitations imposed on private channels were so strict that the audience ratings of private channels such as Hannibal TV (10.2% in 2005) were even lower then those of the national television Tunis 7 at 41.9%. By the mid-2000s, Al-Jazeera and Al-Moustaqilla, a small satellite television broadcasting one day a week from London, were the only media outlets offering space for expression to dissidents such as Moncef al-Marzouki or Sihem Bensedrine (who was arrested and jailed after appearing in Al-Moustaqilla) (Blaise 2011, 27). Small independent radios such as Al-Hiwar Ettounsi founded by Taher Belhassine, (and based in Paris) were also subject to heavy intimidation from the regime (Blaise 2011, 25).

Concurrently, foreign journalists were also actively prevented from researching and reporting on national events that may have portrayed the government in a negative light or threatened the international reputation of the country. Garon (2013) observed that while local reporters were more vulnerable to police harassment and financial pressure, foreign correspondents were not immune from state intimidation as experienced, for instance, by a French AFP journalist falsely accused of attempted rape after publishing information critical of the regime (Garon 2003, 50). International magazines such as Jeune Afrique[61] or Nouvel Observateur [62] were particularly prone to relay the Tunisian propaganda (Garon 2003, 113).

[61] See articles by Ghorbal (2006) and Barrouhi (2009).
[62] See unsigned article at: http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/monde/20071107.OBS3384/tunisie-ben-ali-est-au-pouvoir-depuis-20-ans.html (accessed August 25th, 2012)

The control of the press also extended to foreign affairs. As emphasized by Garon (2003) Tunisia was to look "peaceful and friendly to all" (47). Critical articles against friendly countries or even reports on foreign events that may disturb Tunisia's relationship with its neighbor were severely curtailed (47). More importantly perhaps for the author, the country's propaganda machine created the impression that the regime was strongly supported by its international Western allies (124-5). This impression was corroborated by a series of gestures of approval from American, French or German authorities. During a visit to the country 1996, Pope John Paul II described Tunisia as a "'land of tolerance and freedom" (cited in Garon 2003, 125). Similarly, in a highly publicized visit to the country in 2003, France's President Jacques Chirac showed a remarkable sense of hypocrisy by turning a blind eye on the horrendous human rights conditions in the country and stating that that

> "the first of all Human rights, is to be able to eat, to be medically treated, and to receive an education. From this vantage point, Tunisia is well ahead many countries" (Jeudy 2003).

As it was the case with other civil society organizations such as the UGTT, the regime answered the challenge caused by increasing student activism in the country's universities by encouraging divisions within the organizations representing the student body. While the authorities originally played on the natural rivalry that existed (and still exists) between Islamic and leftist currents (Rollinde 1999, 121) they later directly infiltrated the organization (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2004) which allowed them to directly neutralize the risk caused by university activism.

Forging a Perception of Exceptionality: The Rise of the Unions and the Lawyers Syndicate

The previous section showed how Ben Ali built on his predecessor's heritage to neutralize contestation by controlling the media and virtually eliminating all identifiable outlets for political dissent (notably the Islamic movements, leftist movements, and student groups). The next section will show that it is precisely the success of "Ben Ali's counter-insurgency strategy" (Erdle 2010, 269) that has allowed for popular mobilization to occur after Bouazizi's immolation in December 2010. In particular, this chapter argues that police violence, the involvement of moderate actors and media coverage broke the informational silence that was prevalent under Ben Ali and allowed the rest of the population realize that a historical opportunity for mobilization was available. The commotion created by police violence, the unusually negative national and international media coverage and the involvement of respected actors in the country broke the local cognitive bias shared by the population by showing that a significant number of citizens across the country were dissatisfied with the regime and ready to mobilize against it.

As noted above, authoritarianism in Tunisia was based on severe police repression and nourished by sophisticated mechanisms of economic inclusion (Hibou 2011, xiv). The signal sent by the involvement of UGTT members and the bar association during the early days of the Tunisian revolution simultaneously challenged those two mechanisms: not only the security apparatus could not silence those activists taking the streets of Tunisia's interior

cities but some of those activists were precisely those who were supposed to be benefiting from the regime's strategy of economic inclusion!

Although the interests of the regional unions and the majority of rank-and-file members remained opposed to those of the regime at least since the seventies,[63] the relationship between the national leadership of the union and authorities seemed to have considerably eased after the arrival of Ben Ali to power. While the union was already weakened after a series of bloody confrontations with Bourguiba, Ben Ali seemed to have administered the final blow to the workers' organization by infiltrating its leadership and comforting sympathetic executives in sophisticated patron-client relationships. By the early nineties, and notably the arrival of Ismaïl Sahbani (1989-2000) at the head of the organization, the relationship between the UGTT and the regime seemed so pacified that observers noted its "systematic alignment [of the workers union] on the positions of the state" (Kéfi 2006) while others called the organization a "mouthpiece" (Erdle 2010, 208) of the regime that seemed to be fully under Ben Ali's service (Lamloum 1999, 240).

The surprising involvement of the seemingly tamed union after Bouazizi's death sent a clear message to the Tunisian population about the presence of a historical opportunity for contestation. For ordinary citizens, the perception of exceptionality was nourished by the fact that that a major actor that has become closer to the regime in the past thirty years was actually mobilizing

[63] Rank and file members were particularly opposed to the neo-liberal turn initiated by Bourguiba and fully adopted by Ben Ali in the nineties.

against the authorities in an unprecedented comprehensive way.[64] Indeed, as observed in chapter two, the early involvement of the UGTT was absolutely critical for the development of an informational cascade. The non-involvement of the UGTT after the immolation of Abdesslam Trimech in March 2010 in the city of Monastir killed the local informational cascade that was being formed in the coastal town. Without the support of the large network of workers and sympathizers, the spontaneous popular mobilization that followed the self-immolation of the young street vendor reached an abrupt end. Similarly, it is impossible to imagine that the informational cascade that followed the suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid few months later could have spread outside the small town if it wasn't for the active involvement of local union members.

During the second-half of December 2010, the choice of revolving regional strikes taken by the executive bureau of the union proved particularly

[64] Experts on Tunisia may disagree with this statement and underline the Gafsa events in 2008. Indeed, on January 5th 2008, a loose coalition of unemployed youth and casual workers occupied the local branch of the UGTT in the border city of Rdeyef (26 143 inhabitants in 2004) to protest the publication of the results of a hiring contest organized by Gafsa Phosphate Company (CPG), the only employer in the region (Gantin and Seddik, 2008). Between January and June 2008, protesters clashed with the authorities and used a series of means of contention ranging from hunger strikes to road blockades and the destruction of public infrastructures (Chouikha and Gobe 2009, 388). The revolt movement quickly spread to the neighboring cities of Oum Laarâyes (24 487 inhabitants) and M'dhila (12, 383 inhabitants) (Chouikha and Gobe 2009, 387) but did not spread the rest of the country. However, it is important to note that while activists involved in the 2008 protests in Gafsa denounced corruption and nepotism, their main demand was the exclusion of non-native workers from access to mining jobs through an increase of the quota of jobs reserved for the inhabitants of the Gafsa region (Chouikha and Gobe 2009, 392). In this perspective, it is easy to understand why the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities of Sidi-Bouzid or Kasserine were not supportive of the Gafsa protest movement. Because the demands raised during the 2008 Gafsa events were exclusionary by essence, the riots could not (and did not) spread to the rest of the country and cannot be compared to the riots that occurred in Sidi-Bouzid. More importantly, the UGTT activists involved in the Gafsa events were not only marginal at the national level but also at the regional one too (Chouikha and Gobe 2009, 389). Indeed, the actions conducted in 2008 by the UGTT in Gafsa were not backed-up by the regional union or the mining union (Chouikha and Gobe 2009, 401). More importantly perhaps, even traditionally restive unions such as the primary and secondary education unions) did not side with the Gafsa protesters (Chouikha and Gobe 2009, 401).

efficient. Although the choice was made for tactical reasons in order not to antagonize the regime, the succession of increasingly successful regional strikes sent a cascade of messages to the population all signaling that something exceptional was occurring in the country. As noted in chapter two, the sentiment of exceptionality culminated in the city of Sfax in January 12th when the regional strike organized by the local UGTT branch was attended by more than 80,000 people (some of whom notorious personalities traditionally close to the regime),[65] which effectively signaled the universality of discontent in the country.

Finally, the inability of the regime to respond to the provocations of the regional unions and swiftly extinguish protests the way it was excepted to also had an important effect by breaking the cognitive bias shared by the population about the invincibility of the regime, encouraging more people to join the tide against the authorities. The fact that the security forces were unable to discipline the regional union showed that despite the scale of the coercive means at the disposal of the authorities, the latter were unable to deliver the results that they were expected to.

As observed previously, other civil society organizations were also critical during the Tunisian revolution, and played a crucial role as political amplifiers of the informational cascade that followed Bouazizi's death. In particular, the bar association (Ordre des Avocats Tunisiens) and its very active

[65] Preeminent members of the regime such as Chafik Jeraya (a close friend of Ben Ali) were seen attending the regional strike in the city of Sfax (I. Hidouri, personal interview, February 7th, 2012).

youth section (Association Tunisienne des Jeunes Avocats) proved essential to the success of Sidi-Bouzid informational cascade. [66]

As noted by Chawki Tabib, head of the bar association, the majority of the local lawyers in Sidi Bouzid were members of the RCD (C. Tabib, personal interview, February 14th, 2012 and A. Kilani, personal interview, February 28th, 2012). However, those RCD lawyers were the first to turn against the government in Sidi Bouzid (a spectacular gesture that had an important symbolic impact on the population). In the center of the country in particular, blood ties forced these personalities to take position against the regime further nourishing the local informational cascades. For Abderrazak Kilani, minister in the transitional government and ex-head of the bar association, "personalities known to be close to the ruling party took the streets very early on, particularly in Sidi-Bouzid" (A. Kilani, personal interview, February 28th, 2012) which sent an important message to the population. A case in point is Hachmi Gouadria, a senior associate of the regime ex-governor of Mahdia, who joined the protests in the second week of the revolution. While he was briefly denounced for his proximity to the regime in the early days of the revolution, his involvement in protests against the regime made parts of the population realize that even formal associates of the state were sharing their struggle.[67]

[66] Although lawyers were not immune from the violence of the state and were regularly subject to harassment from the authorities, the state was never fully able to co-opt the corps as a whole or to break its most independent members. Even when the regime tried to brutalize or charge some of the most vocal opponents to the regime such as Radia Nasraoui – strong backlash from the movement and its numerous foreign allies forced the government to retreat.

[67] During an interview with Bouazizi's family, even the mother of the late street vendor expressed her admiration of the former governor.

In line with Schmitter and O'Donnell (1989) conclusions on intermediate actors, lawyers in Sidi Bouzid (and then in the rest of the country), identified the popular anger following the death of Bouazizi as a political opportunity and pushed with all their weight for political mobilization. As noted in chapter two, lawyers nourished the local informational cascade in two important ways. On the one hand, their provided the general population with an incentive to mobilize by framing the suicide of the young man as a political event (and not as a simple *fait-divers*) and by offering legal protection to those willing to mobilize against the regime**.** On the other, their own involvement clearly showed to the rest of the population the extent of popular grievances (even among those who were relatively better off).

In a speech made in front of local population twenty-four hours after the death of the immolation of Bouazizi**,** Khaled Aouaïnia, a respected local lawyer, denounced the weak reaction of the government and linked the suicide of the young man to the prevalence of corruption in the country. The speech was filmed and aired on Al-Jazeera Arabic (and then translated in France 24 as well) with the avowed goal to transform a local incident into a national event[68]. Other lawyers in Sidi-Bouzid quickly congregated to denounce police violence (D. Mourou, personal interview, February 9, 2012) by forming lines in front of the local tribunal. In other cities such as Kasserine, lawyers were also using tribunals as a clearly visible platform to signal popular anger and condemn regime abuse (L. Ben Mahmoud, personal interview 2012). They also contacted

[68] See video of events at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7mL0cj-6mU (accessed July 23rd, 2012)

their colleagues abroad as well as a number of international media outlets such as the Washington Post, the Financial Times in order to force the regime to diminish the severity of its crackdown on the population. Contrary to previous confrontations with the regime, lawyers also used new means of contention during the 2011 revolution. As noted by Me Chawki Tabib, 2010 witnessed new forms of engagements where lawyers in their official garments were at the head of the processions and directly targeting the president (C. Tabib, personal interview, February 14th, 2012 and D. Mourou, personal interview, February 9th, 2012).

Violence and Protest: The Role of the Coercive Apparatus of the State

The second factor that helped nourish a perception of exceptionality in the country in December 2010 is regime violence. Indeed, the impact of state violence on social mobilization has been largely studied in the literature. While some scholars such as Muller, Dietz, and Finkel (1991), Muller and Opp (1986), Opp (1994), and Opp and Gern (1993) (all cited in Kurzman (1996)) remain agnostic in regards to the relationship between violence and mobilization, others argue that state violence increases political mobilization. In this perspective, Opp and Ruehl (1990), argue that police violence increases popular dissatisfaction and nourishes informational cascades (Kurzman 1996, 155). Similarly, Tarrow (1998) highlights the negative impact of state violence through what he refers to as the "repressive paradox (...) [which] produces a radicalization of collective action and a more effective organization of

opponents" (84-5). Tarrow (1998) argues that once the state is forced to resort to violence against its citizens, its imposition on the population gives a political character to the most ordinary acts (85) and forces the population to address this violence or change its behavior to address it. In an interesting twist, Kricheli et al. (2011) show that protests taking place in highly repressive environments have a higher capacity to generate informational cascades because the signaling effect is higher under repressive regimes than under more moderate ones. Although protest actions are less likely to occur under tightly controlled environments, the authors show that their signaling effect is such that successful informational cascades are more likely to occur (and massive protests to spiral successfully) once they happen (Kricheli et al. 2011, 1-2). The more repressive a particular regime is, the "louder" acts of protests resonate with the population and the clearer the sentiment of exceptionality is perceived by the population (Kricheli et al. 2011, 1-2).

In the Tunisian case, police violence actually increased mobilization in two important ways. On the one hand, massive police violence broke the informational silence in the country and signaled to the population that something abnormal was occurring. On the other, the failure of the police services to extinguish protests quickly despite the impressive means that were used signaled again to the population that the regime was not as strong as it seemed. The collective acknowledgment of police failure broke the cognitive bias about the invincibility of the regime. The more protests lasted, the clearer the vulnerability of the state appeared.

As in other Arab authoritarian states, obedience in Tunisia was nourished by the omnipresence of the police forces but also by the appearance of calm and normality (Hibou 2011, 81). As demonstrated by Foucault (1975) in his study of prisons and punishment, state violence is most efficient when it remains a threat. Once the regime is forced to use violence, the appearance of normality that it strove so hard to keep is broken and a powerful informational cascade is created. Interviews conducted with a wide range of actors support this ageny-driven argument. For Henda Hendoud, a twenty-eight year-old young blogger, "the reaction of the government sent a signal that things could not be solved through violence" (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). Fathia Naceri, a forty year-old activist from Kasserine recalls how she realized that the country was experiencing a turning point:

> "the suicide of Bouazizi was a very normal event. Police violence in Sidi-Bouzid and Thala is what [led the way] to mobilization in Kasserine" (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012).

Similarly, for Lasaad Yaacoubi, the general-secretary of the secondary education union in Tunis,

> "the increase in the number of victims [killed by the police], and the arrival of snipers (…) gave our strikes additional impetus. New segments joined the movement, while the pace of mobilization increased as well" (L. Yacoubi, January 23, 2012).

It is striking to note that members of the security forces interviewed for this project also highlight the over-reaction of the police and the excessive use of violence as one of the main reasons behind the diffusion of protests (first in the

center of the country and then to the capital) (T. Affi,[69] personal interview, March 9th, 2012 and A. Jaray,[70] personal interview, February 28th, 2012). The presence of snipers, police interference (notably during the funerals of militants shot by the regime whose families were not allowed to properly bury the victims), limitation on transportation (which was understood by the population as an attempt by the regime to prohibit the sale of food) nourished the general resentment while forcing the involvement of new social categories that were previously hesitant to face the regimes such as doctors (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25, 2012).

By late December, activists within the most radical unions of the UGTT felt that the country was experiencing a historical momentum. On January 4th, restive towns such as Thala or Manzel Bouzayane for instance were surrounded by thousands of policemen who effectively halted the economic and social life in the city. Local government institutions and businesses stopped providing services to the population (A. Homri, personal interview, January 24th, 2012). The perception of exceptionality was fully solidified in the first week of January 2011 when the first snipers made their apparition and when the first riots erupted in the poor suburbs of the capital (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012).

State violence also had another important consequence among activist parts of the population: given the regime history' of violence, the only way out

[69] Head of the police syndicate in Sidi-Bouzid. He was responsible for calling reinforcements following Bouazizi's death and was at the forefront of the confrontations between the police services and the population between December 17th 2010 and January 10th, 2011.
[70] Head of the national police syndicate in Tunis.

for militants involved in early acts of protest against the police was the overthrow of the regime. As highlighted by a young protester from Sidi-Bouzid, "People felt that they could not back away anymore because they knew that Ben Ali's vengeance was going to be terrible" (S. Mihoub, personal interview, March 8th 2012).

Faced with what seemed to many as a very concrete existential threat[71], activists had to resort to exceptional means of contention, which included direct confrontation with police forces. In Sidi-Bouzid for instance, young protesters did not hesitate to attack police members in their barracks, steal weapons, set barrages in the streets, and kidnap policemen in order to exhaust the security forces. As emphasized by Amel Bejaoui, a senior journalist from the official Tunisian press agency, "provocations by protesters who were taunting the policemen in their stations were unseen in the recent history of the country" (A. Bejaoui, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). The 2011 revolution also witnessed a new form of inter-generational cooperation between local youth and their elders. While young protesters clashed with the police at night, older members of local unions, lawyers, and other representatives of civil society organized protests during the day thus allowing the former to rest while continuously soliciting the attention and resources of the security forces. Both union militants, members of professional citizen and activist youth mentioned

[71] It is striking to note that many activists interviewed in Kasserine mentioned a rumour about Ben Ali's alleged plan to bomb a chemical plant in the city and wipe out the population completely (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25, 2012).

this organized (yet spontaneous) form of confrontation with a police as an important leap in the nature of the clash between state and citizens[72].

As in other cities in the country, popular resentment against the regime was fueled by a number of communication mistakes made by the government. After one week of bloody protests, the population in Thala was told for instance that an important official was coming to town on January 7th to address their demands. When no one came, militants echoed their disappointment with renewed vigor and clashes with the police led to the death of five activists. (A. Homri, personal interview, January 24th, 2012).

On January 10th, the government nourished again the perception of exceptionality in the country, by suspending classes in all the academic institutions of the country (including primary and secondary schools) (Bettaïeb 2011, 30). Speeches made by the president at regular intervals also contributed to the general sense of regime breakdown. As highlighted by Dr. Asma Nouira (a lawyer and university professor from Tunis), "the president's speeches only further angered the population" (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012). Abdelwahed Homri, a secondary school teacher from the city of Kasserine and union member also highlights how the speeches made by the president gave additional impetus to local mobilization. "We would [all] listen to the speeches and then take the streets right after" (A. Homri, personal interview, January 24th, 2012).

[72] State violence in authoritarian settings has another impact. Once the security forces start using violence against the population, protesters and the regime are locked in a zero-sum game. The regime knows that a failure to tackle the protests will lead to more activism while protesters fight even more vigorously because they know that the regime will be merciless if mobilization dies.

Finally, the collapse of chain of command of the security forces during the second week of January deeply affected members of the police and helped solidify the impression that the situation was dire for the regime. As noted by Abdelhamid Jaray, head of the national police union, the collapse of the chain of command by January 10th and the issuing of contradictory directives by top officials ended up totally disorienting the police corps already demoralized by the fact that policemen in Tunis knew that their colleagues were scattered across the country and could not be called for help in the capital (A. Jaray, personal interview, February 28, 2012). On January 11th, the very visible withdrawal of the police sent a shockwave in the population and created a deep sense of insecurity and alarm in the country (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012). More vitally for the regime perhaps, once physical repression failed to quickly and clearly terminate the first acts of protests, the cognitive bias on which the entire logic of repression is build was broken. What seemed like an indestructible system to the population for years suddenly appeared in a new light as a tired and poor regime unable to live up to its reputation.

Once the number of victims started accumulating in the Thala-Kasserine-Sidi-Bouzid triangle, it was only a matter of time for the revolutionary contagion to reach the capital. Because many of the inhabitants of the poorest neighborhoods in Tunis such as Al-Tadamon, Ezzouhour, Kram, Douar Hicher were recent migrants from the center of the country - the news of their brothers, and cousins dying could not go unpunished. By the first week of January, the capital's poorest neighborhoods were fully involved in the revolution.

In summary, the Tunisian case shows that regime violence helped nourish the conditions for a local informational cascade while the failure of the state to quickly quell protests strengthened it even more. Once the regime did what it was expected to do by sending massive reinforcements to the locations of the protests and *failed* to immediately extinguish popular mobilization, the cognitive bias on which a repressive regime was built could no longer stand and popular mobilization increased accordingly. However, what the Tunisian case also demonstrates is that the edifice of the state's power of coercion can be eroded not only through the excessive and indiscriminate use of violence, but through the active engagement of particular intermediate actors who signal to the population the feasibility and opportunity for popular protest.

*The Role of Official and Foreign Media***.**

Intermediate actors played a decisive role in engendering popular mobilization against the formidable violence of the state. However, the means through which the information and message was communicated to the general population was crucially facilitated by official and foreign media. Prior to the 2011 revolution, the absence of objective journalistic coverage, the prudence of foreign observers combined with the vigor of Tunisia's propaganda's machine all helped cement the idea that Tunisia was a stable and peaceful country. For ordinary citizens, the public information that was available prior to Bouazizi's death was that their country was a safe heaven in a tumultuous region and "a dream for tourists and foreign investors" (Garon 2003, 113). The unexpected

coverage by national and foreign media of the violent events that followed Bouazizi's death broke the informational silence that was prevalent in the country and allowed ordinary citizens to update their beliefs about the degree of national disgruntlement in the country and the strength of the regime.

In this perspective, all interviewees credit the media[73] (both national and international) for breaking the informational silence in the country by showing the general population the severity of the political situation in the Gafsa-Sidi-Bouzid-Kasserine triangle after Bouazizi's death. In particular, the role of Al-Jazeera, which was not allowed to operate in the country prior to the revolution, and to a lesser extent France 24, was particularly pivotal. Lotfi Hajji, a respected Tunisian journalist and secret correspondent for Al-Jazeera was contacted by union members from Sidi-Bouzid moments after the immolation of Bouazizi. For a young activist in Sidi-Bouzid, "Al-Jazeera is what took folks in Tunis out of their sleep" (S. Mihoub, personal interview, March 8th, 2012). Similarly, for another activist from Manzel Bouzayane "Al-Jazeera's coverage of Thala's massacre (which left six people dead) is what spread mobilization to neighboring towns" (I. Hidouri, personal interview, February 7th, 2012). Journalists familiar with the country, also highlight the importance of the Qatar-based channel. For, Lilia Blaise, a young journalist from Tunis, "Lotfi Hajji knew how to take the temperature of the country (L. Blaise, personal interview, February 23rd, 2012)". In this perspective, it is interesting to note that almost all

[73] And to a lesser extent, bloggers and facebook. For a complete account of the impact of media and new means of digital communications on the Tunisian revolution, please refer to chapter 6.

of my interviewees (lawyers, union members, journalists…) have had a personal contact with Al-Jazeera's correspondent in Tunis at some point[74].

Hoping to bribe the channel into friendly coverage, the regime made a major mistake by officially allowing Al-Jazeera satellite channel to report from the country. While the authorities were certainly hoping that the newly accredited journalists were going to diminish their criticism of the regime in order to be keep their professional authorizations, the actual result proved catastrophic for them. Al-Jazeera's crew covered events in the country in an unprecedented detailed fashion, which had a particularly strong impact on the Tunisian population. The channel interviewed militants and respected civil society figures such as Khaled Aouaïnia, one of Sidi-Bouzid's most respected lawyers, who appeared live on the channel few hours only after the immolation of Bouazizi and criticized the actions of the government on legal grounds (K. Aouaïnia, personal interviews, January 26th, 2012). Moving footage showing the suffering of ordinary citizen affected by police violence also had an important psychological impact on the population. A militant from Kasserine recalls how she was moved by the testimony (aired by Al-Jazeera) of the mother of a young militant killed by the police who was telling the minister sent by the president to present his condolences that "One son died but I have three more that will got out" (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012).

Foreign media quickly followed suit, specifically France 24, and the crew of the popular French show "Envoyé Special" on France 2 whose episode

[74] Which highlights the impressive journalistic work done by Al-Jazeera even before the revolution.

on Tunisia had an important impact on large parts of the Tunisian population who watched in horror for the first time a respected French channel describe the horrendous situation in their country.

International coverage by foreign satellite television also forced Tunisian media, notably Shems FM, Mosaïque FM and Nessma TV to address the death of Bouazizi as well. Official television (and its private satellites) portrayed the young man as an abusive drunkard (used to beating his poor mother) guilty of assaulting a municipal officer who was simply doing her job (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). Given local media usual *langue de bois*, this unusual coverage by national media made people outside Sidi-Bouzid realize that something peculiar was happening in the country (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012) while antagonizing even more those in the center of the country who were experiencing the fierce crackdown by the police. Other communication mistakes by the regime contributed to the president's fall as well. The visit made by Ben Ali to a dying Mohamed Bouazizi on December 28th sent a wrong signal to the population (particularly in the center of the country) who saw footage of the victim and the tyrant ironically reunited in the same room, as another proof of the contempt of the regime.[75]

By the first week of January, the situation in the country seemed so exceptional that a second wave of foreign correspondents usually uninterested in Middle-Eastern politics started reporting on the country, increasing even more

[75] Few hours later, the contemptuous tone of the president's speech – where he put the onus of the situation on "'hooded gangs who attacked public institutions at night, and even citizens in their homes through terrorist acts that cannot be tolerated' cited in (Brynen and Mekouar 2012, 30)" fuelled popular anger in these regions even more.

the national informational cascade. As stated by a Swedish journalist working for his country's public broadcasting service, "[by January 10th], we had to go because things started to take a major scale" (C. Catomeris, personal interview, January 15th, 2012). Strikingly, the journalist also recalled the irritation of on official annoyed by "those Swedes that are usually nowhere to be seen" (C. Catomeris, personal interview, January 15th, 2012).

Finally, it is important to note that speeches made by the president had the opposite effect and antagonized the general population even more (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10, 2012). As highlighted by a number of militants interviewed in Kasserine and Sidi-Bouzid, the president's speeches increased mobilization. "People would listen to Ben Ali's speeches in their homes and then go out to demonstrate" (A. Saadaoui, personal interview, January 25th, 2012). Indeed, the three discourses made by the president nourished popular mobilization in two important ways. First, they forced everyone to acknowledge the exceptionality of the situation in the country *at the same time*. Second, concessions made during the two first speeches (and the overly weak tone of the third and last one during which the president addressed the population in vernacular Arabic instead of using the established official classical form) also increased the impression of exceptionality in the country. The last speech had a particularly important symbolic impact and broke the cognitive bias within the population about the invincibility of the regime. The country's seemingly steel-made president was addressing the population on national television using Tunisian colloquial language like any other normal

citizen. This was an unprecedented gesture that showed what was unimaginable just a few hours before: Ben Ali was human, he was not an invincible, indestructible figure and his demise could be imagined.

Similarly, many militants in the Kasserine-Thala-Sidi-Bouzid triangle mentioned the involvement of women in the protests as a significant psychological turn (W. Gouadria, personal interview, February 14th, 2012 and F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012). In this very conservative part of the country, the participation of local women in direct confrontation with the authorities highlighted again the gravity of the situation and the exceptional character of the events that were occurring at the time.

Conclusion

Paradoxically, it was the success of Ben Ali's "'counter-insurgence' strategy" (Erdle 2010, 269) between 1990 and 2008 that helped facilitate the revolution. Since the regime was able to virtually eliminate or control all identifiable outlets for political dissent (notably the Islamic movements, leftist movements, and student groups), and because the positive media coverage of the country's last twenty years (virtually free on any information that may question the strength of the regime) created a strong impression that mass unrest was impossible, regime violence, the rapid involvement of intermediate actors, and media coverage broke that cognitive illusion in a spectacular way. Things could actually happen in peaceful Tunisia! Once the UGTT regional unions started their regional strikes, once the police started using indiscriminate violence and

once international satellite channels known for their complacency with the regime started filming it and talking about it, a taboo was lifted. Individual citizens disgruntled with Ben Ali discounted their private information and engaged in collective action.

Chapter five will show that Algeria's tumultuous history makes a similar scenario much more unlikely. Because the country has been accustomed to an impressive number of violent and non-violent acts of protest during the last thirty years, it is much harder for citizens to realize that something exceptional is occurring. While Algeria has witnessed for instance more than one thousand acts of protests in 2010 alone (Charef 2011), exceptionality has been a constant characteristic of the country's tumultuous post-colonial history. Self-immolations, localized riots, kidnappings, political assassinations, major protests have all been part of Algeria's collective psyche for decades while the county's relatively free media have been covering these events extensively making the perception of exceptionality harder to be achieved. Thus, the threshold for a surprise symbolic event that could create an informational cascade is much harder to reach in Algeria than in other informationally frozen systems such as pre-revolutionary Tunisia, Syria or Libya.

Chapter five: Algeria: Social Insurrection Routinized

"I don't want to be Bouazizi, I just want a house"
Algerian protestor threatening to burn himself in 2011 (cited by Kamel Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012).

In regards to Algeria, chapter three argued that the absence of mass mobilization at the national level is the result of the non-involvement of national intermediate actors who refuse to encourage social mobilization when political opportunities arise. This chapter presents a supplemental explanation and argues that the numerous acts of protest that have been happening in the country since the end of the civil war make the reception of a clear signal difficult. Because the country has been in a constant state of popular insurrection for the last fifteen years, it is extremely hard for a particular incident to break the social/political routine shared by ordinary Algerians and create a perception of exceptionality that could lead to mass mobilization. Indeed, in the last two years only, the country witnessed hundreds (perhaps thousands) of potentially revolutionary incidents ranging from mass demonstrations, instances of police brutality, self-immolations, road blockades, wild strikes, sports riots, citizens committee protests (for access to electricity or decent housing), unemployed youth protests, university and high-school student strikes, to post-flood popular protests, popular attacks against pro-regime newspapers, informal merchants' protests, popular attacks of police stations, funerals of illegal migrants turning into riots,

waste management conflicts, protests against corrupt local officials, and urban slums riots, all happening in less than twenty months (Bertho 2012). Contrary to the Tunisian case where Ben Ali's regime created a strong impression that his country was a heaven of calm and stability where nothing ever happens, unrest has been a constant feature of Algerian politics since the end of civil war (and even before), and it is therefore particularly difficult for citizens to realize that something exceptional is happening in the country when a potentially revolutionary incident occurs.

This chapter will use the two hard-cases seen in chapter three to show that the noise created by the numerous incidents happening in Algeria since 1988 made the identification of a political opportunity difficult. The first case will build on January 2011 riots/CNCD protests to show that the absence of police violence, the non-involvement of intermediate actors, and an ambiguous media coverage gave the impression that the protests occurring in the country were nothing but one of numerous routine incidents which have been happening in the country during the last thirty years. The second case will build on the exceptional demonstrations in Kabylia in 2001 to show that despite the development of a successful informational cascade at the regional level, social mobilization failed at the national level because the rest of the country perceived the events in Kabylia as just another one of the numerous episodes of discontent expressed by the traditionally restive Kabyle population. Because the general population is used to Kabyle unrest, people outside of Algeria did not develop a

perception of exceptionality that could have encouraged them to bandwagon on the regional protests.

The first section provides an overview of the history of popular dissent in Algeria since the independence of the country in 1962. The following two sections examine the cases of the 2011 and 2001 riots in the country to show how the absence of a perception of exceptionality hindered the development of successful informational cascades and social mobilization during these two potentially regime-shacking episodes.

A Tumultuous History

Many scholars of Algerian politics such as Benjamin Stora (2001, 231), Luis Martinez (2000, 40-1), Abdelbaki Benziane (2005, 106), Louisa Dris-Aït Hamadouche and Yahia Zoubir (2009, 120), highlight the country's inherent political instability. Frédéric Volpi (2003) notes for instance the "endemic (…) instability of the Algerian state" (116) while Belkacem Laabas and Ammar Bouhouche (2011) highlight the country's "unstable, non-enabling environment (206)". For Stora (2001) "ever since the riots of 1988 (…) 'crisis' ha[s] been at the core of contemporary debates concerning Algeria" (231). Similarly for Isabelle Werenfels (2007), the Algerian context "could be best described with the oxymoron 'equilibrium of instability': that is, a balance – albeit a fragile one – between the various (potentially) destabilizing dynamics" (5). For Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdissi (2011), "Algeria is a country where "the

equilibrium bargain has been inherently unstable" (318) while for Hugh Roberts (2003):

> "the way in which power has been diffused throughout the executive branch of the Algerian state since independence has been a major factor promoting incoherence in policy and instability in Algeria's political life" (187).

In the quantitative tradition, scholars such as James Fearon and David Laitin (2005) have also highlighted the volatile character of Algerian politics while attempting to quantify this instability. In a statistically based analysis, Fearon and Laitin use a number of variables (notably wealth, oil, shifts in regime type, population, and terrain) to show that the average probability for an armed insurgency/civil war is two times and a half higher in Algeria than elsewhere in the MENA region (20).

Local interviewees also share this historical reading of Algerian politics. For Pr. Mohamed Mebtoul, a sociologist at the Research Laboratory on Medical Anthropology in Oran, the country witnesses a myriad of acts of protest, and non-unified forms of contestation every single day" (M. Mebtoul, personal interview, April 23rd, 2012). For Dr. Mebtoul and other interviewees, it is precisely the multiplication of these acts of protest that explains the absence of national mobilization. As highlighted by a local French language teacher, social mobilization failed in the country because Algerians had an impression of "déjà-vu" (A. Mohamed, personal interview, April 10th, 2012). For Mohamed, "the population has already been there after the death of Boumediene, (and during the October 1988 riots) with the catastrophic results that we all know" (A. Mohamed, personal interview, April 10th, 2012). Other interviewees mentioned

"the numerous instances of self-immolations which always happen in the country [without] provoking a reaction from the population" (S. Oussad, personal interview, April 5th, 2012), the one million people march on Algiers on 2001 (M. Babadji, personal interview, April 13th, 2012), and even the "soccer riots" which regularly follow the defeats of local teams in national tournaments (S. Oussad, personal interview, April 5th, 2012). One interviewee ironically noted that there have been so many acts of protests (such as road blockades, sit-ins in front of official buildings, strikes and so on and so forth) in the last two decades that the regime has developed automatic reactions when dealing with them (B. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5th, 2012).

Indeed, a quick overview of Algerian politics since the independence of the country vividly illustrates the especially volatile character of Algerian domestic politics. The signature of the country's independence accords was immediately followed by a first civil war which claimed more than 2000 lives (Fearon and Latin 2005, 22-3), score-settling between the FLN and pro-France collaborators (which claimed tens of thousands of victims), a war with Morocco and an open insurrection led by Hocine Aït-Ahmed's FFS in the Kabylia region (Pironet 2006). The following years were marked by numerous instances of violence between competing military factions and between the regime and the population. In 1965 for instance, fifty people were killed in Annaba and Oran when protesting Boumediene's coup against President Ben Bella (Ottaway 1969, 185-9 cited in Fearon and Latin 2005, 34). Throughout the sixties and seventies, the regime struggled to control the Kabylia region (as well as the Sahara region)

where the state was facing armed resistance (Fearon and Laitin 2005, 33-4) and by the end of the seventies, mounting opposition from Islamic groups.

By the beginning of the eighties, declining oil revenues fueled another decade of social unrest. The decrease in the price of oil from $40 a barrel in 1979 to $12 in 1988, amputated state revenues by a staggering 40% (Ramonet 2012, 36) and forced the regime to reduce its subsidies of staple products and freeze salaries in the public sector. Once the failure of the statist developmental model[76] promoted by the FLN became clear by the mid-eighties (particularly when food shortages became endemic), popular dissatisfaction with President Chadli Bendjedid reached a peek (37). While Islamic and leftist students were regularly clashing with each other (and with the state in the case of Islamic groups),[77] other popular protests erupted in the Kasbah in 1985 (Ruedy 2005, 247) and were followed by major strikes and riots in Oran, Skikda and Constantine where a small protest in a local high school quickly spread to the rest of the city. Student unrest and concomitant police violence continued in the following years (Ruedy 2005, 248) and reached a height in October 1988 when mass protests spread across the country. While the state was trying to pay its foreign debt by implementing a drastic structural adjustment program (Ramonet 2012, 38), inflation, the rarity of staple products, real and imagined lay-offs in

[76] Following the independence of the country, the FLN used oil revenues to invest massively in heavy industrial projects such as steel and cement factories, oil and gas plants…etc (Ramonet 2012, 37) but neglected the agricultural sector. As a result, Ramonet adds that Algeria was importing 80% of its food needs in 1988 (37).

[77] 100,000 Islamist leaning demonstrators congregated in November 1982 to denounce the regime's crackdown on religious militants in November 1982 (Ruedy 2005, 242). The impressive demonstration was followed by an even bigger one two years later when 400,000 marchers congregated following the death of Shaykh Abdelatif Sultani two years later (Ruedy 2005, 242).

the public sector fueled popular anger with the state (Ruedy 2005, 248). On October 4th, 1988, rumors of a general strike encouraged a number of secondary students to protest (Ruedy 2005, 248). As noted by Ruedy (2005), what was originally a simple student walkout quickly spread to new segments of the population (notably union members and Islamic activists) before reaching the rest of the country (248). Faced with unprecedented level of popular mobilization, the authorities declared a state of emergency[78] while the military and the police used live ammunitions to quell the protests making six hundred casualties and thousands of wounded (Pironet 2006).

The desertion of the democratic process in 1992 paved the way for a decade of armed violence opposing the regime's security services to Islamic militants/armed bandits that claimed one hundred thousand lives. The civil war was marked by numerous instances of civilian massacres, terrorist attacks, targeted assassinations, massive (and often overly brutal) counter-insurgency operations (Stora 2001, 234) that were not only particularly bloody but also incomprehensible for ordinary Algerians who were unable to identify the perpetrators of the numerous acts of terror that were affecting the country.[79]

Despite the end of violence in the early 2000s, popular unrest continued in Kabylia in 2001, culminating in a one-million-protest in June of the same year, and across the country in the following years. Between 2001 and 2011, the country witnessed thousands of different acts of localized protests ranging from

[78] The state of emergency lasted until 2011.

[79] Throughout the nineties, the multiplication of civilian massacres committed by Islamists claiming to be Algerian security forces or Algerian security forces claiming to be Islamists created a deep sense of bewilderment within the population.

instances of police brutality, self-immolations, inter-communal violence, wild strikes, sports riots,[80] citizens committee protests (for access to housing or public amenities), violence between new and old urban settlers (Bertho 2011), university and high-school student strikes, to post-flood popular protests, attacks on pro-regime institutions, informal merchants' demonstrations, attacks on police stations, funerals of illegal migrants turning into riots, waste management conflicts, demonstrations against corrupt local officials, and urban slums riots, all happening in rapid succession with each other and marked by various degrees of state-society violence.

While the entire country is regularly subject to social unrest, it is important to note that the tumultuous character of Algerian domestic politics is nowhere more evident than in the Kabylia region. As highlighted by Roberts (2003),

> "Kabylia is the most densely populated region of the countryside, not only of Algeria, but of North Africa as a whole, with the sole possible exception of the Nile delta. It is also the region of Algeria which, because of its uninviting relief, experienced the lowest level of European settlement during the colonial era and accordingly was able to preserve its traditional socio-political structures and concomitant solidarities almost intact. As a result, it possesses an unrivalled capacity for political mobilization (301)"

Indeed, since the beginning of French occupation, the region was at the forefront of the fight against colonization [81]and remained a major space for dissent even after the independence of the country in 1962. Two years only after

[80] In May 2008, the city of Oran experienced 3 days of popular riots after the relegation of the Club d'Oran in the 2nd division (S. Oussad, personal interview, April 5, 2012). During the riots, 160 people were wounded (including 100 police members) (Bennadji 2009, 232).
[81] For some analysts, the war of liberation was essentially a Kabyle affair (S. Oussad, personal interview, April 5, 2012).

the departure of the French authorities, fighting broke between the Kabylia-based FFS party and the FLN who was trying to consolidate its control of the restive region (Fearon and Laitin 2005, 33-4). The initial face-off with the authorities was followed by many instances of popular protest against the state the most important of which were the events of 1980 and 2001.

The first major Berber uprising started in March 1980 when a prominent Berber intellectual was barred from delivering a lecture at Tizi-Ouzou University. The banning of the lecture led to an unprecedented wave of social mobilization in the region where local academics, farmers, and public servants all mobilized to denounce the marginalization of the Kabyle language and the contempt of the authorities towards Berber cultural rights (Amrouche 2009, 147). After the faculty and students occupied the university, protests spread to neighboring schools before union members launched a general strike in the Kabylia region; confrontations with the police left thirty people dead and hundreds of wounded protestors (Evans and Phillips 2007, 122 and Ruedy 2005, 240). The 1980 uprising led to the development of a Berberist movement (largely based in Kabylia)[82] calling for the defense of the Berber population cultural rights but also for more democracy and political accountability (Evans and Phillips 2007, 122). The eighties and nineties were marked by many instances of popular (and often violent) unrest during which the local population mobilized to commemorate the events of May 1980 (Ruedy 2005, 240). In 2001, the murder of a young Berber student while in the custody of the local gendarmerie led to the dramatic events of Kabylia's "black spring" detailed in

[82] Even if Berber presence extends to other regions in Algeria.

chapter three and paved the way to massive demonstrations attended by hundreds of thousands protesters.

While the volatile character of Algerian politics is widely acknowledged by students of Algerian politics, these scholars did not attempt to analyze the ways in which Algeria's volatility hinders social mobilization or unravel the mechanisms that make the various instances of social mobilization die prematurely**.** Following the successful revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and the puzzling lack of mobilization in Algeria, Louisa Dris-Aït Hamadouche claimed for instance that "too many revolutions kill the revolutions" (Dris-Aït Hamadouche 2012, 57) and that Algerians seemed to have developed an "allergy" to social mobilization. However Dris-Aït Hamadouche's analysis does not unravel the informational logic at hand or the institutional mechanisms that hinder mobilization in the country (notably intermediate actors, media signals, or police violence). Similarly, Stora argues that "the effect of the discourse of crisis is to instill fatalism, to justify opposition to progress, to discredit in advance many cultural or social initiatives" (Stora 2001, 231) but does not detail the mechanisms by which the country's routine state of crisis prevents social mobilization.

The next two sections will build on the popular riots/CNCD demonstrations of January 2011 and the 2001 Black Spring events to illustrate how the signal sent in both cases was not strong/unusual enough to break the local cognitive bias and generate successful informational cascades.

The CNCD: Protesting in a Country of Protests.

Chapter three explained how despite their best efforts, the protests organized by the CNCD militants were weakly followed (never exceeding a few thousands) and failed to generate mass social mobilization.

In the following section I will show that in addition to the non-involvement of intermediate actors, the absence of police violence and the routine character of local media coverage during the 2011 January riots/CNCD demonstrations also hindered the development of an informational cascade in the country. Without a strong signal of exceptionality (which could have been created by one or all of the previous factors), the events of January 2011 were perceived as just one of the many incidents that have been punctuating the country's political life in the last two decades.

Curbing Indiscriminate Violence

As observed in the Tunisian case, indiscriminate police violence has an important signaling effect that gives a strong boost to informational cascades. Arrests, assassinations, instances of torture are extremely visible events that signal clearly to everyone that a political conflict is happening in the country while forcing the families and friends of those victim of state violence to engage in contentious politics (See Tarrow (1998) and Opp and Gern (1993) cited in Kurzman (196)). Thus, once a dictatorship starts using violence against some of its citizens, the rest of the population is forced to realize that an unusual political event is taking place and take a stance vis-à-vis the actions of the regime.

In the Algerian case, police moderation played an important role in the failure of the local informational cascade during the January 2011 events. Because the authorities were careful not to engage in the killing of innocent civilians, the regime was able to avoid the "repressive paradox" highlighted by Tarrow (1998) which could have "produce[d] a radicalization of collective action and a more effective organization of opponents (84-5)". Thus, during the protests of early 2011, the regime mobilized an impressive number of policemen (estimated by K. Daoud at thirty thousands) whose goal was to contain a maximum of five thousands protestors. However, despite their impressive numbers, Algerian policemen had explicit instructions NOT to use violence against the population. The Algerian regime was careful not to unnecessarily provoke the population and trigger a vicious circle that could quickly cascade out of control.

Union members, foreign observers, academics, and local journalists all highlight the importance of police restraint during the 2011 events. For Messaoud Babadji, a university professor and member of the CNCD, "strict guidelines were given to the police not to use violence against militants" in order to limit the risk of a popular backlash (M. Babadji, personal interview, April 13th, 2012). Similarly, in order to ensure that no member of the state security services would act impulsively on a moment of anger (with the significant risk of antagonizing the silent majority), policemen were searched before their shift to make sure that they were not carrying lethal weapons (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6, 2012). Other observers highlight the regime's "excellent use

of coercion" (I. Derradji, personal interview, October 1st, 2012). Instead of publically brutalizing local protestors, the authorities chose instead to isolate and quietly arrest the different leaders.[83]

Thus, while the region was experiencing a historical momentum, police restraint removed one of the possible triggers for popular mobilization (Economist Country Report 2012) and successfully avoided to unnecessarily antagonize the population. The next section will show that the non-involvement of intermediate actors is another factor explaining the failure of social mobilization in 2011.

The Absence of Intermediate Actors for Protest

Contrary to the Tunisian case where the involvement of respected intermediate actors (notably the national workers' union and the bar association) clearly signaled to the population that the country was experiencing a special momentum, Algeria's intermediate actors refrained from mobilizing during the riots of January 2011 and the subsequent demonstrations organized by the CNCD in the following weeks. Chapter three highlighted the reasons why the country's most important actors refused to contest the state and/or encourage social mobilization. In particular, the chapter underlined the importance of the post-civil war economic (and to a lesser extent political) consensus that was painfully achieved in the last ten years. Thus, the military struggle that the country experienced in the nineties led to the formation of an internal consensus

[83] The Moroccan regime adopted a similar strategy when dealing with the pro-democracy February 20 movement. For more details, see chapter seven.

(cemented in the following years by the increase in oil rent) that none of the involved actors is willing to challenge again.

Indeed, chapter three showed that the country's main workers association, the powerful veterans associations, the student associations and the bar association as well as a few other groups remained stubbornly silent during the January 2011 protests/CNCD demonstrations. While these associations could have used their prestige or their mere size to increase the dimension of the January 2011 protests, these actors chose to defend the status quo. This judgment was shared by many interviewees who mentioned the absence of national intermediaries willing to frame local demonstrations as one of the main reasons for the failure of social mobilization in the country. For Messaoud Babadji, "revolutionary incidents happen all the time in the country but do not have a transmission belt at the civil society level" (M. Babadji, personal interview, April 13th, 2012). When talking about the divide between the population and the civil society, Algerian militants mention in contrast the case of Tunisia where local lawyers and unions essentially carried out mobilization. Ironically, the lack of intermediate actors willing to frame popular demands and act as an intermediary between state and society is so blatant that the regime is often unable to answer the demands expressed by the population (even when it wants to) simply because the authorities do not know who to talk to and what the demands are! (K. Daoud, personal interview, April 6th, 2012).

Another element that hindered the signalling effect of Algeria's intermediate actors is the cloning strategy used by the regime to create confusion

within the population by encouraging scissions within the country's civil society organizations. When asked about the Algerian state's strategies of power consolidation, most interviewees mentioned the fully tried and tested "cloning strategy"[84] (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9th, 2012, S. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5, 2012) that was developed by the regime in the last two decades. Cloning is a strategy used by the authorities to sabotage independent organizations by infiltrating them, encouraging internal scissions, and creating parallel organizations often with the same name in order to instil confusion within the population. For a senior hospital worker and independent union member from Oran, "Cloning has blocked the alliance between the unions and the youth in the country" (S. Mechri, personal interview, April 29th, 2012). The multiplication of similar-looking organizations, name duplication, and confusion over the legal status of the numerous micro-associations create a deep sense of confusion (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9th, 2012) within a population already extremely suspicious vis-à-vis its civil society members while dampening the signalling impact of those who decide to mobilize against the state.

[84] The personal trajectory of Kaddour Chouicha, a long time Human Rights militant and one of the founding members of the CNCD, is a striking illustration of the strategies used by the state to tame local associations. His first involvement in the opposition occurred through the creation of an independent professors union (the only available tool for popular mobilization in Algeria). Chouicha, a university professor at the USTO founded the CNES (Conseil National des Enseignants Supérieurs) whose goal was to challenge the supremacy of the official state union. The authorities quickly high jacked the newly formed union by facilitating its staffing by regime sympathizers which led to the division of the CNES into two competing factions. While the pro-government wing was quickly recognized by the authorities, anti-government militants were forced to regroup in a new association, the SESS (for Syndicat des Enseignants du Supérieur Solidaires) that was never given an official authorization by the regime (K. Chouicha, personal interview, April 9, 2012). This double strategy based on the infiltration of independent organization, and their subsequent divisions, has been a major aspect of the power consolidation strategy used by the Algerian regime during the last 20 years.

In summary, without respected actors willing to use their prestige to raise the attention of the rest of the population, use their institutional networks to spread social mobilization, and their international contacts to call the attention of foreign media, both the January 2011 riots and the CNCD mobilization in Algeria could not create a perception of exceptionality and remained largely confined to where they were born (i.e. the small circle of usual pro-democracy activists in Algiers and Oran). Given the lethargy of the local civil society, the numerous acts of social protest which occur in the country[85] take a routine dimension that strongly hinders the signalling effect necessary for social mobilization.

Foreclosing the "exceptional" through Media Liberalization

One last element that helps explain why the 2011 riots/demonstrations did not take a national dimension is the relatively liberal character of Algerian media. Contrary to the informationally-locked Tunisian case where unexpected media coverage (both from national and international outlets) sent a strong signal to the general population about the exceptionality of the events that were occurring in the country during the 2010/2011 revolutionary events, the psychological impact of Algerian (and international) media coverage of the protest activities of 2011 was much more limited.

As pointed out by Dris-Aït Hamadouche (2012), a relatively free Algerian press does not hesitate to cover financial scandals involving official

[85] Which remains exclusively governed by an "individual logic of protest (M. Mebtoul, personal interview, April 23, 2012)" and makes mass mobilization difficult.

institutions, denounce police violence, the incompetence of the country's top executives or relate the details of the numerous instances of popular dissent that occur daily in the country (59). As it will be shown in greater detail in chapter six, the multiplication, the repetition of quasi-identical coverage since the end of the civil war helped nourish a sense of routine that hindered the perception of exceptionality that could have formed early 2011. Although local media covered the January 2011 riots/CNCD demonstrations in great detail, this coverage did not contrast with the coverage of the many other instances of popular unrest that happened before.

Even before the Arab Spring, Algerian newspapers have been extensively covering the numerous instances of socio-political unrest happening in the country. In this perspective, an archival review of the front page of the daily El-Watan (perhaps Algeria's most popular newspaper) twelve months before and after the riots of 2011 clearly shows how the coverage of the events that were happening in January 2011 was in no way different from the one of the various events that happened both before and after (El-Watan 2010, 2011, 2012, Omar 2010, and M.S. 2010). Contrary to the Tunisian case where ordinary citizens were clearly shocked by the unexpected media coverage of the 2011 revolutionary events in Sidi-Bouzid, Algerians did not experience a similar discrepancy in media coverage that could have signaled that something abnormal was happening in the country. The local media (rightly) presented the 2010/2011 riots as yet another thoughtless "acts of vandalism" without any political goals (B. Benzenin, personal interview, April 5th, 2012) the same way it

has been presenting all of the other events that were happening in the country in the last decade. Without an unusually strong media coverage of the January 2011 events, the Algerian population was not able to realize that an opportunity for national mobilization was available.

History Matters: Lessons from Kabylia's 'Black Spring'

As noted in chapter three, the brutal death of young Massinissa Guermah on April 16th, 2001, shocked the inhabitants of the region who spontaneously congregated to denounce the last one of a long series of police abuse. By the end of the month, violent clashes between the police and the population claimed more than thirty-eight casualties (ICG 2003, 8 and Ruedy 2005, 279). Although some of the grievances expressed during the 2001 Kabylia riots were nourished by cultural anxieties (notably about the status of the Berber minority), chapter three showed that demonstrators were mostly calling for the end of police brutality, political accountability, and better housing conditions – all of which are of concern to the vast majority of Algerians.[86] However, despite their historical dimension, and the universal character of the demands made by the rioters, the 2001 Kabylia protests/demonstrations remained roughly circumscribed to the Kabylia region (and to the capital on June 14th, 2001) and did not spread to the rest of the country.

[86] In a report by the International Crisis Group, the author(s) rightly note that "contrary to view expressed in the international media, the conflict is not "ethnic" in nature, pitting "ethnic Berbers" against the Algerian state. Though the unrest is focused on Kabylia, it did not emerge from identity demands, but has stemmed from problems that are largely national in character (ICG 2003, 1)"

Theoretically, the desertion of the informational cascade that was being formed during the 2001 protests in Kabylia is puzzling. While the revolts lasted an impressive seven weeks, claimed dozens of lives and were largely covered by local and international media, these protests remained largely localized in the Kabylia region and did not spread to the rest of the country. By way of comparison, the 1988 protests took a national dimension in less than 5 days (Roberts 2003, 292) while the Tunisian revolution spread from the center of the country to the capital in two weeks only. Why then did the protest in Kabylia fail to take a national dimension? As shown in chapter three, the lack of involvement of national intermediate actors provides a first explanation. However, police violence, the number of deaths and media coverage should have been enough to create a perception of exceptionality (and bypass the silence of intermediate actors). What explains the abrupt end of the social movement dynamic that was forming in 2001?

The following paragraphs will show that this apparent paradox can be explained by the theory on informational cascades (notably Lohmann 1994 and Kricheli et al. 2011). Chapter three showed that mobilization failed in 2001 because the riots were initiated by a part of the population that was perceived as being culturally different. The absence of intermediate actors at the national level nourished this impression and hindered social mobilization outside of Kabyla. In line with Kricheli et al. (2011) conclusion on the correlation between repression and successful development of informational cascade, an examination of the Kabylia 2001 events (in their historical and cultural context) shows that

Kabylia's long history of opposition to the state weakened the signal projected by the riots/demonstrations of 2001. In particular, this section argues that the informational cascade born in Kabylia in 2001 failed to take a national dimension because the signal sent by the turmoil in Kabylia to the rest of the population lacked a symbolic dimension of exceptionality. Because the Algerian population (outside of Kabylia) is historically used to dissent originating from Kabylia the events of 2001 in Kabylia did not create a perception of exceptionality at the national level (even if the events were indeed exceptional even by Kabylian standards). Thus, for ordinary Algerians, the 2001 riots were just another one of the numerous Berber acts of dissent against the central authorities and did not seem historically exceptional. The lack of involvement of non-Kabyle intermediate actors nourished this perception. With no respected intermediate actors outside of Kabylia bandwagoning on the events, the popular protests of 2001 remained geographically limited to the Kabylia region.

While the frustration related to unemployment, poor housing conditions, and state contempt expressed by the youth of Kabylia was shared by the quasi totality of the Algerian population, the protests were perceived by the rest of the population as yet another one of the numerous instances of Kabyle revolt against the state (Roberts 2003, 290) to which the country has been accustomed to even before its independence. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, Kabylia disproportionately mobilized during the French colonization, after the independence of the country, remained largely opposed to the regime in the following years, while mobilizing again in 1980, 1988, and 2001. Today, the

region remains a hotbed for Islamic terrorism and regular acts of defiance against the state. The impression that the Black spring events were exclusively a Kabyle affair was also nourished by the absence of mobilization from non-Kabyle actors of course but also by the authorities who cleverly framed the spring riots as an identity question (therefore limited to the Kabylia region) instead of a social one which helped limit the informational cascade that was forming in the country. In other words, the perception of exceptionality that could have broken the local cognitive bias and signaled to everyone the presence of a historical opportunity for contestation did not occur in the rest of the country because non-Kabyle Algerians population perceived the protests simply as another one of the many acts of Kabyle dissent to which the country

In summary, the 2001 riots in Kabylia are a clear illustration of a successful informational cascade at the regional level and failed informational cascade at the national one. Police violence[87] which did not hesitate to kill more than 38 people in less than 96 hours in the last week of April 2001, (ICG 2003, 8), the involvement of local intermediate actors (who mobilized their networks and organized massive protests) as well as national and international media coverage led to the development of a successful informational cascade in Kabylia. However, this informational cascade remained limited to the Kabylia region and failed to take a national dimension because despite their severity, the events did not seem exceptional to the general population who is accustomed to the restive Berber region mobilizing regularly against the regime. The signal

[87] For many analysts, the excessive reaction of the police and the provocations of its members is the main catalyst of the 2001 riots (See ICG 2003, 8).

received by Algerians outside of Kabylia was not strong enough to create perception of exceptionality that could have made the rest of the population realize that a historical opportunity for mobilization was occurring.

Conclusion

This chapter have shown that the Algerian state played a crucial role in preventing the onset of a national wide informational cascade by carefully placing restraint on the indiscriminate use of violence by security forces, giving limited "voice" through the media, and co-opting intermediate actors to foreclosure the opportunity for popular rebellion. More importantly perhaps, this chapter also showed that the inability of the 2011 riots/CNCD protests and the 2001 Kabyle protests to evolve into national mass mobilization is the result of the absence of a perception of exceptionality that could have signaled to the population the presence of an opportunity for contestation. Because the country witnesses dozens of random acts of protests every week, it is difficult for the general population to realize that there is an opening for social mobilization. Contrary to the Tunisian case where the exceptional gravity of the events that were happening in late December 2010 broke the local cognitive bias shared locally and signaled to everyone that individual grievances vis-à-vis the regime were felt by everyone, the multiplication of incidents in Algeria prevents the development of a sense of exceptionality that could encourage people to bandwagon.

Chapter Six: Satellite Television and Social Media

"It is as if, no offense, you're handicapped in a wheelchair. And I come and I give you a nice haircut, and I trim your beard, and I put perfume on you, and I introduce a woman to you. Well, the woman she will look at you and she will just see that you are handicapped." (I. Hidouri, personal interview, February 21st, 2012).

Media coverage played an important role in the development of a successful informational cascade in Tunisia but failed to produce the same result in Algeria. This chapter aims to shed some light on the role played by media in its different forms in both countries by underlining the specific ways in which digital media users, foreign satellite channels, and official media covered the December 2010/January 2011 events in both countries.

After examining the theoretical debate on the role of digital means of communication and presenting the state of media in Tunisia and Algeria, this chapter will show that digital means of communication, foreign satellite channels, and local media all helped nourish the Tunisian informational cascade of late 2010 albeit trough three distinct mechanisms. On the one hand, Tunisians digital activists used the anti-censorship tools and strategies developed in the past to follow and document local events while alarming foreign media about the regime abuses in the center of the country. On the other hand, foreign satellite channels used the content generated locally as well as their existing networks (notably their connections with local unions and lawyers) to cover the events in an extensive fashion and create a rare sense of exceptionality within the

population. Finally, the Tunisian section will show that official media's clumsy coverage of the events also helped nourish the Tunisian informational cascade by unwillingly highlighting the tension between reality and the official discourse.

In regards to Algeria, this chapter argues that the relative freedom enjoyed by the local press (which has been extensively reporting on the numerous acts of protest happening in the past) hindered the perception of exceptionality that could have formed in the country by conveying a sense of déjà-vu that prevented the formation of a sense of exceptionality (and eventually of an informational cascade) within the population.

New vs. Traditional Media: A Theoretical Debate

As noted in detail in chapter one, experts in new technologies such as Clay Shirky (2008), Howard and Hussain (2011) highlight the importance of crowdsourcing, web 2.0, and digital activism for the development of mass mobilization while others downplay the role of new media and digital communication technologies. In particular, scholars such as Gregory Gause III (2011), Halim Rane and Sumra Salem (2012) for instance, argue that the impact of traditional media such as television had a higher impact on Arab revolutions than digital technologies. Similarly, after analyzing more than six million tweets about Arab revolutions in 2011, Deen Freelon found that the social platform Twitter served more as a space to discuss Arab revolutions *outside* the Arab world than a real tool for local mobilization (Hounshell 2011).

The conclusions drawn in the literature were confirmed during a number of interviews made in the field. For Lotfi Hajji, Al-Jazeera's correspondent in Tunis, online social networks and traditional media outlets are complementary (L. Hajji, personal interview, February 13th, 2012). Indeed, satellite televisions who sometimes did not have access to the most important points of tension relied on user generated content to cover the events happening in the country which led to a symbiotic relationship between traditional journalists and cyber-activists. While the former were using the massive content generated at the grassroots level to compensate for their limited access to the field, activists on the ground could see their personal content aired on major international channels ((Hänska-Ahy and Shapour 2013, 30).

Media and Revolution in Tunisia: The Unintended Consequences of Regulation

As noted in chapter four, the arrival of Ben Ali at the head of the Tunisian state was the final blow to the already weak independent media outlets in the country. Using a mix of intimidation, direct censorship, and co-optation, Ben Ali was able to hermetically seal the country's media field by imprisoning and torturing independent voices, intimidating foreign correspondents, and widening the censorship powers of the various governmental agencies responsible of overseeing the media production in the country.

In 2010, the country's 265 written publications, its two public television channels and eight public radio stations were all heavily regulated by the country's press code and closely supervised by the Tunisian Press Agency

(TAP) and the Tunisian Agency for external communication (ATCE) (Chouika cited in Blaise 2011). As pointed out by Chouikha (2007), private radios were not allowed to broadcast any opinion pieces while being formally forbidden to air any material that could "threaten public order or affect the reputation of the country" (Chouikha 2007). The telecommunication and press codes (Chouikha 2007) firmly placed "all broadcasting activities under the authority of the ministers of telecommunication, defense, and interior (Chouikha 2007)".

While traditional venues for information were all under the control of the authorities, the regime was also attempting to exert the same degree of surveillance and censorship over the massive digital content produced on the internet both by local and international actors. Aware of the importance of new means of digital communication for the economic development of the country, the Tunisian regime heavily invested on local digital infrastructures by helping put in place hundreds of public spaces for Internet access for instance (Blaise 2011, 30-1). However, with the development of the Internet, the country's media landscape began experiencing a structural tension. As highlighted by Blaise (2011), the government needed to develop digital infrastructures in order to nourish the country's economic development but also needed to make sure that the new means of digital communications were not threatening the regime. In order to resolve this tension, the authorities used a double strategy based on official legal limitations on the one hand (under the responsibility of a newly created Tunisian Agency of the Internet for instance) and direct censorship (Blaise 2011, 30-1).

This double strategy had two major consequences. While the mediocrity of officially approved media content and the availability of digital infrastructures encouraged Tunisians to go online for entertainment or to access independent information, the randomness of the regime's censorship strategy encouraged the politicization of many a-political Tunisians who became gradually angered by their government's arbitrary censorship of inoffensive a-political digital content such as cooking blogs, sports forums, or pornographic pages. As highlighted by Slim Ayedi, a thirty year-old blogger from Tunis, apolitical forums, particularly those related to sports, socialized people and gradually politicized them (S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012). For the young blogger, "it is no surprise that the first confrontation between parts of the population and the police started in Ultras's circles after 2004" (S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012). Groups of ultras were made of soccer fans, many of whom, socialized and developed a new political consciousness online.

More importantly, the absurd and ad-hoc nature of censorship in the country encouraged Tunisians to learn very early on to use online tools to bypass the limitations of the regime and access pages of interest. Between 2008 and 2010, Tunisians developed new techniques to bypass censorship such as Internet proxies[88] (L. Blaise, personal interview, February 23rd, 2012) first to access non-political outlets and gradually political ones such as Takriz.com or Nawaat.org, a popular citizen information website which later played an important informational role during the 2011 revolution (L. Blaise, personal interview, February 23rd, 2012). By 2010, tools for the circumvention of censorship were so

[88] Proxies are tools that allow users to hide their IP address and access censored websites easily.

popular that Abdelkrim Benabdallah, a twenty something local cyber-activist confidently said that prior to the 2011 revolution "half of internet users in the country used proxies on a daily basis" (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012).

The failure of the authorities to effectively control or limit access to subversive digital content had another important consequence by showing that the security services (and notably those responsible of censorship) did not have the technical abilities to keep up with the development of the internet in the country (L. Blaise, personal interview, February 23rd, 2012). This observation was anecdotally corroborated during an interview with Samer El-Feriani, a former high-ranking intelligence service official, who – despite seeming to be a very knowledgeable and experienced official, was using his son's Skype account. While the general population was quickly learning to use the technological tools needed to circumvent the regime's censorship of the Internet, a number of local bloggers and cyber-activists started gaining credibility locally but also with international media outlets[89] (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). By the mid-2000s, local cyber activists were firmly committed to defending their right for free access to the Internet. Between 2005 and 2008, digital activists focused their efforts on non-political issues in order to be able to secure a minimal space for social mobilization relatively immune from state repression (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). The 2010 "Sayeb Salah ya Ammar" or "Nhar 3la Ammar" campaign marked the use

[89] Especially when Zouheir Yahyaoui (a digital activists involved with Tunezine.com) was tortured and killed (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)".

of new means of contention by young cyber-activists who congregated in flash-mobs in summer 2010 to denounce censorship in the country (Kerrou 2012). However it is important to note that prior to the revolution, digital activist did not seek to overthrow the regime but simply to develop the technical skills to secure a space for free expression (S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012).

By the late 2000s, Tunisians realized that social media offered a relatively safe venue for information[90] and expression. A striking illustration of the sense of freedom that materialized within the country's Internet users happened in the beginning of 2010 during the "Mounashadates[91] (petitions)" episode that was cited by many interviewees as the first episode of online

[90] For A. Nouira, a lawyer and university professor from Tunis, the diffusion of secret US diplomatic cables leaked through the Wikileaks website signaled to the population that the "US was not longer protecting Ben Ali's regime (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012)". This impression was corroborated by the fact that the US ambassador in Tunis was not received by the government following a visit he made to members of the 18th October opposition movement that were waging a hunger strike (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012). Digital activist in the country also seem to share this assessment. For Hend Hendoud, "Wikileaks raised awareness amongst those Tunisians who thought that the rumors they were hearing [about the president and his family] were exaggerated (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)". For a local journalist, "Wikileaks allowed to confirm the rumors but was not a triggering factor (A. Bejaoui, personal interview, January 18, 2012)". For Abdelkarim Benabdallah, Wikileaks allowed people to realize that "those in power were liars and monstrous (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)".

[91] The '*Mounachadates*' episode occurred early 2010 (less than a year after Ben Ali's re-election) and opposed Abd-el-Wahab Abdallah, the influential information ministry of the regime and Ben Ali's Son-in-Law Sakhr el-Materi. Only few months after the triumphant re-election of the president, Abdallah (who was presumed to be close to Ben Ali's daughters) published a list in the press comprising the names and signatures of 60 prominent Tunisians calling for Ben Ali to run for elections again in 2014. Shortly after, el-Materi (the unofficial representative of the president's wife family) published a similar list in response, which gathered close to 1000 signatures. The publication of the two lists highlighted the existence of a deep point of contention between the respective families of the president and his wife. The former active in the Sahel region while the latter were in control of the capital and the North West of the country (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012). The episode of the '*Mounachadates*' singalled in an unambiguous way the unwillingness of the regime to engage in reform and the presidents firm intention to bend the constitution once again to remain in power. The '*Mounashadates'* episode created a deep sense of despair amongst all those who were still hoping for a change in 2014.

sedition in the country (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012 and S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012). After the publication of two petitions asking the president to re-run for presidential elections in 2014, many Tunisians took advantage of the anonymity offered by social media to mock the signatories of the two petitions (all close associates of the regime) in a spontaneous gesture unprecedented in the recent history of the country (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012 and S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012).

Media and Authoritarian Persistence in Algeria: Liberalizing the New Media to Prevent Revolution

Contrary to the Tunisian case where local journalists were forcefully silenced by Ben Ali's government, their Algerian counterparts enjoyed a much larger space for freedom of expression after the political liberalization of the country in the early nineties.

Before 1982, Algeria did not have a law regulating information in the country. Journalists able to operate were mostly associates of the regime (Dris 2013) and strictly confined by the limits of the 1976 charter which states that,

> "the socialist state guarantees all of public freedoms and notably freedom of expression, of thought, under the condition that it is not used to destroy the benefits of socialism or re-establish the exploitation of men by men" (Brahimi 1989 cited in Dris 2013).

With the establishment of a multi-party system in 1989, the media landscape of the country changed dramatically. As observed by Dris (2013), President Chadli encouraged the emergence of an independent press that was

supposed to represent the variety of political and economic visions that were flourishing under the new system. The president provided the emerging independent press in the country with financial and institutional resources such as office space, equipment, and funding (Garon 2003, 60 and Dris 2013).

As noted by Dris (2013) again, the 1990 law on information ended the state's monopoly over information while marking the beginning of the professionalization of journalism in the country (Dris 2013 and Mostefaoui 1998, 161). The multiplication of press titles in the following years transformed the media field in the country in an unexpectedly free space for journalistic expression (especially when compared to neighboring countries) (Mostefaoui 1998, 162). In this perspective, it is interesting to note that the popularity of the country's press explain in part the popularity of the FIS message during the early nineties as well as the victory of Liamin Zeroual during the presidential elections of 2005 (Garon 2003, 56).

The intensification of the civil war in the mid-nineties, however, transformed the relationship between the government and the country's media actors (Dris 2013) and marked the beginning of what Lise Garon calls a "dangerous alliance" between the local civil society and the authorities (Garon 2003, 5). While a new cell was created to manage the local press coverage of security issues (Dris 2013), critical articles (especially those pertaining to the government's counterinsurgency strategy) resulted in administrative and financial pressures for their authors (Dris 2013). Since the mid-nineties, the state has been using its ability to distribute resources (in the form of advertising

contracts) and its monopoly over printing shops to pressure the local publications into friendly coverage (Mostefaoui 1998, 163). In 2012, only two dailies were able to set up their own printing houses (Reporters without Borders 2012).

In 2012, Algeria was ranked 122 out of 179 in Reporters Without Borders 2012 index under "difficult situation (Reporters Without Borders 2012)". The same report highlighted the fact that "press offences remain punishable by prison sentences and fines[92]" while local authorities "repeatedly block the distribution of international newspapers in the country (Reporters without Borders 2012). However, despite these limitations, Algeria's written press remains relatively free compared to its neighbors in the Arab world. The relative freedom enjoyed by the country's written press is nourished by the fragmented nature of Algeria's first power circle. Local strongmen all possess their own written periodicals which helps maintain a dynamic media environment.

Media and the Question of Social Mobilization in Tunisia

The previous section showed that prior to the 2010 revolution, the Tunisian population was already massively trained to use social media (with one fifth of the population using Facebook for instance (Howard and Hussain 2011,

[92] "Article 144a of the Algerian criminal code, in force since 2001, provides for jail sentences of two to 12 years and fines for any comments seen as defamatory (Reporters without Borders 2012).

37))[93] while being familiar with the technological tools necessary to circumvent state censorship (although many interviewed cyber activists emphasized the fact that most Tunisians were mostly using these tools to access non-political content). The development of social media in the late 2000s also allowed the solidification of communication networks between previously unconnected social groups. For Slim Ayedi, a thirty-one year-old blogger,

> "the increasing popularity of the internet between 2008 and 2010 broke the regionalist logic that was prevalent in the past (such as the Gafsa/Tunis rivalry)" (S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012).

Lastly, the relative success of previous acts of contestation such as the '*Munashadates* episode' or the "Sayeb Salah' campaign also made online activists realize the potential of digital mobilization. For local bloggers, "the 'Sayeb Salah' campaign showed that contestation was possible" (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012 and H. El-Mekki, personal interview, February 9th, 2012) while illustrating the fact that digital activism could be translated into real-life mobilization.

In this perspective, the intensification of violence of the clashes between the state security services and the population in late 2010 encouraged Tunisians to use the available anti-censorship tools and digital instrastructure to obtain unbiased information about the events that were occurring in the center of the country. (Blaise 2011, 7). Once the feeling of exceptionality induced by state repression (and subsequent popular resistance) became widely shared, the

[93] While 20% of the population used social media outlets, virtually all adults in the country had access to a cellular phone (most of them capable of taking videos) (Howard and Hussain 2011, 37).

strategies used previously by Tunisians willing to avoid censorship to access YouTube or pornographic websites for instance were simply redirected against the regime.

On the specific role played by bloggers and cyber-activists, interviewees active in the country's digital media were divided between those for whom digital activism was important (but rarely the most crucial factor for the success of the Tunisian revolution), and a second group of outright critics.

Haytham El-Mekki, a prominent twenty-nine year-old journalist at Mosaïque FM, emphasized the key role played by bloggers such as Slim Amamou[94] who were able to "break the fear within [local] bloggers" (H. El-Mekki, personal interview, February 9th, 2012). Being active in his country's blogosphere since the end of the nineties, El-Mekki was able to use his contacts as an online community manager (i.e. publicist on digital social networks) developed prior to the revolution to attract the attention of a number of foreign newspapers such as the Guardian or the New York Times, foreign TV stations such as France 24 or France 2 as well as a number of NGOs such as Global Voices and Amnesty International (H. El-Mekki, personal interview, February 9th, 2012). Prior to the revolution, the young journalist "had the know-how for diffusion of information on the internet and [the creation of an online] buzz" (H. El-Mekki, personal interview, February 9th, 2012) on FB and Twitter. For Hend Hendoud, the courageous work of a number of bloggers in the early days of the 2010 revolution was particularly important. Digital "activists such as Lina Ben

[94] Slim Amamou: long-time member of the pirate party (Howard and Hussain 2011, 37), blogger and active contributor on twitter.

Mhenni, took enormous personal risks to document the events that were happening in the center of the country" (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). Indeed, digital activists such as Sofiane Chorabi and Lina Ben Mhenni travelled to the center of the country, talked to local families, documented the numerous instances of police violence and shared the information on their personal platforms as well as with major foreign media outlets (L. Ben Mhenni, personal interview, January 19th, 2012). Bloggers such as Sofiane Chorabi or Aziz Amami also organized a protest in the center of the capital on December 25th "which lasted 60 minutes before being broken by the police" (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012).

For a number of online actors, digital activists played an important role by "deciding to push and not let the government cover up the events [which were occurring the center of the country] (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)". For another digital activist,

> "bloggers sought to amplify and distribute information as much as possible. They translated, referenced and distributed the material that was filmed locally" (S. Ayedi, personal interview, February 8th, 2012).

Local cyber-activists also did not hesitate to "orient" videos in order to stir emotions within the rest of the population. For Hend Hendoud, "videos were purposefully made to show that violence was directed towards normal people" (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012).

Putting the 2010 events in a historical perspective, other digital activists highlight the availability of digital content as a contributing factor for local social mobilization. For Abdelkarim Benabdallah, the absence of mobile Internet

in 2008 explains why the 2008 events did not spread to the rest of the country.[95] For the young blogger, "everyone owned a Chinese phone with a camera (…) The cycle of the Internet reached maturity in 2010 and became a terrible tool for mobilization" (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012).

Digital social networks nourished by content generated by local bloggers allowed activists in every city to follow the events that were happening in their own towns and villages with constant updates on police violence and the number of casualties (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). When the city of Thala was besieged by the security forces at the end of December for instance, local bloggers documented the events hourly (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012), a statement that was shared by other actors such as Lasaad Yacoubi, a senior executive with the UGTT who underlined the fact that "the internet detailed everything minute by minute" (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23, 2012).

Additionally, it is important to note that digital activists who played an important role during the Tunisian revolution were respected individuals who did not belong to neither one of the country's most polarized political forces (i.e. the Islamists or the radical left) (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)". In this perspective, their coverage of the events in the last two weeks of December 2010 was received with a lot of attention. As highlighted by Hend Hendoud, "everyone believed Lina [ben Mhenni] who was not an extremist (neither from the left nor an Islamist) (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January

[95] Other digital activists disagree with this statement. For Henda Hendoud, "thousands of videos [documenting the events of 2008 in Rdeyef] were available and were as shocking as the ones that were filmed in 2010 (H. Hendoud, personal interview, January 18th, 2012)".

18th, 2012)". The enthusiasm of the previous digital activists was shared by a number of observers of Tunisian politics. For Amel Bejaoui, a journalist with the official Tunisia Press Agency (TAP), "bloggers reported what was happening in the country and helped diffuse information" (A. Bejaoui, personal interview, January 18th, 2012). For Leila. Ben Mahmoud, a young female lawyer from the capital, "Facebook broke 'the taboo' of criticizing the president and his family" (L. Ben Mahmoud, personal interview, February 9th, 2012).

However, despite their emphasis on the importance of social media, none of the previous interviewees credited digital media for being more than a contributing factor to social mobilization (with most of the credit going to those who took the risk to physically confront the police on the ground). For A. Benabdallah, "bloggers are no heroes but did play their part" (A. Benabdallah, personal interview, January 18th, 2012).

Other observers were much more critical of the role played by digital media. For Malek Khadraoui, a member of Nawaat.org,[96] the role played by local bloggers during the Tunisian revolution has been exaggerated by some foreign observers, such as journalists and academics, who turned a blind eye on the human rights abused perpetrated during Ben Ali's rule. These foreign actors felt that emphasizing the role played by young westernized bloggers was a way to make up for that tacit support (M. Khadraoui, personal interview, March 30th, 2012). For Khadraoui, digital activists, such as young Lina Ben Mhenni, acclaimed in Europe or North America,

[96] A popular independent news portal which played an important informational role during the 2010/2011 events.

> "often fit with Western models (usually young westernized female bloggers) and allow these observers to feel less guilty about turning a blind eye on the abuses perpetrated by Ben Ali's regime" (M. Khadraoui, personal interview, March 30th, 2012).

Other interviewees also agree with the previous statement. For S. Tahri, a senior executive at the UGTT, local activists were helped by "foreign interests" and a number of digital activists were able to unfairly free-ride on the revolution (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23, 2012). Similarly, for Lilia Blaise, a young journalist, "bloggers did not do the revolution. Videos were filmed by normal citizens" (L. Blaise, personal interview, February 23rd, 2012). Khadraoui also emphasized the fact that contrary to popular perceptions, calls for mobilization did not happen on the internet but through real life linkages (M. Khadraoui, personal interview, March 30th, 2012). His statement was confirmed by local militants such as Fathia Naceri from the center of the country who noted that "coordination in cities like Kasserine was made via telephone" (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012). Indeed, some testimonies show that a number of those who mobilized were almost totally outside the digital grid. For Ms. Naceri, even if,

> "bloggers were present from the beginning, those who actually mobilized were so destitute that they could not even afford Internet (in the local cyber-cafés)" (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012).

While there was no consensus on the role played by digital media, virtually all interviewees highlighted the important informational role played by mass media, particularly Al-Jazeera and France 24 during the 2010/2011 revolutionary events.

For a forty-eight year-old militant from Kasserine who heard about Bouazizi through international channels,

> "people mobilized on the early days of the revolution after seeing videos taken with cell phones and broadcasted on international TV channels" (A. Saadaoui, personal interview, January 25, 2012).

Strikingly, it is interesting to note that many militants from the center of the country such as Fathia Naceri also heard of the events in their region through mass media[97] although they lived one hour only from Sidi Bouzid (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012).

Indeed, Al-Jazeera broadcasted the speeches made by local activists such as Khaled Aouainia very early on and the testimonies aired by the Qatar-based channel had a deep emotional impact (F. Naceri, personal interview, January 25th, 2012). The material aired by Al-Jazeera was then re-used and translated by other channels such as France 24 (K. Aouainia, personal interview, January 26th, 2012). Al-Jazeera also contacted a number of local activists who had no idea how the channel obtained their personal number (K. Aouainia, personal interview, January 26th, 2012). For Tahri, "Al-Jazeera served as a platform for the propagation of mobilization" (S. Tahri, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012).

Union members (many of whom were directly in contact with a number of foreign channels) recognized the importance of the media coverage of 2011

[97] Interestingly, as noted in chapter three, it is ironic to note that some interviewees heard of Bouazizi, and realized the gravity of the situation in the country, only after Ben Ali made his highly mediatized visit to him in the hospital on December 28th (A. Jemali, personal interview, March 1st, 2012). Similarly, footage shot by officials showing popular support to the regime were debunked on Facebook and nourished the popular uprising even more (A. Nouira, personal interview, January 10th, 2012)

events for the success of the revolution (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23, 2012) but also noted the complementarity between traditional and digital media. For Lasaad Yacoubi, head of the executive bureau of the secondary school teachers union, media (both traditional and digital means) allowed "to break the sacralities" (L. Yacoubi, personal interview, January 23rd, 2012). Similarly for Shiheb Mihoub, a twenty-seven year-old unemployed young man from Sidi-Bouzid,

> "Facebook and Twitter played a role but Al-Jazeera played a very important role (…) Al-Jazeera is what have awaken Tunis from its sleep (S. Mihoub, personal interview, March 8, 2012)".

Other observers highlight a generational shift between users of digital media and satellite channels viewers. For Aymen Jemali, a former reporter with Nessma television, facebook had a higher impact on the youth whereas older generations were more sensitive to information broadcasted by the traditional TV networks (A. Jemali, personal interview, March 1st, 2012).

Finally, the discussion of the role of media during the Tunisian revolution will be incomplete without an examination of the way the governmental media handled the events in the country. Indeed, once the clashes between the population and the authorities started to take a major dimension by the end of December, official media were called to uphold the position of the government. However, the prevalence of censorship in official media outlets was so strong that it was impossible for journalists to defend the government's position without recognizing the severity of the situation (Blaise 2011, 35-6). While official media tried at first to simply ignore the social unrest that was

happening in the center of the country, Ben Ali's unexpected visit to the badly wounded Bouazizi on December 28th, suddenly forced official journalists to simultaneously cover the visit (which signaled the severity of the situation) without acknowledging its real causes. As underlined by Raouf Seddik a journalist from the very official La Presse daily cited in Blaise (2011),

> "'I was called to write an article calling for the end of violence…Implying, violence by insurgents. My article condemned violence but did not mention whether it was the violence of the authorities or the protesters'" (cited in Blaise (2011, 34).

Because the message put forward by officials (including the president) did not align with the reality of the situation, Blaise (2011) remarked that it became extremely difficult for local media to continue pretending that the local situation was under control (Blaise 2011, 35-6). While the president was firing ministers and asking official media outlets to denounce those who were forcefully resisting the authorities, the official media networks were paralyzed because they could not ignore the events nor cover them (Blaise 2011, 35-6).

As observed by Blaise (2011)

> "contradiction reaches its paroxysm in the second week of January 2011 when the president issued a statement saying that 'the Law will have the last word' against those responsible for violence" while calling at the same time "for '[a spirit of] civism and citizenship' and announcing a series of extravagant measures such as the "hiring of 1500 of university graduates" by the UTICA (the Tunisian Union for Industry, Commerce, and Artisanat"(37).

In summary, digital media, official media, and international independent channels all helped create a perception of exceptionality in the country and fuel a national informational cascade through different mechanisms.

While citizen journalism helped document the abuses perpetrated by the regime in a very detailed fashion, foreign satellite channels gave these locally produced videos the respectability and the audience needed to create an informational cascade. Conversely, the clumsy attempts made by the official media to cover up social unrest also participated to nourish the local informational cascade by showing the Tunisian population that the situation was so dire that even official media had to address it.

In contrast, as the following section will show, a similar logic did not occur in Algeria. While the Algerian media covered the January 2011 events in detail, the specific nature of Algeria's media landscape led to a different result.

Algeria: the Liberalization Effect

In Algeria, the relative freedom enjoyed by the local press led to a different result. Although the Algerian media covered the riots of early January 2011 in detail, the coverage did not differ from previous reports on other events of popular protest and used the same vocabulary used in other instances of social protest, which hindered the perception of exceptionality that could have formed following the January 2011 clashes. While the daily El-Watan published for instance a series of alarming titles in its front page between the 7th and the 11th of January 2011, these titles conveyed a sense of déjà-vu to most Algerians and used almost the same wording used in previous editions. El-Watan's headline on January 7th 2011 reading "Riots: The Wildfire" for instance was almost the same as the one written on March 19th, 2010 edition which read "Algiers Biggest

Shantytown on Fire" or the one of April 30th, 2012 "Self-immolation Attempt, Riots: Jijel is on Fire" (El Watan Archives, 2013). Examples of alarming headlines mentioning the words "clashes", "fights", "casualties", "panic", "anger", "bloody night", "revolt" and "battles" (all appearing in bold letters on the front-page of El-Watan in the last four years) could be multiplied over and over again (see El-Watan Archives 2013). Thus, as observed in chapters three and five, the Algerian population has been used to hundreds of similar acts of protest happening every year and had no reason to react to the media coverage of the January 2011 protests in an unusual way.

Conclusion

In summary, a combination of censorship and sudden influx of information (stemming from different sources and platforms) contributed to the formation of a powerful sense of exceptionality in Tunisia and the formation of a major informational cascade. In conjunction with police violence and the involvement of intermediate actors, media coverage in the country signaled the presence of a historic opportunity for political contestation and allowed Tunisians to experience the "cognitive liberation" (McAdam 1982) necessary for social mobilization.

In contrast, the relative freedom enjoyed by Algeria's media prevented the formation of a similar sense of exceptionality locally. Because the population is used to alarming coverage by its local press covering the details of the many instances of popular protest, the signaling effect of media coverage is weak and

unable to create the cognitive shock necessary for the formation of a successful informational cascade.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

"What does a union worker do anyhow?"
Anonymous twenty-nine year-old Algerian cook.

In analytical terms, this study used the literature on informational cascades to highlight the importance of three independent variables, namely regime violence, the involvement of intermediate actors, and media coverage; and one intermediate variable: perception of exceptionality, for the development of mass social and political mobilization.

Building on a number of insights from the literature on informational cascades, my study addressed the empirical question of why some symbolic acts of protest trigger mass mobilization while others fail. I have argued that despite sharing similar structural conditions, Tunisia and Algeria witnessed divergent political outcomes primarily due to two inter-related factors: variations in the level of participation and institutional strength of key actors in civil society and variations in the sentiment of exceptionality produced by these actors. Taken together, these factors led to mass political mobilization in Sidi-Bouzid in 2010. Since under authoritarian settings citizens are rarely able to voice their discontent and mobilize popular protest against the coercive apparatus of the state, this finding is of particular importance in both empirical and theoretical terms.

This final chapter will first seek to summarize the methodological approach taken in this essay while highlighting the specific role played by each variable vis-à-vis the others. Second, this chapter will examine the cases of Libya, Morocco, and Mauritania, the three other countries of the Arab Maghreb in order to underline the similarities and differences with the cases examined in this work. Finally, the last section will examine the theoretical limitations of this study while presenting options for future research .

Findings and Implications

The comparison between the failed mobilization in Monastir in March 2010 and the successful one originating from Sidi-Bouzid in December of the same year highlighted the role played by local intermediate actors in Sidi-Bouzid who mobilized their national and international support networks, contacted the media, organized strikes, and actively encouraged the rest of the population to engage in contentious activities by providing militants with formal and informal resources such as safe locations for protest, legal advice, and logistical support. Police violence and media coverage also helped mobilization succeed in December 2010 by breaking the informational silence in Tunisia and helping everyone realize the presence of a historical opportunity for social mobilization. In this perspective, chapter two highlighted the fact that actions taken by the authorities (who used excessive and indiscriminate violence for instance) or national media (whose clumsy coverage of the events angered the population even more) all helped nourish social mobilization in the country.

In addition, the comparison between the two cases enabled me to control for the role of media coverage. As illustrated in the following table, even if the technological infrastructure was already "mature" in March 2010, neither satellite channels nor the digital sphere seized the political potential of the events that followed the suicide of Abdesslam Trimech in Monastir. As observed by Lotfi Hajji, Al-Jazeera's correspondent in Tunisia, the suicide of Abdesslam Trimech in Monastir "(…) was treated as a simple fait-divers" (L. Hajji, personal interview, February 13th, 2012) without a political connotation. Because local union members refused to politicize the incident, neither local journalists nor cyber-activists were able to exploit (or even identify) the mobilizing potential of the incident and trigger social mobilization. Thus, the comparison between the two cities clearly shows that media (both in their traditional and digital forms) do not trigger social mobilization by themselves but need to be nourished by other factors.

	Tunisia	
	Sidi Bouzid	Monastir
Violence	✔	-
Moderate Actors	✔	-
Media	✔	✔
National Perception of Exceptionality	✔	-
Mobilization	**YES**	**NO**

Table 1: Within-Case analysis: Tunisia 2010.

Similarly, the analysis of the Algerian case helped confirm the previous conclusion about the role of the media while clarifying the weight of the remaining variables. On the one hand, the study the CNCD protests in 2011 confirmed the conclusion drawn from the Tunisian case by showing that media coverage is not enough to trigger social mobilization by itself. Even if Algeria's newspapers and television, as well as foreign channels covered the CNCD protests extensively, the detailed media coverage of the protests organized by the pro-democracy movement failed to trigger mass mobilization.

On the other hand, the examination of popular mobilization in Kabylia in 2001 showed that regime violence alone is not enough to trigger national social mobilization. Even if the events of spring 2001 in Kabylia were marked by dozens of casualties and thousands of wounded, the protests occurring in the eastern part of the country failed to spread to the rest of the population. Chapter three showed that the early abortion of the Kabyle informational cascade was in part due to the refusal of national intermediate actors to encourage social mobilization. Without national figures willing to frame the protests in the region as a national affair, the events remained limited to the region where they were born. As shown in the following table, without intermediate actors, the brutality of the regime alone did not suffice to trigger social mobilization outside of the Berber region.

	Algeria	
	CNCD 2011	Kabylia 2001
Violence	-	✔
Moderate Actors	-	-
Media	✔	✔
National Perception of Exceptionality	-	-
Mobilization	**NO**	**NO**

Table 2: Within-case analysis: Algeria (2001/2011).

We are then left with two variables: intermediate actors and the perception of exceptionality whose importance is confirmed by a more detailed examination of the 2001 events in Kabylia. As shown in chapter five, even if the 2001 events in Kabylia were impressive by all means, the events failed to create a sense of exceptionality outside of the region where they were happening because the rest of the Algerian population is accustomed to hundreds of cases of unrest occurring every year in the country and particularly used to these acts of protest happening in the traditionally rebellious Kabylia region.

Thus, Table 3 shows that an informational cascade requires the presence of a national perception of exceptionality fueled by the involvement of national intermediate actors.

	Algeria 2001	
	Rest of the Country	Kabylia 2001
Violence	✔	✔
Moderate Actors	-	✔
Media	✔	✔
Perception of Exceptionality	-	✔
Mobilization	**NO**	**YES**

Table 3: Within-case analysis: Algeria 2001.

Figure 2 below summarizes the logic of the mechanism through which informational cascades (and social mobilization) occurred in the cases examined in this work while clarifying the relationship between the different variables.

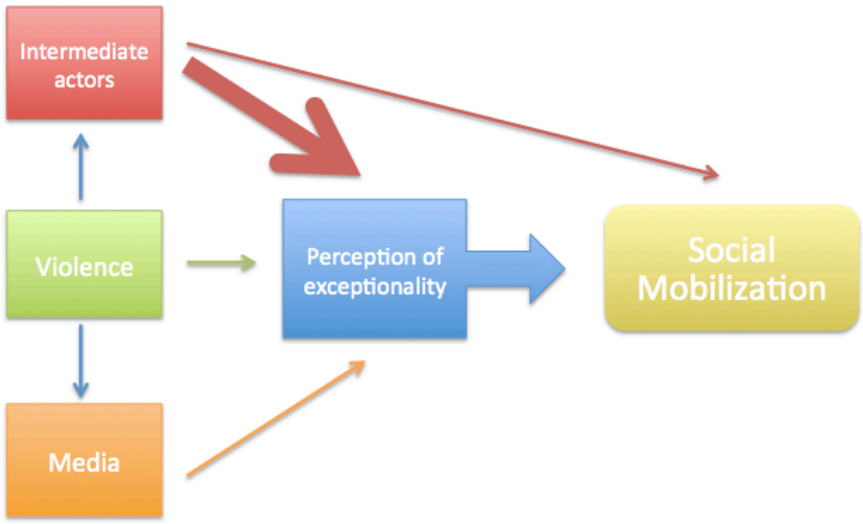

Fig. 2 The logic of informational cascades in Algeria and Tunisia.

Following the occurrence of a random act of protest under an authoritarian regime, excessive police violence nourishes a perception of exceptionality by signaling to the population the severity of an incident that could have remained invisible otherwise. Scenes of public violence are traumatic

events that resonate strongly with the general population while explicitly demonstrating the degree of popular frustration. In particular, the use of live ammunition by the authorities is an important psychological threshold for even the most passive citizens. Second, as noted in the Tunisian case indiscriminate police violence angers new segments of society and forces new actors to take a stance and/or engage in mass mobilization. Families of victims of state violence, previously a-political actors are suddenly forced to take a political stance against the state and engage in contentious actions. Finally, police violence brings the attention of national and foreign media whose coverage of the events also helps nourish the general perception of exceptionality. In particular, media coverage helps signal the presence of widespread discontent by relaying the various instances of social unrest, giving added visibility to contesting actors, and attracting the attention of international actors.

However, the most important variable identified in this research is the involvement of intermediate actors (translated through a perception of exceptionality). Both in Sidi-Bouzid and Kabyla, local leaders were able to trigger mass mobilization by using their resources and prestige to encourage others to join. But more importantly, in both cases the very visible involvement of respected intermediate actors sent a strong signal to the rest of the population confirming the universality of the grievances shared at the individual level. In particular, the largely unexpected stance taken by allies of the regime (or respected local notables) in favor of political change created a deep sense of exceptionality within the population and encouraged other dissatisfied society

members and groups to join mobilization. In Tunisia, the revolving strikes organized by the UGTT signaled to the general population that the frustration felt at the individual level by ordinary Tunisians was actually shared even by former allies of the regime while encouraging other social groups (such as doctors or businessmen) to join the protests. Similarly in Algeria, the involvement of Kabyle notables in 2001 encouraged other generally apolitical social groups to join the protests. The case of the May 24th 2001 protest in Tizi-Ouzou where 10,000 women marched to express their dissatisfaction with the authorities (Roberts 2003, 289) is a case in point. However, the actions of intermediate actors need to create a perception of exceptionality at the national level without which, the rest of the population is unable to realize that there is an opportunity for contestation. As noted in chapter five, Algeria's long history of dissent makes it harder for local intermediate actors to create this perception and trigger informational cascades.

Lessons from the Rest of the Maghreb

The following section will examine the political trajectories of three other countries of the Maghreb during the Arab Spring and show that in all three cases, the decision of local actors to shift (or not) with the opposition very early on as well as their ability to or not to create a perception of exceptionality, explain the development or the absence of mass social mobilization.

Morocco.

Although Moroccans remained largely passive compared to their neighbours in Tunisia and Libya, an examination of the role played by local intermediate actors provides a good illustration of the important balancing role played by local unions, opposition parties and NGOs.

Following the successful Tunisian and Egyptian revolution in 2011, a number of young pro-democracy activists seized the historical momentum building in the region and called the rest of the population to take the streets and protest for change. Contrary to their Tunisian or Egyptian counterparts, the Moroccan pro-democracy activists of the February 20th movement were not calling for the departure of the head of the state but simply for more political accountability, an end to the endemic corruption in the country and more respect for human rights. The movement's slogan: "liberty, dignity, and social justice" carefully avoided to attack the palace even if a number of slogans called for more checks on the king's entourage. After successfully mobilizing tens of thousands of protestors in the first demonstrations,[98] the pro-democracy February 20th movement gradually fizzled by the beginning of 2012 before dying almost completely few months later.

Although the Moroccan population shares many of the grievances expressed elsewhere in the Arab world (particularly in regards to corruption, social inequalities and lack of economic opportunities), the population generally

[98] Estimates of the total number of demonstrators on February 20th 2011 for instance ranged between 37,000 (for the government) and 300,000 (for militants) (Mamfakinch 2011)

refused to seize the historical opportunity provided by the international context and largely restrained from joining the February 20th movement.

While students of Moroccan politics such as Driss Maghraoui (2011), Omar Bendourou (2013) and Nicolas Pelham (2012) trace the lack of mobilization in the country to the popularity of the King, constitutional maneuvering and/or the overall restraint of the authorities, it is interesting to examine the role played by some of the country's most important institutional actors. Indeed, the vast majority of the country's intermediate groups strongly mobilized in favor of the status quo. The very vocal unions, the popular Islamic PJD party (then in the opposition), the country's business elite, the francophone bourgeoisie, the urban middle-class, and rural traditional religious and tribal notables all stood firmly behind the king. Al-Massae, Morocco's most popular daily, but also the vast majority of the country's journalists heavily criticized the February 20th movement by questioning their loyalty to the country, their religiosity, or their political motives (Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeghally 2012, 878). While the country's main unions did pay lip service to the movement, their involvement remained largely passive (Baylocq and Granci 2013). For Mounia Bennani-Chaïbi and Mohamed Jeghally (2012), the passivity of the country's traditionally vocal unions is the result of a social agreement reached between the regime and the country's main workers' organizations even before the arrival of the new king into power (887) and the continuation of what Thierry Desrues (2013), calls "the preventive management of the threat of mobilization" by the authorities who quickly met with union leaders few weeks only after the

Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions (Desrues 2013). Similarly, while the youth sections of the country's biggest political forces (i.e. the Islamic PJD and the socialist USFP) did voice their support for the pro-democracy movement, heavy pressure from their respective hierarchies forced them to curtail their involvement in the pro-democracy protests (879).

The Moroccan case shows that local actors and notables mattered tremendously. While religious leaders such as Cheikh Hamza, the head of the Sufi Tariqa Boutchichiya, clearly called his (tens of thousands of)[99] followers to support the King's constitutional project (Serraj 2011), rural notables mobilized their supporters during the vote for the constitution and helped the king's reform be approved by a staggering 98%. The solidarity of the country's most important institutional actors and the palace is the natural prolongation of a sophisticated patrimonial system established by Hassan II and consolidated by Mohamed VI where access to state rent is generously provided in exchange for political loyalty.

In this perspective, it is interesting to note that even the limited success of some of the protests in the country (which may have reached one hundred-thousands in some cases) was due to the involvement of Al-Adl-Wal-Ihsane, one of the country's most vocal Islamic groups. Thus, when the leadership of the party called supporters to join the mobilization, tens of thousands of disciplined demonstrators showed on the streets. However, as soon as Cheick Yassine decided to disengage from popular mobilization, the February 20th movement

[99] Perhaps hundreds of thousands of supporters.

found itself deprived of the vast majority of its popular support during the demonstrations (Bassirou 2011).

Thus, the Moroccan case clearly illustrates the importance of intermediate actors (or rather lack of) for the absence of mobilization in the country. Even if the potential for social mobilization is important, the unwillingness of local intermediate actors to challenge the supremacy of the King makes social mobilization difficult.

Mauritania.

Although largely understudied, Mauritania's recent history provides valuable insight on the role of intermediate actors and inter-elite bargaining in a context of democratic transition. Indeed, after more than two decades in power, a military coup in 2005 ended President Mu'awiya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya's control[100] of the country (Economic Intelligence Unit 2008, 3) and marked the beginning of North Africa's first true democratic attempt. However, Mauritania's democratic experiment was abruptly ended after elected President Sidi Ould Cheick Abdallah was overthrown by Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz in 2008 (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 5). Despite the undemocratic arrival at the head of the state, Abdel Aziz was then able to democratically win the 2008 subsequent presidential elections with 53% of the vote (Economist

[100] However, as observed by Alain Antil and Céline Lesourd (2012), it is important to note that the country never witnessed the same degree of repression that all other Arab countries experienced in the last three decades. As noted by the two authors, "even during the most authoritarian moments of the last thirty years, spaces for freedom (of action or expression) always survived (Antil and Lesourd 2012)".

Country Report 2013, 5).

Following the successful revolutions in three neighboring countries, a number of Mauritanians from all social and ethnic origins seized the historical opportunity for social mobilization and attempted to imitate their neighbors to call for a number of reforms (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 1-2). As in Morocco, Mauritanians made a number of focused demands related to economic and political reform but did not call for the end of the regime (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 2)

Congregating in the capital, protesters came from different parts of society and included students, former slaves, retired military officers (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 7) but also from members of the civil society and the opposition (Antil and Lesourd 2012). The February 25th movement called for "a withdrawal of the military from politics, electoral reform, a larger space for youth in the political sphere, the adoption of a genuine employment policy, and the immediate departure of a government seen as incompetent" (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 4). However, as observed by Antil and Lesourd (2012), activities of the February 25th movement remained largely confined to the capital and were not able to attract the attention of other Mauritanian actors (Antil and Lesourd 2012).

One of the reason behind the failure of the mobilization in Mauritania is the popularity of the elected president who retains a large social and tribal support base (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 5) especially after his daring attempts to try some of the country's most corrupt personalities (Ould

Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 6 and (Economist Country Report 2013, 9). Although a number of high-ranking officials such as El Arbi Ould Jideine, the Vice President of the national assembly critiqued the president in May 2011 (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 7-8), traditional leaders sided with the government during the 2011 protests (Quatrano 2011). Thus, although the president had to deal with a difficult international context and a decrease in political support, his core supporters remained faithful to him (Ould Ahmed Salem and Samuel 2011, 9). As noted by Antil and Lesourd the February 25th movement failed to spread to the rest of society because "Intermediate bodies such as doctors or lawyers associations which had a major role elsewhere were missing" (Antil and Lesourd 2012).

Finally, contrary to the Tunisian and Egyptian cases for instances where the local heads of state refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the demands raised by protesters, the prompt reaction of the Mauritanian president also helped pre-empt mobilization. As noted by the same authors, the president quickly met with the representatives of the opposition while most of the demands expressed by the various unions who mobilized in the spring of 2011 were promptly satisfied by the president (Antil and Lesourd 2012). The regime also chose to de-escalate the situation by releasing political prisoners in the spring of 2011 (Quatrano 2011).

In this perspective, the Mauritanian case illustrates the importance of local actors' restraint for the failure of social mobilization (even if other variables may have played a role as well).

Libya.

Finally, the Libyan case also provides a good illustration of the causal mechanism highlighted in this study. Although it is difficult to examine the role played by institutional actors given the absence of almost all forms of organized corporations in the country, the role played by important members of the regime in the development of a local informational cascade seems to be crucial. In particular, the early defection of senior military and political officials played an important signaling role by showing all Libyans that the grievances felt by the general population were also felt in the highest governmental spheres. Indeed, while the country did witness a number of violent demonstrations in the past, (the most recent of which in 2006 when 11 people were killed by the authorities after a protest against the publication of Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad too a political dimension (Anaya 2012)), these protests were not accompanied by defections from high-ranking officials and did not lead to mass mobilization.

The major characteristic of the Benghazi 2011 protests, which eventually led to the development of a massive informational cascade and the fall of Muammar Gadhafi, was the early defection of a number of prominent officials who joined the rebellion in Benghazi few days only after its beginning. Sparked by the arrest on February 15th of a young Human Right Activist (Brahimi 2011, 606), pre-democracy protests in Benghazi quickly spread to the rest of the country and were immediately faced with massive state violence.

While the state's harsh response[101] to the protests did indeed fuel the local informational cascade, the most important characteristic of the 2011 Libyan revolution was the series of surprising defections of senior officials traditionally close to the regime. Thus, four days only after the first protest in Benghazi, the country's minister of justice, Mustafa Abdeljalil, joined the rebels (Reuters 2011) with whom he was supposed to negotiate on behalf of the regime (AFP 2011). The high-profile defection of the country's Justice minister was followed on the subsequent day by the defection of Abdul Fatah Yunis, a high ranking military official and minister of interior (Prier 2011) and of Suleiman Mahmud, another senior military commander (Haddad 2012) as well as many diplomats (including the country' ambassadors to the US, India, and the Arab League), and two military pilots who refused to follow orders and flew their planes to neighboring Malta (The Wall Street Journal 2011 and Haddad 2012). These high-profile defections were accompanied by entire parts of the national army joining the rebels and contributing to nourishing the general sense of exceptionality felt in the country.

Thus, the Libyan revolution highlights the importance of the signal sent by intermediate actors whose actions in the early state of an informational cascade give the rest of the population the signal to bandwagon on a particular act of protest.

[101] As noted by Haddad (2012), the crackdown of the authorities during the week which followed the first protest claimed between 300 and 600 lives (Haddad 2012).

Limitations

This study would be incomplete without an examination of theoretical limitations of the logic highlighted in this work, the most important of which is the definition of the main variables used in the causal mechanism fleshed out above. Indeed, the quick examination of the Mauritanian case highlighted the importance of a clear definition of the concept of intermediate actors. Who are we talking about when we refer to these actors? Indeed, there is a danger that the definition of soft-liners/intermediate actors provided by Schmitter and O'Donnell (1986) and used as a basis for this research may perhaps be too elastic. Although, area experts will have no difficulty identifying who the intermediate actors are in a particular country, a framework is needed to strengthen the scientific viability of intermediate actors as a conceptual variable. The same comment can be made for perception of exceptionality, the intermediate variable identified in this work. How could exceptionality be measured? Again, although area experts would generally have no difficulty identifying political crisis, it may perhaps be useful to provide a more universal definition of exceptionality that would be valid across time and cases. Other elements also need to be studied more in detail. In particular, more research is needed to trace more precisely the variable role of the new media across different cases; the role of culture and Arab identity underpinning informational cascades in the Arab context; what specific types of grievances and frames resonate stronger; and why precisely do oil-exporters utilize patronage to forestall popular mobilization

However, the main advantage of a use of the signaling logic of informational cascades, the framework on which this study is based, is that it allows to circumvent the above limitations without taking anything away from the strength of the causal mechanism highlighted in this work (particularly the link between the presence of a signal and the cognitive liberation experienced during revolutionary times). More research on social mobilization in the Arab Maghreb (and elsewhere in the MENA region) will help further refine the informational logic highlighted in this study.

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Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

SYNDICAT GÉNÉRAL
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

النقابة العامة
للتعليم الثانوي

تونس في 20 ديسمبر 2010

بيـــان

بعد الحوض المنجمي وقريانة والسخيرة وبنقردان والرقاب، تندلع احتجاجات سيدي بوزيد على نفس الخلفية: غياب التنمية وانعدام البنية الاقتصادية ذات الطاقة التشغيلية والتفقير الواسع لفئات متعددة من المجتمع من مزارعين وعمال وفئات اجتماعية وسطى.ومرة أخرى تثبت الأحداث فشل الاختيارات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية للسلطة التي أرست الحيف وانعدام التوازن وغياب العدالة وانتشار الفقر والدفع بالآلاف إلى اليأس والنزوح والانحراف .

إن إقدام شاب من حملة الشهائد العليا والمعطلين عن العمل على محاولة الانتحار يقيم الدليل على حالة الإحباط التي دفع إليها شباب تونس رغم الدعاية الإعلامية المزيفة للواقع ،ويؤكد أن استمرار بطالة عشرات الآلاف من خريجي الجامعات ومن غيرهم من أصناف البطالين إنما هو تدمير ممنهج للقدرات الشبابية للبلاد في الوقت الذي تهدر فيه المليارات في غير مواطنها ويتعمق التفاوت بين الطبقات والجهات .

لقد شكلت احتجاجات أهالينا في سيدي بوزيد حالة من الممانعة والرفض للسياسة التمييزية المكرسة منذ عقود جابهتها السلطة كالعادة بالإجراءات القمعية والاعتقالات والترهيب للحيلولة دون استمرارها واتساعها من دون الانكباب على معالجة أسبابها الحقيقية التي ظلت السلطة تتهرب من مواجهتها في كل الجهات التي اندلعت فيها احتجاجات شعبية.

إنّ النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي تعتبر ما يحدث في سيدي بوزيد مؤشرا على الأزمة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية التي بلغتها البلاد. وتطالب ب :

- اطلاق سراح الشباب المعتقلين على خلفية الأحداث وإيقاف المداهمات والمطاردات وكل أشكال الحصار ومحاسبة التجاوزات الصادرة عن قوات البوليس في حقّ المواطنين والناشطين النقابيين والحقوقيين والسياسيين.
- مجابهة الأسباب التي تكمن وراء ما يحدث بإصلاحات جذرية حقيقية تمسّ كلّ الميادين. والإقدام على إجراءات اجتماعية واقتصادية جريئة وسريعة في سيدي بوزيد وفي كلّ الجهات المحرومة والمفقرة تمكّن من خلق مواطن الشغل القارّة وإرساء عوامل التنمية الأساسية الدائمة والتوزيع العادل للثروة،ولا يمكن أن يتمّ ذلك إلاّ بتشريك قوى المجتمع المدني في تقديم الحلول وضبط البرامج وعلى رأسها الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل الذي سبق أن قدّم دراسات في الغرض في العديد من الجهات قابلتها السلطة بالتجاهل واللامبالاة .

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي

الكاتب العام

سامي الطاهري

17, Rue Souk Ahras - Tunis Tél : 71 332.400 - Fax : 71 337.667 : 17 نهج سوق اهراس ـ تونس ـ الهاتف : 71.332.400 (216) ـ الفاكس

Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

Union Régionale du Travail
de Monastir

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

الاتحاد الجهوي للشغل
بالمنستير

المنستير في ، 20 / 12 / 2010

بيـــان

إن المكتب التنفيذي للاتحاد الجهوي للشغل بالمنستير المجتمع يوم 20 / 12 /2010 بعد إطلاعه على الأحداث المؤلمة والإحتجاجات التي جدت مؤخراً على خلفية إقدام شاب من حاملي الشهائد العليا على محاولة الإنتحار إضافة إلى تردي الأوضاع الإقتصادية والإجتماعية مع تفاقم البطالة وانسداد آفاق التشغيل يُعبر عن :

- المساندة المطلقة لنضالات الجماهير دفاعاً عن حقها في التشغيل والعيش الكريـــــم .
- مراجعة الدولة لخيارات الخارطة الإقتصادية في إطار برنامج أساسه العدل والمساواة وتكافؤ الفرص للجميع .
- إستنكارنا للتعتيم الإعلامي تجاه الأحداث بسيدي بوزيد .
- الدعوة إلى إطلاق سراح كافة الموقوفين على خلفية الإحتجاجات والإيقاف الفوري لكل التتبعات والمداهمات .
- ندعو السلط الرسمية لفتح حواراً شاملاً وشفافاً لمعرفة المُتسبب الحقيقـــي لهذه الأزمة .

عاش الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل حراً مُستقلاً ومناضلاً

الكاتب العام للاتحاد الجهوي
للشغل بالمنستير
الصديد يوسف

FAX : 73 463.191 الفاكس : TELEPHONE : 73 461.137 - 73 464.357 الهـــاتـــف :

Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

UNION RÉGIONALE DU TRAVAIL
DE TOZEUR

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

الاتحاد الجهوي للشغل
بتوزر

ع ـ 10/420 ـ دد

توزر في : 2010/12/21

بيان حول أحداث سيدي بوزيد

إن المكتب التنفيذي الموسع للاتحاد الجهوي للشغل بتوزر وهو يتابع بكل انشغال أحداث منطقة سيدي بوزيد ليذكر من جديد بمواقف الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل الثابتة التي نبه فيها في عديد المناسبات إلى التفاوت الملحوظ بين الجهات في التنمية ممّا خلق هوّة شاسعة بين الشريط الساحلي وبقية الجهات الداخلية ومما زاد هذا الوضع تأزما عجز الأنماط التنموية الأخيرة على توفير الشغل لطالبيه وخاصة لأصحاب الشهائد العليا وفي ظل خصخصة المؤسسات العمومية والتسريح الجماعي للعمال تضخمت ظاهرة البطالة وأصبحت تنذر بتوترات اجتماعية حادة مثل ما حدث في الحوض المنجمي وبن قردان وأمام هذا الوضع فإن المكتب التنفيذي الموسع للاتحاد الجهوي للشغل بتوزر يدعو الأطراف المسؤولة إلى دراسة الأسباب الحقيقية التي أدت إلى مثل هذه التوترات والإضطرابات وعدم اللجوء لمعالجة هذه الظواهر أمنيا ويطالب في هذا الصدد بإطلاق سراح جميع الموقوفين في جهة سيدي بوزيد وفك الحصار الأمني عليها وفتح حوار جدي ومسؤول مع جميع مكوّنات المجتمع المدني في الجهة وعلى رأسها الهياكل النقابية لإيجاد الحلول الملائمة والدائمة لمعضلة التشغيل وخاصة لخريجي الجامعات مع الاستئناس بالدراسة الميدانية التي قام بها الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل والخاصة بجهة سيدي بوزيد في هذا الصدد وضرورة إيجاد مورد رزق قار لعائلة المتضرر ومتابعة المتسببين في هذه الازمة .

عاش الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل
حرا مستقلا ومناضلا

عن المكتب التنفيذي للاتحاد
الجهوي للشغل بتوزر
الكاتب العام

هارون بوعقة

AV. ABOULKACEM CHEBBI - FAX : (76) 462.810 الفاكس : TEL : (76) 452.216 شارع أبو القاسم الشابي ـ الهاتف :

Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

SYNDICAT GÉNÉRAL
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

النقابة العامة
للتعليم الثانوي

تونس في 31 ديسمبر 2010

برقية مساندة :

إلى السيد عميد المحامين التونسيين
وإلى السادة المحامين

على إثر قرار مجلس هيئتكم الوطنية للمحامين للتونسيين بإنجاز وقفات احتجاجية تعبيرا عن مساندتهم للمطالب المشروعة لأهالينا في سيدي بوزيد، وأثناء تنفيذ المحامين لهذه الوقفات بمقرات المحاكم وبعد أن قامت قوات البوليس بمداهمة المحامين والاعتداء عليهم بالضرب والإهانة لمحاولة منعهم من التعبير عن مساندتهم، فإن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي :

- تعبّر عن إكبارها لوقفة المحامين وهيئتهم مع أهلنا في سيدي بوزيد وعن تثمينها للدور الوطني الذي يعلبه المحامون في كلّ القضايا الوطنية.
- تندّد بالاعتداءات التي تعرّض إليها المحامون على خلفية مساندتهم للمطالب الشرعيّة لكلّ الجهات المحرومة.
- تطالب برفع التضييقات الأمنية ووقف الاعتداءات المتكرّرة وفتح حوار وطني جادّ ومسؤول حول قضايا التنمية والتشغيل وتشريك قوى المجتمع المدني في ذلك.

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي
الكاتب العام
سامي الطاهري

17, Rue Souk Ahras - Tunis Tél : 71 332.400 - Fax : 71 337.667 : 17 نهج سوق اهراس ـ تونس ـ الهاتف : 71.332.400 (216) ـ الفاكس :

Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

SYNDICAT GÉNÉRAL
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

النقابة العامة
للتعليم الثانوي

تونس في 31 ديسمبر 2010

بيان

على إثر التجمّعات التي انعقدت في عدد من مقرّات الاتحادات الجهوية والمحلية للشغل تضامنا مع أهلنا في سيدي بوزيد وما تعرّض له النقابيون من اعتداءات من قبل قوات البوليس، فإن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي :

1- تحيّي جميع النقابيين الذين هبّوا لمساندة مطالب أهالينا في سيدي بوزيد وتكبر دور كافة الهياكل النقابية في تأطير هذه التحركات ومتابعتها.
2- تدين الاعتداءات الفضة التي طالت مقرّات الاتحاد ومناضليه من جنوب البلاد إلى شمالها.
3- تطالب بالكفّ عن كل أشكال التضييق على النقابيين ورفع الطوق الأمني عن مقرّات الاتحاد.
4- تعتبر أن المعالجة الأمنيّة للتحرّكات المطالبة بالتشغيل والتنمية خاطئة ولن تفضي في كل الحالات إلا إلى مزيد التوتّر والاحتقان.
5- تطالب بالتشريك الفعلي للاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل في معالجة ملفي التشغيل والتنمية.

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي
الكاتب العام
سامي الطاهري

17, Rue Souk Ahras - Tunis Tél : 71 332.400 - Fax : 71 337.667

17 نهج سوق اهراس ـ تونس ـ الهاتف : 71.332.400 (216) ـ الفاكس :

Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

SYNDICAT GÉNÉRAL

DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

النقابة العامة

للتعليم الثانوي

تونس في 05 جانفي 2011

بـــلاغ

تدعو النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي مدرّسي التعليم الثانوي والتربية البدنية بجميع المؤسسات التربوية إلى **وقفة احتجاجية لمدة عشرين دقيقة (20 دق) يوم الجمعة 07 جانفي 2011 بداية من الساعة العاشرة صباحا** (س 10) وذلك مساندة للتحرّكات الاحتجاجية في العديد من الجهات وخاصة بسيدي بوزيد وتالة.

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي

الكاتب العام

سامي الطاهري

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Union Générale Tunisienne de Travail
UNION RÉGIONALE DU TRAVAIL
DE TUNIS

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل
الإتحـــاد الجهـــوي للشغـــل
بـــتـــونـــــس

بيـان

إثـر التطـورات الخطيـرة التـي شـهدتها بلادنـا فـي كـل مـن تالـة و القصـرين والرقاب و خاصة إقدام قوات البوليس على إطلاق النار على المتظـاهرين العـزل ممـا أدى إلـى جـرح عـدد كبيـرو سـقوط شـهداء فـإن المكتب التنفيذي للإتحاد الجهوي للشغل بتونس يعبر عن إدانتـه الشديدة لهذه الممارسات في حق أبناء شعبنا الذين خرجوا مطـالبين بحقهم في الشغل و الكرامة و التوزيع العادل لثروة البلاد و يؤكد مرة أخرى فشل الخيارات الأمنية في التعاطي مع الاحتجاجات الاجتماعية .

إننا نقف إجلالا لأرواح من سقطوا شـهداء و نعزي عـائلاتهم و كل شعبنا فيهم . و نتمنى الشفاء العاجل للجرحى.

و في هذا الظرف الدقيق فإننا نطالب بـ :

1/ وقف إطلاق النار على المواطنين العزل و فك الحصار عن المدن.

2/ إطلاق سراح المعتقلين ووقف التتبعات في حقهم.

3/ احترام الحريات العامة و الفردية و خاصة حق أبناء شعبنا في التعبير و الاحتجاج.

4/ إصلاحات سياسية تمكن من طرح الملفات الكبرى و في مقدمتها ملف التنمية و التشغيل و تشريك قوى المجتمع المدني و على رأسها الإتحاد العام التونسي للشغل في ذلك .

عاش الإتحاد العام التونسي للشغل حرا مناضلا و مستقلا

الكاتب العام
نور الدين الطبوبي

الإتحاد الجهوي للشغل بتوزر
10 جانفي 2011
الـــوارد
01/23

21, PLACE M'HAMED ALI - TUNIS 1000 - TÉL : 71 341 216 - 71 332 400 - FAX : 71 355 046
21، شارع محمد علي - تونس

Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail

SYNDICAT GÉNÉRAL

DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

النقابة العامة

للتعليم الثانوي

تونس في 05 جانفي 2011

بيان

شهدت عديد الجهات تحرّكات احتجاجية عارمة كان منطلقها سيدي بوزيد بعد إقدام شاب على الانتحار حرقا احتجاجا على البطالة والإهانة والتهميش. وقد توسّعت هذه الاحتجاجات لتشمل العديد من المدن وآخرها مدينة تالة التي تتعرّض منذ يوم الاثنين إلى حملة اعتقالات وانتهاكات ومداهمات للبيوت والمؤسسات التربوية والحصار الكامل.

لقد عبّرت جماهير المتظاهرين عن سخطهم إزاء سياسة التهميش والإقصاء وأدانوا فشل الاختيارات السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية وعرّوا مظاهر الفساد والرشوة وسوء التصرف والمحسوبية وطالبوا بحق الشغل والتوزيع العادل للثروة وبحق التعبير والتظاهر.

وفي المقابل جابهتهم السلطة بالحديد والنار وسقطت قائمة من الشهداء رميا بالرصاص الغادر وأخرى من الجرحى وتعرّضوا إلى التنكيل والإهانة والتعذيب وانتهاك الحرمات واقتحام البيوت ودوس الكرامة.

إن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي، إذ تقرّر هذه الوقفة الاحتجاجية، فهي تعبّر من خلالها على انحياز الأساتذة إلى صفّ الشعب وانخراطهم في نضالاته بكل الوسائل. كما تعبّر عن :

- إكبارها للشهداء الذين سقطوا حرقا أو رميا بالرصاص
- اكبارها للجرحى ورجاءها لهم بالشفاء
- دعمها لكل النضالات التي خيضت خلال ما يقارب الخمسة عشر يوما
- تنديدها بالقمع المسلّط ومطالبتها برفع الحصار البوليسي على المدن وعلى المؤسسات التربوية ودور الاتحاد العام التونسي للشغل ورفضها للمعالجات الأمنية في كل القضايا بما فيها الاجتماعية ومطالبتها بالتحقيق في كل الانتهاكات
- تبنّيها لجميع مطالب شعبنا في حق الشغل والعدالة والحرية والكرامة ومطالبتها بمشاركة فعالة لمكوّنات المجتمع المدني في كل الشأن الوطني سياسيا واجتماعيا واقتصاديا.

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي

الكاتب العام

سامي الطاهري

17, Rue Souk Ahras - Tunis Tél : 71 332.400 - Fax : 71 337.667 : 17 نهج سوق اهراس ـ تونس ـ الهاتف : 71.332.400 (216) ـ الفاكس :

الإتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

تونس في: 2011/01/06

السيد العميد

السادة أعضاء هيئة المحامين التونسيين

السادة المحامون

تحية لكم في إضرابكم اليوم 06 جانفي 2010

تحية لكم في وقفاتكم الشجاعة دفاعا عن أبناء شعبكم وعن حقهم في الشغل والتوزيع العادل للثروة وفي التعبير.

تحية لكم وانتم تدافعون عن هيبة هيئة الدفاع وعن هيبة المحاكم من الدوس والانتهاكات والاعتداءات .

دمتم سندا لشعبكم أفرادًا وجمعيات ومنظمات وهيئات تنحازون بلا تردّد الى طموحاتهم ومطالبهم وتتقدّمون الصفوف دفاعا عنها .

عاشت المحاماة

عاشت نضالات شعبنا

النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي — النقابة العامة للتعليم الأساسي — الجامعة العامة للبريد والاتصالات

النقابة العامة للأطباء — النقابة العامة للصناديق الاجتماعية — النقابة العامة للشباب والطفولة

29 بطحاء محمد علي - تونس 1000 - ص.ب 266 - الهاتف : 71.532.400 - الفاكس : 71.345.381

الإتحاد العام التونسي للشغل

تونس في 11 جانفي 2011

بـــــلاغ

انخراطا منها في نضالات شعبنا وتنديدا بغلق المؤسسات التربوية وبمسوّغات ذلك التي تتهم ضمنا المدرّسين بالتحريض على الفوضى، **تدعو النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي والنقابة العامة للتعليم الأساسي كافة المدرّ سين إلى تجمّع يوم الخميس 13 جانفي 2011 على الساعة 13 ببطحاء محمد علي بتونس.**

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الثانوي

الكاتب العام

سامي الطاهري

عن النقابة العامة للتعليم الأساسي

الكاتب العام

حفيظ حفيظ

29 بطحاء محمد علي ـ تونس 1000 ـ ص . ب : 266 ـ الهاتف : 71.332.400 ـ فاكس : 71.315.381

Appendix 2

List of number of deaths per province

Whose families received first installment of compensations.

Number	Province	Number of Deaths
1	Tunis	**58**
2	Ariana	**15**
3	Manouba	**7**
4	Benarous	**18**
5	Bizerte	**17**
6	Beja	**4**
7	Jendouba	**5**
8	El-Kef	**4**
9	Siliana	**1**
10	Kasserine	**25**
11	Sidi-Bouzid	**15**
12	Gafsa	**5**
13	Tozeur	**5**
14	Kebili	**5**
15	Tataouine	**3**
16	Medenine	**4**
17	Gabes	**6**
18	Sfax	**5**
19	Kairouan	**8**
20	Mahdia	**10**
21	Monastir	**54***
22	Soussa	**18**
23	Zaghouan	**2**
24	Nabeul	**17**
Total		**311**

Includes 38 prisoners burnt alive during the riot at the Monastir prison on January 15th, 2011.