

# **Continuity and change before and after the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. Regime reconfiguration and policy-making in North Africa**

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*ABSTRACT While the scholarship on the Arab uprisings is increasingly complex and intellectually refined, this special issue considers an aspect that so far has failed to attract sustained scholarly attention, namely continuity and change. This introduction provides the framework underpinning the special issue as a whole and discusses all the articles composing it, while elaborating on the scientific contribution that the examination of continuity and change before and after the uprisings can make to our understanding of politics in the region.*

**Keywords:** Continuity, Change, Arab uprisings, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Regime reconfiguration

The Arab Uprisings have generated significant amounts of scholarly reflections on how politics functions in the Middle East and North Africa, with scholars broadly shifting between the dynamics of either democratic change or authoritarian continuity. There is a vast literature on the causes of the uprisings and on explanations for how they occurred in some countries and not in others, but it is accepted as conventional wisdom that the politics of the region, both in the short and in the long-term, has changed for

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good.<sup>2</sup> This is potentially the case, but one should be aware that the complexity of earth-shattering events is considerable and that it takes time to tease out their impact.<sup>3</sup> It should be thus highlighted that in the examination of any revolutionary process there should also be an emphasis on what has not suddenly changed from one day to the next, and more attention should be paid to long-term processes of change, whose culminating moments are revolutions, instead of conceptualising revolutions as unexpected and sudden events. It is both academically and politically problematic to look at the uprisings solely relying on 'change' as the dominant perspective because we can always detect a certain amount of continuity in the political, social and economic relations of societies having witnessed massive upheavals.

This special issue presents contributions exposing the overlapping of continuity and change. More specifically, it investigates them in the context of state-building, institutional reforms, contentious politics and economic relations in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. By examining the political dynamics in these three countries, where the protests have resulted in very different trajectories of regime re-configuration, the articles identify patterns of both continuity and change and expose the very problematic nature of the notions of 'regime change' and 'regime stability.' For instance, it is rather unclear how to label post-July 2013 political events in Egypt. Some would suggest that there is an inevitable return to the paradigm of authoritarian resilience after a brief interlude of intra-regime negotiations that allowed pluralism to emerge,<sup>4</sup> while others would contend that it is a rather classic case of failed transition and that genuine change

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<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Achcar, *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Fred Halliday, *Two Hours That Shook the World. 11 September 2001. Causes and Consequences* (London: Saqi Books, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, 'Authoritarian learning and authoritarian resilience: regime responses to the "Arab Awakening"' *Globalizations* 8, 5 (2011): 647-653.

is only being suppressed in the short-term.<sup>5</sup> Adopting a different perspective, the special issue aims to examine the process of regime transformation and reconfiguration while bringing at the forefront of scholarly attention the similarities and differences in the cases of Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

One of the most relevant debates through which the uprisings have been examined centres on the usefulness of the two dominant paradigms in the study of the politics of the Middle East and North Africa, namely transition to democracy and authoritarian resilience.<sup>6</sup> While the study of authoritarian resilience flourished in the past decades and has resulted in theoretically rich accounts for why regimes have been so durable, the examination of political change in the Middle East had suffered for some time from the over-presence of 'transitology,' as detailed in numerous works since the mid-2000s.<sup>7</sup> The dominance of the 'transitological approach' to political change has determined a sort of neglect of a serious analysis of how Middle Eastern societies have actually changed, to the point that criticising 'transitology' became academically more appropriate than engaging social or political change. Studies on activism and social change did abound in the field, but a 'transitological bias' characterised them and it is only after mid-2000s that scholars engaged civil society activism and social movements in authoritarian contexts with no teleological focus on democratisation.<sup>8</sup> In fact, it is no

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<sup>5</sup> Nathan Brown, 'Egypt's Failed Transition' *Journal of Democracy* 24, 4 (2013): 45-58.

<sup>6</sup> See the debate generated by Marc Morjé Howard and Meir R. Walters, 'Explaining the Unexpected: Political Science and the Surprises of 1989 and 2011,' *Perspectives on Politics* 12, 2 (2014): 394-408 and in particular, Ellen Lust, 'Response to Howard and Walters,' *Perspectives on Politics* 12, 2 (2014): 413-414.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Anderson, 'Searching where the light shines: Studying democratization in the Middle East' *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9 (2006): 189-214; Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East: An overview and critique' *Democratization* 13, 3 (2006): 373-395. More recently: Andres C. Härdig, 'Beyond the Arab revolts: conceptualizing civil society in the Middle East and North Africa,' *Democratization* (2014). Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13510347.2014.917626>.

<sup>8</sup> See: Janine Clark, *Islam, charity, and activism: Middle-class networks and social welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Andrea Liverani, *Civil society in Algeria. The political functions of associational life* (London: Routledge, 2008) and more recently: Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World: The Dynamics of Activism* (London: Routledge, 2010).

coincidence that scholarly interest for authoritarian resilience emerged after criticism of 'transitology' had become established in the field of Middle Eastern studies. The uprisings contributed to make clear that these two dominant paradigms - democratisation and authoritarian resilience - are far too rigid to grasp and explain the complexities on the ground. Indeed, both paradigms understand social and political phenomena as conducive to either democratisation or to the strengthening of authoritarianism, displaying a degree of inflexibility that prevented scholars from 'seeing' the uprisings coming.

This does not mean that the scholarship should have predicted them,<sup>9</sup> but more attention should have been given to actors and processes that were considered irrelevant or marginal and turned out instead to be extremely significant. In addition, although the outbreak of the protests has in some cases re-boosted scholarly interest for the democratisation paradigm<sup>10</sup> and 'democracy spotting',<sup>11</sup> it can be legitimately argued that even if successful transitions to democracy were to occur, democratisation theories would be ill-equipped to account for them.<sup>12</sup> This is the case not only because a different set of marginal actors, others than the 'usual middle-class suspects' of mainstream democratisation theories, have been empowered as the protagonists of the protests, but also because state-society contentious relations have been developing

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<sup>9</sup> As correctly pointed out by: Marc Lynch, 'Response to Howard and Walters,' *Perspectives on Politics* 12, 2 (2014): 415-416.

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Stepan, 'Tunisia's Transition and the Twin Tolerations', *Journal of Democracy* 23, 2 (2012): 89-103.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Hudson, 'Awakening, Cataclysm, or just a Series of Events? Reflections on the Current Wave of Protest in the Arab World', *Jadaliyya*, 16/5/2011 (<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1601/awakening-cataclysm-or-just-a-series-of-events-ref>, accessed 23/9/2014).

<sup>12</sup> As already pointed out by Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi (eds.) *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2009); Michelle Pace and Francesco Cavatorta, 'The Arab uprisings in theoretical perspective—an introduction,' *Mediterranean Politics* 17, 2 (2012): 125-138; and, more recently, by Ricardo René Laremont (ed.) *Revolution, Revolt and Reform in North Africa: The Arab Spring and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2013); Lina Khatib and Ellen Lust (eds.), *Taking to the Streets: The Transformation of Arab Activism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

differently from the template provided by orthodox theories of transitions to democracy.

Thus, the most important aim of this special issue is to invite scholars to look for relevant political processes in specific *loci* of negotiation and conflict amongst social and political actors, exploring the contradictions between the literature and the actual dynamics on the ground while re-considering some of the seemingly granitic assumptions of both democratisation and authoritarian resilience. In order to offer an empirically-grounded substantiation of this, the special issue compares and contrasts three case studies. While the uprisings have followed very different trajectories in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, some of the contributions to this special issue demonstrate that the dynamics of continuity and change may be surprisingly similar in the three countries. For instance, Gianluca Parolin's revealing analysis of the processes of constitution-making in Tunisia and Egypt exposes the attempt on the part of the political elites in both countries to exclude radical revolutionary fringes in order to be able to proceed with moderate and unthreatening 'pacted constitutions.' Adam Hanieh's comparative examination of the negotiations between the three North African regimes and international financial institutions also reveals common characteristics in the content and logic of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank lending conditions to these three countries.

To be sure, there are also important differences in the way in which Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt have gone through the uprisings and subsequent political turmoil. Some contributors demonstrate that the stark differences the three case studies present can be enlightening as to why dynamics of change and continuity have unfolded following specific national patterns, thus shedding further light on the workings of politics in the region. In this sense, the comparative analysis proposed by Raymond Hinnebusch of

post-independence state-formation processes and path-dependent institutional and social conditions of the three countries is of particular significance. In fact, it sets out the factors and processes that have determined the patterns followed by the uprisings – with a look to likely future political and social developments. In a similar vein, Florian Kohstall’s comparative examination of higher education reforms in Egypt and Morocco elucidates the different approaches to reform that the Moroccan monarchy and Mubarak’s administration had adopted, elaborating on the two regimes’ different management of contention and revolt, thus illuminating the reason why the uprisings had such different outcomes in the two countries.

The focus on specific actors, policies or processes is rewarding also in the case of articles focusing on individual countries, such as Raquel Ojeda García and Ángela Suárez Collado’s detailed examination of regionalisation policy in Morocco; Fabio Merone’s sharp class-based analysis of the Tunisian revolutionary process and emergence of the Salafist Ansar al-Sharia; Matt Buehler’s insightful examination of trade unions in Morocco; and Rosita Di Peri’s in-depth analysis of the tourist sector of Tunisia. All these articles indeed stress a common dynamic throughout North Africa, namely that actors, be they the Moroccan King or Tunisia’s radical Islamic revolutionary constituencies, have tried to turn to their advantage the ‘revolutionary’ moment created by widespread protests, seizing or attempting to seize the opportunities political turmoil offered, no matter what the broader scenario, whether regime survival or change, might have been. However, not all attempts at seizing these ‘windows of opportunities’ resulted in success with some actors failing spectacularly to do so, as the contributors explain in their analysis.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the final result, the articles highlight the relevance of the

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<sup>13</sup> See: Francesco Cavatorta, ‘No democratic change... and yet no authoritarian continuity. The inter-paradigm debate and North Africa after the uprisings,’ *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015).

transnational dimension of the 'Arab Spring.' In fact, this was of crucial importance both to national actors, because they could make their protests resonating within a wider, international arena, and to authoritarian regimes, as their fear of being wiped away as occurred in neighbouring countries resulted in 'authoritarian learning.' In order to grasp these dynamics, the focus on specific actors and policies is of great help, as it allows for a detailed analysis of complex processes unfolding on the ground. In fact events in the region highlight that, beyond authoritarian resilience or democratic transformation, there are deeper and more enduring trajectories of continuity and change in the way in which actors and structure interact.

### **Regime reconfiguration and the historicity of the uprisings**

Although the uprisings have exposed a number of contradictions, the tendency to focus on regimes' broad transformations has continued and the conclusion of this special issue partially returns the theme. However this almost exclusive focus has led to underestimate more subtle and partially more obscure political dynamics and, once again, to concentrate the attention on either broad canvas of change or granitic continuity when in fact the reality might not be so stark. In this sense, the consensus on the open-ended nature of the uprisings is a step in the right direction, but does not tell us much about what has actually changed or remained the same. In order to address this issue, Valbjørn and Bank's had suggested to examine 'actual continuity in the apparent changes' and the 'actual changes in the apparent continuity' is useful. Thus, already before the uprisings, the two authors invited the scholarly community to focus on the

'changes *within* regimes (e.g., a transformation from populist to post-populist authoritarianism), *in* the relations with the opposition (e.g., the changing regime/Islamist parties dynamics) and *within* the latter (e.g., an emerging cooperation between the secular Left and Islamists), and finally changes *in* the society at large (e.g., the emergence of alternative orders coexisting in parallel with the official political order).'<sup>14</sup>

Drawing on this point, the special issue aims to advance our knowledge of the ongoing dynamics operating outside the rigidity of 'regime change' or 'regime survival.' In this sense, it seems productive to focus on the reconfigurations of policies and political processes. Indeed, no regime surviving the uprisings has remained the same and no 'new' regime in place after the uprisings is entirely new and, in this sense, the study of policy-making process and policies seems a very fertile 'venue' for research.

Following on from this, the special issue aims to make two substantial contributions to the scholarship. The first is to bring continuity and change at the forefront of scholarly interest by examining specific case studies in the realm of politics and policy-making. In particular, by adopting a micro- or meso-perspective of empirical analysis, the special issue targets the co-existence of factors of change in contexts characterised by political stability and, vice-versa, the persistence of elements of continuity (in terms of elite composition and values, institutional resilience, unchanged policies, governance structure, top-down approach to policy-making and securitisation of societies and politics) in contexts of broad change.<sup>15</sup> Here, the suggestion<sup>16</sup> of examining the meta-

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<sup>14</sup> Morten Valbjørn and André Bank, 'Examining the "post" in post-democratization: The future of Middle Eastern political rule through lenses of the past,' *Middle East Critique* 19, 3 (2010): 188.

<sup>15</sup> This is not new to social and political scientists from other fields. For example, social scientists of the post-second World War era in Europe already underlined the strong continuity in the Italian political system before and after 1945 in terms of elite composition, political and business networks and elite values. See Salvatore Lupo, *Il fascismo: la politica in un regime totalitario* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2005).

meaning of the democratisation studies toolkit is taken on board: 'continuity' and 'change' do not equate with 'authoritarian continuity' and 'democratic change,' and do not constitute a meritocratic scale according to which change is preferable to continuity. In particular, the empirical, micro and meso-level analysis this special issue offers aims to provide insights about the real degree of change and continuity in North African political and economic systems. For instance, after regimes changed and new governments came to power in Egypt and Tunisia, it is unclear whether and to which extent the personnel of former regimes still play a role in decision-making processes. This is a relevant issue because it impacts on the extent to which actual change can be brought about by political and business elites still connected with previous regimes. Factors of continuity can be very visible and evident, as in the case of the role played by the Army in Egypt, but they may also be present in less visible sectors of the political, social and economic life. What are, for instance, the degrees of change and continuity in specific policy sectors, such as higher education in Egypt or tourism in Tunisia, if we contrast the pre- and post-uprisings eras? To what extent the inclusion of Islamist political forces in Tunisia helped to remake a new, post-Ben Ali Tunisia? In the case of Morocco, similar questions can be asked not only in connection to the apparent 'politics of compromise' that the monarchy carries out when threatened by political mobilisation or by the popular consensus of Islamist groups<sup>17</sup>; but also in connection to labour policies and labour-related contentious politics, which might have introduced elements of change despite the broader scenario of monarchical continuity. More generally

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For a similar approach to Eastern European political configurations before and after the fall of Communism, see Andrew C. Janos, 'Continuity and change in Eastern Europe: Strategies of post-Communist politics,' *East European Politics & Societies* 8, 1 (1993): 1-31.

<sup>16</sup> Andrea Teti, 'Beyond Lies the Wub: The Challenges of (Post) Democratization,' *Middle East Critique* 21, 1 (2012): 5-24.

<sup>17</sup> Mohamed Daadaoui, *Moroccan Monarchy and the Islamist Challenge: Maintaining Makhzen Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

speaking, what are the consequences that specific post-uprisings policies and reforms – regionalisation policy and constitutional reforms to name just two – may engender in the future, considering the stability of the monarchy-centred political configuration of Morocco? Accordingly, elements of both rupture and stability are present at the same time. To be sure, scholars have already been preoccupied with some of these issues and have already attempted to answer some of these questions, denouncing that ‘dictators have gone but regimes have remained in place’;<sup>18</sup> this special issue however expands such an analysis through a more nuanced examination of the micro-processes that do operate beneath the apparent regime survival. In particular, it touches upon what Streeck and Thelen have called ‘models of institutional change’<sup>19</sup> by acknowledging the displacement, layering, drift, conversion and exhaustion of institutions and the consequential engendering of processes of continuity and change in policy-making, contentious state-society relations and in the process of institution-building. As noted by the two authors, who focus on US and European economic policies, broad canvas of change failed to grasp those nuanced dynamics shifting between resiliencies and transformations that have been taking place during the last three decades along the lines of privatisation policies and neo-liberal reforms. The focus of the two authors on the interplay of agency – or change – and structure – namely continuity – is particularly relevant to this special issue because it highlights how they are not mutually exclusive

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<sup>18</sup> Vincent Durac, ‘Protest movements and political change: an analysis of the ‘Arab uprisings’ of 2011’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 31, 2 (2013): 175-193; Marina Ottaway, ‘The presidents left, the regimes are still there,’ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 14/2/2011 (<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/02/14/presidents-left-regimes-are-still-here>, accessed 23/9/2014); Eva Bellin, ‘Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring’, *Comparative Politics* 44, 2 (2012): 127-149; Ellis Goldberg, ‘Mubarakism Without Mubarak. Why Egypt’s Military Will Not Embrace Democracy’, *Foreign Affairs* 11/2/2011 (<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67416/ellis-goldberg/mubarakism-without-mubarak>, accessed 23/9/2014).

<sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen (eds.), *Beyond continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 18-33. Thanks to Rossella Ciccia for pointing me out in this direction.

as posited by Ira Katznelson,<sup>20</sup> whereby change takes place during those rare moments when agency defeats structures. On the contrary, Streeck and Thelen argue that institutions and regime are regularly contested, with actors trying to take advantage by redirecting or subverting them. This generates gradual but nevertheless transformative change. Likewise, the focus of the contributions to this special issue is to understand the way in which actors have cultivated change from within before the uprisings or, conversely, on how they currently are working towards the maintenance of some traits of former regimes in the post-uprising period. In particular, elaborating on the models of institutional change Mahoney and Thelen advance,<sup>21</sup> we can identify three different cases: one in which political systems do not change but institutional elements are added to the core institutions of that system (as the case of Morocco suggests, with the monarchy remaining resilient but regularly establishing temporary ad hoc commissions, whose effect has been so far to strengthen the king's grip on policies further); one in which political systems remain intact but hierarchies of institutions change, with core institutions losing their privileged position or being replaced by other institutions (as the case of Egypt seems to suggest, where the core institution, namely the National Democratic Party, was replaced by the Army despite the NDP had consensually dominated the Egyptian political scene for decades along with it, but from a position of relative superiority); and one in which institutions remain the same but the way in which actors deal with them changes, possibly creating new meanings and wakening or strengthening the impact of those institutions (as the case of Tunisia seems

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<sup>20</sup> Ira Katznelson, 'Structure and configuration in comparative politics,' in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman (eds.), *Comparative politics: Rationality, culture, and structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997): 81-112.

<sup>21</sup> James Mahoney and Thelen *Explaining Institutional Change. Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

to suggest when it comes to the role played by the president, a resilient core-institution whose role has however changed in the last constitution).

The second contribution this special issue makes is drawing attention to the historicity of the uprisings. In the context of the debate about the uprisings as a long- or short-term phenomenon, the contributions to the special issue highlight that protests have been the result of long-term processes<sup>22</sup> which have engendered novel trajectories. This is the case, for instance, of new technologies and social media which, capitalising on past mobilisations, have been a new and relevant feature in the protests and which may change future mobilisation patterns for good.<sup>23</sup> The heterogeneity of time frames at work in the aftermath of the uprisings includes the *longue durée* of an enduring colonialism, which has taken new forms but still is present in the policy *imprimatur* of former colonies, as the case of Tunisia's process of identity-building and Morocco's regionalisation policy demonstrate<sup>24</sup>; the medium *durée* of the post-independence period, characterised by political authoritarianism and its several transformations, decompressions and retrenchments,<sup>25</sup> and by the dependence on international financial institutions, which has become seemingly irrevocable despite

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<sup>22</sup> Achcar, *The People Want* cit.; Koenraad Bogaert, 'Contextualizing the Arab revolts: the politics behind three decades of neoliberalism in the Arab World,' *Middle East Critique* 22, 3 (2013): 213-234.

<sup>23</sup> Marc Lynch, 'Media, old and new,' in Lynch (ed.), *The Arab Uprisings explained. New contentious politics in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014): 93-110; Ricardo René Laremont, 'Demographics, Economics and Technology: background to the North African revolution,' in Laremont (ed.), *Revolution, Revolt and Reform in North Africa*, cit., 15-30.

<sup>24</sup> Fabio Merone, 'Enduring class struggle in Tunisia: the fight for identity beyond Political Islam,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015); Raquel Ojeda Garcia and Ángela Suárez Collado, 'The project of advanced regionalisation in Morocco. Analysys of a Lampedusian reform,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Change and Continuity after the Arab Uprising: The Consequences of State Formation in Arab North African States,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015); Florian Kohstall, 'From reform to resistance: Universities and student mobilisation in Egypt and Morocco before and after the Arab Uprisings,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015); Matt Buehler, 'Labour Demands, Regime Concessions: Moroccan Unions and the Arab Uprising,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015).

popular demands during the uprisings<sup>26</sup>; and the most recent, post-uprisings *durée*, where enduring and non-linear pattern of contention meet relatively new trajectories of institution-building generating further changes, as the politics of constitution-making and constitutional reform demonstrate in all of North African countries.<sup>27</sup> Such plurality of time frames is highlighted in the ‘moment’ of the uprisings, which represent a watershed as they generate change and continuity. These different time frames are intertwined and contribute to shape continuity and change. There is no over-determination on the part of specific time frames, as long-term tendencies have been reshaped and refashioned by events which have taken place in the mid- and short-term. The result is a dialogical effect, where all the different *durées* are connected and impact on each other. Thus, looking at the dynamics of change and continuity allows for a stretching of our historical perspective, which has often been concerned with the most recent events taking place in the region because of their rapidly changing and often puzzling nature. The ‘change and continuity’ framework allows for exploring specific political and social processes in a temporal flux.

Although the uprisings remain a watershed in national and international history, determining when the uprisings have actually started and when they terminated is a rather difficult, if not impossible, task. For example, revolutions both in Egypt and Tunisia underwent several waves of mobilisation and regime configuration since late 2010. In addition, revolutions can be temporally framed in different ways according to the subject accounting for them. In this sense the case of Morocco is very interesting because, despite the fact that the regime has not lost its supreme authority as it

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Hanieh, ‘Shifting Priorities or Business as Usual? Continuity and Change in the post-2011 IMF and World Bank Engagement with Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt,’ *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015); Rosita Di Peri, ‘An enduring “touristic miracle” in Tunisia? Coping with old challenges after the revolution,’ *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015).

<sup>27</sup> Gianluca Parolin, ‘Constitutions against Revolutions. Political Participation in North Africa,’ *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, 1 (2015).

happened in Egypt and Tunisia, the country is undergoing an everlasting process of change, whose leading trigger is however shifting between the king and social opposition.<sup>28</sup> It is no coincidence then that the special issue calls for the analysis of specific phenomena in a time framework that can be stretched according to the actors observed. Thus, the micro- and meso-approach adopted by the contributions to this special issue allows for a grounded examination of specific aspects of the political, social and economic life in the countries, generating detailed analysis and empirically and theoretically rich contributions.

Finally, this approach highlights at best the benefits the scholarship may have from the ‘methodological encounter’ between the micro-analysis of processes and policies on the one hand, and the historicity of the uprisings on the other hand. These two dimensions are indeed intertwined, and enable us to shift away from the immediate ‘democracy spotting’ as well as from the ‘authoritarian stalemate’ paradigm, while revealing the complexity and richness of the phenomena under consideration.

### **Mapping continuity and change**

In order to highlight all of the points discussed above, the special issue offers a broad spectrum of articles that touch upon three clusters of issues. The first set of issues relates to the process of state building, which has profoundly affected the outcomes of the uprisings in the three countries and which, in turn, has been deeply affected by them after regime change and reconfiguration. Raymond Hinnebusch comparatively reflects on the impact that the long-term process of state-building in the three North African countries has had on the outcome of the protests, highlighting the relevant role that

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<sup>28</sup> See: Driss Maghraoui, ‘Constitutional reforms in Morocco: between consensus and subaltern politics,’ *The Journal of North African Studies* 16, 4 (2011): 679-699; Irene Fernández Molina, ‘The monarchy vs. the 20 February Movement: who holds the reins of political change in Morocco?,’ *Mediterranean politics* 16, 3 (2011): 435-441.

'distinctive packages of authority (seen through Weberian lenses), institution-society relations (via Modernization Theory) and political economy infrastructures (Marxism)' have played in the explanation as to why we had such diversified trajectories despite the many similarities displayed by the protests. Hinnebusch offers a compelling example of how the uprisings have been influenced by the *longue* and medium *durée* of post-independence state-building, providing an analysis of how longer historical dynamics meet short-term events.

Raquel Ojeda García and Ángela Suárez Collado on Morocco and Gianluca Parolin on Egypt, Tunisia and Libya provide examples of how policy-making and institution-building processes have been influenced by the uprisings. The authors do so by examining in depth the seizing of the 'windows of opportunity' provided by the uprisings on the part of various national political actors in the three countries. Raquel Ojeda García and Ángela Suárez Collado examine the advanced regionalisation reform in Morocco, whose launch took place after the eruption of protests in Morocco and which constituted an instrument in the hands of the king to respond to political turmoil and discontent. Indeed, the two authors contend that the regionalisation project is part of the broader 'never-ending reform package' that, more generally, characterises the Moroccan system to ensure its continuity as a stable executive monarchy. In this respect, the two authors highlight the paradoxical display of a 'theatre of change' in a reality of continuity, whereby the king was successful in portraying himself as the proponent of change, by exploiting the novelty and the transformations brought about by the regionalisation reform, in a context of continuity with the pre-uprisings era.

Gianluca Parolin comparatively examines the processes of constitution-making in Tunisia and Egypt, focusing on the shifting power balance and power-sharing agreements among the different factions that have taken part in it. Parolin's analysis

aims to examine North Africa's 'constitution-making stories' by assessing the role of the actors that influenced or even 'captured' those processes, thus exposing continuity and change in terms of elite self-preservation. The overarching conclusion is that constitution-making processes can be instruments of continuity not only because they may be participated by the old elite or by factions linked to the former regime; but also because they are widely regarded as a crucial step in the stabilisation of newly reconfigured political regimes at the expenses of people's political participation. With the goal of making his argument more compelling, Parolin contrasts the case of the constitution-making process in Libya with the one of Egypt and Tunisia, in order to explore a case of failed stabilisation through the constitution-making process. The conclusion the author reaches is interesting because he highlights how failed stabilisation (Libya) may paradoxically result in more democratic and inclusive constitution-making processes than those in successfully stabilised countries (Tunisia and Egypt), where the constitution-making processes have been smoother at the expense of political inclusion and participation.

The second set of issues the contributions to the special issue explore is related to contentious politics. Contentious politics is obviously a crucial dimension for the examination of the post-uprisings North Africa, and the articles shed light on two aspects. The first is how and whether the uprisings have changed the dynamics of contestation and activism, while the second aspect revolves around how and to what extent the ruling authorities have changed their attitude towards mobilisation and discontent as a result of the uprisings. Florian Kohstall and Fabio Merone insightfully underline the relevance of the medium and *longue durée* in the examination of revolutionary or protest movements, highlighting that national authorities may follow a path-dependent pattern in dealing with them. Indeed, the specific configuration of

regimes and their ability of coping with threats of mobilisation significantly impact on the characteristics of post-uprisings political arena. On the contrary, while not neglecting the *longue durée* of Morocco's labour-related mobilisations, Matt Buehler's article demonstrates how contemporary events, such as the fall of regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, have had an impact on Moroccan authorities' attitude towards political contention, weakening their resistance to yield to workers' demands while strengthening the workers and trade unions.

Florian Kostall's article deals with university politics and education reforms in Egypt and Morocco, and comparatively examines how the different management of such reforms links to the uprisings and their contrasting outcomes. Kostall contends that, contrary to Egypt, the Moroccan monarchy has so far resisted protests and even regime overthrown thanks to a more 'dynamic' blend of reform and repression – a successful 'blend' the monarchy used to introduce education reforms too and to cope with the discontent they generated. Indeed, the Moroccan higher education reform introduced a new form of governance in public universities whereas in Egypt, the government established a parallel system through the mushrooming of private universities. These different systems of governance emerging in the two countries partly reflect the different political configuration of the two regimes, with Morocco being characterised by party pluralism beneath the hegemony of the king and, on the contrary, Egypt having been dominated for a long time by a quasi one-party system – with some features that the uprisings did not succeed in challenging and transforming. This difference also explains the trajectory and outcome of state-society contention in the two countries.

Fabio Merone explores the continuities and changes in the field of contentious politics in Tunisia through the examination of political inclusion and exclusion before and after the uprisings. He does so by investigating in depth two case studies, namely

the inclusion of the moderate Islamic party Al-Nahda and the emergence of the radical Salafist party and social movement Ansar al-Sharia. Through an historical analysis of Al-Nahda's marginalisation from national independence up to the uprising of 2010-2011, Merone builds an innovative argument as he highlights the persistence of old logics in the definition of political inclusion and exclusion in the national political game, which, according to the author, is mainly built on social class cleavages. The emergence of Salafism after the uprisings is of particular relevance, the author argues, in elucidating this. Indeed, while Tunisia's conservative middle class joined the Al-Nahda party, compromising with secular opposition parties but enjoying the benefits of the revolution in exchange, Ansar al-Sharia's disenfranchised constituencies remained excluded both politically and economically. Merone concludes by highlighting the persistence of two continuities in Tunisia's modern history, namely the resilience of a definition of national identity, or *tunisiannité*, built along the acceptance of 'secular modernity' and moderation, and the exploitation of the threat of radical Islamism to mystify social class exclusion.

Matt Buehler examines labour protests in Morocco before and after the 2011 protests, and highlights the crucial importance that regional turmoil and disorders had in allowing trade unions to strategically use the 'revolutionary' moment to advance their demands. The author carries out an historical analysis of trade union's strategies and struggles in Morocco with the purpose of illuminating the readership on the long process existing behind the outbreak of political discontent in the country, with more general mobilisation and workers' protests existing since French colonialism. However protests increased since 2010 and, in the context of North African mobilisations and revolutionary processes, threats of disorders became very efficacious thus allowing the trade unions to see their demands accepted.

The third and last set of issues the special issue explores relates to the economy. More specifically, Adam Hanieh and Rosita Di Peri adopts two distinctive perspective (international political economy and domestic economy) to examine the dynamics of continuity and change in two crucial sectors of the economy of Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, namely their relation to international financial institutions on the one side, and Tunisia's touristic industry on the other side. Interestingly enough the two authors, while not overlooking the transformations they detected in their in depth examinations of the economic sectors, contend that continuity has prevailed over change.

Rosita Di Peri details her analysis of the tourist industry of Tunisia by investigating the history and characteristics of it since the independence. By recalling this long history, she is able to identify two main constants, or *thawabit*. The first is the persistence of a touristic and developmental model, which have traditionally been interconnected in Tunisia, based on the '3S' (Sun Sand and Sea) despite the economic and financial evidence of its major weaknesses, in particular during the past decade. The second continuity is the persistence of tourism as the centrepiece of the narrative of the 'new Tunisia.' The author's analysis is convincing in arguing that, because of its economic success, the touristic model of Tunisia has been self-reinforcing for decades, thus making a change rather difficult. In addition, its economic relevance and credibility at the international level has made its characteristics and nature even more resilient. Therefore, it is not surprising that the national authorities, both before and after the revolution, have exploited tourism as the core of a narrative of (their) national success. Di Peri's analysis is interesting as it makes an important point when examining the issue of continuity and change after major political events. In fact, she suggests that political and social actors might not be able to seize the new opportunities the revolution offers, as it happened in the case of Tunisia's operators of the touristic sectors which have not

exploited the chance to impose a significant shift in the industry to their benefit. This argument counter balances other contributions, although Di Peri does not overlook the novelties and new experiences that have been taking off in the realm of sustainable and local tourism in particular.

Adam Hanieh comparatively examines the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's engagement with Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, and asks as to what extent change and continuity can be observed in the negotiations between them. The article finds that despite the widespread condemnation of neo-liberal economic policies by activists and various political groups during the uprisings, and despite the rhetorical commitment on the part of the IFIs to reinforce attention to social issues, little has changed. States and national business elites have not raised any significant opposition to the economic policies associated with the two financial institutions, and negotiations with them have continued along the same trajectory as under previous rulers. However, Hanieh concludes his contributions by highlighting the existence of some degrees of change, or as he puts it 'rearticulating continuity,' beneath the continuity of practices and policies characterising his case studies. He points out to the ongoing mobilisation and turmoil in North Africa, which may affect the continuity of IFI policies considering that potential political disorder remains of significant concern to policy makers, who may turn their indulgence into bolder attitudes should turmoil continue.

Existing scholarly examinations of the uprisings and their consequences can hardly answer all of the questions we ask as academics and observers, and further research into their causes, trajectories and effects will be of great benefit to our knowledge and understanding of the actual dynamic on the ground. With the ambition of contributing to this advancement, this special issue targets an aspect, namely the one of continuity and change, which has not been considered in a consistent and substantial way.

Adopting a regional, comparative scope, the special issue hopes to shed some light on the questions raised.

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