

MINORITIES, MOBILIZATION, AND MARGINALIZATION:
NON-MAJORITY ACTORS AND THE 2011 TUNISIAN AND EGYPTIAN
REVOLUTIONS

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to attempt to understand the role of minorities who, even after active participation in revolutionary movements, are then marginalized in favor of majority-centered nationalistic pursuits. It examines the events of the 2011 revolutions in Middle Eastern and North African countries, also known as the “Arab Spring”, specifically Tunisia and Egypt. It incorporates historical data, contemporary events, and media analysis to craft a picture of how events unfolded and progressed from the initial sparks of the revolutions. Economic and social institutions played a significant part in protest mobilization; trade unions were key in both countries, but other factors also contributed to the building discontent and eventual rebellion. By analyzing the participation of women and ethnic or religious minorities, I hope to understand how nationalism works as an exclusionary force against minority groups in post-revolutionary settings. Women, Berbers, and Coptic Christians are the three groups of focus in this research; a small section on the Baha’i in Egypt is also included for context. This work contributes to greater understanding of the political issues in each country and adds to the body of literature pertaining to minority involvement in revolutionary contexts, as well as post-revolutionary forms of nationalism and nation-building that exclude minority demands.

I.

Introduction

“In the midst of the maelstrom, I witnessed a goose-bump-inducing moment. A fresh volley of tear gas had once again scattered the crowds from the heart of Tahrir Square. A young woman in her late twenties climbed atop a raised platform in the middle of the square- part of the ventilation system for the subway running underneath Tahrir. The young woman defiantly waved a huge Egyptian flag as the tear gas swirled; the crowd roared and rallied around her” (Khalil 149).

Like the above excerpt, individual stories exemplify a diversity often overlooked by the history books. Usually little more than isolated faces in a majority crowd, people tend to forget that minorities embody the same loyalty as the rest of their fellow citizens in conjunction with the loyalties of their specific communities. They long for the same change, the same possibilities for their countries, and two years ago, Tunisian and Egyptian minorities came out in droves to stand alongside their countrymen and topple the regimes (Ben Ali and Mubarak respectively) that controlled their countries for so long.

There have been a lot of news articles and discussions about the youth involvement and the role of social media; some conversations have even touched on the female faces in the crowd, a mark of Orientalist surprise that women were protesting their countries’ oppressive regimes, fighting alongside their male counterparts in a supposedly repressive Arab world (Cole and Cole). There have been a few conversations about Coptic Christians and the iconic image of the human circle they formed to protect their

Muslim brethren from Mubarak's forces during Friday prayers and vice versa (Bohn). However, not much has gone beyond the surface observations to explore these groups within the crowd, the sub-groups within the majority. As the beginning vignette suggests, minority groups function within the same patriotic spaces as the majority groups, but then, in many cases, they shape that space to reflect a more distinct identity, one that is dependent on factors specific to belonging to a minority community. In these recent cases, that patriotism combined with the opportunity to reshape their country into one that values, or at least protects, their ubiquity and difference was an important opportunity. Long relegated to subpar status in their own nations, as well as subjected to the repression long perpetrated against every citizen in the country, minorities found themselves in an opportune situation. The protesting crowds were not visibly separated by religion, gender, ethnicity, etc.; instead, they marched as one people.

Topic and Importance

But now, post-revolution euphoria is fading, and the intangible lines are reestablishing themselves as each country finds itself defining a specific concept of the nation-state. Having assisted in this chance at a new beginning for all, it is essential for minority communities to make themselves recognized by their governments and ensure that their contributions, both in numbers and solidarity, are not forgotten. A comprehensive understanding of the construction of minority roles within an authoritarian regime and how that construction figured into the sociopolitical upheaval is imperative, because distinct characteristics within specific authoritarian regimes (whether those characteristics pertain to the economic, social, or political aspects of said regimes) may lend themselves to the creation of a climate that better facilitates an inevitable form

of protest or rebellion. A deeper look into such authoritarian regimes is both prudent and educational, because in studying the roots of authoritarian discontent and possibilities for individual expansion and/or fulfillment within that discontent, we can better understand why certain climates foster revolutionary movements and why others do not.

Based on my analysis, the argument I wish to make is that while women and ethnic and religious minority groups in Tunisia and Egypt have participated actively in the uprisings against the respective authoritarian regimes, they have been marginalized in the aftermath of the uprisings. In making this argument, my research departs from many of the recently published scholarly works on the Arab Spring. There are dozens of such books, many of which came out only in 2012 or the beginning of 2013. These works include James Gelvin's *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Hamid Dabashi's *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, Rex Brynen et al.'s *Beyond The Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democratization in the Arab World*, Mark Haas and David Lesch's *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, and Lin Noeuihed and Alex Warren's *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of A New Era*, to name a few of the many.

My research contributes to this literature by focusing on minorities and women. These books mainly sought to explain the revolutions themselves, e.g. the reasons for the discontent and protests, the day-by-day events of the wide array of revolutions (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Libya, etc.), and/or the aftermaths and sociopolitical implications for each country. This means that they examine things mainly from the perspective of the majority population, and have little (if any) time to touch on minority situations. The Arab Spring in general has been written about from a majority perspective, and that fact

is something that influences readers' perceptions and conceptualizations of how much things have changed. Some authors have questioned the labeling of these protests as truly revolutionary, something I believe is especially valid when considered from a majority/minority context. Even if the majority does feel like a revolution has been successful, minorities may hold the exact opposite opinion, having garnered little to no benefit from what others consider a revolution. I do refer to the uprisings as revolutions throughout this thesis; I do not wish to deny the fact that the struggle by millions was revolutionary and overturned entrenched authoritarian regimes. But readers must also keep in mind that the term is not universally applied by all groups. That is what I seek to contribute to the work of literature; I hope to share the knowledge that I have accumulated over many months with regard to the less-heard voices of women and minorities.

For the purposes of this thesis, I focused on the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings; while they are both North African countries, the similarities go beyond geography. Their respective histories of European colonialism, struggles for independence, and subsequent reorganization and establishment of identity are points of fascination in a personal intellectual context, but there is more than that as well. Both situations were held within uniquely authoritarian contexts, and the power dynamics within each regime were essential matters of consideration in terms of either staving off or hastening the systems' downfalls (Cole and Cole). Granted, there is a tension between the discussions of the two case studies that creates a seemingly uneven power dynamic in terms of both relevance and relationship. This was not my initial intention; in the beginning, I thought a comparative analysis of two similar situations would prove beneficial for scholarly

understanding. However, after extensive research and writing, it became clear that the two cases were not as easily comparable as I initially believed. This is a point that I reiterate over the course of this thesis, and it is one that I do not view as inherently problematic, because the two distinct cases still provide valuable insight into two important examples of minority mobilization and subsequent marginalization in the process of nation-building, specifically the means and reasons for both mobilization and marginalization.

The marginalized actors for this discussion are separated into three distinct groups: women, ethnic minorities, and religious minorities. While there is no questioning that the changes that occurred were revolutionary, it is necessary to consider the possibilities and the history of the now-deposed presidents to understand any possible plights in which minority groups may now find themselves. The majority may not keep the best interests of smaller communities in mind as they set upon forging a new path for their country's future. As Democracy Project so eloquently states: "Human rights- and particularly the human rights of minorities- depend largely on the good will of the majority" ("Minorities"). Although a general statement, it raises a relevant point: the possibility that certain groups may be worse off than they were prior to the revolutions is also central to this thesis and its specific conversations. Other divides like class, geography (urban/rural), and/or political divides are not specifically addressed in this thesis, but like all of aspects of society, these divides undoubtedly do influence minority lives as well.

Tunisia

The catalyst to the revolutions that rippled across the region, Tunisia's uprising was the first of a still-progressing upheaval in the region. President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali was ousted after less than a month of protests and fled the country soon after (Fantz). In terms of what this revolution has meant for specific groups, the verdict is varied. Although women achieved numerical gains in terms of political representation, many women also fear that the recently elected political party Ennahda could compromise social rights that Ben Ali initially implemented, namely the Personal Status Code, which contributed to Tunisia's identification as one of the most progressive countries in the region (Loftus). And as the native population of the region, many Berbers looked to this revolution as a key moment in which better assertion of their indigenous rights could become possible. They sought to secure the status of their native language, Tamazight, and to rectify much of the discrimination and suppression of indigenous practices that were outlawed during Ben Ali's rule (Smith). Now one of the biggest problems, especially for minorities, is that the idea of Tunisian-ness is being redefined yet again, by and for a majority community (Parker). Tunisia provided both a baseline for understanding the initial spark of discord in the region, and as a "largely homogenous" country with few internal divisions, it also provided a marked contrast to the Egyptian case study. The vast majority of Tunisians are ethnically Arab, religiously Muslim, and as a small country, the divides are far less pronounced than in Egypt (Keiswetter). This brief summary and its Egyptian counterpart are meant not only as introductions, but also as means of highlighting some of the key disparities that will arise again in the discussion.

Egypt

Spurred by the initial January 25th movement, Egyptians set up camp in Tahrir Square and demanded that President Hosni Mubarak step down from his long-running position. This included minorities as well. As 10-15% of the population, Coptic Christians have historically suffered attacks from extreme Islamist groups, and religious-oriented violence and church destruction have been problems both in the past and present. Although Mubarak assisted the community in some ways (he designated Christmas “a national holiday, and loosened rules on church building”), he did not ensure their protection from the recurring violence (Dalrymple). And Egyptian women must deal with an entrenched patriarchy to assert their rights. Both groups are uncertainly awaiting the future decisions that the Egyptian political elite decides to implement, because extremism (in the form of extreme elements in the Muslim Brotherhood or worse, the radical Salafists) could be far worse than anything Mubarak ever implemented (Michael). In terms of long-term possibilities, Egypt faces one of the most difficult battles due to its large population, well-known minority conflicts, and lack of a lucrative resource like oil. The Middle East Institute additionally posits the variable factors as the military, possible expansion and protection of minority communities and their rights, and the burgeoning influence of Islamism in the region (Keiswetter)

Terms and Methods

Throughout this thesis, I use certain terms with very specific meanings in mind. These terms are as follows: minorities, rights, and representation. In this thesis, the term minority refers to people who belong to a “distinct group” and are “subordinate to a dominant group”, and for the purposes of the two aforementioned case studies, it is a term that has been strongly influenced by historical legacies of colonialism, a factor that I

will discuss throughout the thesis (“Minority”). Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein argues that minority is not a numerical concept, but a social one; a concept that defines the identity of the “other” as applied to those of a different race, religion, or language group, and this assessment is also integral to my consideration. While women are not a numerical minority in every context, I include them here due to the fact that in some cases, women experience discrimination and marginalization in a sociopolitical sense due to a perceived inferiority to men (Wallerstein). With regard to the term rights, I refer strictly to options pertaining to voting, worshipping, national identity etc. This consideration is derived from the scholarly understanding of rights as “entitlements (not) to perform certain actions” (Wenar). Similarly, the term representation is based on traditional philosophical understandings of representation as “the activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives present in the public policy making process” (Dovi).

The research itself focused on both historical and contemporary sources, and as discussed earlier, there were commonalities that spurred discussion of the two countries on an equal level, but then regional and individual situations as well. I chose two countries because I wanted to understand how and why minorities are constituted differently and assert themselves in different environments, and how the subsequent marginalization is effected in different contexts. In terms of why I chose these two for comparison: both countries were subject to lengthy periods of authoritarian rule, they have colonial (albeit under different colonial powers) pasts, neither revolution involved foreign intervention (NATO), and as Majid Rafizadeh stated: “... in both Egypt and Tunisia, an organized political elite and a network of trade unions participated in the

demonstrations from the outset”, a fact that distinguishes these two countries from others of Arab Spring (Rafizadeh). However, Egypt is also a focal point in the region and for the wider sphere of Arab-Islamic culture (due to its lengthy history and central location), while Tunisia operates in a more socio-culturally independent context (Keiswetter).

After selecting these two North African countries, I wanted to use different forms of information to construct my analysis, including scholarly sources (books and articles) and media analysis, which came from international and local newspapers, as well as the blog of Egyptian activist Dalia Ziada. The media analysis that I incorporated in the chapters became especially important as the research progressed. This research showed examples of what the media chose to cover and what they chose not to cover, and it highlighted what was considered important to the populations of each country as everything unfolded and developed. Although limited in scope and scale, the media can function as a possible indicator of a government beginning its process of subtle marginalization; the shifting themes of stories can be telling. While the everyday person may not necessarily find merit or relevance in what the media chooses to report, I viewed this incorporation as a necessary addition because the media coverage provided an invaluable examination of how perceptions of the revolutions developed and shifted. What certain media outlets chose to include and disregard was interesting to consider in terms of what controlling interests feel is important to address in a post-revolutionary context. Also, throughout the revolution, the media (both traditional and social media) essentially served as the arbiters of the events unfolding, so much of the information that external parties have regarding what went on either comes from established media sources or, in some cases, individual stories from people who participated.

In terms of most of the English-language sources like *CNN*, *The Telegraph*, and *Al-Jazeera English*, there was a fair amount of focus placed on the role of women in the revolutions, and less of a focus on ethnic minorities. This focus most likely goes back to the perceptions that so-called Western countries have of the Middle East and North Africa; involvement that contradicted stereotypes seems especially interesting to audiences. The idea that women are subjected and oppressed by an undeveloped patriarchal society controlled by Islamist radicals tends to perpetuate American ignorance with regard to the region (Hasso 40). As for the local sources, the information was meant to serve a completely different purpose; ideas of unity and cooperation were highlighted. It would be necessary, it seems, in order to form, maintain, and perpetuate a revolutionary force, and later, a new and cohesive society. In consideration with nationalism, this theme of unity is one that is seemingly necessary for nation-building. Although good for the majority of the country, such a theme is not necessarily good for minorities and their causes.

I selected two major Tunisian newspapers, one in French and one in Arabic (*Le Temps* and *As-Sabaah* respectively) and examined some of their coverage. I selected five articles from *Le Temps* and five articles from *As-Sabaah* that I found from a keyword search. The search was based on important words: “Berber”, “women”, “revolution” etc., and I tried to pick articles from a wide temporal array. A sampling of five seemed appropriate because it allowed for articles spread over a period of time and allowed for different topics. I analyzed two Egyptian newspapers as well; *Al-Masry Al-Youm* and *Al-Ahram* are locally based in Cairo. I selected five articles from each of those newspapers as well, based on a search for words like “Copt”, “women”, “Baha’i”, and “revolution”.

These articles are used to support larger themes in the thesis; the media analysis itself is not the focal point.

Before proceeding with an overview of the organization of this thesis, an important factor to keep in mind is that some words in this thesis have been transliterated from the Arabic to Latin alphabet. In cases of citations, I maintain the author's spelling, and in case of widely known names or places, the common transliteration is used. However, in cases derived from audio files or native Arabic sources, I rely upon the transliteration that I feel best encapsulates the Arabic pronunciation as I have learned it (formal or fuSha Arabic). This disclaimer applies to translations as well, both for French and Arabic sources.

Chapter Two provides a brief theoretical examination of similar situations and relevant ideologies. Chapter Three is the literature review, in which I examine some of the debates and scholarly works pertaining to important theoretical applications, historical events, and contextual background information. In Chapter Four, I talk about the political, social, and historical experiences for each group and from there, move into discussion about what each group hoped to gain from their participation in the revolutions. And in Chapter Five, I analyze and discuss the results of what the revolutions have actually done for each of the groups and how (if applicable) the phenomenon of post-revolutionary marginalization is unfolding. Chapter Six, the conclusion, briefly recapitulates the main points and ties all of the presented information together.

II.

Theoretical Background

Throughout the course of the history, there are various sociopolitical phenomena that seem to occur when events unfold in revolutionary situations. The following theoretical section seeks to provide the theory and context necessary to understand my argument of minority marginalization and exclusionary nation-building processes. This theoretical framework is important because it focuses on ideologies and discourses that emerge from similar situations and the corresponding literature on those situations. Most of this framework comes from postcolonial theory, which is essentially the idea that analysis of the “dismantlement of structures of Western domination” requires a parallel reevaluation of “Western knowledge” (LeSueur 12).

The idea that the recent revolutions were not only reflections of their post-colonial histories but reflective of a rejection of the subtler neocolonialism that still prevails today is one that was recurring in many of the earlier books on the Arab Spring; Hamid Dabashi argues that the Arab Spring is “not a fulfillment but a delivery... not the final fulfillment of a set of ideologies but the exhaustion of all ideologies, a final delivery from them all” (Dabashi 252). His work asserts that the postcolonial era was replaced by the neocolonial agenda of today, something that is finally being challenged with the recent revolutions. The postcolonial era is exactly what the term implies: the period following colonization, and the neocolonial agenda to which he refers is one of Western imposition in the form of uneven economic power dynamics and foreign policy interference (Dabashi 10-11). While such an assertion characterizes the revolutions as inherently freeing for the

populations as a whole, it does not necessarily apply to minorities, who again, are subject to the will of the majority (“Minorities”).

With the following theories, one can analyze the broadly similar situations of postcolonial Algeria and post-revolutionary Iran and consider how some of the theoretical concepts that arise in those two cases relate to and/or explain the contemporary Tunisian and Egyptian cases. Along with those specific case studies, the process of nation-building itself is important to consider. My research shows that nation-building and nationalism are integral to a post-revolutionary context, and especially with regard to minority groups, they are important tools of either inclusion or exclusion for the new vision of a country.

Algeria

The Algerian case is useful for discussion because it illustrates a case of rebellion and revolution against a colonial power. In Algeria, a French colonial policy based on social Darwinism that positioned the Berbers above the Arabs in the social and human hierarchy was unfortunately masterful. It not only created the needed divisions to prevent initial rebellion against French occupation, it turned the population against the Berbers as well (Maddy-Weitzman 40). This effective policy not only ensured submission of a native population, but it also created a disparity that remains problematic to this day because the policy grew to the point that eventually the Kabyle (Berber) population was associated with European colonialism. Regardless of the fact that the Kabyles were particularly active in the anti-colonial independence movement, they were still dually viewed as a barbaric minority and a European outpost population (Maddy-Weitzman 40-44). Although seemingly contradictory, I argue the dual “othering” of the Berbers in

Algeria arose both as a result of European colonialism and the consequent majority rejection of the legitimacy of that colonial occupation. So when the time to redefine Algeria in a post-revolutionary, or postcolonial, context arose, a form of nationalism based on Islam and a connection with the Arab world formed the basis of Algerian nationalism. This recurring theme of formulating a nationalism that contradicts the perceived identity of the European colonizer is one I found numerous times in the course of this research. And naturally, this nationalism was inapplicable to the Berbers, who were essentially left without a place in the reformation of Algeria's history (Maddy-Weitzman 44). A similar situation exists in today's Tunisia, albeit in a slightly different form.

Although the Kabyles formed their own organizations and attempted to retain their cultural distinctiveness, the "efforts of the new Algerian state to impose a hegemonic cultural and historical narrative on what had always been a fractured and highly contested society" were highly effective (Maddy-Weitzman 72). The interestingly-named "Berber Spring" in 1980 reflected not only the growing tension between minority and majority communities in Algeria, but it attempted to gain greater recognition for the Kabyle community as well. While it was unsuccessful (many activists were arrested and put on trial), Berbers were undoubtedly asserting themselves in new ways (Maddy-Weitzman 79-84). The formation of the Amazigh World Congress in the 1990s was arguably the first valid attempt at a pan-Berber movement, one that is not restricted solely to the Algerian context, but has international and colonial implications as well (Maddy-Weitzman 125). These points are not only applicable to the Tunisian

context, they also highlight a history of action (Algerian) Berbers have taken to redress the marginalization they experienced.

Evans and Phillips go even further with their discussion of the importance of the Berber Spring; they position it as a challenge to “the fundamental tenets of all post-1962 regimes... (And with the denunciation of) the FLN definition of the Algerian people as far too narrow, it was characterizing the notion of an Arab-Islamic identity as an imposition” (Evans and Phillips 8). Algerian history, although a mixture of various narratives (Berber, colonial, official, etc.), did not equally acknowledge or represent those narratives in everyday life and cultural discourse. The role of these various narratives was key in the Algerian context because they highlight issues of legitimization and connection that have been key throughout Algerian history (Evans and Phillips 9). The consideration of the Algerian resistance as an example of a “wider Islamic renaissance”, exemplified by scholars like Rida and Al-Afghani, was key because it necessarily positioned the resistance as a “reassertion of Islamic identity” and eventually divided the populace due to the fact there was an underlying association of Arab-Islamic identity implicit in such a reassertion (Evans and Phillips 43 and 86). This uncomfortable tension and constant struggle between the hegemony of the state in terms of imposing identity on minority groups with distinctly different histories and cultures is yet another similarity I argue Tunisian Berbers share with their Algerian brethren.

Iran

In Iran’s case, nationalism is central to considerations of post-revolutionary Iran. The Iranian case is important because it represents a rebellion or revolution against an elite and/or authoritarian government instead of a colonial one. The overthrow of the

shah, a man who was widely viewed as a puppet for Western interests, goes along with the idea of overthrowing neocolonial elite powers in favor of religious and nationalist rhetoric (Chenar). Ansari talks about a revolution that initially aspired to be an inclusive, universal redefinition of Iran but as time wore on, devolved into an exclusionary mentality (Ansari 1). This conceptualization and argument is essential to my portrayal of the two cases, as well as a basic reiteration of my thesis statement; I would posit that the universal ideals that drive a revolutionary movement in its initial stages are difficult to maintain when the necessary delineations and boundaries for definition arise in a post-revolutionary environment. I use the term necessary in the preceding sentence because I argue that is necessary to establish a binary in order to define a nation with respect to what makes it similar or different to other nations. The linkages between myth, nationalism, and history are also integral to the Iranian context; the development of the Aryan Myth as central to a rediscovered and redefined Iranian history is a process that is inherently exclusionary (Ansari 8 and 14). Like the earlier discussion, the reconstruction or the re-conceptualization of history can be especially problematic. However, Ansari goes on to lament what he sees as the devolution of (Iranian) nationalism: “It is perhaps the greatest irony that an ideology developed to empower the people through education and a coherent sense of imagined community has... been used to marginalize those very people” (Ansari 300). This statement, reminiscent of Benedict Anderson’s original portrayal of nations as social constructs basically built on the back of nationalist rhetoric, propaganda, and accepted legitimacy is an essential tenet of both nationalism and nation-building and is by no means particular to the Iranian context, as the later discussions of both Tunisia and Egypt will emphasize.

Nationalism

Speaking of that integral work, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, a seminal work on the ideology of nationalism, is one that influenced this research. The four factors of a nation, according to Anderson, are that it is: sovereign, limited, imagined, and a community (Anderson 7-8). The last two factors are the most relevant to my discussion. With regard to the concept of imagined, he states that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 7). This emphasizes the importance of a national myth, or national imagination, in nation-building. And as to the latter, he states that "...regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 8). Contrary to outward portrayals, the exclusionary tactics that nationalism requires are related to the idea of "minority-majority integration", a process in which states attempt to make "the population more homogenous by either trying to diminish differences between the minority and the majority or by excluding the minority" (Schulze et al. 6). While not specific to the Middle East, historical conflicts over territory through discourses of ethnicity, religion, and nationalism play a role in this modern application. In its desire to avoid such conflict, the state relies on suppressive tactics meant to diminish the power of minority communities and promote an "ethnic or religious nationalism" that again, is inherently exclusionary (Schulze et al. 7).

Another important scholar who has written extensively on this subject is Ernest Gellner, who writes:

“The general emergence of modernity hinged on the erosion of the multiple petty binding local organizations and their replacement by mobile, anonymous, literate, identity-conferring cultures. It is this generalized condition which made nationalism normative and pervasive; and this is not contradicted by the occasional superimposition of both of these types of loyalty, the occasional use of kin links for a kind of interstitial, parasitic and partial adaptation to the new order” (Gellner 86)

This framing of nationalism as an attempt to institute the ill-defined concept of modernity is an interesting way of conceptualizing the power and applications of the ideology; it certainly explains its use in nation-building in postcolonial contexts. Nationalism is inextricably tied to ideas of identity, an essential notion for nation-building. And the idea of superimposition of that conferred identity from a state level as a form of constructing and maintaining the modern political structure of the nation-state applies as well. The discourse of modernity is one fraught with colonial complications, constructed by powers like the French and British vs. the natives.

Unlike the French in Algeria, the British did not differentiate between Christian and Muslim populations in Egypt. However, in ousting the British, various political parties strove to set themselves apart from the colonizers, who as Christian Europeans were markedly different from how the majority constructed itself as Muslim Arab Egyptians (Eudoxie-Francisse 98-102). This difference would seemingly imply that religious divisions were not overtly exacerbated by the colonizers, but that the colonial presence had later implications for different groups in the population, namely the Egyptian Copts. Eudoxie-Francisse also reiterates Maddy-Weitzman’s earlier point with

respect to Algeria, in that she asserts that the French imposition forced the locals to construct themselves as the opposite of their occupiers; “I am a Moslem, I am Arab, I am an Algerian” was a common phrase taught to Algerian children to emphasize their difference (Eudoxie-Francisee 72). This notion is summarized well by Aletta Norval in her discussion of South African nation construction, in the phrase “identity requires the articulation of otherness” (LeSueur 264). I argue that the binaries that come with nationalism and identity construction require opposites as signifiers; regardless of the location, human perceptions of identity are based on what is and what is not applicable in terms of characteristics.

John Rex argues that ethnic (and by extension, other such categories’) distinctions are not solely reproduced for the “preservation of identity”, but as “forms of mobilisation in pursuit of political and economic interests” (Rex 81). I understood this assertion as an explanation of self-internalization of such categories and consequent reproduction of those categories both for individual and group belonging and identity purposes, but also for recognition of the fact that one will inevitably be perceived in social and political arenas as a member of that group so identification and mobilization in pursuit of common interests is essential. Rex goes on to state what is the basis for all understandings of minoritization in this thesis: the creation of ethnic groups (or religious separatism) as a process that was constructed by external parties in order to serve a specific purpose (Rex 85). In the context of the two cases, that definition is taken to be the imposition of artificial categories by colonizing powers in order to both create division and to hinder mobilization against their occupation.

Frantz Fanon details the plight of the native, or the socially constructed inferior minority, and places their discontent in a sphere of colonial oppression, by saying “every effort is made to make the colonized confess the inferiority of their culture” (Fanon 171). This quote is one of dual application; it is relevant both to European colonialism and the subsequent replacement of the Europeans by local elites. This phenomenon was something that Fanon discussed in his works at length; he argues “new elites have occupied the same positions of power and exploitative authority as the former white masters” (Nayar 105). The process of categorizing and in that, separating humans based on specific characteristics in order to further a political aspiration or goal is one that has had repercussions in the modern-day case studies of Tunisia and Egypt, something the following sections of my research exemplifies.

III.

Historical and Contextual Background

This discussion involves a juxtaposition of topics, ranging from family law and union participation to mobilization, and the relationships between them. These factors have provided the citizenry, including the traditionally disadvantaged minority groups, with the means to mobilize and join in with the greater majority, even against authoritarian powers. This literature review seeks to provide context for the environments in which the revolutions were, at the least, granted the tiny part of public space in which they gained the ability to grow and organize.

Tunisian History

Historically, I begin with pre-colonial Tunisia and their ethnic minority population, the Berbers. The Berbers were an indigenous (at least in the sense of pre-Arab and pre-European migration) population; they were the original inhabitants of present-day Tunisia and other parts of North Africa. The word Berber comes from the term barbarian, and prior to Arab incursion into their territories, agriculture was the focal point of their settlements (Smith). Berber society reached the peak of its productivity in the 15th and 16th centuries and began to decline toward the end of those two centuries. After the fall of the Berber dynasties, Spain and the Ottoman Empire began a rivalry furthered mainly by incidents of piracy. That piracy was the French justification for occupation in later years, and three European powers: France, Great Britain, and Italy continued to interfere in Tunisian affairs even after that occupation ended (Gascoigne). Even without physical interference, the colonized mentality did not leave quite as easily; in the case of Tunisia, my assertion is that the colonizers were replaced by a Tunisian

elite that normalized the majority's culture as Tunisian culture, leaving the Berbers in an inferior position. This phenomenon is the very one Fanon describes as the plight of the native, and it is especially apropos for the Berbers, having essentially been dually colonized by both Arab and European groups. Even today, the fact that Berbers have not been able to freely express their culture and customs clearly paints them as subpar citizens who must submit to the majority culture (Smith). This is partly because, with the move to independence in the mid-1950s, a new nation was born on the basis of freedom from European interference, and a revolutionary spirit prevailed. The need for a Tunisian identity, one markedly different from the colonizers', one that harkened back to an Arab Tunisian culture encouraged a sort of homogeneity that was, at times, difficult for minorities to combat (Mzioudet). Again, the theoretical application of nationalism and distinctive nation-building arise as explanations for that needed homogeneity.

After Tunisia gained independence in 1956, Habib Bourguiba became president. As the former leader of the colonial opposition party, the Neo-Destour (Constitution) party, one of the first mass movements that proved effective in terms of organized protest activities, Bourguiba seemed to essentialize resistance and nationalism in the truest sense of the words ("Tunisia"). Bourguiba and his party, the RCD (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique) focused on developing areas that would provide for a more modern Tunisia, including legal and social reforms. This included "economic and social development", namely issues relating to the status of women, education, and job creation (some were maintained under the later regime), which contributed to the social advances and purported economic success of Bourguiba's era. But a concentrated attention to Tunisian political life took away some of the infrastructure needed for

building a fortified civil society, instead leaving Tunisia with a civil society that was “weak and divided”, and Bourguiba’s redefinition of Tunisian society proved short-lived (“Background Note: Tunisia”). After instituting military rule following an attempted coup to seize his position, Bourguiba lost the respect of the Tunisian people, as well as his presidency (“Tunisia”). Although his presidency was over, Bourguiba’s social reforms would last for many more decades, especially for women.

Tunisian Women- Historical Concepts

Historically, women were defined by their relationship and importance to the concept of family (this was obvious even in later years, with Ben Ali’s creation of a Ministry for Women and Family Affairs) (Nordhagen). The assertion that successive regimes (post-independence in 1956) have implemented numerous laws and reforms that were meant to provide a cohesive nationalist understanding of Tunisian society but have drastically affected other aspects of society as well is astute. As Mounira Charrad states, “In reforming family law, a state redefines rights and obligations for men and women in the family, the community, and by extension, the society, at large” and “policies on family law and women’s rights thus become pawns in broader conflicts and alliances” (Charrad 239, 241). Again, reformations are seen as key in state-building, and women and Berbers seem to have borne the brunt of that process in Tunisian history. This goes along with the exploration of the importance of tribal kin groupings in traditional Berber families and how changes in family law forced the Berbers to restructure their social identities around a new state-imposed standard, because ideas of “collective political action” and “social solidarity and social control” had to be reworked (Charrad 6). Haney and Pollard make a similar point with regard to Egypt with their assertion that ideas of

family are often used as mere political tools to insert other agendas into society; family law and any associated reforms have been instrumental in constructing roles for both women and minorities, as well as for political goals with wider implications (Haney and Pollard 4).

Frances S. Hasso discusses this as well, and unlike the other authors, terms the attention to family law a form of inequality: “In the process of creating their secular legal systems, these states also established institutionalized forms of gender inequality less subject to negotiation” (Hasso 24). This is necessary for the discussion in a myriad of ways, namely in that women and Berbers face an uphill battle when it comes to disentangling the motivations of the government from the community’s attempts to achieve measurable progress in terms of rights and representation. It also establishes gender inequality as less of a direct colonial remnant than the more easily defined forms of ethnic stratification, a fact that, while it structures the discussions of gender and ethnic inequality in different spheres, nonetheless shows that both groups are disadvantaged in terms of legal redefinition in a post-revolutionary context; they are both marginalized in the eyes of the law. On the other hand, some amplifications of women’s rights were not the products of an orchestrated, organized feminist movement, but were instead just a fraction of a much larger national effort to implement reforms that could modernize a post-independence Tunisia in the mid 20th century (Charrad 219-220). While a primarily nationalistic sentiment, this effort had added benefits for women.

Following Bourguiba’s removal, Ben Ali became the new president and Tunisia seemed to be on the path to becoming a just and egalitarian society. Ben Ali initially legalized a number of political parties, but with the crackdown on Islamism following the

Gulf War, his dictatorial grip grew stronger and stronger; he began using the military on an increasing basis and discrediting and dismantling any opposition that stood in the way (“Tunisia”). The methods he employed to ensure his grip on the country were both stiflingly authoritarian and invasively controlling. Finally, after years of corruption, rigged elections, and a blatant disrespect for human rights, Tunisians took to the streets in early 2011. Spurred by the self-immolation of a young street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi, the people took to the streets and began a revolution that would reverberate and catalyze other repressed populations, namely the Egyptians. There are inherent similarities in the two situations, because “structural conditions inherited from the pre-colonial and colonial period delineated the range of options and strategies available to the leadership” in both cases (Charrad 238-239). Many scholars consider one of those key conditions to be the role of labor unions in North African affairs.

The Role of Unions and Nationalism in Tunisia

Labor unions have a lengthy history in Tunisia. For minorities, they provide an invaluable connection to the wider populace, because in many ways, the unions are themselves a form of mobilization; they provide a means of organization and consolidated power. The UGTT (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail), one of Tunisia’s largest and most influential labor unions, has been an integral actor in the sociopolitical sphere for decades and is basically one of the few outlets the Tunisian people have that is free from direct government control (Hibou 1). The Sidi Bouzid sector of the UGTT was involved in the uprisings from an early point, only cementing the idea that the regional groupings of the union are known for their bold action. Unlike the offshoots around the country, the central UGTT is sometimes known for being affiliated

with the elites; however, in the months of the uprising, “grassroots members were playing active roles” (Ryan). Historically, unions have not only been considered representative of the people and not the government, but they have been used as more than socioeconomic structures to create a distinct national identity.

Nationalism played a major role in this consideration, because “when a labor movement emerged in the 1940s, labor grievances merged with nationalist issues” (Charrad 119). Historically, labor unions have provided disgruntled populations with a means of organization, coordination, and communication, as well as the numerical means to exercise that driving nationalism. Beyond that, they cut across ethnic, religious, and gender differences to provide a more consolidated sector of the population as a whole (Charbel). And as is the case in most situations, political, social, or economic discontent can catalyze reactions to discontent in another aspect of society. However, not everyone agrees with the centrality of unionization as a positive force; Hibou talks about the “bureaucratization and subordination of the Tunisian trade movement” as an ongoing process, one that is not as grassroots as it is often perceived to be (Hibou 170). But for minorities, labor unions can be especially effective. They have a tendency to incorporate every working-class Tunisian, regardless of background. And with unions as a principal organizer of the revolution, it is no wonder that the revolutionaries were so diverse. But labor unions are but one piece of the (socio) economic factors that were relevant in the recent revolutions; the ultimately false promises of economic success played a role in the discontent as well.

Ben Ali's regime used a very specific discourse to craft a specific portrait for its people, one in which economic prosperity and Tunisian identity would both be redefined and reconstituted under regime leadership:

“... economic success, attention to the social sphere, a specific path toward democracy and a multi-party system thanks to economic development, stability, security, and moderation, a judicious balance between a decision in favor of modernity and progress, on the one hand, and respect for Tunisian values on the other, a harmonious relation between openness and national sovereignty- these are all recurrent themes in the discourses that monopolize the public space” (Hibou 15).

The attempts to rectify any issue that would challenge that image were almost as badly delegitimizing, in that “it became evident that the president was also moving more interior ministry and military personalities into the realms of civil politics” (Murphy 184). The greater the attempt to maintain the delicate balance of domination and feigned authenticity, the worse the regime delegitimized itself with unconstitutional or ill-received tactics. And from those tactics, it had to redefine and step up its attempts at legitimacy even more. Hibou talks about the “extremely hierarchized character” of the regime, and how the myth of such a hierarchy only fuels its attempt to control and direct the discourse of the citizenry through targeted rhetoric (Hibou 111 and 113). There was a government-created “myth of consensus” that forced the Tunisian people to focus on nationalist matters rather than individual (or in this case, a smaller groups like a distinct ethnic community) matters, creating a perpetual subordination of the citizenry (Hibou 203). I interpret this subordination to be dually experience for minorities; they were

subject to the authoritarian government as members of the country and in social settings, they are at times, subordinated to the majority population.

Egyptian History and Gender Activism

Perhaps more than Tunisia, Egypt has had a well-defined feminist movement, sometimes referred to as “gender activism”. Gender activism is used mainly in the context of Egypt because the related term of “Islamic feminism” is one that is not bound by national borders; it “transcends and destroys old binaries” (Badran, *Feminism Beyond* 27). Nationalism and feminism in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt seem to be intertwined in an intricately complicated manner, one in which neither is necessarily dependent on the other, but they both function in an atmosphere of synergistic dynamism, one in which they alternately spur attention for and mobilization in the name of the other. As Margot Badran writes,

“Historically, feminism has been- implicitly or explicitly- part of other discourses, such as religious reformist or nationalist discourses. It gendered these discourses in ways that take as central concerns the constructions and positionings of women and their rights, choices and opportunities” (Badran, *Feminism in Islam* 220).

Women use feminism in nationalist terms, yet at the same time, it is a distinct nationalism that defines the discourse of feminism; identity is negotiated and acted through both nationalist and feminist terms. The two do not always coexist comfortably; there is a tension in the at-times synergistic relationship that illustrates the fact that they are in fact distinct ideologies (Badran, *Feminism in Islam* 22). Ideas of nationalism permeate revolutionary discourse as well, but may ultimately not be strong enough to break the bindings of long-held divisions within society itself (Khalil). Nationalism seemingly has

its limits for female empowerment, ones that may or may not prove problematic for the implementation and practice of feminism. The question of minorities and citizenship is also of vital relevance to this conversation. Here again, issues of nationalism arise, because “citizenship is understood... only as a relation with nationalism and patriotism” (Hibou 206). Minorities tend to be contested citizens when the majority deigns such a separation necessary, which is always problematic when negotiating ideas of identification, citizenship, and perceived (or actual) nationalism.

Minority Identification and Contested Citizenship

Bengio and Ben-Dor assert that the problem is not so much minority identification as it is refusal to acknowledge the existence of minorities, “...regimes tend to emphasize themes of national unity, and any tendency that has diversity and variety is suspect at best... no effort is spared to prevent the discourse on the Copts from treating them as a minority” (Bengio and Ben-Dor 195). This point has been raised numerous times already, and it applies to the Copts as well. Coptic Christians, like the Berbers, are a minority group whose settlement in Egypt predated the introduction of Islam into modern-day Egypt. As roughly a tenth of the population, their history spans almost two thousand years, and traces of Egypt’s pharaoh era are still evident in some Coptic practices to this day. Copts are not necessarily inconspicuous either; the women do not cover their heads like their Muslim counterparts and many have tattoos or other Christian symbols on their person as a mark of their heritage (Michael). These visible indications of difference have provoked discrimination at times, and as discussed above, caused others to question their identity as Egyptians. With that in mind, I think that these visible indicators serve not only to show attachment to their religion or mark their difference in

the eyes of non-Copts, but they serve as markers of identity that not only reaffirm their status as different from the rest of the country in a positive way; they counter the imposition of a state-controlled identity by highlighting their place in a minority group.

It is not only ethnic and religious minorities whose citizenship has been questioned. For women, this has been problematic over the course of time, in essentially every culture and every country in the world. As discussed with regard to family law, female citizenship has been negotiated on the basis of a subordinate, yet inherent worth to the family. But for ethnic and religious minorities, I argue there is an element of colonial construction that is seemingly less contested than the traditional European divide between concepts of male/female difference; ethnic and religious differences and their corresponding categories continue to plague modern nation-states to this day.

Both ethnic and religious minorities may face attacks on their citizenship by more extreme factions of the majority community when the country is in a difficult position, or when an extremist sect finds the need to vilify a minority group for its own purposes or agenda. This has been evident in Egypt, with extreme Islamists labeling Coptic Christians as “infidels” and “polytheists” who have no loyalty to the nation or the wider Egyptian community, and therefore cannot be trusted (Al-Aswany 129). These statements cast aspersions on the nationalist sentiments of Copts, a form of emphasizing difference and placing the community outside the country as non-Egyptians. Accusations of inequality have plagued even the Muslim Brotherhood (a powerful Islamist movement) in a post-revolutionary environment; the section of the Constitution that does not guarantee equal citizenship for all Egyptians is apparently not on the list of things that the Brotherhood aims to change (Van Doorn-Harder). Although admittedly divisive, the

Brotherhood is an important part of Egypt's extensive history, and not just in a contemporary context.

Egyptian Nationalism and Family Law

Egypt is one of the oldest and most dominant societies in the Arab world, but like Tunisia, legacies of colonialism and the subsequent social and political environments have played an irreplaceable role in constructing the system of today's sociopolitical space. However, while Tunisia did not typically have a violent history in terms of uprooting the political system, Egypt's history saw much more violence, with numerous military men succeeding one another. After gaining independence from Britain in 1923, Egypt established a constitutional monarchy, which did not last long; the people viewed the monarchs as little more than England's puppets. Following months of demonstrations, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power in 1952, using "Egyptian nationalism rather than a coherent ideology" ("Egypt", *Encyclopedia Britannica online*). Basically, Nasser relied on nationalist rhetoric and imagery instead of a specific or established ideology to champion his presidency. This would prove to be a recurring theme in Egyptian history; nationalism seems to be both a pervasive and domineering force. In modern thought, Nasser is considered an effective leader; in economic terms, his presidency saw the proliferation of the middle class (Amin 89).

But not everyone considers Nasser's presidency as beneficial as Amin. Tamir Moustafa argues that Nasser chose "national independence, redistribution of national wealth, economic dependence, and Arab nationalism over the niceties of liberal democracy" (Moustafa 3). This quote would suggest that Nasser's priorities centered on the economic well-being of the country as a whole rather than the grievances of any

smaller community. This is not a criticism per se; it was necessary for the time and the political environment Egypt found itself in. But it also left a political legacy that would craft a distinct space for successors like Hosni Mubarak. In political terms, things did change under Nasser; in 1962, the National Charter laid out an egalitarian legal framework for men and women, an important step for the country's legal efforts at gender equality ("Egypt", *Encyclopedia Britannica online*).

Although Egypt has not been as quick to modernize its personal status laws as Tunisia, there have been attempts at revisions that serve a larger purpose for the state as well (Badran, *Feminism in Islam* 117). In post-independence Egypt, personal status laws continued to bind women in their traditional roles, even as the socialist policies of Nasser supposedly brought about more egalitarian conditions. Women continued to face the persistent effects of the patriarchal hierarchy, in that a lack of state support services and disproportionate power in the workplace restricted them from gaining positions equal to their male counterparts, something that the outdated Personal Status Law continues to perpetuate (Badran, *Feminism in Islam* 129). This patriarchy partially stems from the early part of the 20th century, when the "political culture of the Revolution was steeped in highly domestic imagery" as a means of distinguishing Egyptian values from British occupation and imperialism (Haney and Pollard 18). That was not the only problem. Muslim and Christian communities each had their own versions of family law, and the tension between religious and secular agendas was palpable.

Today, the idea that "modern secular power has transformed the concept of 'the family', religious identity, and intra-communal relations, often exacerbating earlier patterns of religious hierarchy and gender difference" prevails and is central to ideas and

practices of family law in contemporary Egypt (Mahmood 56). It is that secularization that is proving to be a divisive concept. While family law and religious doctrine are inextricably tied within two separate communities, the differences between the two cause numerous problems, including issues related to inter-religious topics like conversion. Complicating things even more, in 1967, the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic fundamentalism began to gain traction (“Egypt”, *Encyclopedia Britannica online*). A few years after that, a new president took control. While Nasser was a polarizing, yet ultimately charismatic and persuasive figure, his successor, Anwar Sadat, was by no means as revered (Amin 3-4).

However, Sadat was assassinated in 1981, which led to the installation of Hosni Mubarak. Again, Islamism posed a problem, and as Mubarak stepped up the authoritarian efforts to contain the growing problems, the social and economic problems that were building in the background were heightened. In 1993, Mubarak negotiated and settled with the Muslim Brotherhood while taking a more hardline approach with some of the more extremist groups (Evans Braziel). There is a debate within Egyptian society over the Brotherhood’s role and how much of an extremist group they are, especially in terms of women’s and Coptic Christian rights. It is important to understand the amount of time they have been an important force in Egyptian society and also to understand that they have adapted over that period to suit the needs of the Egyptian people (Michael). The Brotherhood did not fade into the background as time went on, nor did Mubarak’s ever-increasing problems. With pressure from numerous sides, including the IMF, a growing socioeconomic gap between rich and poor, and increasing problems with

extremist groups, general displeasure with Mubarak festered (“Egypt”, *Encyclopedia Britannica online*).

Egyptian Unions and Recent Mobilization

In 2004, people began to protest Mubarak’s rule, an indication that any popularity he had once enjoyed had long since waned. That same year, grassroots organization Kefaya appeared publically for the first time. Kefaya, which means ‘enough’ in Arabic, was especially effective. Although initially birthed from labor organization, the group grew to be a combination of people from different positions on the political spectrum, some of whom were intellectuals, some of whom were working-class, all with the same goal: to oust Mubarak and prevent his son from succeeding him (“Kefaya”). And while specific labor unions undoubtedly played more of a role in the recent revolutions in Tunisia than in Egypt, this is not reflective of the idea that Egypt does not have a distinct history with labor or trade unions. Rather, the legal trade unions were allied with Mubarak, so people did not utilize them as a means of resistance. Due to this fact, people focused on subverting the national unions, and instead formed independent unions that operated free from government involvement and responded directly to what the people wanted (Haddad). There are millions of working-class people (the majority of Egyptians) who belong to trade unions in Egypt, and when the protests began, it became clear that they could not organize opposition through the state-affiliated union, so they deserted their union obligations in favor of the strikes and protests that ultimately defined the revolution (Lee and Weinthal).

In 2008, while youth were beginning to use social media in a widespread fashion, the workers were taking a stand against Mubarak. Union members made their opinions

known through strikes that essentially brought parts of the Egyptian economy to a very visible, very problematic (for the regime) breaking point (Khalil 55). With that, one could argue that the unions were organizing and taking to the streets before even the wider populace got to that point. In both Tunisia and Egypt, it seems that unions could be considered the litmus tests of organized protest, in that a union-based movement tends to either precipitate or catalyze a wider mass movement. As the events of both 2004 and 2008 prove, grassroots organization, with or without the much-discussed social media, was beginning to take the stage. All of these dots would soon be connected, because prior to the start of the revolution on January 25, 2011, a young woman named Asmaa Mahfouz posted a clip online calling people to stand with her in Tahrir Square to protest National Police Day (Afify). People were hoping to displace Mubarak like their Tunisian brethren had done with Ben Ali. And on January 25th, thousands gathered in Tahrir Square. The amalgamation of factors: former connections to and domination by Britain, successive inefficient regimes and their authoritarian character, and economic woes have crafted and shaped the Egypt that we know today.

Mobilization has at times been hindered due to a “lack of organization and (a) focus on individual solutions”, something that has been institutionalized and psychologically internalized following years of repression (Al-Aswany vii). These problems are not easily overcome, and they are severe in many ways. Ghada Talhami frames a lack of education and severe communication deficiencies as problems that ultimately inhibit gains for the minority and female protest movements (Talhami ix-x). And although the unrest in Egypt was widespread, there was a “localized psychology” that reflected protestors’ geographic and socioeconomic statuses; Ashraf Khalil’s work

provides a look into a protest environment that, at times, struck an uneasy balance between nationalistic solidarity and other times, an environment rigidly defined by uncomfortable class boundaries (Khalil 183, 202). Class boundaries, an omnipresent problem in the two countries, due to the stark socioeconomic gap (a result of years of authoritarian rule), are exemplified in the participation in labor unions by the working class; generally speaking the upper or educated classes tend to utilize other means of resistance, perhaps through avenues of academia (Cole and Cole).

The most interesting aspect of mobilization is undoubtedly how it overcomes ideas of gender, religion, and in most cases, class, to overcome a common boundary. This is key to my discussion because the inclusive nature of both revolutions is something that I continue to emphasize. Both Tunisia and Egypt have histories of mobilization that do not necessarily conform to traditional ideas of what such mobilization entails. One of the most striking and relevant statements in this conversation, one that sums up the relationship between women and minorities perfectly, is: "...latent mobilization of Egypt's Christian minority must now be viewed as one of the significant contributing factors toward the Islamic redefinition of female rights" (Talhami viii). Her discussion of the mobilization of both Muslim and Christian communities following a series of skirmishes between the two, focuses on the perceptions of the other group as a threat, which led to a rise in activism, both verbal and physical, on the part of Egyptian women (Talhami viii-ix). Although different groups may mobilize for different purposes, such mobilization can not only call others to action but also accomplish change for a population as a whole. And this certainly applies to the recent revolutions; various groups ultimately joined to fight for a common goal. Whether

or not that camaraderie was remembered after those revolutions is the core question of this thesis; some attempts have been made at preservation for certain groups, while others have seen little to no change and have been as thoroughly ignored as they were before.

IV.

Minorities in Tunisia & Egypt

“One of the most wonderful things for me was how we turned out to be a truly united people. Although the Coptic Church asked its adherents not to take part in the demonstrations a few days before the 25th, there were many Christians amongst us every day” (Rushdy 81).

- Amr Waked, actor

“There was a lady sitting next to me on the sidewalk from a very poor area in Cairo called Bashteel... She said: ‘I am not leaving until he leaves. Either I live with dignity or I die here and my children live in dignity.’” (Rushdy 122).

- Islam Mo'men, owner of numerous food chains, Day of the Camel (February 2nd)

“It was a sense of freedom, pride, and victory that we all shared together... We had no leader in this revolution. Our dreams were our weapons” (Rushdy 256)

- Mona Rushdy, mother and student

Unlike the previous chapter, which laid out the historical context for each group, this chapter seeks to show the reasoning behind what I earlier termed active participation in the uprisings. The difficulties, discrimination, and desires that have defined each community are positioned as key to that participation and they are contrasted with the growing marginalization of each community by the respective governments.

Tunisian Berbers

BBC News said it well: “While there has been much talk of the Arab spring, ethnic Berbers have played a key role in the changes sweeping through North Africa, which is leading to greater recognition for their culture and language” (Jensen). Although they make up a fairly negligible percent of the population, the ethnic Berber population is an important part of Tunisian demographics. And the Berber community in Tunisia is intent on preserving its unique culture and history (Smith). An article in *As-Sabaah* discussed a recent survey in which people were asked to identify themselves, and unsurprisingly, the majority identified as Arab, with smaller pockets identifying as Berber or Mediterranean. The article just stated the results; it did not go into much depth into social effects of the results (Binyunis). The lack of that depth is interesting because it suggests that the effects are not relevant or important to the majority of the population or the majority of the paper’s readers. That lack of depth with regard to ethnic minorities was pervasive in the articles I found, and it shows the Berbers face a difficult battle. The earlier conversations of purported homogeneity as a means of not only defining a national identity but establishing one set historical narrative as well are integral to this analysis; this silent marginalization of Berbers by ignoring their numbers and demands is nationalistic at its core.

Slightly less than 100,000 people in Tunisia are considered “pure Berber”, which implies that they count Berber heritage as the majority contribution to their racial or ethnic identity. This is an accepted estimate, due to the fact that many North African countries do not include a relevant question to support this data on the national census (Penchoen). And unlike Morocco and Algeria, which have historically experienced far

more discriminatory practices with regard to their Berber populations, Tunisian Berbers have always been considered a force to reckon with (Jones). Following Arab migration to the area, the Berbers and Arabs clashed numerous times, in which neither side was completely decimated or destroyed (Jensen). But now, the power dynamic has changed, and the Berbers are a minority community plagued by economic and social problems. The government has used Berber culture as a tourist draw, but the community still faces innumerable problems that have not been addressed on a national level (Jones). Most Berbers live in southern Tunisia, in isolated, impoverished settlements, largely ignored by the government and the rest of society. Many of the settlements have a severe lack of employment and a disproportionate gender imbalance (the men must leave for work); activists want running water, jobs that keep them in their original settlements, and schools to help combat these ills, and they have long fought against the assimilatory practices threaten to destroy or diminish their culture (Jones). I assert that this poverty can be traced back to the colonial structures that encouraged divisions of difference because marginalization is not only found in the political forum, but in geographical and economic considerations as well. And similar to the Algerian context, Tunisian Berbers have had to struggle against the imposition of a hegemonic “cultural and historical narrative” in the attempt to maintain their distinct culture (Maddy-Weitzman 72).

It is especially difficult to find information on the Tunisian Berber community, a problematic disparity. Some of the questions that I sought to answer when I began this research included: Who are its leaders and organizations? What do practices of assimilation entail for the community? Many organizations were not allowed under the time of Ben Ali’s rule, but now the Berbers have established organizations to make sure

their voices are heard (Aziz). Again, parallels to the Algerian context become apparent. Khadija Ben Saidane, the head of the newly-established Tunisian Association for Amazigh Culture, met with other scholars of the Berber community in March 2011 to discuss the process of incorporating more Amazigh (Berber) language, culture, and history into education at the university level as a first step. From there, they hope to spread the knowledge and education to other aspects of Tunisian life, and one Berber man asserted that the revolution has only strengthened that drive for recognition and cultural freedom (Mzioudet). It seems that prior to the loosened restrictions on Berber organizations, there was no coherent organization through which the community could mobilize; grievances were aired through protest or through actions by the intellectual circles of the community. That has apparently changed, and now Berbers have a more grassroots base, one that can more broadly appeal to the new government.

The renewed calls for recognition of the Berber identity, language and culture stem from the long-felt imposition of forced Arab identity into their communities and lives. Many Berbers feel that they will only truly be Tunisians once their language, Tamazight, is available for Berber children to study at school, which would require government acknowledgement and approval. The cohesive Tunisian identity that was demanded in post-colonial Tunisia led to the rise of Berber assimilation and the concurrent turn away from societal acceptance of spoken minority languages (Jensen). The demand for cultural recognition, or at least government acceptance of the community's desire to counteract the social homogeneity and assimilation practices that have gone on for so long, is the main point for many Tunisian Berbers following the revolution. There were three articles in *Le Temps* and *As-Sabaah* that related to this

topic. The first outlines a debate about the national identity, whether Arab, Berber, Muslim, or just Tunisian. The only mention of the Berbers as a distinct group is used in historical context, and no mentions are made of the present-day community (Ajroudi). I saw numerous articles about “Tunisian identity”, and there are differences between national and individual perceptions of such an identity, something that could prove problematic for those that do not fit the category of the national standards.

The second article in the same paper is the most representative of the articles I found about Tunisia: it talks about Berbers in a context pertaining to tourism. It discusses an archaeological site that is part of historical Berber civilization, and how the government is sending a delegation to ensure that everything is still intact (Midani). Most mentions of Berbers refer to history or tourism; there are very few references to the modern-day community and their struggle. And the last of the three articles talks about the attempt to preserve Berber music through performances. It says that some cultural forms are on their way to extinction, and that there is an attempt to rectify that (Bin-Nahila). Here again, I found a focus on Berber culture and history, and less on the sociopolitical situation of the community. These omissions are something that the community is undoubtedly going to have to combat in terms of establishing themselves in the new Tunisia. And they raise an interesting question about the media’s approach to Berber identity. In all of these articles, I would argue that Berber identity is used as a marketing tool and a tourist draw; their culture has been commodified. This commodification fixes them as foreign, non-Tunisian objects and limits their political power and mobilization. The process positions them as a historical group outside of the realm from having a say or influence in modern Tunisia. It undermines their struggle in

many ways, and these articles clearly show that Berber problems and issues are not taken seriously by other groups in Tunisia- especially the media; it is a subtle form of marginalization in favor of the majority group's historical narrative, placed in contrast to a defined Arab Tunisian history, culture, and identity.

And while other countries like Morocco and Algeria have taken steps to reassure their minority communities, the new Tunisia has disregarded the options and freedoms that many Berbers thought they were fighting for (Jensen). And they are facing an undeniably uphill battle; in September 2012, a gathering of six major Berber organizations had to be canceled after Islamists threatened the conference. The detractors accused the organizations of treasonous activities, but many believe that they do not want the "assertion of rights by the indigenous non-Arab" Berbers (Aziz). This entrenched prejudice is but one facet of the Berbers' struggle and something that cannot be easily fixed. On a similar note, some scholars characterize Fanon and his writings as pan-Africanist in their tone and content, an interesting point to consider with regard to his work's application to the Berber community (Rabaka 32). The Amazigh World Congress, mentioned earlier as the first valid attempt at a pan-Berber movement, is a possible response to this prejudice; mobilization beyond the borders of Tunisia is something I view as possibly useful to the Berbers' situation.

Tunisian Women

On the other hand, with regard to gender equality, Tunisia tends to be viewed as one of the more cosmopolitan countries in the region; women have not been significantly disadvantaged in Tunisia, unlike in other countries. The position of women has been compared to some European countries, and is deemed "among the most privileged in

North Africa” in terms of social and economic equality (Nordhagen). This was purported to be true during the rule of Ben Ali, whose attempt at gender equality led to the creation of the Tunisian Ministry for Family and Women Affairs in the 1990s. However, this is a curious attempt at equality, because it continues to frame women in conjunction with the family and not as independent actors. This idea defines women as mothers and assesses their importance only in relation to their families and/or children. Badran and Charrad argued this point in relation to colonial power structures and colonial resistance in the second chapter; the association of domestic imagery with women as a refutation of European culture is a lasting remnant of that era. Women’s rights were actually guaranteed in the 1959 constitution, but practice and protection of those rights have not completely permeated the rural areas of the country, which are still steeped in tradition (Nordhagen). Women also have political powers beyond those pertaining to protection and equality. They gained the right to vote in municipal elections in 1957 and national elections in 1959. The first woman was elected to the legislature in 1959, while the first one was appointed to the cabinet almost three decades later in 1985 (Martin). These dates are later than one may originally expect, but nonetheless, they prove that Tunisia has experienced several decades of female political representation.

In past years, there were essentially two organizations that lobbied for women’s rights: ATFD (The Tunisian Association of Democratic Women) and AFTURD (The Tunisian League for Human Rights). But they were severely restricted and oppressed under Ben Ali’s regime, at times even by violent means (Arfaoui). Both organizations were well-established and focused on promoting greater involvement of women in Tunisian affairs. And now that the restrictions have loosened, women are intent on

making their voices heard; on January 29, 2011, the two organizations held a protest to ensure the Personal Status Code would be upheld in this new era. The organizations acknowledge the possible problem of empowered Islamists, but they also emphasize that this will not dampen their mobilization and that they are considering expanding the organizations' reach and numbers now that they have more options (Arfaoui). Another important factor with regard to women's participation was the passage of CEDAW, or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Adopted by the United Nations in 1979, the convention emphasizes equality, especially in sociopolitical spheres, and has been a rallying point for women's organizations in Tunisia ("Convention"). Tunisia became the first country in the region to lift its reservations to the treaty in August 2011, and many hope this is a mark of a changing Tunisia (Whitaker).

Generally, political and economic situations vary for women. According to *The Nation*, women make up 20% of wage earners, and 43% of union members, which only highlights the fact that their influence is in no way limited. The discrepancy between the two percentages is interesting, however. I cannot directly speculate on why that discrepancy exists, but it definitely shows the impact women have in terms of labor unions, which have always been central forces in terms of effecting social change (Cole and Cole). Labor unions are central to the Tunisian discussion, in both minority and majority contexts. While they provided a means of organization for the majority of Tunisians, they also provided a link to the rest of the country for smaller minority groups. Although technically economic outlets, labor unions are undoubtedly social outlets as well. With nearly half of union members being women and unions being central to the

economic conversation, it emphasizes the economic sway women have, especially in a post-revolutionary context free from an authoritarian regime. I make this point to show that women are not marginalized in terms of economic representation per se, but the structures of that economic representation and political representation are a different matter; numbers do not always translate to leadership positions or proportional power distribution.

However, that economic importance has translated into social gains as well. Social indicators like education and the rise of technology like television, the Internet, and social media have led to high participation in labor and other mass movements. While women in the upper classes traditionally fought political injustice and strove to make laws more egalitarian for the sexes, working class women have traditionally focused on the economic injustices and the disparities in wages and workplace rights (Cole and Cole). Although their interests may be at times contradictory, in that working class women tend to push for stronger organized labor and a lessening of the elite, they undoubtedly have the same goals in the end. The majority of women, regardless of class or background, look at health, literacy, and societal and personal well-being as important issues (Cole and Cole).

Another important issue is patriarchy. The remnants of an ingrained patriarchal system remain most obvious in “family and inheritance cases (shari’a law)”, and women still face difficulties when it comes to poverty and unemployment, a fact that is almost always true. But Ben Ali’s desire to “improve gender sensitive legislation and promote women’s participation in the economic political life” had several important consequences: marital equality, sexual harassment prohibition gains, and an increase in

female-held positions in the government, which stood at more than 13 percent in 2004 (Nordhagen). So now that Ben Ali has been deposed, some women fear that the country could revert back to the patriarchal system of old, and many wonder if the regime's protection will be reversed by the growing fundamentalist groups.

An article in *Le Temps* discusses the rise of Islamism and how that rise relates to the Arab Spring. It positions Tunisia as being in the best situation of all of the countries, and says that "La Tunisie est source d'espoir" (Tunisia is a source of hope). It mentions the Personal Status Code and asserts that Tunisians will make sure it is upheld regardless of anything the Islamists may claim (Bouaouina). I included this article because, contrary to what the Western news sources questioned, most Tunisians do not want the considerably progressive Personal Status Code changed, which is important for women under the new government. Ennahda, now the ruling party, has taken steps to ensure that women are represented in the new era. The interim government introduced new stipulations to ensure more equality; during the election, some of the running parties even went beyond those stipulations to target women specifically. Ennahda, which considers itself "a mixture of 'democratic politics' and 'social conservatism'" has been popular with women due to its emphasis on the family (Mitchell).

My contention for this group is that, unlike the Berbers, women have not experienced the silent, exclusive marginalization that persists from colonial era divisions, but instead, they face a different form, one in which they continue to be largely represented by men in the political arena; female self-representation is something that is still shifting and growing. Ben Ali undoubtedly furthered their political rights, and whether that was for show or the good of society is unknown. But now women can go

much further beyond even those gains and incorporate new social ideas as well. In fact, an article in *As-Sabaah* talks about the societal problem of violence against women, namely rape. It calls for both social and legal action, and condemns the lack of focus on the problem (Abdetaif). While it may seem irrelevant, I think this article is important because it again reaffirms the idea of space for issues related to women in the public discourse, which may prove useful. Even something generally considered taboo, like talking about rape, might find a space in the discourse of the new Tunisia. It is an important topic not only for women, but for Tunisian society as a whole as well.

Egyptian Copts

Like Tunisia's situation with their religious minority population, Egypt has ethnic minorities as well, although they will not be the focus of this discussion due to their numbers and a lack of concrete data pertaining to participation and involvement¹. Egypt's problems have been of a religious nature; its ancient Coptic Christian community has long felt marginalized. According to the Pew Center, Egypt is ranked fifth worst for religious freedom and twelfth in violence against minorities ("Global Restrictions" 12 and 22). Especially given the recent ire because of an expatriate Coptic Christian American who produced and/or created an anti-Islamic video that caused riots in much of the Middle East, Copts are in a precarious situation at the moment, an unfortunate fact, given their ardent participation in the recent revolution (Sennott).

Historically, persecution has always dogged Copts in some form or another. Thousands of years ago, they faced persecution from the Romans, and in modern times, the presidencies of Nasser and Sadat did nothing to further their standing. Mass

¹ Like Tunisia, Berbers reside in Egypt, but they constitute an extremely minute portion of the population. Nubians and Bedouins are small groups as well, but they are distinct to the Egypt consideration.

emigration occurred under Nasser (due to his nationalization policies) and Sadat emphasized shari'a law as the law of the land (Dick). But those two presidents also allowed for Coptic judges, generals etc., in contrast to Mubarak, whose reign was marked by a definite lessening of Coptic political power (Dalrymple). Mubarak did nothing to directly affect the community, in fact, he emphasized religious equality for both Christians and Muslims and appointed a moderate as the leading cleric, but he did not ensure necessary protection either (Dick). This is not necessarily new to Copts; positions of power have long been denied or refused to them. There was a Coptic prime minister from 1908-1910, but he was later assassinated, and the first Coptic woman was elected to the assembly in 1973, quite a difference from non-Copt women, who elected two women to the national assembly in 1957 (Martin). The inequality is neither subtle nor limited.

During the protests and revolution, the bodies of two dozen protestors were brought to the Coptic Hospital in Cairo, where the relatives and bereaved had less than kind words to say about the government. "It's my right to live as a citizen and not a second-class citizen" were the words of Iman Sanada, a Coptic woman (Michael). Mubarak's reign was not as uncertain as the current situation has proven to be for Coptic Christians (although legal barriers and acts of vandalism prevented church construction during the era of Mubarak), and now many Copts worry that Islamists could make the situation even worse. Widely touted images of religious harmony in Tahrir Square downplayed the usual situation, the one beyond the revolutionary camaraderie (Michael). In fact, many of the sources that observed Tahrir Square during the revolution remarked upon the peaceful coexistence, through the dual images of Muslims protecting Christians

so they could pray in peace and vice versa (Michael). I would say that the notion of an inclusive revolution was exemplified in Egypt, but the inevitable exclusivity is beginning to reappear.

The revolutionary euphoria has passed, and the community, having squared off with Islamists in the 1990s, when an extremist group called Gama'a Islamiya resorted to violence, is especially worried. Mubarak allowed for the growth of this fundamentalism, some Copts argue, because of his "passive policy toward Salafism", and now, that accumulated power is worrisome (Dalrymple). However, an article in the local newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, interestingly titled "Copts, The Army, and The Homeland", talked about how the burning of Coptic churches has gone unnoticed, even after Muslims and Christians worked together in Tahrir Square, and asked "How did this happen?" Published in October 2011, it is unknown if the author himself is Christian or not, but regardless, the fact that the paper published it is relevant to the discussion (Al-Namnam). The subsequent marginalization is not a silent phenomenon like the one the Berbers continue to experience; Egyptian citizens seem highly aware of the issue. The article dispels the notion of rampant fundamentalism and even better, shows that some media sources have taken notice. In terms of Egyptian media, I definitely found more articles than I expected with regard to the Copts, none of which were tailored to extremist propaganda. I wondered if the situation would progress similar to a less fundamentalist version of the Iranian Revolution, if nationalist ideas promoting a single Egyptian history or myth, one of Islam as an essential part for Egyptian identity would appear as things settled down. But this was not the case.

In contrast to the Tunisian newspapers, the Egyptian newspapers devoted a sizable amount of time to the Copts' current situation. I argue that this is not just numerical visibility (the Copts are a much larger percentage of the population than Berbers in Tunisia), but greater overall visibility as well. Unlike the Berbers, who have technically remained isolated from the larger population, Copts are integrated into the Egyptian population as a whole. This may reflect an earlier topic, the different forms of colonialism practiced with regard to each population. Another newspaper article gave readers a look at Coptic history, from the early days of the Romans to the "Islamic conquest". An especially interesting part of this article is where the author says that it was written to contradict some of the lies, which seems to indicate that people are actively trying to destroy stereotypes and ideas of Copts in popular society (Amara). Both of these examples suggest that there is a continuing effort to maintain a modicum of that solidarity. However, the media cannot speak for extremists and the increasingly exclusionary nature of the government, the sources of the bulk of Coptic marginalization. In the coming chapter, with political analysis, I show how they seem to dismiss what the Copts contributed to the revolution.

The Baha'i

Other religious minorities in Egypt, namely the Baha'i community, have faced problems as well. The Baha'i, a community of approximately two thousand adherents, face a unique problem in that their religion is not even recognized as legitimate by the government. The Baha'i faith was denied legitimacy by the government in 1960, and since then, courts have held that the "freedom of religion clause (does) not apply" to adherents of the Baha'i faith. This "lack of official documentation prevents school

enrollment, opening business, and subjects them to risk of imprisonment” (“Egypt”, *The Muslim Network for Baha’i Rights*). Since the religion was deemed illegal in 1960, assets of Baha’i adherents have even been confiscated (Saldanha). The group has had to fight for political rights like identification cards and marriage recognition, especially since Egyptian ID cards formerly required that a religion be listed on the card for it to be valid. In 2009, after lengthy battles in court, the option of a dash instead of a religion on the card was added to the law, but this does not prevent discrimination against the people who choose that option (Saldanha).

There are also religious barriers that make political organization and mobilization difficult. “Partisan politics” are contradictory to the teachings of the religion, and members cannot participate in any political process considered to be such, nor can they “campaign for candidates, join political parties, or vote in blocs”. Therefore, many of them focus on effecting change on a local level, through neighborhood participation (Saldanha). All of these factors make it difficult for the Baha’i to truly be involved in the macro-level of Egyptian society, and many of their wishes or grievances therefore go unnoticed. I wanted to examine an article that dealt with the Baha’i population, but my search yielded no results. I think the absence of such an article is highly significant. Apparently the Baha’i are not considered relevant to mainstream society, because there is nearly no discussion of the problems that they face.

Egyptian Women

Women however, received extensive coverage with regard to the revolution; there are numerous personal stories of women who participated in the revolution. Two of the most well-known figures of the revolution were Asmaa Mahfouz and Dalia Ziada.

Mahfouz, the young woman mentioned earlier as the one responsible for the January 25th video, has a unique position in the revolution in that she was essentially one of its original driving forces. On January 18th, she posted her first video, calling for Egyptians to uphold their honor and dignity, and to gather against the police and protest instead of self-immolation or other forms of public suicide (references to recent incidents of people setting themselves on fire). She challenged every man in Egypt to join her in Tahrir Square, and she stressed that as a woman, she would be there challenging the regime and demanding human rights (“Asmaa”). And then, the night before the revolution, she posted her best-known video. In the short video, she begins by saying January 25th is the day that everyone in Egypt has worked for, young and old, male and female. She states that tomorrow will not be a revolution, but the first peaceful step for change. Her emphasis on unity and a shared nationalist sentiment was noticeable in the video, and it seemed to resonate with the rest of Egypt (“Asmaa”). The video went viral, and many could not believe that it was a young woman who called for such action, who spurred the country into action.

The same holds true for Dalia Ziada. Best known for her blogging during the revolution, Ziada later ran as a candidate for moderate party Al-Adl, which has a young electoral base (Bohn). But her blog provided an on-the-ground look at what was unfolding in Tahrir Square from an Egyptian woman’s point of view. Granted, the Internet was blocked for several days, but her commentary and observation provided people around the world with a sense of the jubilation that seemed to hang so thick in the air during that revolutionary period (Ziada). Ziada also “founded the first partisan women’s organization in Egypt to promote political literacy and help empower qualified

women to run” (Bohn). Both Mahfouz and Ziada utilized social media as their platform for mobilization and calls of national unity and freedom to appeal to Egyptians: “It is a real upheaval of angry people who are fed up with government’s corruption and deteriorating economic situation” (Ziada, post from 2/3/11). And their stories of change in the political sphere are not one-time occurrences; at a recent conference, other women who have focused on social and economic empowerment came to discuss the methods and outcomes of their efforts (Bohn).

Politically, women won the right to vote and the right to run for election on June 23, 1956, and although the first women were appointed to the national assembly were in 1957, the first was not appointed to the Cabinet until 1962 (Martin). But socially, Egyptian women have the formidable task of changing the direction of deeply entrenched patriarchy in society. This patriarchy marginalizes Egyptian women because, like their Tunisian counterparts, it denies them the chance to speak for and/or represent themselves. An article in *Al-Masry Al-Youm* talked about several women running for representation on their parties’ lists. Although the woman have different stories of why they chose to run and they ran with different parties, all of them echoed the mantra of “freedom and change”, and believed that the elections would turn over a new leaf for Egyptian society (Abdelhamid). This article is interesting; it provides a reminder that while the assumption from Western media may be that liberal politics and feminism are guiding the hand of Egyptian women (who are fighting their patriarchal societies) in a post-revolution atmosphere, there are women who are still fighting for conservative values and application as well, just in a different (political) context. Just because more women run

in and/or win elections does not directly translate to an assertion that feminism is gaining traction or the idea that all of those women necessarily support feminist ideals.

An article in *Al-Ahram* discussed the role of women in the revolution and with that, some of the possibilities for their roles in the future. One of the focal points for Egyptian women, both in terms of what it was during the revolution and what it should be now, is combating the perception of what feminism is on a societal level. State-sponsored feminism has not helped the public idea what feminism is, and along with a lack of awareness and a disjoint direction for where women's rights should be have not helped either. The "vision for gender justice and women's rights also needs to be challenged and re-imagined so as to capture people's attention and to develop meaningful initiatives and interventions" (Sholkamy). This sentence is worded too well to change; it encapsulates the struggle that women now face in changing the mindset of a historically patriarchal society that finds itself rediscovering and redefining its own dynamism and role. The article mentions the revitalization of the women's movement after a woman named Samira Ibrahim won her case against army officers who allegedly subjected her to "virginity tests" (Sholkamy). In March 2011, seventeen protestors were submitted to forced vaginal exams and beatings at the hands of army officers. The fact that Ibrahim took on her assailants has brought hope to some, and skepticism and assertions of placating public outrage to others (Wilson). Ibrahim claimed that she, along with other women, was detained during a protest and then tortured, beaten, stripped naked, and vaginally examined during the course of her detainment. The army denied the claim in the beginning, but later admitted some measure of wrongdoing by stating they had been trying to prevent soldiers from being deemed rapists (Flock). Ibrahim took her case to

court and a tribunal punished some of the guilty parties. But other convictions were overturned, and now Ibrahim vows to make sure they are punished, whether by national or international law (Flock). This is an important litmus test for Egypt, because it reveals not only the strength and transparency (in terms of equality) of its legal system in the new era, but it also reveals the extent to which women have a voice to share and receive retribution for any wrongdoings in the new society.

With that, the less tangible effects of the revolution, such as the perceptions of the majority as a whole, have yet to shift. While there seems to be space in the public discourse for discussing women's rights and problems of harassment, it is another thing for legal standards and decisions to support and validate that discourse and truly usher in a new Egypt for women. There was an article in *Al-Ahram* that talked about the relative absence of women in historical texts, and how they have been considered largely absent from political participation. This is essential to my argument; it shows that although women contribute to important historical events, they are marginalized in later representations of that very event, and as the issue of patriarchy persists, they are even marginalized in the subsequent reconstruction of their society. The article also included a brief analysis of several important events in Egyptian history, all of which are framed by a young woman draped in the Egyptian flag, presumably from the recent revolution (Al-Jandy). The choice of a picture with a young woman seemingly sends a dual message to youth and females, one that says that they will be included and considered in the history of this new Egypt.

However, as discussed in earlier sections, post-revolutionary populations and governments have various reasons for the exclusion of minority groups in favor of

creating a cohesive national identity. Tunisia and Egypt have different histories and levels of recognition with regard to their specific minority groups, but as the next chapter will explore, the political outcomes of and governmental responses to diverse, inclusive revolutions do not always yield results as idyllic as the aforementioned picture.

V.

Political Outcomes, Changes, and Analysis

Le sang pur du martyr Mohamed Bouazizi,

(The pure blood of the martyr Mohamed Bouazizi)

A fait déborder la coupe, déjà, dégoulinante,

(The cup has already overflowed, dripping)

Sans crier garde, avec brio, intelligence et se dépassant de courage,

(Without warning, with verve, intelligence, and beyond courage)

Comme un volcan, un souffle, gigantesque, de colère sans haine,

(Like a volcano, a breath, gigantic, of anger without hatred)

Emporta l'innommable personnage et son régime,

(Took out the unspeakable character and his regime)

Ralluma au passage le flambeau de la liberté à jamais éteint,

(Rekindled the passage of the never extinguished torch to liberty)

De tous les peuples de la région qui ont salués dans la joie,

(Of all the people who have greeted with joy)

Le passage de cette inattendue comète de la liberté.

(The passage of this unexpected comet for liberty)

Le combat héroïque des tunisiennes et Tunisiens est notre.

(The heroic struggle of the Tunisians-female and male- is ours)

-Rosier Belda (my translation)-²

² This is a selected excerpt from the poem "La comète tunisienne" (The Tunisian Comet); parts of it have been omitted.

After the revolutions technically concluded, electoral and legislative processes like elections and constitutional reforms became the next important undertakings. These processes were important indicators of the direction that each country wanted its new government to represent. And for minority groups, it was a chance to improve their respective situations as well. This chapter focuses on the political decisions and changes that the interim or new governments have made that speak to official considerations of minority position and either empower or marginalize those groups.

Tunisian Elections and Reforms

Since the Tunisian revolution, things have been shakily functioning. The Tunisian parliament was suspended in January 2011, directly after the January 14, 2011 displacement of Ben Ali and his party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD). The RCD, as one of the few legitimate parties and undoubtedly the only one with a chance of winning, was no longer the only option. In fact, as of August 2011, the electoral authorities counted over a hundred registered political parties, a marked contrast from the period of Ben Ali's rule, in which less than a dozen were permitted, none of which had even a remote chance of seizing power. The revolution called for "political reform" as its main point, and in recent months, Tunisia and its people have attempted to rise to that challenge ("Background Note: Tunisia"). But the question still remains: how will this newfound 'political reform' shape up for Tunisia's minority communities, and how have those communities ensured that their needs and priorities do not fall to the back of the majority's minds? Looking at the chosen forms of media, many of the articles in *As-Sabaah* seemed to be individual pieces on how to better society, especially in an environment with a new government, and the local sources undoubtedly focused more on

unity and less on ethnic/gender divisions. Given the discussion with regard to nationalism's power in nation-building throughout this thesis, this is not surprising. A refusal to acknowledge difference can make things worse and ignore the plights of disadvantaged communities, but at the same time, it is also notable that no specific group is being singled out or attacked.

The election following the unrest was comparably free from scandal, in that, unlike Egypt, there were no major contestations or accusations. In terms of gender, male and female candidates were supposed to alternate on party lists, because like the United Kingdom, the party, not the candidate, runs for office. An "independent electoral commission" implemented the first attempt at gender equality prior to the elections by changing party requirements (Bessis). This new mandate stated that half of the representatives on party lists had to be women, but less than six percent of those lists were actually headed by women, so some people viewed the change with skepticism. It varied from party to party, and each party had its pros and cons. The PDP (the secular party) had three lists headed by women, leading some to say that the women in the party did not seek leadership roles. The Modern Democratic Axis however, applied the law with a stringent interpretation, and half of their lists were headed by women, but they ran into difficulties in the conservative interior of the country (Schemm and Ben Bouazza).

Moderate party Ennahda looked to regain its former eminence, but it, like most of the newly reinstated political machines, had to tread a careful line between secular and moderate forces (Mitchell). This line had implications for women as a whole as well. Some parties made an effort to communicate with women, while others did not. Ennahda, however, took a particular focus on the female voting populace this time

around, and they modernized that focus to fit into a social media forum as well, focusing on the younger population (Howard). It does not seem that any real effort was made to reach out to the Berber community. I argue this lack of outreach signified two things: 1) Berbers are not numerically significant enough or prominent enough to warrant such political courtship and 2) calling attention to an ethnically distinct group could compromise the image of the new Tunisia that politicians want to promote, especially given the Berbers' socioeconomic situations. Again, marginalization of the Berber community took the form of neglectful disregard by the majority and the Tunisian government.

The elections on October 23, 2011 were expected to bring about a 218-seat constituent assembly, and that assembly would create both a constitution and an interim government ("Background Note: Tunisia"). After the election, Ennahda was the winner, with a 40 percent plurality, marking a shift toward a moderate approach to Tunisian politics. The party assured the populace that they will uphold the Personal Status Code, which is considered an important piece of progressive legislation relative to other countries in the region, but there is still speculation that the party practices different brands of politics for the wealthy and the less affluent, and there has been worry on the left about appeasement of Islamist factions (Loftus). I believe both concerns would undoubtedly affect the Berber community; most are not wealthy, and Islamists could emphasize the Arab identity of Tunisia if granted power. And women could lose the political gains and/or the Personal Status Code that they have grown accustomed to in past decades. A completely new constitution will not be created until April 2013, and general elections are expected to be held in the summer, so the real litmus test will not

only be the interim between now and the upcoming elections, but the choice that Tunisians make this summer and whether or not that choice is truly theirs (AFP).

In terms of relevance to my original argument, two things must be said. Berbers and women played active roles in the revolutions, but the gains for each are vastly different. Berbers now have more freedom to organize and voice their opinion, but they have not yet acquired any distinct political or social recognition, which is not surprising given the short amount of time. They remain trapped in post-colonial considerations of what it means to be Tunisian, and the nationalism that has driven this passion for defining and creating a newfound Tunisia has largely ignored them. However, the revolution certainly opened space for them to air their grievances, which is the same for women and their organizations. But the change for women is uncertain; while efforts were made to promote equality in the political sphere, there is still a difficult reality. Social and economic factors require changes of perception, and the maintenance of the Personal Status Code is not set in stone. Their marginalization is found in the form of a government that, while attentive during the election cycle, may not continue to uphold the issues important to them.

Media and Other Frameworks

There are numerous situations that have been discussed as possibilities for Tunisia in the coming future. Arguably, it has been the most successful of the revolutions, and with the current level of stability in the country, many observers predict an increased focus on democracy and associated ideals will be key for the governments and the citizenry in the coming years (Keiswetter). But minorities face a parallel battle, in that they must assert their rights as both Tunisians and members of a minority community.

An article in *Le Temps*, titled “For the Equality of Every Tunisian Under the Law”, and interestingly enough, written by a woman, talked about how the extreme right has plagued Europe, the United States, Afghanistan, Iran, and numerous other countries, and how Tunisia cannot afford to let that happen. However, she also acknowledged that countries like France and the United States have laws so that minorities cannot be discriminated against, and with that, Tunisia must acknowledge its diversity and redefine itself both socially and legally (Ghrab). I found this one interesting because it was the only article that directly acknowledged minority populations and the concept of laws ensuring marginalization in the form of discrimination is illegal, and the author argues for recognition and protection for those groups. Another article in *Le Temps*, written about a month after the revolution, laid out eight incontrovertible social and economic points that must be realized in the new Tunisia. One of these is removing all barriers or forms of discrimination, which the authors placed in the category of human rights (Chebbahi and Ferjani). This goes along with the previous one, because it asserted minority protection as a human right. Although Tunisia’s majority does not often acknowledge its ethnic minorities by name, these calls for universal human rights could prove useful in the empowerment of Berbers.

The media is an important force in this battle, because their attempts to publicize and subsequently rectify minority situations will be necessary to ensure they do not get lost in the still-unfolding shuffle. Tunisia remains an important force in the region, especially with regard to women’s rights and issues. And the country has long maintained good relations with both Europe and the United States, which would indicate the recent alleviation of popular discontent may strengthen Tunisia’s position even more

in “Western” eyes (“Background Note: Tunisia”). Two articles in *As-Sabaah* talk about this perception. The first talked about the revolution in a general sense and states that in a global sense, Tunisia has much to do before it can be considered a democracy (Al-Yousefi). This was interesting because it considered the country as a whole, and did not call attention to any subsets, which was what I found in most articles that I looked at. The second discussed the revolution as a means of establishing the justice and human rights that the Tunisian people desire. It stated that the West has a negative image of Tunisia, but that as one of the most tolerant and moderate countries in the region, there is no reason for such a stereotype (At-Tawiiir). The fact tolerance is so emphasized in this article is relevant, because it is almost as though the author either disregards national policies and considerations of ethnic minorities, or they do not consider them relevant to the tolerance discussion. And this article brings up the interesting aforementioned point: the role of human rights discourse in framing and understanding these revolutions.

As an example, CEDAW, which I discussed earlier, was established by the United Nations. The framework that the U.N. establishes as a means of defining human rights tends to be viewed through Western lens, and the framework may not always be applicable in every country’s situation. The argument that human rights discourse exists in a Western-imposed sphere and functions as a form of neo-colonialism comes into play in this discussion (Schulze et al. 11). It is interesting how, according to the article, “the West” sets a standard for human rights based on its own characteristics but then judges other countries and other contexts based on that standard. This sets “the West” firmly above other countries, and reiterates a colonial dynamic in terms of power structures. Whether this dynamic ultimately holds or not is another matter. Tunisians assert that the

“current political landscape is by no means final or non-negotiable”, so changes will undoubtedly be dynamic and fluid, just as the people wish it (Parker). Although they may have freed themselves from the overarching remnants of colonialism, it is now necessary to examine the issues within the country that continue to reproduce that dynamic on a smaller scale.

Egyptian Elections and Reforms

Unlike Tunisia, which progressed from revolution to interim government with no real hiccups, Egypt’s interim construction and governance were rife with complications. After Mubarak was removed, a transitional council headed by the military took control of the country until elections could be held in summer 2012. The two main players in the election were the Muslim Brotherhood (Mohamed Morsi) and the opposing candidate, Ahmed Shafik, who some considered to be too closely allied to the military and Mubarak’s era (“Egypt News”). Initially there were some disputes over who had actually won the election, but in late June 2012, Morsi was named the final winner. In the elections, Egypt also utilized a quota system, which set aside 64 seats for women in the People’s Assembly. 380 women ran for these seats, but it was a dual-edged sword, because they faced stiff traditional resistance, and even resistance from women who are accustomed to the patriarchal society (Hill). I posit the reproduction of patriarchal mentalities as one of the biggest factors contributing to female marginalization in the Egyptian political sphere, something the elections seemingly emphasized.

Egyptian women must not only appeal to the male hierarchy, but to women comfortable with that hierarchy as well. This is a process that will take involvement and activism, but also a rediscovery of roles. An article in *Al-Ahram*, written a little over a

week after Mubarak's resignation in February 2011 by respected author and activist Nawal El-Sadaawi, talked about the importance of having both women and youth represented in the writing of a new constitution. She acknowledged some of the problems they face, like money and perceptions, but also stressed the importance of "individual and collective responsibility" and says that it is up to everyone to make sure these changes last (El-Sadaawi). This is seemingly congruent with the tone during the revolution; individual initiative cannot be tampered by anyone, whether the Muslim Brotherhood or another party. Although it challenges concepts of marginalization during the nation-building process, it does not mention Copts as essential to that process, something that I argue is key to not only stave off an exclusionary definition of Egyptian nationalism but to counter any possible tactics of marginalization or discrimination on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood as well.

A concern prior to the elections was how big a role the Muslim Brotherhood would play in the election, because the group does not view equality for all Egyptian citizens as an essential point. The Brotherhood's policy of "conditional" tolerance only extends to Copts when their actions are within range of acceptable for the Brotherhood, and exclusion and excuses for attacks on the minority community seem to be tethered to that policy (Van Doorn-Harder). Van Doorn-Harder goes on to define this conditional tolerance as not necessarily practices of outward discrimination, but more of a method of blaming the Coptic population when they fall victim to random acts of violence. Copts are strongly constructed as the "other", even in school textbooks, so the violent acts that befall them are viewed as retribution for passing some imaginary safety level that is unacceptable to the rest of society, such as an increase in their social or political power or

any Coptic reflection of the ever-increasing tension between the communities (Van Doorn-Harder). This “othering” is a prime example of my argument, and as scapegoats for unwanted events or occurrences, it sets the Coptic community as second-class Egyptians, marginalization in its purest and most obvious form.

Media and Other Considerations

In *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, there was a video in which several Copts discussed what they thought about the aftermath of the revolution, in terms of some in their community seeking asylum elsewhere, and others carefully watching the actions of Islamist groups. Posted in January 2012, the interviewed people also echo the ideas of possibility, with some expressing more positive outlooks than others (Joseph). The idea that Copts are living in fear of the Muslim Brotherhood was repeated by some in that video, but others also stressed points of unity as Egyptians, and the fact that the newspaper is giving voice to that fear and the minority group’s concerns is also important to consider. This reiterates one of the earliest points I made in this thesis: minorities embody the same loyalty to their countries, regardless of how the majority tries to construct them as outsiders. But as an article in *Al-Ahram* discussed, there is also a rising debate over whether this is a religious or civil problem, a topic that will undoubtedly set the tone of future discourse on the subject (Al-Sirjani). Delineations of discourse are being restructured as the country seeks to rebuild its system and government, and where to position debates over minority issues and discrimination is a question that will establish the space for and tone of future reforms. Another article in the same paper does not position that debate as particularly important; the self-described non-Copt author called for “an Egypt for all Egyptians” under Morsi. The anger and hatred that some people

have for Copts is misplaced, he says; they all share the same homeland (Al-Razilaharb). While admirable, sentiments like this are also simplistic in their denial of the intricacies of this new era.

Although some downplay the relevance of the Brotherhood, the party is proving its strength. They managed to win over the population and secure a spot with Morsi chairing the new representative party and now the Egyptian government; now it is just a matter of how they choose to balance being both a socially relevant and politically dominant organization. Morsi's presidency is one already marked by controversy; many feel as though he did not start off particularly well and his actions prove that democracy will be little more than a fleeting hope. After the decree stating that the president could supersede judicial decisions was implemented, Egypt seemed poised to head down the same path of authoritarianism. This unpopular decree brought activists to Tahrir Square once again ("Egypt News). And less than a month later, yet another spate of battles would break out, this time over a different issue, and the battles would ultimately cause six casualties. In December 2012, a draft of the constitution called for

“...the end of Egypt's all-powerful presidency, a stronger Parliament and provisions against torture or detention without trial... it would also give Egypt's generals much of the power and privilege they had during the Mubarak era and would reject the demands of ultraconservative Salafis...”(Egypt News).

The constitution was meant as a compromise, but the battles over its implementation would be especially problematic, and Morsi had to deploy tanks to contain the situation. The document was viewed as being too vague; it does not address protection concerns of religious minorities or women ("Egypt News"). It does state that believers in the “three”

Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) are free to worship, but it continues to exclude others and does not specifically address equality or legal response to discrimination. The vagueness of the constitution is the main point of contention, and some Egyptians believe conservative judges can use the ambiguous and indefinite wording to punish people who do things that contradict their personal beliefs (“Egypt News”). In January 2013, rioting broke out on the anniversary of the 2011 revolutions after 21 people were sentenced to death for their roles in inciting a riot at a soccer game. The protests rage on, and numerous protestors have already been detained for their parts in the unrest, an especially unpopular move.

For Egypt, the prospects are even less certain than those for Tunisia. Protests continue to embroil parts of the country, and the government is not as popular as it was after the revolution. Coptic Christians are in an uneasy situation; the revolution has not exactly furthered their standing. The authoritarian nature of Mubarak’s regime may have quelled some of the discrimination, but the Muslim Brotherhood is not exactly what many envisioned for the new Egypt. The Baha’i have not seen a change in their situation, which is not especially surprising given their religious limitations. And women have not reaped the benefits of the idealized revolution either; the recent constitution did not include much in the form of substantial change. The revolution has not yet provided tangible benefits for these groups, but as protests continue, Egypt will ultimately be reshaped or find itself repeating history under the thumb of an oppressive, militarized government. The military still remains as a formidable and unpredictable force, one that will undoubtedly be relevant in Egyptian society for years to come (Wilson). An article written in June 2012 talked about the revolution as a product of the people and did not

differentiate between those people. The author also talks about what he calls the “arrogance” of the military and how the people must resist the incursion of the army into politics (Waji). This one is interesting because it stresses unity, but chooses to separate the goals of the people from the military, which positions the military as the main aggressor, or the main antagonist, and not a specific societal group. The military is not a popular topic in some circles of Egyptian society, and the use of force by the current president is something that could determine his popularity, his standing, and eventually, his legacy.

As discussed in the earlier section, the aftermath of the revolution was hectic and the future seemed unfortunately unpredictable. Egypt will undoubtedly have to construct and position itself within its new understanding of its people and its future, and move from there. Some people feel as though Morsi is deviating from the democracy they fought so hard for; his promises of female and Coptic representation are falling on deaf ears as he continues to kowtow to the hardliners in the Muslim Brotherhood. And as Bengio and Ben-Dor stated,

“No matter how it is defined... transition will threaten non-Muslims in Egypt. It will inevitably introduce legislation based on the Islamic heritage, at the expense of the universal elements of the modern nation nation-state, which are more accommodating as far as minorities are concerned” (Bengio and Ben-Dor 16).

An eerie reiteration of earlier discussions, definitions of nationalism will prove key in both Tunisia and Egypt; minorities must contribute to those definitions to end the marginalization. Their contributions as patriotic members of the same countries can lead

to not only a broader conceptualization of nationalist understanding, but a more egalitarian approach to notions of minority citizenship as well.

VI.

Conclusion

Minorities are often relegated to the footnotes of the book or the margins of the page, at least in a figurative sense. And North African countries were often relegated to the whims and desires of colonial and/or capitalist powers, at least in a historical sense. There is no doubt that both Tunisia and Egypt face significant obstacles in terms of forging the new paths that the protestors and revolutionaries of this past year set out to create. These revolutions were not spontaneous; an amalgamation of factors and circumstances led the people to their breaking points, both in Tunisia and Egypt. The tension that was mentioned at the beginning of this thesis is one that undoubtedly colored the analysis of both Tunisia and Egypt, but I do not view it as a fallacy; it merely proved the difficulties of undertaking a substantively comparative analysis of two distinct countries with situations that are far more dissimilar than they may seem on the surface. But throughout this thesis, I have presented and argued the facts and the possibilities of marginalizing Berbers, Coptic Christians, and women in various ways and the reasoning for that marginalization, as well as the communities' responses to that marginalization.

As discussed, the Berbers face distinct challenges in that they are fighting not only as an ethnic group, but as a distinct cultural group as well. There is seemingly a tension between Tunisian and Berber identities, and due to that, Berbers must act in dual spheres; they not only have to focus on national pushes for recognition, but on community cohesion and definition as well. And Copts and Baha'i face an uphill battle as well. With the former busy combating the effects of ignorance perpetrated in the name of their community and the latter bound by specific rules, they are both in especially

difficult positions at the moment. Women are the least disadvantaged of all of the groups, but their main obstacle continues to lie in matters of perception and societal acceptance. In the more traditional, staunchly conservative areas, there continues to be a deeply entrenched patriarchy, and women will need far more than revolutionary fervor to combat those ideas.

In terms of wider implications for foreign relations, there are several stages at play. On local and national levels, the people of both countries have proved that they will not tolerate a system in which their wishes are disrespected or disregarded. The political elites will have to accommodate the majority, at least to an extent, but the minority groups face the very real possibility of being forgotten yet again. On a regional level, any perceived submission to the Coptic community could be problematic for Egypt, and they face a much more difficult battle than Tunisia because of that.

I do believe that, aside from the factionalism that it creates and engenders, nationalism can provide constructive reinforcement in terms of community belonging and identification for a group of people. The problems lie in definition and practice, especially for minorities. The idea that a group can struggle to overthrow an authoritarian regime that has held power for decades alongside the rest of their countrymen and then subsequently be relegated to a second-class position or secondary consideration is troubling, to say the least. It is a pattern that is not restricted to either Tunisia or Egypt, which is something that I hope this thesis reiterated as well. But in contemporary times, nation-building as a dichotomous, exclusionary process is an obstacle for the Arab Spring countries, looking to set themselves apart from the past decades under dictatorships, and that is oddly reminiscent of past historical times. This

time however, minority groups must insert themselves into the national conversations and definitions like never before to ensure that history does in fact not repeat itself.

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