

United Nations  
Security Council

**UNSC**

**MUNUC 37**

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

## CHAIR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council at MUNUC 37! My name is Kelly Liu, and I will serve as your Chair during this committee. I am a second year at the College double majoring in Economics and Philosophy and am pursuing a minor in Data Science. In terms of Model UN experience, I served as an Assistant Chair for the Ad Hoc committee at MUNUC 36 and staff at ChoMUN, UChicago's collegiate conference. I also competed during all four years of high school and attended MUNUC 34! Aside from MUN, I am also part of our independent student newspaper's sales team, the Private Equity Club, and UChicago's Pi Phi chapter.

Throughout the weekend, delegates in the UNSC will address the 2011 Tunisian civil resistance campaign known as the Jasmine Revolution. The Jasmine Revolution ousted Ben Ali's autocratic government and replaced it with a stable democratic government, further inspiring the Arab Spring, a series of other resistance movements — both unarmed and armed — across the Middle East. As such, the committee is tasked with responding to the resistance movements of Tunisian citizens while considering the current authority of the Ali government. While resolving this political division, it is imperative for the committee to consider its ramifying impacts on other neighboring countries.

Addressing such issues of unstable political institutions necessitates both dialogue and delicate diplomacy. As members of the UNSC, your positions as delegates have unique and influential power. As you negotiate competing interests in governance in Tunisia and the Middle East, I trust that you are all prepared to bring nuanced perspectives to our discussions as you carry out the responsibility of bringing peace to the region.

Given the seriousness of the subject matter, this committee is expected to respect and uphold sensitivity while approaching the intricate political turmoil of Tunisia and its implications on the broader Middle East region. Please be mindful of inclusivity and remain open-minded throughout the weekend.

I am excited to see you all at work in February! You can expect a fast-paced, dynamic committee that will be engaging throughout the weekend. Please feel free to reach out to myself, Khristian, or Rhea with any questions or concerns about anything related to the Jasmine Revolution, MUNUC 37, UNSC mechanics, or anything related to Model UN. Best of luck delegates!

Best,

Kelly Liu

[kellyliu3@uchicago.edu](mailto:kellyliu3@uchicago.edu)

Chair, UNSC, MUNUC 37

## CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council of MUNUC 37! My name is Rhea Kanuparthi, and I am currently in my second year at the University of Chicago, majoring in Political Science and minoring in Mathematics. I am originally from the great city of Dallas, Texas! I've been competing as a delegate for 6 years now — both in high school and on UChicago's Travel Team. Outside of Model United Nations, I am involved with the Existential Risk Laboratory at UChicago, studying the impact of nuclear weapons on conflict. I also love to cook incredibly spicy food and watch any team sport but especially cricket. I had an absolute blast with my committee last year as an Assistant Chair at MUNUC 36. I am excited to be a Crisis Director for the UNSC and watch on as delegates grapple with Tunisia's complicated political atmosphere.

This committee may be set in 2011, but the crisis in Tunisia is one that still impacts us today. Tunisia was once hailed as the sole victory of the turbulent Arab Springs; however, in the last few years, the country has been witness to democratic backsliding and the erosion of free and fair institutions. The crisis deals with topics of foreign intervention and sovereignty. As such, it is crucial that delegates approach this topic with integrity and sensitivity as we grapple with its aftermath.

The Jasmine Revolution evolved quickly—a flashpoint of socio-political, economic, and ideological tensions. Cries of “The People Want the Fall of the Regime” rang through the streets as protests surged through the country. A victory for democracy, a demonstration of the people's strength, another failed attempt — views of what happened during Tunisia's revolutions have continued to evolve as well. Delegates, we are asking you to engage in this debate and reimagine the Arab Spring. While some familiar aspects won't change, Tunisia's new

path is in your hands. The committee begins when the spark of conflict is ignited — how will you choose to either put it out or let it burn?

Because of the sensitivity of the topic, we urge you to be delicate and sensitive as you engage in debates about interventionism, neocolonialism, sovereignty, and security. Take care to respect what was one of the greatest crises we saw in our lifetimes. While we want creative solutions and spirited debate, it must occur while we stay mindful and considerate about our dialogue. Please reach out to the Dais if there are any questions! We look forward to seeing you all soon!

Best,

Rhea Kanuparthi

Crisis Director,

UNSC: Tunisia, 2011

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Dear Delegates,

A very warm welcome to MUNUC 37! My name is Khristian Bass, and I will be one of your Crisis Directors for the United Nations Security Council: Tunisia, 2011. I'm from Gun Barrel City, Texas, and I am a fourth-year at the University of Chicago majoring in Public Policy and Psychology. Some of my interests include playing the euphonium in the University Wind Ensemble, repairing technology, and making fun coffee drinks.

Since the start of college I have heavily engrossed myself in the world of Model UN. In my first year, I was an Assistant Chair for the Peru-Bolivia Confederation, 1836, and Assistant Chair for ChoMUN, The University of Chicago's collegiate Model UN conference. My second year I was a Crisis Director for the Cabinet of Florvil Hyppolite at MUNUC and for a ChoMUN committee. Last year I was a Crisis Director for the Cabinet of Sir Seretse Khama. This year I am a USG for ChoMUN and continue to be a member of the University of Chicago's traveling Model UN team. Overall, I love Model UN, and can not wait to share this passion with all of you as we embark on our journey to experience a time of great change in the Middle East from the point of view of the UNSC in 2011!

The year 2011 in Tunisia marks the start of the Arab Spring as well as revolutions across the Middle East. As a delegate on this committee, it is your job to act as powers near and far from Tunisia, assisting to navigate the tides of this new era for Tunisia. The issues of this committee are very multifaceted, so I ask delegates to tread lightly and respect the material that they will be engaging with. I look forward to seeing all delegates bring their creativity, their passion, and their excitement so that we can all have a great time.

All the best,

Khristian Bass

Crisis Director, The United Nations Security Council: Tunisia, 2011

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNSC



*UNSC meets on October 24, 2019 to address violent unrest in Syria.<sup>1</sup>*

The United Nations was founded in 1945, and the Security Council was quickly established as one of its six principal committees. The UNSC has the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security—helping guide the international community through crisis and calamity. The changes in the UNSC’s makeup very much reflect the changing geopolitical landscape of a multilateral world. Originally six members, the Council later expanded to consist of ten in 1965.<sup>2</sup> From then on, the Council consisted of fifteen member states with the five

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<sup>1</sup> GPA Photo Archive, Bureau of Global Public Affairs. ““Security Council Considers Situation in Syria.”” Flickr, 24 October 2019, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/iip-photo-archive/>. Accessed 11 August 2024.

<sup>2</sup> CFR. “The UN Security Council.” Council on Foreign Relations. August 12, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/background/un-security-council>.

permanent members — the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia, wielding veto-power. Such power prevents any substantive resolution from passing, regardless of how the rest of the Council votes. Such power allows the P5 to defend their national interests—often at the expense of international cooperation. This aspect of the UNSC is not only controversial in theory; veto-power has caused decision-making gridlocks and prevented intervention, action, and resolution in 293 instances (as of 2015).<sup>3</sup>

Outside of the P5 members, the remaining ten member states are elected for rotating two-year positions by two-thirds majority in the UN General Assembly. To guarantee geographical coverage, three seats are afforded to African states, two to Latin American and Caribbean states, two to Western European states (and other non-covered states), two to Asia-Pacific states, and one to Eastern European states.<sup>4</sup> By dividing the remaining states by region, the UNSC intends to protect geographic inclusivity and ensure representation.

Another important tool that only the Security Council can leverage is the use of the UN Peacekeeping forces. With 11 active missions across the world and more than 72,000 field personnel, the UNSC helps navigate the pathway from conflict to peace, protecting both civilians and the political process.<sup>5</sup> The UNSC can also employ sanctions on member states to incentivize peaceful outcomes and protect global trust. Sanctions, peacekeeping, and collaboration with other UN bodies and NGOs are the Security Council's instruments to protect global peace and pave the pathway for conflict resolution.

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<sup>3</sup> Security Council Report. "The Veto : UN Security Council Working Methods : Security Council Report." Security Council Report. December 16, 2020. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>

<sup>4</sup> CFR, "The UN Security Council.

<sup>5</sup> "UN Peacekeeping." *Better World Campaign*, Better World Campaign, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/un-peacekeeping>. Accessed 8 July 2024.



## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

This year, MUNUC's United Nations Security Council aims to create an environment that challenges delegates to be their most creative, thoughtful, and adaptable selves. Kelly, Khristian, and Rhea have engineered this committee with this goal in mind. Within the crisis section of this committee, delegates will be challenged with the task of interacting with the MENA region in a measured manner. By that, it means the front room's utilizing directive cycles to extend a helping hand, rather than an overpowering presence, to solve the crisis. This means that directives will have to be thought out and keep in mind the sovereignty of the nation in question, as well as the people who the United Nations Security Council aims to assist. Within the backroom, arcs will have to be equally thought out, interacting with the region in a way that understands the sensitivity of the topics at hand, while still at the same time allowing each delegate to spark crisis breaks and improve their country's position in this world. Within the GA portion of the committee, delegates will be expected to again be creative, detailed, and practical in their solutions to create lasting fixes for the issues that are discussed, showcasing how much care must be taken when dealing with a topic such as this one. At all stages, delegates should be attentive to both the world in the micro as well as the macro, understanding that small actions can have big consequences and vice versa, as we intend for any decisions that delegates take to be felt. Another critical aspect of this committee is its nature as a double-delegate hybrid, meaning that collaboration will be encouraged across delegations to further enhance the solution mechanisms within this committee. Overall, while this committee has many parts that we will explain further, please keep in mind that the core of this is creating a learning experience through solutions that are creative and detailed, collaboration across nations, and everyone trying their best.

## Position Papers

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This year, the UNSC will have a unique structure for position papers. Rather than the usual several paragraphs that provide a general outline of the problems of the committee and a brief overview of the country's solutions, Kelly, Khristian, and Rhea ask that delegates submit position papers that are simple bulleted lists of possible solutions that they think their country would support on the issue of the different points of the conflict; consider potential solutions that would prevent the need for future revolutions, and also consider solutions to the potential humanitarian and geopolitical fallout from the revolution in Tunisia. We feel this is the best way to ensure that all delegates enter the committee with flexible solutions that they can use in the paper writing and debate process, without being chained to one solution or stance.

## Overall Format of the Committee

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This committee is a hybrid committee that has some important differences from both traditional and continuous crisis committees. First, it should be noted that the committee will function as a continuous crisis committee for the entirety of sessions one, two, and three. This means that we will have cycles beginning with a crisis break to introduce a problem that the committee faces, followed by the delegates solving the problem by giving speeches on solutions and then debating comprehensive solutions in the form of directives which delegates will work to write and merge, filed going into a voting procedure with debate on said directives. Simultaneously, delegates will be writing notes that drive forward delegate arcs to the backroom. The goal of these notes is to impact the committee by having the content that you—the delegates—write, the problems that you create, or the shifts that you orchestrate 'break into' the front-room during crisis breaks. While this may seem daunting, we will explain this further in the subsequent subsection and continuously throughout conference.

After the crisis portion of the conference has elapsed, the backroom will present the room with two topic choices, Topic A and Topic B. Both topics will be related to issues that the backroom believes were continuous themes—in both delegate crisis arcs and crisis breaks—throughout the first three sessions of the weekend. This will mark the beginning of the GA portion of the committee, where the frontroom debates which topic they would like to address over the rest of the weekend. Delegates will then work together to form blocs, create working papers within these blocs, as well as debate and vote on each working paper. It is important to note that the GA sections of the committee build directly off of the world that was built within the crisis sections of the committee, so that even during the crisis sessions, delegates must be thinking of what they want to be discussed in the GA session.

## The Crisis Section

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As was mentioned earlier, this committee will begin with three crisis sessions. The UNSC's crisis sessions, however, have some differences from crisis sessions in continuous crisis or traditional hybrid committees. The UNSC requires a similar level of attention to each policy proposal delegates present. As described above, the frontroom crisis cycle begins with an opening crisis break, which delegates respond to through a cycle of moderated and unmoderated debate, the drafting of directives, the merging of directives, and voting on said directives. Within each crisis cycle, every action can have a wide array of repercussions. As such, the dais will always closely examine directives to see whether delegates have accounted for the potential repercussions of their various actions.

Equally important to understanding the front room cycle is having a solid knowledge of how the backroom—where delegates send notes and carry out their wildest schemes—operates. The goal of each delegate should be to utilize the backroom to build an arc that at its core benefits the nation that the delegate is representing. Arcs are built by delegates usually by first beginning with a core ideology that the nation wants to

represent within the region. It is almost always best to explicitly state what your animating ideology and end goal—as a delegate and as a representative of your nation—is in your first note. Delegates should feel free to come up with any ideology and end goal that they see fit, but they should take care to ensure that whatever they choose is backed up by some justification of their nation’s history or otherwise, even if it is merely a brief explanation. With this ideology and end goal, delegates will usually start by using their first notes to build resources; this could be as far-ranging as setting up a shipping outpost to setting up a complex spy network. This stage of the committee is to set the groundwork for more dramatic actions—actions that will hopefully ‘break into’ front room in future sessions. Within this resource-building process, it is also most effective to write down why exactly your country needs the resources you are seeking to acquire, and how these resources will build towards your end goal.

The next stage in the note-writing process is to use the resources that delegates have amassed to execute actions that will help fulfill a delegation’s end goals. This is one of the most—if not the most—important elements of the entire crisis-note-writing process. The notes written within this stage are called execution notes, as they execute the plans that have been in the works since the beginning of the conference. While the notes in this stage must be disruptive to warrant some kind of response from the committee as a whole—as this is one of the major factors that decide if a note will break or not—it is critically important that delegates keep in mind the extremely sensitive nature of the committee. Notes that encourage gender-based violence, race-based violence or racism, ethnic cleansing, or human-rights violations will not be executed, and the backroom staff will have a word with any delegate who intentionally or unintentionally sends in a note with one of these features. With that in mind, always be looking to be creative with execution notes, as the things within each note have a chance of changing the face of the committee.

The last component of continuous crisis that must be mentioned is the JPD or Joint Personal Directive. JPDs are basically crisis notes that are written in conjunction with at least one other delegation. JPDs should

always make clear what exact resource from each delegation is being used and should always execute actions that could not be done by a single country.

## UNSC-specific Crisis Mechanisms

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The UNSC will have a few components that were touched upon but will be explained in further detail here. First, as you may be aware if you have done a crisis committee before, most crisis committees work on a two-notepad system such that whenever one notepad is sent to the backroom to be read, the other is kept in the frontroom to be worked on. The two-notepad system is also a feature of UNSC committees. However, as we are a double-delegate committee, we strongly encourage that each delegate is assigned to one of the notepads. This means that as one member of the delegation writes a note and sends it in, the other member of the delegation writes the next note on the second pad.

Another important element of the UNSC is that the first five countries listed in the Blocs sections (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France) will have veto power. If they decide to vote against a directive or working paper, it will immediately fail. After all—for better or for worse—this is how the UN Security Council works. As such, we suggest that delegates representing the permanent members of the UNSC use their veto power extremely sparingly, and if these powers are abused, the dais may find it necessary to strip any delegation of these powers.

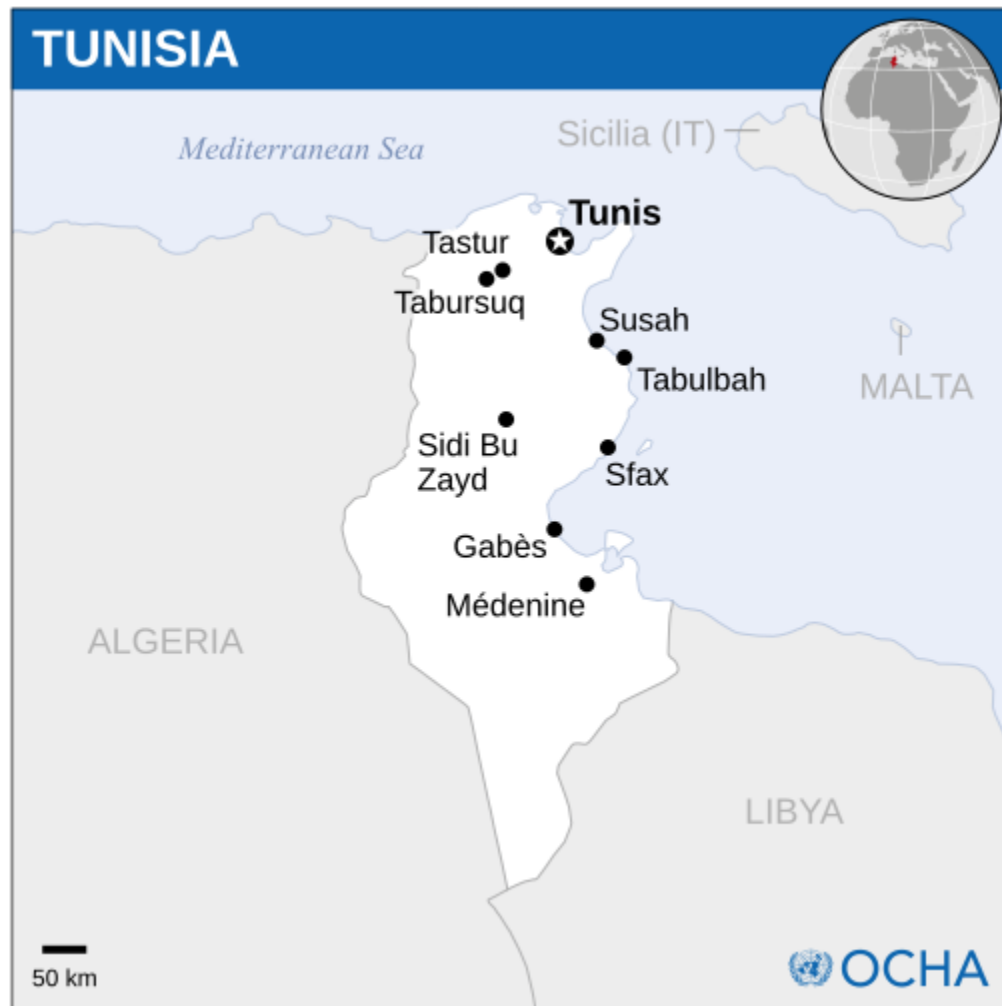
The most important change that is different from most crisis committees is how intertwined the crisis sessions are with the GA. When it comes to choosing the topics, we will be looking extensively at delegations' execution notes to be able to see if there are consistent throughlines that suggest a topic that would be appropriate for further discussion. This means that any action a delegate takes will be noticed, and all actions should be taken with the goal of influencing what the two potential topics for the GA session are.

## The General Assembly Section

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The General Assembly portion of conference may seem daunting. After all, delegates will not know what their topic is until it is voted on by committee members. But you should not be alarmed. Delegates will vote on either Topic A or Topic B, and then we will move into a regular double-delegate General Assembly format for the rest of conference. This means that after a speakers list of which all delegates in the room are a part, we will move to a “one-in-one-out” system in which one of the delegates within a double delegate pairing is in the room giving speeches and suggesting new topics to drive moderated caucuses, while the other delegate is outside working within their bloc to draft a working paper, with delegates able to swap with each other at any time during moderated caucuses. As with all GA committees, we will rotate between moderated and unmoderated caucuses before moving into the official presentation of working papers. After the working papers are presented, we will have a Q&A session in which presenters face questions about their bloc’s working papers, followed by a vote on said working papers.

## HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM



*Map of Tunisia.*<sup>6</sup>

Tunisia's twenty-first-century political chaos does not exist in a vacuum. The country still suffers from the aftershocks of French colonialism, its early independent years, and the decades-long dictatorship of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Since independence, Tunisia has featured a presidential regime backed by a single political party

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<sup>6</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). "Tunisia: Location Map (2013) - Tunisia." ReliefWeb, 25 September 2013, <https://reliefweb.int/map/tunisia/tunisia-location-map-2013>. Accessed 11 August 2024.

and bolstered by the 1959 constitution.<sup>7</sup> Such a rigid political system easily allowed for the rise of autocrats, the establishment of ruling regimes, and the silencing of public dissent. An examination of Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution must consider how the country's foundation was slowly constructed on the premise of strongman rule.

## The Hafsīd Dynasty

Tunisia has survived the rise and fall of several dynasties: from the Carthaginians and Romans to the Almohands to the Hafsids. Situated in the greater Maghreb region—the western part of the Arab world in Northwestern Africa—Tunisia was, for a period of time, under the rule of the Hafsīd dynasty, the only strong Muslim power among its neighbors.<sup>8</sup> The Hafsids came to power in 1229 when the Almohad Governor Abū Zakariyyā' Yaḥyā broke off from the larger Almohad Caliphate, marking a period of growth that would take the dynasty—and what would become Tunisia—to a position of great strength.<sup>9</sup> The beginning of Abū Zakariyyā's reign was best characterized by a forward-looking trade policy, as the Hafsīd dynasty began to engage with Spain, Italy, and Provençal communities, with Abū Zakariyyā' even expanding his territory into northern Morocco and southern Iberia. Under Abu Zakariyyā's rule, the Hafsīd dynasty grew to become the most powerful force in the region. Unfortunately, after Abu Zakariyyā's death, the Hafsids were quickly met with an array of challenges. Abu Zakariyyā's successors were forced to grapple with a dizzying gauntlet of challenges, including the repeated invasion of the rival Marinid dynasty, increasingly aggressive piracy in the western Mediterranean, and a rebellion that lasted from 1435 to 1452.<sup>10</sup> After the seventeen-year rebellion, the Hafsids would begin a decline that would

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<sup>7</sup> "Tunisia: Government and Society." Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tunisia/Government-and-society>. Accessed 8 July 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib* (Cambridge Univ. 19) p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> "Hafsīd Dynasty | North Africa, Tunisia, Maghreb | Britannica." Accessed August 22, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hafsīd-dynasty>.

<sup>10</sup> "Hafsīd Dynasty | North Africa, Tunisia, Maghreb | Britannica." Accessed August 22, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hafsīd-dynasty>.



prove irreversible, thanks to the rise of the Ottoman Empire. In 1573, the Hafsid s of Tunis turned to Spain for an alliance against the Muslim Turks, but the Ottomans invaded the Hafsid lands with a large enough fleet to decisively capture Tunis and envelop it into their empire. Although the Ottoman invasion marked the end of the Hafsid s, their legacy included a strong system of education, the development of the Maliki school of law, and the establishment of Tunis as the capital of the kingdom.

## Tunis: Province of the Ottoman Empire

Modern Tunisia began as a province in the Ottoman Empire but eventually won increased autonomy. At the onset of Ottoman rule, the capital city of Tunis was garrisoned with Ottoman forces. However, although the Ottoman's efficient military could control the tribes in the countryside, their rule was greatly unpopular, as they were outsiders. Indeed, in 1591, junior officers who were not of Turkish descent forced the Ottomans to acknowledge their authority. They elected a *bey* who was able to exercise control in the city.<sup>11</sup> In the countryside, *deys* (Turkish for chieftains) controlled and collected taxes in tribal rural areas and were leaders who had control over the governance of the region.<sup>12</sup>

Over the next few centuries, several trends emerged as the ruling elite attempted to maintain balance within Tunisia. The Ottomans never came to expect obedience from their Tunisian province—indeed, the province acted in its own interest, forging ties with different European nations and parties. However, foreign trade ultimately proved to be damaging to Tunisia's long-term autonomy. In the 19th century, Tunisia's economy entered into a steep and prolonged downturn. The state's inability to compete with European industrial powers, coupled with declining productivity, led to economic stagnation. To cover trade deficits, Tunisia increasingly relied on credit from European banks, but the growing debt became unmanageable. In the context of a faltering

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<sup>11</sup> "dey | Ottoman leader". Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved 2017-09-14.

<sup>12</sup> Perkins, *Tunisia: Crossroads of the Islamic and European Worlds* (1986) pp. 55–57.

economy, shifting European dynamics, and intensifying resource competition, the age of Turkish rule in Tunisia drew to a close, paving the way for French colonization.

## French Rule and the Protectorate System

On May 12, 1881, after French military forces entered from Algeria and engaged in combat with Tunisia under the pretext of a border skirmish, Muhammed III as-Sadiq—the Bey of Tunis—was forced to sign the Treaty of Bardo. Though the Ottoman Sultan rejected the treaty, the Ottoman Empire was significantly weakened by the late 19th century and could do little to stop the French takeover.<sup>13</sup> By forcing as-Sadiq into signing the Treaty of Bardo, the French had practically conquered Tunisia in little time. But why exactly was France so set on conquering Tunisia? France's interests in Tunisia mainly centered around two issues: First, France had supplied major loans to Tunisia—a province with a weak government, inefficient tax system, and a series of droughts that crippled its economy— and, to put it simply, Tunisia owed French creditors a great deal of money. Second, France needed to suppress Italian and British influence in neighboring Algeria to regain international prestige and control over the region.<sup>14</sup> Within two years after the Treaty of Bardo, the French Protectorate was formally established at the La Marsa Convention. As a protectorate, though Tunisia was not fully annexed into the French empire, it was under French control as its own independent state. This meant that France could exert influence over the many sectors of the nation without the complete dissolution of the Tunisian government. The Bey of Tunis still existed as a position, but the representative of France, the Resident-General, held the real power. As such, France could control Tunisia's foreign and economic policies, leaving only lower-level administrative concerns to the

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<sup>13</sup> “13. French Tunisia (1881-1956).” Accessed August 22, 2024. <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/french-tunisia-1881-1956/>.

<sup>14</sup> Aldrich, Robert (15 Sep 1996), *Greater France: a history of French overseas expansion*, European Studies, Basingstoke-London: Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 978-0-312-16000-5

Tunisian.<sup>15</sup> Although protectorate status was officially established through treaties and conventions, in practice, the French did not impose control through peaceful means. Tunisian nationalist movements arose in the early 20th century, resulting in violent riots, boycotts, and eventually, the frequent invocation of martial law. Tunisian leaders who disagreed with French rule were readily deposed.

Capitalizing on the periods of unrest was Habib Bourguiba who founded a pro-independence newspaper in 1933. Finding that existing political parties were too conservative in their fight against the French, in 1934, he founded the New Destour party, serving as its Secretary General. His political activism subsequently saw him arrested and imprisoned by colonial authorities that very year. Nonetheless, upon his release in 1936, Bourguiba resumed New Destour's radical activism, encouraging labor struggle. He was once again jailed until 1942. Upon his release, he became quickly frustrated with the lack of progress wrought by peaceful means. World War II had disrupted any progress for the Neo-Destour cause. Many nationalists, accused of collaborating with the Nazis, were forced to flee Tunisia or face imprisonment. Yet the nationalist cause remained undeterred, continuing to fight for a place in the government and maintaining the eventual goal of winning complete independence for Tunisia. As the war came to a close and other Arab states emerged with their independence, the French decided in 1951 to permit a government with nationalist sympathies to take office. The man who came to office was Salah Ben Youssef, who was an old friend of Bourguiba and had commandeered the struggle for independence by invoking Islamic values and integrating the fight for Tunisia with the broader struggle to free the entirety of the Maghreb from colonial rule.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "13. French Tunisia (1881-1956)." Accessed August 22, 2024. <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/french-tunisia-1881-1956/>.

<sup>16</sup> "The Protectorate (1881–1956)." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tunisia/The-protectorate-1881-1956>. Accessed 8 July 2024.

For three years, from 1951 to 1954, France and Tunisia were in a bitter standoff — the nationalist leaders who had been brought into the fold were pushed aside as French resident generals attempted to reverse course and regain control. Frustrated with a lack of progress towards independence, in 1954, Bourguiba announced that Tunisian nationalists would take up arms to attain their independence. It was this threat of a violent rebellion that finally brought the French to the negotiating table. In 1955, an agreement was signed that allowed Tunisia to form a Neo-Destour ministry. However, a conflict quickly erupted between the Bourguiba-aligned forces—who tended to be secular, Western-oriented, and nationalist—and the followers of Ben Youssef—who tended to be more religious and more attached to the idea of pan-Maghreb unity.<sup>17</sup> As the Magrheb blazed with struggle, Bourguiba turned to France to win the political battle and begin negotiations for total independence.<sup>18</sup> On March 20, 1956, Tunisia became independent—with Bourguiba at the helm as President.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “13. French Tunisia (1881-1956).” Accessed August 22, 2024. <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/french-tunisia-1881-1956/>.

<sup>18</sup> Bessis, Sophie [in French]; Belhassen, Souhayr [in French] (2012). *Bourguiba* (in French). Tunis: Elyzad. ISBN 978-9973-58-044-3.

<sup>19</sup> Zuber, David. "Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000)." BlackPast, 16 Apr. 2022, <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/people-global-african-history/habib-bourguiba-1903-2000/>. Accessed 8 July 2024.



*UNSC delegates convene at the Tunisian desk during a debate in July 1961 on Tunisia's complaint against France for not complying with the interim resolution to the Bizerte crisis. The Bizerte crisis was the consequence of Tunisia's blockading of the French naval base at Bizerte, Tunisia with the goal of forcing France to leave.*<sup>20, 21</sup>

Although Tunisia gained its independence, French influence was apparent in its culture, education, and political system. Furthermore, Tunisia's protectorate status, instead of being a colony, allowed France to distinguish Tunisia from other members of the Arab world and the Maghreb and led to the creation of a Tunisian national identity that was distinct from other identities in the region.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, although Tunisia suffered from

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<sup>20</sup> The United Nations Security Council. "Photo # 103684." Flickr, 15 January 2016, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/). Accessed 11 August 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Department of State: Office of the Historian. "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXI, Africa." 169. Editorial Note, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v21/d169>. Accessed 11 August 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Willis, Michael J. *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*. Hurst & Company, 2014, p. 21.

political repression and frequent skirmishes, the colonies of Algeria or even Morocco experienced repression on a much greater scale. French as a language had ingrained itself deeply into society, surviving even nationalist pushes for Arabization. Furthermore, France maintained strong economic ties with Tunisia—a trend that would continue beyond Bourguiba.

On the other hand, one must consider what the legacy of political intervention did to Tunisia as an emerging state. Long used to depositions and political threats, the Neo-Destour parliament was suddenly faced with the question of how to secure political stability within a new political style. Gone were the days of the Bey as the singular ruler or the French as overlords. In the coming decades, Bourguiba and his revolutionaries would need to create a new government within the limited freedoms afforded to them by the French.

### **The New Day: Bourguiba's Burgeoning Government**

Bourguiba's government was characterized both by sweeping reforms and the creation of a strong presidential system that quickly evolved into an authoritarian one-party state. Bourguiba was able to build such a strong cult of personality from his role as the architect of Tunisian independence that in 1975, he declared himself "president for life." Indeed, much of his presidency is characterized by threats from his more religious opponents who struggled to reconcile their vision of a Tunisia heavily influenced by Islam with Bourguiba's staunch modernism and secularism. Faced with formidable opponents whose vision of a more religious Tunisia had serious appeal in certain segments of Tunisian society, Bourguiba relied on tools of repression to consolidate his power.



*Habib Bourguiba in 1960.*<sup>23</sup>

Bourguiba's reforms focused on the education and health sectors as he veered the country towards so-called *Western-style* education. Koranic schools—religious education centers—were put under the authority of the Ministry of Education. He constructed new Western-style schools and proclaimed free-education—not just for boys. In fact, he led a gender equality campaign that provided women with education, the right to consent to

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<sup>23</sup> “Habib Bourguiba Portrait.” Wikimedia, 1960, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Habib\\_Bourguiba\\_portrait4.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Habib_Bourguiba_portrait4.jpg). Accessed 11 August 2024.

marry, a minimum age of marriage, the right to divorce, and the same employment rights as men. Furthermore, polygamy was abolished, and the religious court system—a relic of Tunisia’s Caliphate past—was suppressed.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, Bourguiba began a socialist experiment in Tunisia—one that would eventually fail. Indeed, significant sections of the agricultural community resisted the socialist collectivization, the World Bank refused to fund the program, and the desired increases in output were conspicuously absent. Just as important, however, were Bourguiba’s fears that Ahmed Ben Salah, the program’s primary advocate, was leveraging the program to fuel his own political ambitions. Fearing both Ben Salah and public anger, Bourguiba abandoned the project in 1969 and shifted to a more free-market system. Thus, the Tunisian economy shifted to export-oriented policy, bolstered by domestic oil revenues, labor remittances, and foreign borrowing (particularly from France). Such oil and rent-centered policy would eventually bankrupt the nation when all three sources begin to dwindle. By the 1980s, the nation was in a debt-ridden crisis with the private sector nowhere near developed enough to fill the gap.

Bourguiba’s foreign policy was equally as distant from his Arab partners. Regardless of Tunisia’s past as a protectorate, Bourguiba looked to the West for both economic and military assistance. Despite pushing for the Tunisization of the nation, he still strived for a special relationship with France. In this, he alienated many of his Arab peers and Arab-Muslim advocates in his own nation. Indeed, even as Bourguiba approached foreign policy with distinct pragmatism that was appreciated by many Western powers, troubles grew at home as he failed to appease Islamist political groups.<sup>25</sup>

In the end, both the alienation of his opponents and succession worries spawned Bourguiba’s declaration that he was “president for life” in 1975. By actively preventing the emergence of a successor through thwarting the

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<sup>24</sup> Zuber, David. "Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000)."

<sup>25</sup> "Bourguiba, Habib." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Habib-Bourguiba/Presidency>. Accessed 8 July 2024.



success of his own party members, becoming increasingly authoritarian, detaching from his party's base, and ruthlessly repressing a rival party called the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI), he was the sole option for presidency. Nonetheless, in the upcoming years, Tunisia quickly found itself on the verge of political and economic crisis. Bourguiba's onslaught against the MTI was riddled with abuses by the country's security forces. Dissidents within his own party and his pan-Arabist opponents, as well as his own centralization of power, made Bourguiba's continued rule deeply unpopular. Finally, in 1987, Prime Minister Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, a month into his new appointment, organized a constitutional coup on the grounds of Bourguiba's declining mental health. He then assumed the presidency himself—a post he would continue to hold until the Jasmine Revolution.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Dusk: Ben Ali's 24 Year-rule**



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<sup>26</sup> Delaney, Paul (9 November 1987). "Senile Bourguiba Described in Tunis". The New York Times. Accessed 9 July 2024.

*Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2008.*<sup>27</sup>

Ben Ali considered himself a revolutionary. The day of his ascension was celebrated annually as New Era Day, and Ben Ali seemed to encourage terming his medical coup d'état as the "Tunisian Revolution."<sup>28</sup> Ben Ali's initial days in office raised hopes of a democratic Tunisia—hopes that did not last long. He immediately loosened restrictions on the press, allowing, for the first time, opposition statements to be published. Political prisoners were granted pardons and released. He even changed the name of his own party to the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD). However, regardless of his seemingly democratic maneuvers, the 1989 elections saw the RCD sweep every seat—with Ben Ali appearing alone on the ballot. The last dictator before the Jasmine Revolution, Ben Ali's 24 years in power would feature extreme oppression of Ennahda, Tunisia's Islamist party, high youth unemployment, and one of the worst human rights records in the world.<sup>29</sup> Although opposition parties were allowed, they could only run if they had endorsements from 30 political figures. However, the RCD dominated the political landscape, and not a single candidate was capable of doing so.<sup>30</sup> Election after election, the opposition to Ben Ali struggled to get higher than 5% of parliamentary seats. Once more, Tunisia was dominated by a single-party system.

The implications of long-standing single-party rule—such as a continuation of the sins of the same party, an overall blockage of the ability to make widespread changes, and stagnation of policy considerations—extend both to the reasons behind the Jasmine Revolution and to potential problems that the United Nations Security

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<sup>27</sup> Presidencia de la Nación Argentina. "Zine El Abidine Ben Ali." Wikimedia, November 2008, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zine\\_El\\_Abidine\\_Ben\\_Ali.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zine_El_Abidine_Ben_Ali.jpg). Accessed 11 August 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Michael, Ayari; Vincent Geisser (2011). "Tunisie: la Révolution des "Nouzouh"\* n'a pas l'odeur du jasmin" (in French). *Témoignage chrétien*. Archived from the original on 28 January 2011. Accessed 8 July 2024.

<sup>29</sup> "Remembering the Day Tunisia's President Ben Ali Fled." *Al Jazeera*, 14 Jan. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/1/14/remembering-the-day-tunisia-president-ben-ali-fled>. Accessed 8 July 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Dickovick, J. Tyler (2008). *The World Today Series: Africa 2012*. Lanham, Maryland: Stryker-Post Publications. ISBN 978-161048-881-5.

Council must consider before moving forward. Furthermore, foreign interests—particularly those of France—play a crucial part in Tunisia's economy, security, and politics.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM



*Tunisians protest in Tunis for freedom against Ali's regime.<sup>31</sup>*

The Arab Spring—an explosion of pro-democracy protests—stormed through the Middle East and North Africa, but the heart of the revolution was in Tunisia. Named the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisian protest movements ousted dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and instituted a transitional government.<sup>32</sup> Ben Ali, who had been in power for 27 years, was the archetype of the Arab strongman leader: corrupt but powerfully entrenched. The causes and implications of the Jasmine Revolution arose both from domestic considerations and international entanglements. Although many debate why the Tunisian revolution erupted, most agree that internal turmoil and political oppression intensified dissent.

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<sup>31</sup> Nouri, Nasser. "Tunisians take a rest at a wall with an Arabic slogan and the word 'Freedom.'" Flickr, 15 January 2011, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nassernouri/5381199773>. Accessed 11 Aug 2024.

<sup>32</sup> "Jasmine Revolution." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 13 Jul. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tunisia/The-Jasmine-Revolution>.

By all measures, Tunisia was one of the most socially progressive countries in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region. It was highly secularized, with long-standing separation of religion and politics. Furthermore, it had incredibly progressive laws on women's rights. In this context, Ben Ali's regime may have appeared popular. It seemed as though he kept the country safe from the domestic terrorism that ravaged nearby Algeria in a civil war. He even maintained some semblance of pluralism by allowing opposition parties to continue—so long as they did not threaten his rule nor introduce controversial debate against his policies.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in contrast to the economic turmoil of the Bourguiba era, Ben Ali's bold steps helped stabilize the country's monetary situation. Indeed, the economy sustained annual growth of 5% for a decade, improving living standards for middle-class Tunisians.<sup>34</sup>

If this was the case, then how did youth dissatisfaction become potent enough to end a decades-old regime?

## **Ben Ali's Regime: the Repression of Ennahda**

As aforementioned, Ben Ali maintained some semblance of plurality at the onset of his presidency. Indeed, he used democracy to rally the people behind his questionable takeover; upon taking power, Ben Ali had ended the one-party system, released political prisoners, and loosened restrictions on the press. Furthermore, in 1998, he abolished the office of president-for-life and introduced a two-term limit for the presidency.

Part of his electoral reform prohibited political parties based on religion. This law set up potentially the most salient political conflict under Ben Ali. Most of the religious leaders and politicians—whom he had in fact released from prison—had set up a party known as Hizb Ennahda (Renaissance Party) and promised to work

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<sup>33</sup> El-Khawas, Mohamed A. "Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution: Causes and Impact." *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 23 no. 4, 2012, p. 1-23. Project MUSE [muse.jhu.edu/article/492974](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/492974).

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

within the limitations of Ben Ali's ban on religious parties. However, when they won more votes than any secular party in the 1989 election, Ben Ali became concerned about a powerful opposition bloc.

Over time, Ennahda grew increasingly militant, inviting Ben Ali to crack down harshly. His administration invoked armed forces to arrest, exile, and imprison Islamist leaders in the name of national security; indeed, in 1995, Amnesty International stated that two thousand Islamists had been imprisoned.<sup>35</sup> The political environment was so oppressive, that when Muhammad Mouada, the leader of the Movement of Social Democrats, and Khemais Chammary, the secretary-general of the Tunisian League of Human Rights, wrote an open letter to the president criticizing his restrictive policies, they were arrested.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, although Ben Ali was once the champion of free press, he utilized intimidation and harassment to curtail the expression of opposition. Writers feared unemployment and seizure should their news reports not satisfy the ministers in charge. Such de-facto restrictions on the media circumvented the free-press policies Ben Ali had supposedly put in place.<sup>37</sup> Alongside a "winner-take-all" election policy that consistently locked out the opposition—so strongly, in fact, that Ben Ali ran unopposed several times—Ben Ali quickly consolidated his political power.

Notably, the treatment of Ennahda members as political prisoners frequently involved abuse and torture. Those who may have stayed silent—particularly secular parties—found that the targeting of Ennahda was in fact a targeting of any potential opposition, be it Islamist, secular, or anything in between. Indeed, the torment of persecuted opposition members—both inside and after detention (through arbitrary and humiliating restrictions)—was widely criticized at the time as some of the worst human rights abuse globally. Repression in

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<sup>35</sup> Emma C. Murphy, *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: From Bourguiba to Ben Ali* (New York: Macmillan, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Perkins, 197.

<sup>37</sup> Lise Garon, *Dangerous Alliances: Civil Society, the Media, and Democratic Transition in North Africa* (New York: Zed, 2003), 43.

Tunisia was psychologically, socially, and organizationally productive in uniting secular parties with Islamist parties, thus creating a revolutionary front that would be effective in motivating the Jasmine Revolution. While the liberal-Islamist split has long been Tunisia's most impactful political fracture, Ben Ali, by sidelining both sectors together, paradoxically created the opportunity for dialogue and cooperation.<sup>38</sup>

## The Economy: Growing Yet Deficient

Strangely, although economic discontent is commonly cited as a major reason for the Jasmine Revolution—by all means, the Tunisian economy should have been flourishing—as previously mentioned, growth was at a sustained 5 percent which should have stabilized the middle class. Indeed, by common metrics, quality of life had increased, rather than decreased, under Ben Ali's government. Why, then, is the economy so focused on academic debate?

Ben Ali's push for economic growth was facilitated through cooperation with international institutions and incredibly close ties with the European Union. Indeed, continuing the legacy of French-Tunisian ties left by his predecessors, Ben Ali quickly tied Tunisia's economic well-being to Europe's. By 1992, Europe purchased 80% of Tunisia's exports and supplied 70% of its imports. The trade relationship was so intertwined that Europe largely ignored Ben Ali's autocratic nature because his economy was successful. Through this relationship, the mid-1990s featured sustained economic growth and raised living standards for the middle class. It was a miracle economy. Starvation was down, homelessness was almost completely eliminated, and real income was up. Furthermore, education and healthcare greatly benefitted from the improved economy which provided for greater tax revenue—so much so that it seemed the country cared little about political repression so long as the economy stayed stable.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Nugent, Elizabeth R. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*. Princeton University Press, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Perkins, 211

However, when Europe was hit by the financial crisis in 2008, Tunisia experienced an intense economic downturn. Tunisian products no longer were in demand, the industrial sector contracted, and services were no longer expanding. Although a stimulus package was introduced to help the economy rebound in 2010, for many recent graduates, jobs were still scarce. With 20% unemployment and little ability to migrate and seek employment abroad, Tunisia's youth was left destitute. Furthermore, the already meager economic rebound did not impact substantial regional disparities. Tunis and the coast remained highly developed, while the interior fell further into poverty. To many below the poverty line, it seemed that the government did not care about them. Unemployment was greater than 22% in the interior cities of Kasserine and Gafsa—and yet, because of the lack of political dialogue, neither Ben Ali nor his top officials had any idea of their dissatisfaction.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia," CRS Report for Congress, no. 7-5700 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 16 December 2011).





*Government buildings in Tunis.*<sup>41</sup>

Such economic discontent was worsened by perceptions of Ben Ali's corruption. In late 2010, there was a WikiLeaks release of cables from the US Embassy in Tunis. The release exposed the staggering corruption of the Ben Ali family which, in turn, furthered anger among unemployed youth. First Lady Leila Trabelsi and her son-in-law Mohamed Sakher El Materi enjoyed lavish lifestyles powered by a series of extremely lucrative and rarely above-board businesses. Thus, even as Tunisia fell into greater economic distress, Ben Ali and his family continued to build up their excessive wealth. Shady business deal after shady business deal inflamed Tunisia's youth

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<sup>41</sup> "Tunis | These are some government buildings in Tunis, the ca...." Flickr, 9 April 2011, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/98422476@N00/453093421>. Accessed 11 August 2024.

population; for those under the age of twenty-four—who made up forty percent of the population—employment seemed out of reach even as twenty-eight-year-old El Materi delighted in his wealth.<sup>42</sup>

As U.S. Ambassador Robert Godec commented, “corruption in the inner circle is growing. Even average Tunisians are now keenly aware of it, and the chorus of complaints is rising.”<sup>43</sup> The people were no longer content to stay silent as the Ben Ali regime grew increasingly out of touch, refusing to listen to domestic and international criticism.

## Civil Society and Institutions of Strength

Regardless of Ben Ali’s stubborn repression of Tunisia’s political atmosphere, two key institutions would become instrumental to the Jasmine Revolution’s success: the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and the Tunisian military. The UGTT played a massive role in the Jasmine Revolution and would continue to influence Tunisian politics after its success. Their unique role in Tunisian civil society allowed them to survive the Ben Ali regime while still revolting against it when the time was ripe.

Contrary to popular discourse before 2011, labor unions in Tunisia were not “empty shells.”<sup>44</sup> However, in order to survive Ben Ali’s regime, many UGTT leaders were not outwardly critical. Large-scale demonstrations rarely occurred. The union expanded the ranks of its membership without doing much of anything at all. Such supposed submission allowed UGTT to grow even as opposition groups were brutally targeted by the Ben Ali regime. Yet, despite the previous quiescence of the UGTT, come 2010, labor union activism became a major and decisive element in the revolution. UGTT offices became meeting points and refuges for the protestors. General

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<sup>42</sup> Ian Black, “WikiLeaks Cables: Tunisia Blocks Site Reporting ‘Hatred’ of the First Lady,” *Guardian*, 7 December 2010

<sup>43</sup> Black, 2

<sup>44</sup> Eva Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jan. 2004).

strikes brought the revolution outwards to the coasts. UGTT became the protests' greatest national organizers, despite their earlier compliance.<sup>45</sup>

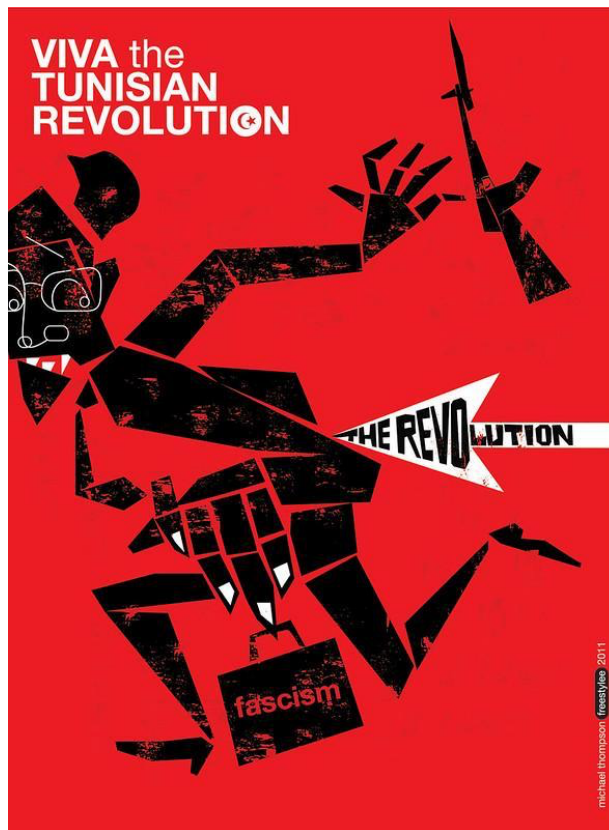
The military similarly played a decisive role during the revolution—namely by refusing to fire on protestors as the movement raged on far longer than Ben Ali had initially expected. The military during Ben Ali's regime often acted as a tool of power, whether through oppressing key opposition members or focusing on latent domestic terrorist threats. However, the military was also structured largely independently of the ruling government. In contrast to countries like Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, which feature mostly patrimonial military structures, Tunisia's military saw themselves as meritocratic, serving the public's interests. The robust bureaucratic structure of the military—where promotion did not lie solely in Ben Ali's hands and clan/ethnic ties were not the reason for leadership—allowed the military to envision political reform without losing their jobs.

Why precisely the Tunisian military remained relatively independent can be traced back to the start of the independent era. Under Bourguiba, soldiers were kept deliberately out of politics. Ben Ali largely continued this policy. The military was kept small and modestly funded, focusing mostly on border defense. Ben Ali preferred the police over the military, which found itself overshadowed by the better-funded and larger politically influential security agencies of the Interior Ministry. Nonetheless, the military was extremely well-trained and professional, and grew increasingly disdainful towards the regime's blatant and widespread corruption. Quite simply, the military had no stake in the Ben Ali regime's survival. Throughout the Jasmine Revolution, these two institutions bolstered civilian movements.

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<sup>45</sup> Netterstrøm, Kasper Ly. "The Tunisian General Labor Union and the Advent of Democracy." *Middle East Journal*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2016, pp. 383–98. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26426626>. Accessed 17 July 2024.

## The Beginning of the Jasmine Revolution



*Political cartoon illustrating the goals of the Jasmine Revolution.<sup>46</sup>*

On December 17, 2010, fruit vendor Mohammed Bouazizi was a young twenty-six-year-old who struggled to find real employment. While selling fruits, he was harassed and humiliated by municipal officers. They demanded bribes he couldn't afford and confiscated his merchandise when he couldn't pay. In response, he protested by self-immolating in front of the municipal office in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid.<sup>47</sup> His protest epitomized feelings of helplessness, economic discontent, and anger held by Tunisian youth, citizens of the interior, and those left behind by the Ben Ali regime. Indeed, as many academics argue, the feelings of anger

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<sup>46</sup> Thompson, Michael. "I came across this very interesting article written by Ka..." Flickr, 22 January 2011, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/freestylee/5378711868>. Accessed 11 August 2024.

<sup>47</sup> "The Jasmine Revolution." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tunisia/The-Jasmine-Revolution>. Accessed 12 July 2024.

and humiliation were powerful enough to outweigh the fear of repression. Unlike many neighboring countries—namely Algeria—Tunisia did not have a long-standing history of military coups or civil wars. Therefore, protestors felt hope that they could truly bring change to the regime, rather than war.<sup>48</sup>

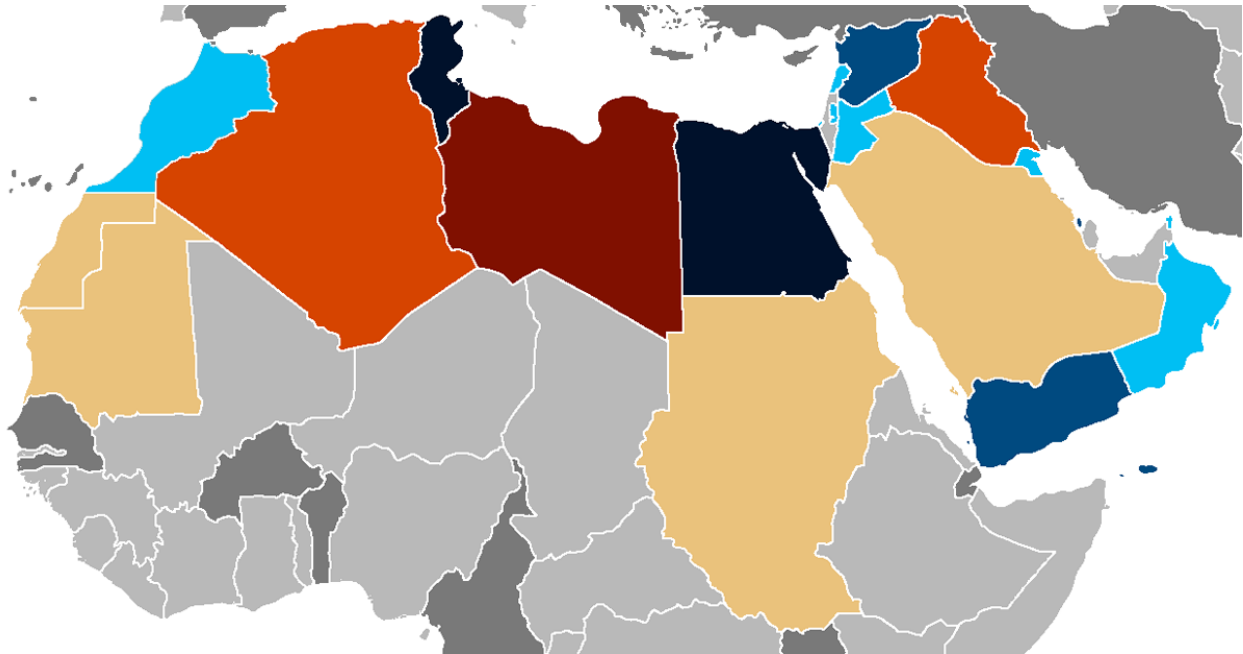
The Tunisian government's response to the protests drew international criticism after dozens of protesters were killed in clashes with police. Amid accusations of excessive force, Ben Ali dismissed Interior Minister Rafik Belhaj Kacem and vowed to investigate the government's response. Despite deploying troops to control the unrest, clashes continued and spread to the capital. On January 13, Ben Ali promised not to seek another term and vowed to reduce food prices and loosen internet restrictions. However, these concessions failed to quell the protests. On January 14, a state of emergency was declared, the government was dissolved, and Ben Ali stepped down. Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi assumed power but was soon replaced by Fouad Mebazaa as interim president.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Pearlman, Wendy. "Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings." *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2013, pp. 387–409. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43280795>. Accessed 18 July 2024.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

## International Implications—How the Fire Spread



*Map of the countries with Arab Spring protests.<sup>50</sup>*

Tunisia is in close proximity to several Arab countries with similar political structures—the countries that would come to comprise the Arab Spring. Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Bahrain all featured strongman, repressive leaders who left little political freedom to their occupants. While countries had different reactions and subsequent revolutionary movements, many shared similar characteristics with Tunisia that encouraged political reformation movements—namely, a high percentage of youth, the spread and rise of information technology, and the aforementioned political repression. Within the demographic development of the Middle East, many countries were experiencing a historically unprecedented share of individuals between the ages of 15–29, causing pressure on educational institutions and the labor market that resulted in unfavorable economic conditions and frustrated the youth. Furthermore, faster information-sharing platforms meant citizens could spread news and

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<sup>50</sup> “Arab Spring Map.” Wikimedia Commons, 6 May 2011, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arab\\_Spring\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arab_Spring_map.png). Accessed 11 August 2024.

images to organize street protests. The remaining obvious similarity between Tunisia and many other nations in the Middle East that would also experience pro-democracy protests and uprisings was a corrupt, repressive government.<sup>51</sup>



*Civilians in Aden, Al Mansoorah during the Arab Spring protesting for the secession of South Yemen from North Yemen.<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup> Assaad, Ragui. "How will Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution Affect the Arab World?" Brookings Institution, 24 January 2011, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-will-tunisias-jasmine-revolution-affect-the-arab-world/>. Accessed 18 July 2024.

<sup>52</sup> "File:Protest Aden Arab Spring 2011.jpg." Wikimedia Commons, 14 May 2011, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Protest\\_Aden\\_Arab\\_Spring\\_2011.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Protest_Aden_Arab_Spring_2011.jpg). Accessed 11 August 2024.

Inspired by the events of the Jasmine Revolution, young Egyptians came together through social media to organize a mass protest on January 25. The protest eventually resulted in the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak on February 11 after thirty years of serving in office. Subsequent movements occurring in Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Bahrain were widely unsuccessful and led to extreme violence and unrest. The movements in Yemen, Syria, and Libya sparked by the Jasmine Revolution later devolved into civil wars. Russia and China vetoed UNSC resolutions meant to pressure President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. The escalation of violence and competing interests from foreign nations only compounded the devastation of this series of uprisings that came to be known as the Arab Spring.<sup>53</sup>

While it is important to understand the geopolitical landscape in which the Jasmine Revolution is taking place as well as its repercussions, the goal of this committee is to center debate and resolutions on the events of Tunisia. That is, focus on addressing the current issue at hand, the Jasmine Revolution, while keeping in mind its potential impacts.

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<sup>53</sup> Britannica. "Arab Spring | History, Revolution, Causes, Effects, & Facts." Britannica, 13 July 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>. Accessed 18 July 2024.



## DELEGATION POSITIONS

### France

France's relationship with Tunisia is long-standing and well-documented. As noted in the History of the Problem section, France's role as the former colonizer of Tunisia has created enduring ties between the two countries. For one, France is home to what is by far the largest Tunisian diaspora in the world. A notable example of political and economic ties between France and Tunisia is the nuclear energy deal completed between the countries in 2009. This deal would entail a 104.2 million dollar aid package given to Tunisia in a project that would see 20% of the country powered by nuclear energy by 2020. Not only did this solidify the connection between France and Tunisia as nations, but President Ben Ali of Tunisia would use this deal to strengthen his connection with French officials, particularly the center-right President Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>54</sup>

After the events that led up to the Jasmine Revolution, and after the Tunisian government had already harmed civilians, the French government refused to condemn Tunisia. One member of the French parliament even suggested that France "offer the know-how of [its] security forces to help control this type of situation." From this, it is clear that France as a whole is—at least at the moment—not opposed to the Ben Ali government and would instead likely prefer a cessation of the violence in favor of returning things to the status quo.

While France may eventually decide that it is best to oppose Ben Ali, it is undeniable that France will continue to take a great deal of interest in Tunisia's affairs—regardless of leadership. However, France will still advocate for the minimization of harm towards civilians and will be guided by principles of human rights, which is proven by France's continued investment in aid in the region.

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<sup>54</sup> Reuters. "France Seals Nuclear, Aid Deals with Tunisia." April 23, 2009. <https://www.reuters.com/article/economy/france-seals-nuclear-aid-deals-with-tunisia-idUSLN941296/>.

Given this history, France is likely to align with nations that are flexible or favor a continuation of the status quo of the reigning Ben Ali regime in Tunisia while also emphasizing the importance of preserving human life and advocating for the minimization of civilian harm. France's long history with the country and its previous assistance and knowledge concerning the infrastructure of the nation are sure to be strong resources for whatever decision it makes in terms of what to do in Tunisia.

## United States of America

The United States is no stranger to interactions with the Arab world, especially in the early 2000s. In 2011, the United States found itself involved in two wars in the Middle East: The Iraq War and the War in Afghanistan. With these two wars going on, it is no surprise that the United States did not extend itself further and have direct involvement in Tunisia. At the onset of the Jasmine Revolution, the United States joined France in its muted response, with the United States initially declaring that it would not take sides in the matter.

Further developments would occur, however, as with the progression of the Jasmine Revolution, the United States would eventually be more likely to publicly support the Tunisian people's calls for democracy, though the United States would continue with a "do-nothing" policy in the region.<sup>55</sup> It must be noted that the United States had substantial resources in the Middle East due to its ongoing conflicts, resources that could be utilized in various ways to ensure sovereignty and help Tunisia find a peaceful solution. These resources included everything from aircraft carriers to personnel stationed in the region.

Overall, the United States was in a prime position to advocate for democracy, equipped with the necessary tools to collaborate with other countries seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict. That being said, the United States also has invested a great deal of time and resources into developing strong relationships with some not-

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<sup>55</sup> Miller, Aaron David. "The Do-Nothing Strategy." Foreign Policy (blog), August 15, 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/09/22/the-do-nothing-strategy/>.

particularly-democratic Middle Eastern leaders—in particular, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak. To put it mildly, the United States does not want to see any of its allies lose power. That being said, the United States’ significant regional presence offered avenues for expanding influence, building partnerships, and strengthening Tunisia in ways that could also benefit American strategic interests.

## China

Though China is on the other side of the world, this has not limited the ability for China and Tunisia to develop a strong relationship. In 1983, the two countries formed the Sino-Tunisian Joint Committee of Economic, Trade, and Technological Cooperation, which saw Chinese labor service companies enter Tunisia where they would involve themselves in infrastructure projects, while at the same time, China would begin to grow a strong trading relationship with Tunisia. Since then, the two countries developed their relationship, with President Ben Ali making it part of his mission to support China, and Chinese leadership reciprocating that support.<sup>56</sup>

Friendly relations were not always possible between these two countries, proven by the limited relationship that China and Tunisia had when Tunisia had a more pro-Western orientation. A change in the leadership of Tunisia suggests that diplomatic relations may slow, especially if a democratically elected leader is more aligned with the West than Ben Ali. Consequently, China would likely join in with other nations who prefer that Tunisia maintain its status quo, having supported the Ben Ali regime for so long.

Thus, China is inclined to support the continuation of the current regime and would naturally seek to work with nations that share this alignment. Additionally, China would look for different ways or partnerships

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<sup>56</sup> “China’s Presence in Tunisia: How Far Has It Come, and Where Is It Headed? | The Washington Institute.” Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/chinas-presence-tunisia-how-far-has-it-come-and-where-it-headed>.

that would allow China to expand its resources in the region. Tunisia's unique position at the center of the North African coast presents strategic opportunities for China. If China can build its resources in the region, it could gain access to both Europe and Africa, which are key factors for China's ongoing development.<sup>57</sup>

## United Kingdom

No record suggests that the United Kingdom had involvement in the Jasmine Revolution, and, as such, its foreign policy principles of emphasizing democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, as well as international cooperation must be seen as its most basic guiding principles.<sup>58</sup> More than just these guiding principles, the parliament of the United Kingdom granted the citizens of Tunisia outright support of the movement towards democracy, thus showcasing that the United Kingdom's official stance on the matter is one in support of the proponents of democracy protesting the Ben Ali leadership within the country.<sup>59</sup>

To join the support of Tunisia's aspirations for democracy, the United Kingdom would again not be directly involved, but it is entirely possible that the delegates representing the United Kingdom would think that it is time to provide more direct support to anti-government protestors. In concert with these goals, it is also likely that the United Kingdom would hope to make new moves in the region to be able to further its resources, such as trading capacity or overall regional power.

All in all, the United Kingdom would align itself with other nations who want to move this conflict to one in which civilian voices are heard and democracy can take full effect, while at the same time positioning the United Kingdom to have greater power and resources in the region.

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<sup>57</sup> "Tunisia -- China.Org.Cn." Accessed August 12, 2024. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/focac/183413.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> GOV.UK. "About Us." Accessed August 8, 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office/about>.

<sup>59</sup> GOV.UK. "FCDO Statement on the Situation in Tunisia." Accessed August 8, 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fcdo-statement-on-the-situation-in-tunisia>.

## Russia

Russia's relationship with Tunisia has been continuously growing, with trade between the two nations standing at around 1.047 billion dollars in 2010. This relationship would continue to grow as Russia deepened ties with Ben Ali, with his government signing a deal with *Rosatom*—the Russian state-owned nuclear energy corporation—to help Tunisia fully build out their nuclear energy capacity by 2020.<sup>60</sup> Due to this interaction, it should be clear that Russia already has a vested interest in supporting the Ben Ali government during the Jasmine Revolution, though it is not entirely bound to it.

In 2011, Russia faced a pivotal moment in its regional strategy. While Russia initially stated that it would support the pro-democracy movement in Tunisia and similar movements in the region, some within Russia argue that supporting the counterrevolution would be positive as a way to push against Western influence within the region.<sup>61</sup> Since the late 1970s, Russia has been pushed out of the Arab sphere in favor of Western powers, and picking the winning side could be a way for Russia to begin to regain influence in the Middle East.

As such, Russia should feel free to work in whichever direction they find fit. With the right path, Russia could establish a greater presence in North Africa, which could prove worthwhile for finding allies in the region and generally strengthening the nation's resources. Hopefully, Russia will join all other nations in promoting peace and human rights, but its final goals could very well be separate from others.

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<sup>60</sup> Podtserob, A. B., and Подцероб Алексей Борисович. "Russia-Tunisia: Political Relations (Past and Present)." RUDN Journal of World History, no. 4 (December 15, 2010): 35–43. <https://journals.rudn.ru/world-history/article/view/1153>.

<sup>61</sup> Podtserob, A. B., and Подцероб Алексей Борисович. "Russia-Tunisia: Political Relations (Past and Present)." RUDN Journal of World History, no. 4 (December 15, 2010): 35–43. <https://journals.rudn.ru/world-history/article/view/1153>.

## Nigeria

During the early stages of the Jasmine Revolution, Nigeria was undergoing severe internal strife, exemplified by a series of bombings in December of 2010 as well as sectarian violence that began to simmer in early 2011.<sup>62</sup> As such, this puts Nigeria under additional stress that makes the nation less likely to get involved in the Jasmine revolution. Besides this fact, Nigeria has long since stood for democracy and human rights, and, very importantly, for bettering Africa as a whole.<sup>63</sup>

As such, it would stand to reason that Nigeria would have two goals from this conflict. Nigeria's first goal is to ensure that civilians are kept from harm in this revolution and that the conflict can meet an end that brings democracy to Tunisia. Nigeria's second concern is ensuring that Tunisia can quickly regain stability. After all, Nigeria does not want to see the unrest from Tunisia spill out across the Sahara and spread into the rest of Africa.

With these concerns in mind, Nigeria would be aligned as a more neutral country, though supporting first and foremost nations that would help move Africa towards a stronger, more developed place. Yet, it is not immediately obvious which outcome in Tunisia would lead to a more stable and prosperous outcome. Thus, Nigeria can be seen as something of a wild card with ambitions to become Africa's diplomatic and economic powerhouse yet unclear ideological commitments.

## Portugal

Portugal, on its surface, joined many other countries here in refraining from direct involvement in the affairs of Tunisia at the time, yet it is not hard to discern the direction in which Portugal might lean. Portugal is familiar with the type of struggle the Tunisian people, as in the mid-1970s, Portugal overthrew its long-time,

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<sup>62</sup> Al Jazeera. "Timeline: Tensions in Nigeria." Accessed August 8, 2024.  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/12/26/timeline-tensions-in-nigeria>.

<sup>63</sup> "Foreign Policy – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria." Accessed August 8, 2024.  
<https://foreignaffairs.gov.ng/about-us/foreign-policy/>.

quasi-fascist dictatorship in a military coup known as the Carnation Revolution that resulted in a democracy that has survived and thrived to this day.<sup>64</sup> This history would suggest that Portugal would support the calls of the Tunisian people for democracy and would in turn support the pro-democracy movement and the cessation of violence.

On a larger scale, as with other nations present in the committee, Portugal is a part of the European Union, which has made clear that it supports democracy across the globe. With plans to help progress this democracy through aid in the works, Portugal as a member state of the European Union would likely be ready to support Tunisia in whatever way that the nation sees fit. That being said, Portugal is one of the poorest countries in the EU, and—given the current state of the European economy and the Eurozone—it is not clear if Portugal itself can devote a significant amount of material support to the Tunisian protests.

As such, Portugal is clearly oriented towards nations aiming towards the formation of a lasting democracy in Tunisia and would likely support any effort to cease the fighting and allow for a freer Tunisia. Furthermore, gaining standing in Tunisia would be a good way for Portugal to be able to expand its reach to Africa, which could be great for its expansion as a possible greater power within the world. Nevertheless, given Portugal's relative (by European standards) poverty and the state of the European economy, the biggest question is whether Portugal can do more than release sympathetic statements.

## Lebanon

Since the days of Phoenicia and Carthage, Lebanon and Tunisia share an ancient history and a more relevant past of cooperation, showcased by a meeting held in 2010 between the countries with the goal of

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<sup>64</sup> Cuzán, Alfred G. "Democratic Transitions: The Portuguese Case." In *Comparative Democratization and Peaceful Change in Single-Party-Dominant Countries*, edited by Marco Rimanelli, 119–36. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 1999. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780312292676\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780312292676_4).

energizing the process for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.<sup>65</sup> Besides this connection, the involvement of Lebanon in the Jasmine Revolution is limited. However, Lebanon has indicated that the nation would be supportive of democratic change within the country. Furthermore, Lebanon's recent civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990 would mean that, while the Lebanese people are sympathetic to calls for democracy, they also would like to see the unrest in Tunisia come to a quick resolution.<sup>66</sup> Of course, Lebanon will feel a great deal of sympathy and solidarity with the Tunisian people, given that both countries are Arab-speaking and have been greatly influenced by France.

That being said, the Lebanese government cannot help but look over its shoulder. After all, while Lebanon is certainly more democratic than its neighbor to the north and east, Syria, the Lebanese governing structure—designed to ameliorate sectarianism—has bred rampant corruption that has empowered some deeply unsavory and unpopular groups within Lebanon. To put it mildly, the Lebanese public is, by and large, not in love with its government. Thus, as Lebanese government officials, you should be slightly worried about the Tunisian fever spreading to the shores of Lebanon.

## Brazil

Brazil during the Jasmine Revolution is a country that is embroiled in its own issues. In Rio de Janeiro and certain areas of São Paulo, violent crime is skyrocketing, with clashes between police and gangs growing more frequent. In 2011, a series of devastating floods and mudslides have also led to many casualties.<sup>67</sup> Given these conditions, it should be no surprise that Brazil has not yet been directly involved with the Jasmine Revolution. It is also worth noting that from 1964 to 1985, Brazil was ruled by a military dictatorship, with many of its current

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<sup>65</sup> Tunisia News. "Tunisia News," June 26, 2010. [www.tunisiaonlinenews.com](http://www.tunisiaonlinenews.com).

<sup>66</sup> "Lebanese Civil War | History, & Significance | Britannica." Accessed August 8, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Lebanese-Civil-War>.

<sup>67</sup> Phillips, Tom. "Brazil Landslides Leave Hundreds of People Dead." *The Guardian*, January 13, 2011, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/12/brazil-landslide-leaves-115-dead>.



leaders spending time in jail. One would hope that Brazil's leaders would be sympathetic to pro-democracy protests in Tunisia, although the Brazilian government's anti-American instinct might complicate this picture somewhat. Furthermore, Brazil has constantly advocated for multilateralism, non-intervention, and peaceful dispute settlement.<sup>68</sup> This outlook would suggest that Brazil would believe the best path forward would be the one that aims for peace and the safety of civilians, and that Brazil does not get directly involved in the conflict.

However, this does not mean that Brazil must not get involved in the conflict, as Brazil's seemingly neutral stance allows it to feel free to work with any party that it believes will help find a peaceful solution as soon as possible. Engaging in such efforts could enhance Brazil's influence overseas, benefiting a nation keen on expanding and building its resources. In the context of the Jasmine Revolution, Brazil would have the freedom to collaborate with those aligned with its goals for peace, while simultaneously ensuring that it continues to advance its international standing and resources. Brazil's commitment to multilateralism and peaceful resolution positions it as a potential mediator or supporter of initiatives aimed at stabilizing Tunisia.

## Gabon

Very little is known about Gabon's involvement in the Jasmine Revolution, but it did share a few key similarities with Tunisia. Like Tunisia, Gabon was under French control in the 19th century, with France controlling the region and eventually joining it together with three other colonies to form French Equatorial Africa in 1910. The nation would later gain independence from France in 1960, and, just like Tunisia, France would keep close relations with Gabon.<sup>69</sup> These close relations would entail various sources of aid from France,

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<sup>68</sup> "Brazil's Global Ambitions | Council on Foreign Relations." Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/brazils-global-ambitions>.

<sup>69</sup> "Gabon - Colonialism, Independence, Oil | Britannica," August 5, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gabon/History>.

but Gabon would eventually work independently to diversify its economy and build out its infrastructure in 2009 after the election of Defense Minister Ali Ben Bongo as the new president.<sup>70</sup>

Although Tunisia and Gabon may not have a history of deep bilateral relations, their shared history with France provides ground to infer the opinions of Gabon as a nation on the Jasmine Revolution; Gabon would likely initially be inclined to support France's opinion that the status quo of the Ben Ali government be kept, but not at the expense of human rights, and would thus want to support any move to leave things as they should be.

However, it is also possible that Gabon would align with Nigeria, aiming to support Tunisian stability above all else. Ultimately, Gabon is very flexible in terms of where the nation will fall, but the Jasmine Revolution does provide an opportunity for Gabon to expand its diplomatic heft.

## India

India's stance on the Jasmine Revolution, like many nations, has been to "wait and watch" to see the results of the uprising, as the nation is geographically and politically removed from the conflict. In 2011, India was at the beginning stages of its own mass demonstrations and protests against perceived political corruption, with this movement known as India Against Corruption (IAC).<sup>71</sup> While this movement did not involve civilian casualties, the citizens of India would likely be sympathetic to the Tunisians' calls for an end to corruption, viewing their struggle against Ben Ali's regime through a similar lens. Whether India's government has the same sympathies is less clear.

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<sup>70</sup> "Gabon - Colonialism, Independence, Oil | Britannica," August 5, 2024.  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Gabon/History>.

<sup>71</sup> Khanna, Anuja, Pretika. "Anti-Corruption Movement a Watershed Moment in India." *mint*, December 13, 2019.  
<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/anti-corruption-movement-a-watershed-moment-in-india-11576199569995.html>.

India, as a nation, would feel the need to assist the country from a humanitarian standpoint and would align with international efforts to support democratic governance and anti-corruption measures. Thus, India would be willing to collaborate with any nation that seeks a Tunisia free from corruption and open to democratic change.

Given its limited existing connections with Tunisia, India has significant flexibility in deciding who to work with. India would be interested in building new diplomatic and economic ties in the region to make a lasting impact. Such an approach would allow India to support Tunisia's transition while also expanding its own influence and relationships in North Africa and the broader Middle East.

## Germany

While no evidence exists that Germany has directly gotten involved in the Jasmine Revolution, Germany as a nation keeps at the center of its foreign policy the importance of international cooperation, and—given its history—takes care to prioritize protecting human rights in all nations.<sup>72</sup> Within this conflict, Germany would aim to see a cessation of hostility as soon as possible. Additionally—given the checkered history of Germany intervening in the affairs of other countries—Germany would, under no circumstances, deploy military personnel in the region. Given Germany's enthusiastic membership in the European Union, though, it is likely that the German public, at the very least, will be deeply sympathetic to the pro-democracy movement.

The government's seeming neutrality, however, leaves open the possibility for German involvement, even if said involvement would be diplomatic and humanitarian. That is, with so much potential for growth in Tunisia, could Germany, as Europe's largest economy, see a way to expand economic ties with whoever ends up in control of Tunisia?

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<sup>72</sup> "TAT-2022-Gemeinsame-Verantwortung | Facts about Germany." Accessed August 8, 2024. <https://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/peace-and-security/foreign-policy-germany>.

As such, Germany should be seen as a relatively flexible country, as while it will be in line with the European Union in its calls for democracy, it will also be attuned to what is best for Germany's flagship companies. Germany could easily work with any ally that wants to improve the region, so long as they do not violate the human rights of the Tunisian people.

## South Africa

While there is little official record of South Africa's involvement in the Jasmine Revolution so far, South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy provides a clear framework for understanding its likely position within the international community and its stance on the Jasmine Revolution. Since the end of apartheid in the 1990s in South Africa, the nation has been a member of the Non-Aligned movement, meaning that it would not be a part of any multilateral military alliances or sign onto bilateral military agreements.<sup>73,74</sup>

As such, South Africa may have reason to support the Tunisian people's call for democracy against the Ben Ali regime, given its people's historical struggle for freedom and democracy. However, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, a public front of neutrality may be the more official stance. In terms of other connections, South Africa joins other delegates as a member of the African Union along with Tunisia, providing a more natural connection between the nations and promoting the betterment of the African continent, by any means that South Africa may see fit.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, it is just as likely that South Africa would side with a dictator that they view as being pressured by the West over a popular movement for democracy.

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<sup>73</sup>“Apartheid - Resistance, Protest, Activism | Britannica,” July 23, 2024.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/apartheid/Opposition-to-apartheid>.

<sup>74</sup>“Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) | Definition, Mission, & Facts | Britannica,” June 21, 2024.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement>.

<sup>75</sup>“Member States | African Union.” Accessed July 31, 2024. [https://au.int/en/member\\_states/countryprofiles2](https://au.int/en/member_states/countryprofiles2).

Given these conditions, South Africa has quite a lot of flexibility in terms of the nations that it could work with; South Africa could align with pro-democracy forces or back the status quo. Further, South Africa could see Nigeria and Gabon as allies and work to provide a unified African perspective on Tunisia. Or, South Africa may see Nigeria as a rival, given the fact that both countries have ambitions to be Africa's leading power. At the very least, we should hope that South Africa's leaders don't have any Ben Ali-style corruption skeletons in their closet!

## Colombia

At the moment, Colombia is continuing to bear the brunt of long-running armed conflict within the nation between leftist guerilla groups, right-wing paramilitary groups, and security forces, all of which have committed grave war crimes. President Juan Manuel Santos claims that human rights will always be prioritized by his government and violators will be punished, although his critics have accused his promises of being insincere.<sup>76</sup> As such, when it comes to Colombian involvement in the Jasmine Revolution, there is little documented evidence that the nation has engaged. However, given this claim of the importance of fighting against war crimes, while it may be natural that Colombia takes a noninterventionist stance, it is very likely that Colombia would support the end of the conflict, no matter what.

With that, Colombia has the freedom to make its own decisions for how to support Tunisia in this time of revolution, not just for the ends of stopping the fighting and helping out the populace, but also in order to make a greater name for Colombia and to possibly gain resources overseas. With so much trade happening in this other end of the world, there are many unknowns for what Colombia could unlock for itself if it were able to

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<sup>76</sup> Amnesty International USA. "Annual Report: Colombia 2011." Accessed August 7, 2024. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/annual-report-colombia-2011/>.

successfully make new ties in the form of powerful allies or potential partners in Northern Africa. After all, as conflicts rage at home in Colombia, the potential for power abroad will always be an enticing prospect.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a relatively new nation, having been established in the aftermath of the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. What followed were great losses—and some horrific atrocities—during the Bosnian conflict that would last from 1992 to 1995, ending with a peace agreement called the Dayton Accords that stopped the fighting but left the country in a fragile state.<sup>77</sup> Given this recent history, it is clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina is still trying to find firm footing, and did not have a super strong bilateral relationship with Tunisia before the Jasmine Revolution.

Despite limited direct relations with Tunisia, Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience with devastating violence would, just like Lebanon, likely make it wish to see an immediate cessation of violence. Additionally, as a predominantly Muslim nation, Bosnia and Herzegovina might feel a sense of solidarity with Tunisia, further supporting the possibility that it would advocate for the most peaceful resolution to the conflict. Complicating the picture somewhat, given the role the United States played in the Dayton Accords, and given the warm relationship between Bosnia's bitter enemy and Russia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is seen as having a pro-Western alignment. At the very least, it is more or less impossible to foresee Bosnia aligning with Russia, taking into account historic and current ties between Russia and Serbia.

Given these facts, Bosnia and Herzegovina can be seen as a nation that would support the democratic cries of the citizens of Tunisia and would be aligned with nations that aim for the same. At the same time, this

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<sup>77</sup> "Bosnia and Herzegovina | Facts, Geography, History, & Maps | Britannica," July 28, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina>.

conflict may be a great chance for Bosnia and Herzegovina to expand its reach and make new international connections that the country could utilize in the future.

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