

## Reconsideration of the Structure of the ‘Arab Spring’: the Middle Way’s Inevitability, Vulnerability and Absorbability

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### Introduction

In December 2010, people all over the world witnessed numerous angry citizens protesting on the street in Tunis, who subsequently overthrew the authoritarian regime led by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. That was the start of the ‘Arab Spring’, in which some authoritarian rulers disappeared, and new regimes were founded in the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Just as Anderson pointed out, there were some patterns within transitions in MENA countries<sup>1</sup>. In Tunisia and Yemen, the people’s movements compelled the authoritarian rulers to exile themselves, and they successively established new regimes. In Egypt, although the protesters made President Hosni Mubarak leave his office, political power was handed over to the military force tentatively, and it practically presided with the transition thereafter. In Libya, as a result of the full scale internal war, Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi’s regime was replaced by the anti-governmental force led by the National Transitional Council. And in Morocco, the citizen’s demonstration compelled King Hassan II to introduce a new constitution allowing the People’s Assembly to elect a prime minister with substantial administrative powers. One may say that these differences between them were decided by the historical background of each country, and, at the same time, would regulate their courses after the ‘Spring.’

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Anderson (2011) “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” *Foreign Affairs*, 90(3), pp.2-7.

On the other hand, it is also certain that the ‘Spring’ brought a collapse of the existing authoritarian regimes in a lot of countries. However, it is too optimistic to suppose that this series of transitions would be a one-way stream. In world history, there have been a lot of examples in which a new authoritarian ruler appeared after the defeat of an old one, like Gaddafi’s revolution in 1969, in which King Idris was expelled. In brief, it is hard to deny the possibility of a rebound in the ‘Spring’.

In addition to this, establishment of parliamentarianism and implementation of elections does not necessarily mean consolidation of democracy. In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), it is not a rare case that the rulers’ arbitrarily use their powers or the violence and the harassment against anti-government forces persists even after the transitions from one-party system or military regime to multi-party system in the 1990s. SSA countries’ experiences show the possibility that authoritarian rules can survive after the foundation of a democratic regime composed by periodical elections, multi-party system, constitutionalism, and so on<sup>2</sup>.

Taking this into account, the next question now arises: can a series of transitions consolidate democracy in MENA countries? It is needless to say that we should continue to watch the situation of those countries in order to obtain the answer to this question. However, on the other hand, it is necessary to understand the structure of the transitions in order to grasp its significance, and to predict the results of the ‘Spring.’

From this view, we will consider the distinctiveness of the ‘Spring’ and its sustainability. First, we will begin by confirming the political and economic situations in MENA countries in the period prior to the ‘Spring’. Second, we will examine the cause of the ‘Spring’ in terms of three perspectives; the Islamic revival, the spread of the norm of democracy after the end of the Cold

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<sup>2</sup> Marina Ottaway (2002) *Democracy Challenged: the Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, Washington, D.C.; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

War, and the socio-economic frustration among the people. Based on these preparations, we will next consider the common feature of the transitions' path, and then focus on the concerns of instability after the 'Spring.' Finally, we will argue the possibility of the consolidation of democracy in MENA countries.

## **1.MENA before the 'Spring'**

### **1-1 MENA as a region which was far removed from liberal democracy**

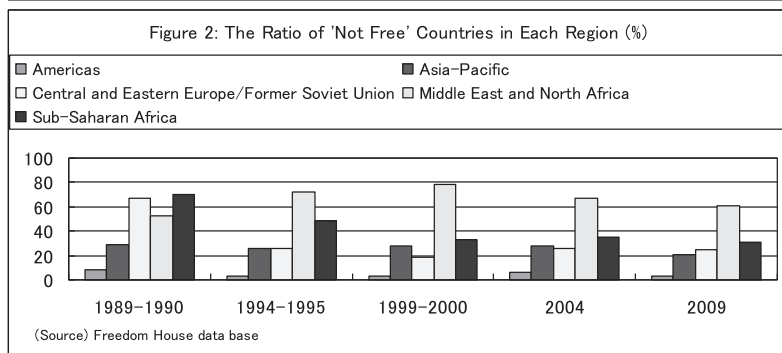
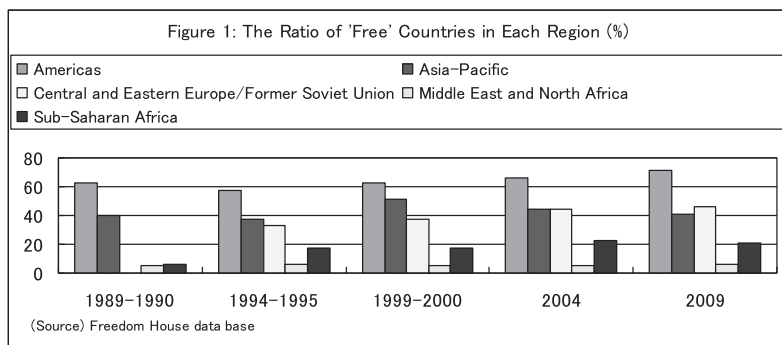
It is important to keep in mind that MENA was broadly evaluated as the least democratic region before the end of 2010. This kind of view was mainly from Western countries' intellectual or political circles, and the Freedom House's yearly score can be regarded as one of the representative evaluations. Figure 1 shows the Freedom House's score of the ratio of the numbers of countries evaluated as 'Free' in each region and Figure 2 shows the countries evaluated as 'Not Free'. We can see that MENA's score has generally been the worst for about twenty years.

There are critics against this kind of evaluation by the Western world. Harik criticised that the Freedom House's qualitative evaluation is so arbitrary as to focus on different levels in each countries, and asserted that it is heavily biased by 'Arab Exceptionalism'; 'the way the figures represent the status of democracy remain very problematic'<sup>3</sup>. It is hard to deny that evaluations from outside, represented by Freedom House's, are influenced by their subjective and arbitrary judgement more or less. Granting the imperfection of these indexed evaluations, however, what should be noted here is that there were few successful elections in MENA countries before 2010, and human rights' abuse was normalised there.

It is well known that elections with universal suffrage have never been carried out in the Gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates, and they

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<sup>3</sup> Iliya Harik (2006) "Democracy, 'Arab Exceptionalism,' and Social Science," *Middle East Journal*, 60(4), pp.664-684.



have been ruled by absolute monarchies<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, in Morocco, King Hassan II gripped the power to elect the prime minister and to control the military force until 2012. In Egypt or Syria, although there were elections under the Republic, it was almost impossible to implement them competitively and transparently, because of the normalised emergency decrees which justified detaining or suppressing opponents against the governments. In Gaddafi's Libya, even the concept of the State was denied, and the people were censored daily under the Jamahiriya regime, a kind of direct democracy. Even in Tunisia or Jordan, countries with comparatively moderate rule, political parties'

<sup>4</sup> In Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah granted women the right to vote and run in local elections in September 2011. This decree will first be applied to the 2015 election of the Shura Council, the advisory district council. One may say that the 'Spring' influenced King Abdullah's decision to a certain extent.

activities were restricted, and the governments were inundated with nepotism and corruption. In short, apart from the scored evaluation against them, one may say that almost all MENA countries except for Israel and Turkey were far apart from party politics and parliamentarianism before the 'Spring'.

## 1-2 The distribution of material interests and the political inactivity

This situation could be mainly explained by two reasons; 'rentier-economy' and the foreign powers' connivance. First, we will consider the former below.

It has been confirmed that almost 70% of the world's petroleum is buried in MENA. Although the control and the interests of the oil ponds in this region was gripped by Western companies, particularly the Majors, so to speak, the governments of MENA countries took the plunge to nationalisation in the mid-1970s. Despite being triggered by the Fourth Arab-Israeli War (Yom Kippur War / Ramadan War), this movement was back-grounded by the sharpened North-South problem in the Congress of the United Nations and the rising of resource nationalism in developing countries. Either way, as a result, most of the income from fossil fuel began to flow into the national treasuries of each government by the nationalisation of oil ponds, and that dramatically strengthened their fiscal ability. That enabled them to supply a lot of services for the people's well-being in the shape of spreading education or medical services, electrification, tax exemption, and so on. Moreover, the expansion of public service and the construction of infrastructure gave birth to huge employment opportunities.

The capability to satisfy the people materially, however, has also had an aspect to justify the rule by the existing authoritarian regimes. In Saudi Arabia, the biggest exporter of petroleum in the world, although a lot of plans to overthrow the Saud were exposed before the mid-1970, rebellions against the existing regime have generally subsided, except for radical Islamists' terror, since the nationalisation of the oil industry. In other words, one may say that the

people accepted the authoritarian rule because of their material satisfaction. In the small or middle size oil-producing or even non-oil-producing countries, the people have been able to access the fruit of the extraction industry through migration to the Gulf countries, remittance from them, and so on. The distribution of the huge benefits of fossil fuels made the people's political dissatisfaction moderate in MENA countries, more or less, and that is one of the factors which enabled the authoritarian regime to survive<sup>5</sup>.

### 1-3 International connivance to the authoritarian regimes

In addition to the rentier-economy, we must draw attention to the international circumstance as a factor to have restricted democratisation of MENA countries. Just as that was symbolised by the term the 'End of History' by Francis Fukuyama, liberal democracy and market economy came to be regarded as the global standard by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries or developed countries in the 1990s<sup>6</sup>. As a result, they have explicitly required developing countries to employ not only economic deregulation, but also democratisation and the protection of human rights. However, despite their discipline, there were countries or regions which faced strict demands from DAC countries, and others that did not.

Amongst these, the former were represented by SSA countries. In the early 1990s, the governments of SSA countries were exposed to the pressure of the DAC countries, not only with bilateral aid, but also multilateral loans like the Structural Adjustment Programme by the IMF and the World Bank, or Breton-Woods Institutions (BWIs). Although BWIs have regarded themselves as non-political institutions, they were main credit suppliers for SSA, and often use their loans politically, like IMF's freezing of financial loans to Zaire in 1991, shortly

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<sup>5</sup> David S. Sorenson (2011) "Transitions in the Arab World: Spring or Fall?," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Fall), pp.22-49.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Fukuyama (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*, Illinois; Free Press.

after protesting university students were oppressed and killed. Therefore, it was a natural reaction that the governments of SSA countries needed to pay attention to BWIs and DAC countries' will seriously. It is noteworthy to point out that the number of SSA countries with multi-party systems rapidly increased during the early 1990s; from eight in 1989 to thirty five in 1995. We can see that DAC countries easily pressed SSA countries to carry out democratisation because of the latter's vulnerability against donors.

On the contrary, DAC countries, particularly the US, did not substantially seek or force MENA countries democratisation, but refrained from it. Although the US propelled MENA countries' democratisation based on the Middle East Partnership Initiative (2002) and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Partnership Initiative (2004) in parallel with the War on Terror, their attitudes toward authoritarian regimes in this region were generally quiet, despite their seeming hard-line stance. In its first presidential election in Egypt in 2005, a lot of harassment or attacks against the opposition candidates or their supporters by police and the pro-governmental crowd took place<sup>7</sup>. However, all of the DAC countries finally evaluated the election as 'free and fair' in general, and congratulated President Mubarak, who led the National Democratic Party. This contrasts their uncompromising accusation against President Robert Mugabe and Zimbabwe's presidential election in 2002 and 2008.

The difference of DAC countries' attitude can be mainly explained by two reasons; natural resources and security. Out of these, resources are a critical factor with which DAC countries decide their approaches to the objective, and they tend to refrain from interfering with the resource-rich countries' internal issues, as far as they will not be clearly opposed to the world order centred by Western countries, like Gaddafi's Libya or Iran. We can find their permissive

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<sup>7</sup> *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series (ARB)* (September 1<sup>st</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> 2005), 42(9), Blackwell Publishing Inc., pp.16348-16349.

attitudes toward pro-Western oligarchies of resource-rich countries not only in MENA, but also in SSA, like Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Chad, and so on.

Secondly, regardless of the presence or absence of oil ponds, it is hard to deny that their sense of caution against the spread of extremism has compelled the governments of Western countries to connive with the secular or moderate Islamic authoritarian rules in MENA. As we will consider the details in the next section, the governments of MENA countries have oppressed Islamists forcefully as anti-social groups or terrorists. In the sight of the governments of Western countries, the authoritarian rulers in MENA were a kind of sentinel against the threat of the spread of radical Islamism in terms of not only the Global War on Terror, but also the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, it is possible to understand Western countries' reaction toward the election of Egypt in 2005, because Mubarak's main target was the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which was one of the oldest Islamist groups, and substantially took part in the election despite being illegal.

It follows from what has been said that authoritarian regimes in MENA were internally based on the distribution of the income from fossil fuel, and internationally connived by the foreign power's interests in resources and security. However, that does not mean that there weren't any movements which sought liberty or democracy in MENA before the 'Spring'.

## **2. Islam and democracy**

### **2-1 Islamic revival as an antithesis against the existing authoritarian regimes**

The relationship between Islam and democracy is a very debatable issue. On the one hand, there are arguments which regard Islam as a religion restricting individual's rights, and emphasise the heterogeneity between them. This stand point is collectively referred to as 'Islamic Essentialism' or 'Arab Exceptionalism', and is pessimistic to democratisation in MENA countries due to the cultural



difference from Western countries. Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' is basically based on this view<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, there are insurances that emphasise the affinity between Islam and democracy. According to Esposito and Voll, equality between people is originally respected, and opposing is recognised in Islamic values<sup>9</sup>. From this perspective, they insisted that Islam includes the same essences as the idea of democracy.

I am incompetent to discuss the heterogeneity or the affinity between them in the dimension of philosophy or theory. What is important, however, is that Islam has been a critical centripetal force for the political movements in MENA since the mid-1970s. We should notice that most political movements in MENA were something secular, or at least sympathised with modernisation, until the 1970s, and Arab Nationalism appealed by Gamal Abdel Nasser was the representative ideology. However, secular Arab Nationalism's centripetal force was declined after Arab's defeat in the Third Arab-Israeli War (the Six-Day War / the June War) in 1967, Nasser's death in 1970, and the Camp David Agreement in 1978. The ideological vacuum was followed by the Islamic revival, which was the rebound of the former secularisation, like the Iranian Revolution against the absolute monarchy (1979), the gathering of the voluntary Muslim's soldier, Mujahedin, to Afghanistan against the invasion of the USSR (1979), and the assassination of Muhammad Anwar El Sadat, who gave priority to Egypt's national interests rather than the ideal of Arab Nationalism, by a military personnel belonging to al-Jihad (later renamed the Egyptian Islamic Jihad), which separated from the MB (1981). In sum, the Islamic revival took place in the context of protesting against secular authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (2011) *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order*, Illinois: Free Press.

<sup>9</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll (1996) *Islam and Democracy*, London: Oxford Univ. Press, chap.1.

## 2-2 The encounter of Islamism and democracy

The Islamic revival, however, did not necessarily create political movements requiring democratisation until the end of the 1980s. In those days, although most Islamist groups were involved in violent activities or welfare activities like relief for the poor, there were few remarkable movements seeking political participation in the civilian way or elections. One may say that the turning point, which changed the current thought, was the end of the Cold War.

Even if it was moderate compared with the other regions, MENA countries, more or less, were not far apart from the international plate tectonics after 1989; the spread of the norm of democracy and human rights. In this circumstance, political parties appealing Islamic values came to take part in elections in some countries, particularly in small countries without oil-rich economies. For example, in Jordan, the MB obtained 22 seats out of 80 in the general election in 1989, and in Yemen, al-Islah became the second largest party as the result of the parliamentary election in 1993. These examples may account for both the spread of Islamism and the sprouting of Islamist groups' direction to peaceful political activities in those days.

Yet this trend was oppressed not only by oil-rich monarchies in GCC countries, but also by the governments in most of the MENA countries. Algeria was a notable example. In Algeria, President Chadli Bendjedid, who had faced the people's frustration about economic depression after the crash of oil prices in the mid-1980s, declared the amendment of the constitution in 1989, and carried out the first multi-party election in 1991. However, due to the victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF), an Islamist party, in the first round of the election, the military force respecting secularism intervened in the electoral process, cancelled the second round, and finally compelled Bendjedid to resign in 1992. The military junta thereafter banned religion-based political parties including the ISF, and as a result of a series of interventions, Algeria fell into a

vicious circle of the suppression by the government and the terror of the ISF.

This example well illustrates the caution against Islamist parties not only by MENA governors, but also by foreign powers; DAC countries basically accepted the cancelling of the electoral result by the military, and continued to supply foreign aid to Algeria the same as ever, despite using their ODA as a leverage to democratisation in SSA. In fact, although the total amount of ODA to Algeria from DAC countries decreased from 252 million dollars in 1992 to 188 million dollars in 1993, it increased to 285 million dollars in 1994<sup>10</sup>. It is entirely fair to say that DAC countries did not regard the cancelling of the electoral result in Algeria as a serious problem, even if they reacted a little negatively once.

In addition to this kind of DAC countries' double standard, it is well known that the Gulf War (1991) further worsened the feeling of the MENA public against DAC countries, and fuelled the activities of radical Islamist groups. In fact, Osama bin Laden accelerated his accusations against the government of Saudi Arabia, which agreed with the US to having a presence of troops in its country, and escalated anti-Western violent activities after the mid-1990s. Viewed in this light, one may say that the end of the Cold War not only promoted the moderate Islamist group's political participation in a peaceful way, but also brought the extremists' further radicalisation and MENA people's antipathy against Western countries as a result.

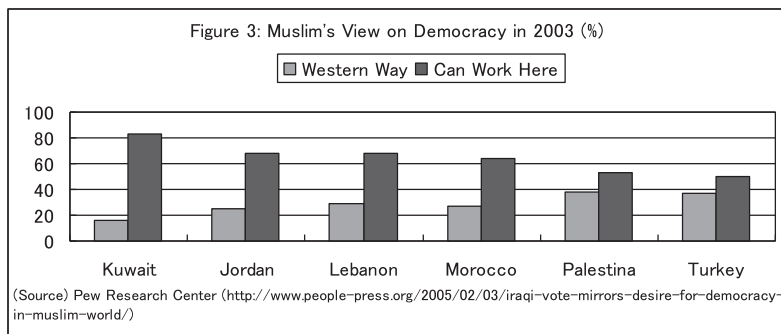
### 2-3 The spread of the norm of 'democracy'

The activation of the Islamic groups and the accumulation of anti-Western feelings in MENA, however, do not seem to be necessarily synonymous with the denying of the norm of democracy. Rather, there is empirical evidence that shows the spread of democratic ethos in MENA countries. Figure 3 shows Muslim's view of democracy in MENA countries in 2003. Granting that the

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, World Databank (<http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do>).

time of implementing the research by the Pew Research Center was after the Afghanistan War of 2001, these data are especially noteworthy, even if they are from limited countries; while there were differences between countries, more than half of the respondents answered ‘Democracy can work here’. In other words, the Islamic revival and antipathy toward Western countries, which particularly became prominent in the 1990s, have not constrained the spread of the norm of democracy in MENA.

Yet even if the majority of the public in MENA accepted the norm of ‘democracy’ and rejected the existing authoritarian regimes in the early 2000s, it is not clear what kind of regimes they preferred. Since the meaning of ‘democracy’ was not explicitly presented in the questionnaire of the Pew Research Center, respondents held room for judgement about it. While ‘democracy’ fundamentally represents the discipline of people’s participation to politics, one can safely state that it implicitly means ‘liberal democracy,’ at least in the developed countries. In other words, in the contemporary standard view of DAC countries, the concept of ‘democracy’ almost automatically includes respecting civil liberties, like the freedom of expression, the freedom of belief, the protection of private property, and so on. However, the notion of civil liberty has an aspect conflicting with Islamist’ values or Muslim’s custom, because it covers sensitive issues like gender equality, secularism, and so on. It is not certain whether the respondents were conscious of these points, or whether they grasped



'democracy' as the idea limited to purely political realm. Therefore, we should notice that the spread of the norm of 'democracy' does not necessarily mean the spread of expectation to found a regime which is based on liberal democracy as the people of DAC countries' image.

In addition to this, what is important is that the norm of democracy does not directly clarify the reason why the 'Spring' took place; why did it start suddenly from the end of 2010? The spread of the norm of democracy is not enough to explain this question. Namely, one may say that although the spread of the norm of 'democracy' might be a root cause of the 'Spring,' it was not an immediate cause of it. From this perspective, we need to expand our argument into socio-economic conditions, which ignited a series of transitions.

### **3.Socio-economic changes and the 'Spring'**

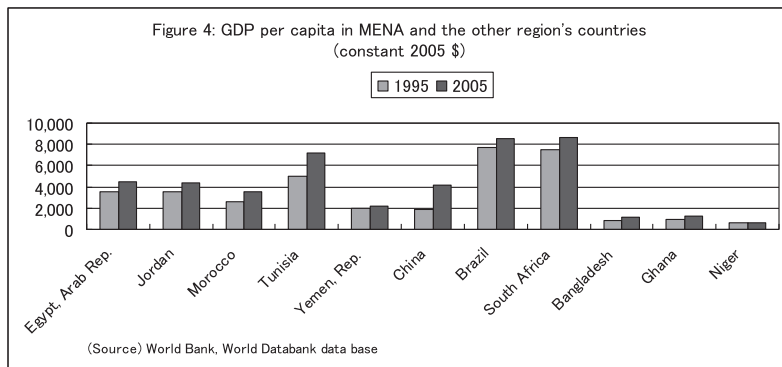
#### **3-1 The political upheaval in moderately wealthy and equal societies**

As Arendt pointed out, in humans' history, the penetration of poverty often motivated the huge political movement against the governments, like the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and so on<sup>11</sup>. The democratisation in Latin American countries in the 1970s was triggered by the economic depression and the mismanagement of the governments after the Oil Shock in 1974. One may say that dramatic political changes are influenced by the deterioration of the socio-economic situations, more or less.

Yet, regarding the 'Spring', we can find some data which seems to oppose this thought. Figure 4 shows the GDP per capita in MENA and the other region's countries. Nevertheless a lot of countries' data are uncertain due to the problem of those transparencies, we can see that average income of the people in MENA countries was not low compared with the other region's countries, and it grew at a moderate pace. On the other hand, from Table 1, which

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<sup>11</sup> Hannah Arendt (2006) *On Revolution (Revised)*, London: Penguin Classics, chap.2.



indicates the GINI index there, it is possible to confirm that the income gap within MENA was generally smaller than the other region's countries, although it worsened in a few countries from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. Besides these data, one may notice that there were a lot of protesters who belonged to the middle class, in particular university students, in the 'Spring'. These data and points seem to make it hard to explain MENA's transitions based solely on low-income.

However, what has to be noticed is that income level, which can be compared with the data across the countries, will not represent the degree of frustration of poverty among the people directly. Even if they are perceived by others to have a sufficient level of income in the other's sight, they may not be satisfied with their situation. The average income level of the protesters, who demanded to correct the

Table 1: GINI index in MENA and other region's countries		
Egypt, Arab Rep.	30 (1996)	32 (2005)
Jordan	43 (1992)	38 (2006)
Morocco	39 (1991)	41 (2007)
Tunisia	42 (1995)	41 (2005)
Yemen, Rep.	33 (1998)	38 (2005)
China	36 (1996)	42 (2005)
Brazil	60 (1995)	57 (2005)
South Africa	57 (1995)	67 (2006)
Bangladesh	33 (1996)	33 (2005)
Ghana	38 (1992)	43 (2006)
Niger	42 (1994)	44 (2005)

(Source) World Bank, World Databank data base

disparity and attempted to occupy Wall Street in 2011, would be much higher than the residents of rural areas in SSA, in which political protests merely took place. Namely, the level at which people will expose their frustration to poverty and disparity varies across society, and the ignition point is hugely influenced by the individual's evaluation based on the comparison with others. From this viewpoint, it seems reasonable to suppose that there were particular socio-economic changes, which fuelled the people's frustration against poverty and disparity in MENA countries before the end of 2010.

### 3-2 Socio-economic fuses and sparks of the 'Spring'

Let us look at the accumulation of the socio-economic frustration in MENA countries from three angles; long term, medium term, and short term.

From the long term perspective, what should be first noted is that equality is one of the norms mostly respected in Islam's values. Although a lot of religions appeal for human's equality, Islam features it heavily. Historically, the Sunni, in particular, did not develop the priest's hierarchy, and there was not even a distinction between sacred and secular. Those who led prayers at Mosques were simply those who knew the contents of the Koran and words of prayer more than the others. Compared with their long history, it was very recent, in the 1970s, that most of MENA countries' governments strengthened their control of Islam, and introduced the hierarchy of ulama, the Muslim legal scholar. In other words, most MENA people originally have a strong tendency to take equality for granted, and that would bring about a comparatively equal society in terms of materiality. To put it the other way round, one may say that their culture has little patience with inequality.

Secondly, and from the viewpoint of the medium term, we can see the situation which has made the people's frustration against disparity worsen in MENA countries since the 1990s. As we confirmed in Table 1, the income gap

in some countries has widened within a decade. In addition, what should be noticed is that the ordinary people living in MENA countries, particularly in the urban areas, have rapidly and broadly gained the opportunity to access a lot of information due to the spread of mobile phones, PCs, and so on. Table 2 shows that the accessibility of information in MENA countries has generally risen up similar to the other region's countries since the early 1990s, although there were distinctions among them. This means that not only did they come to communicate with people apart from them, but also that it became possible for them to obtain a lot of information about other lifestyles which enabled them to compare themselves with. The consciousness about disparity or poverty becomes active, when they can compare themselves with others. In other words, it is entirely fair to say that the spread of information tools made it easy for the low-middle-income people to accumulate their dissatisfaction.

Thirdly, and finally, an important point to note is that a lot of people in MENA had faced more serious economic instability than the other regions since the mid-2000s. Figure 5 shows the GDP deflator in each region from 2000 to 2009. From this figure, we can see that MENA countries experienced not only a higher inflation than the other regions since 2004, but also faced sudden fall of

Table 2: The spread of information tools in each country

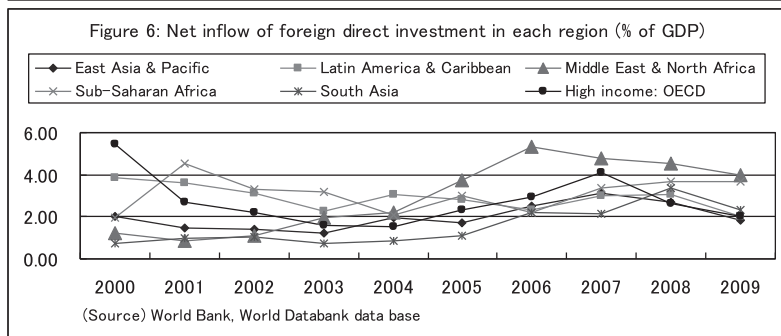
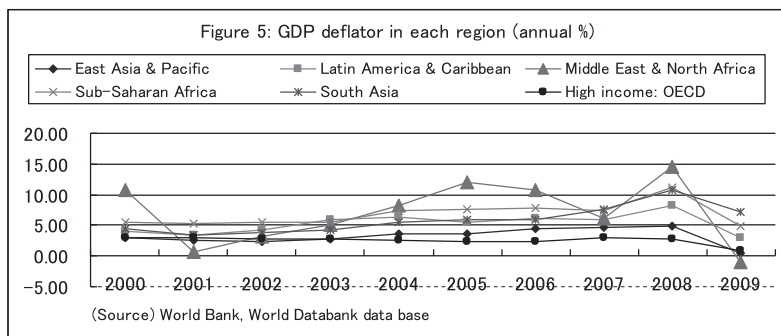
	Cellular subscribers (per 1,000 people)		Internet users (per 1,000 people)	
	1990	2005	1990	2005
Egypt, Arab Rep.	-	184	0	68
Jordan	-	304	0	118
Morocco	-	411	0	152
Tunisia	-	566	0	95
Yemen, Rep.	0	95	0	9
China	-	302	0	85
Brazil	-	462	0	195
South Africa	-	724	0	109
Bangladesh	0	63	0	3
Ghana	0	129	0	18
Niger	0	21	0	2
France	5	789	1	430
United States	21	680	8	630

(Source) UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, pp.273-276.



prices in 2009. It is fairly reasonable to suppose that this economic volatility enlarged the people’s frustration rapidly by the end of the 2000s.

That instability can be explained by the inflow of money from outside sources. Figure 6 shows the volume of net inflow of foreign direct investment. We can see that MENA countries faced larger capital inflow than the other regions in particular after 2005. It is well known that a lot of investors have been interested in natural resources back-grounded by the emerging economies’ growth, and the financial crisis in 2008 promoted this trend. Although massive funds could make a contribution to MENA countries’ economic growth, it is certain that unnecessarily large amounts of money can attribute to inflation. In addition, it is not to be denied that their economy became vulnerable due to its rapid and huge dependence toward outside trends. Soaring prices of petroleum, which was attributed to globalisation,



brought MENA not only the unprecedented booming economy, but also the phenomenal economic instability, which is hard for ordinary people to deal with by themselves.

### 3-3 The connection of political and socio-economic causes

From what has been said above, there is no doubt that the societies in MENA were filled by the public's frustration against poverty and disparity until the end of 2010. This situation was amplified and sparked by the oppressive and patriarchal governance.

Tunisia, in which the 'Spring' started, is a notable example. Although the market economy had been broadly introduced in Tunisia, Ben-Ali and his families located at the centre of the patronage network combined the government with industry, and they privatised the wealth of the State. This clientelism was called 'the Family,' and it was the critical factor for the people to access economic opportunities and avoid harassment by the police, those who were apart from it were compelled to be in socially vulnerable positions. The middle class was no exception: even if they graduated from university, it was hard for them to find suitable jobs without accessing clientelism. Viewed in this light, it can be regarded as a necessity that a youth, 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi of Bouzid, who was harassed and struck by a policewoman while he was selling vegetables on a street without a license in Tunis in December 2010, burned himself two weeks after in order to appeal his frustration and complaint, and that event caused sympathy and anger amongst those who were in the same position, and triggered the protest rally against Ben-Ali regime right after.

It follows that, from what has been said, the causes of the 'Spring' can be attributed to not only the spread of the norm of democracy, but the following four points; the culture which hates inequality, the situation in which they can compare their income level with others through information technology, the

rapidly deepened disparity, and the patriarchal governance. Having got these points firmly established, we can turn to the dynamics of the transition in the next section.

#### **4.The meaning of the rising of the Islamist parties**

##### **4-1 The rising of the moderate Islamist parties as a necessity**

It was the natural course of things, so to speak, that Islamist groups would become the core of the transition in each country, because there were no other groups which could lead the people's social discontent to the political movement sustainably and organisationally. As it was mentioned above, the Islamic revival started in the 1970s. It is well known that Islamic groups represented by the MB have extended their forces in society by supplying social services like medicine, education, and so on for the poor, services which should be fundamentally guaranteed by the public authorities. Since these activities are theoretically based on one of Muslim's five obligations, almsgiving, they can be supported by donations from wealthy Muslims including GCC countries' royal families in practice, though the details are not clear.

The financial basis was a critical difference between the Islamist groups and the other secular political groups. For example, al-Wafd, the oldest liberal political party in Egypt, could not gain any huge support from overseas, because developed countries like the US supplied huge financial aid to the Mubarak administration. As a result of the downward force of their secular rivals, Islamist groups could expand their support base, mainly to low-income people, and prepare to gain political power. Nevertheless, they were oppressed by the authoritarian regimes in each country.

When the transition started with the explosion of the unorganised low-income people's frustration, the Islamist groups were not involved at first. However, as the protest rallies expanded, their presence rapidly grew in anti-governmental

movements back-grounded by their ability to mobilise supporters. Considering their influence on the massive low-income people before the ‘Spring’, it was even a necessity that Islamist groups, not secular NGOs supported by Western donors and alienated by the ordinary citizens, become a leading force of the transitions<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, as the broad support to them became clear, the Islamist parties came to prefer a stable transition to a complete regime change. Egypt’s transition shows us a typical example. Supreme Council of Armed Force (SCAF), the provisional military government, carried out the referendum in March 2011, in order to decide the course of transition; either drafting a new constitution, or amending a part of the clauses of the existing constitutions and implementing elections as soon as possible. While secular liberals, including university students, called for the need of a new constitution, the MB insisted on the election first<sup>13</sup>. As a result, 77.2% of voters supported the latter option in the referendum. It is fairly reasonable to suppose that this consequence was hugely influenced by the attitude of the Islamist parties.

In addition to this, it was apparent that the Islamist parties partly cooperated with the former rulers within the process of transition. In Egypt, more than hundreds of thousands protesters held rallies and sought to replace the military provisional government in Cairo and Alexandria in May 2011, because SCAF did not start former President Mubarak’s trial, but did continue the curfew. Most of those who composed SCAF, including Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi as the Chairman, used to work under the Mubarak administration. While these rallies appealing the ‘Second Revolution’ were led by secular citizens, most

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<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless the US carried out to support Egypt’s secular civil societies in order to promote its democratisation particularly after 9.11, those groups were out of place in the society. See; Katerina Dalacoura (2005) “US democracy promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: a critique”, *International Affairs*, 81(5), pp.963-973.

<sup>13</sup> *ARB* (March 1<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> 2011), 48(3), p.18772

Islamist groups did not take part in<sup>14</sup>. Besides, most Islamists did not present clear condemnation against the former high official's running the elections for the new parliament, while secular citizens opposed that<sup>15</sup>. In sum, the Islamist parties represented by the MB refrained from excessive accusations against the former rulers, except for Mubarak, so as to carry out the transition smoothly in the situation in which their advantage in the election was clear. In other words, most of the transitions in MENA countries were realised by the compromise between Islamist parties and the former rulers<sup>16</sup>.

#### 4-2 The pattern of winning of the Islamist parties: Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco

Let us confirm the influence of the moderate Islamist groups in the result of the first elections of the new regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. In the first poll of Tunisia's Constitutional Assembly in November 2011, Ennahda gained 91 seats within 217, and became the first party. In Egypt's first poll for the People's Assembly, which was implemented in three phases covering the entire country and started in November 2011, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political branch of the MB, finally gained 127 seats out of 498 seats. It was followed by 96 seats of al-Nur, a Salafist party, 36 seats of al-Wafd, and so on<sup>17</sup>. In the election of the lower chamber of the Moroccan parliament in

<sup>14</sup> *ARB* (May 1st-31st 2011), 48(5), p.18840.

<sup>15</sup> *ARB* (July 1st-31st 2011), 48(7), p.18902.

<sup>16</sup> Karl classified political transitions in four types by the critical actors, the elites or the people, and their strategies, compromise or violent. These are pact (the elites-compromise), imposition (the elites-violent), reform (the people-compromise), revolution (the people-violent). According to this typology, for example, most of democratisation in Latin American countries in the 1970s were 'pacts', or a series of compromise between 'Soft-Liners' in the existing authoritarian regimes and anti-governmental movements. See; Terry Lynn Karl (1990) "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics*, (23), pp.1-21. Obeying this typology, we can say that most of transitions in the 'Spring', except for Libya's case, were 'pacts'.

<sup>17</sup> *ARB* (January 1st-31st 2012), 49(1), p.19120. This result, however, was cancelled by the order of the constitutional court on 14 June, 2012. The court ruled that one-third of the seats were invalid,

November 2011, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) gained 105 seats out of 395.

While we can see their presence by the result of elections, there were some signs that the Islamist parties had become ideologically edgeless during the process of the elections. During the campaigns, most of them refrained from radical Islamist's appeals in their manifestations, and promised the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy. Tunisia's Ennahda, for example, did not mention the introduction of the Islamic Sharia law in the election programme, instead appealed to respect religious and minority freedoms, guaranteed women's equal rights to work and vote, and vowed to 'oppose any compulsion to adopt a specific pattern of dress'<sup>18</sup>. Similar attitudes could be witnessed in FJP in Egypt or JDP in Morocco. Out of these two, the former was publicly founded as 'not theocratic, but a civil party', according to the secretary general of the MB<sup>19</sup>. In sum, the Islamist parties, which became the first parties in each country, had a common feature; drawing in the insistence of radical Islamist values.

Each winning Islamist party shared another common distinction; all of them emphasised their will to deal with social problems in their campaigns. In the Moroccan election in 2011, the JDP originally presented Islamic insistence, like opposition to summer music festivals or the sale of alcohol, but later shifted to issues like reducing unemployment or raising the minimum wage by 50%<sup>20</sup>. In the case of Tunisia, Ennahda promised social housing, broader access to health care, bigger social grants and a higher minimum wage, and pledged to create 590,000 jobs and reduce the unemployment rate to 8.5% by 2016 from 19% in those

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because they were elected from candidates belonging to political parties. According to Egypt's constitution, one-third of the members of the People's Assembly should be elected from individual candidates (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/06/2012614124538532758.html>).

<sup>18</sup> *ARB* (November 1<sup>st</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> 2011), 48(11), p.19056.

<sup>19</sup> *ARB* (April 1<sup>st</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> 2011), 48(4), p.18805.

<sup>20</sup> *ARB* (December 1<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> 2011), 48(12), p.19091.

days<sup>21</sup>. It is entirely fair to say that these appealed to the broader constituencies out of Islamist parties' original supporters.

In addition, what should be noted is that all of the Islamist parties, which won the first elections in each country, formed a coalition with the other parties, including secular ones. In Tunisia, Ennahda founded a coalition government with the Congress for the Republic, which is a social democratic party and gained 30 seats, and Ettakatol, moderate Islamist parties which gained 21 seats. As a result, important offices were allocated to three parties; the prime minister, who is practically responsible for the administration, was for Ennahda, the president was for the Congress for the Republic, and the speaker of the constitutional assembly was for Ettakatol. Similarly, as a result of Moroccan parliamentary election, the JDP founded a coalition for the next government with three secular parties; the Istiqlal Party, which is a nationalist party and was second-place with 60 seats, the National Rally of Independents, which was originally founded in 1978 by the husband of a sister of King Hassan II and won 52 seats, and the Authenticity and Modernity Party, which was founded by the former interior minister Fouad Ali El Himma in 2008 and gained 47 seats. In the case of Egypt, although no concrete coalition for the new government was created, the People's Assembly's posts were allocated to three parties; the speaker for FJP, the sub-speakers for al-Nur and al-Wafd. Considering that no party could enjoy the majority of the legislative bodies independently in each country, one may say that this kind of power-sharing represented their realistic or pragmatic calculations.

#### 4-3 The Islamist parties' modification and the path of the progress of party politics

On the other hand, there are some who are concerned with the strong dash of the Islamist parties. Considering that they include the former extremists, who

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<sup>21</sup> *ARB* (November 1<sup>st</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> 2011), 48(11), p.19056.

aimed to turnover the existing order with violence, it is no wonder that Islamist parties' presence in each country after the 'Spring' reminded some Western watchers of the nightmare of the Islam Revolution in 1979. Joshua Muravchik, one of the representative neo-conservative researchers in the US, pointed out that the MB, which used to commit violent activities in the past, changed their slogan from 'Islam is the answer' to 'Freedom is the answer' during the 'Spring'; 'In other words, the Brotherhood's embrace of peaceful method is tactical, not philosophical'<sup>22</sup>. One may say that Muravchik cast doubt on the ideological proximity between Islamist parties' insistence and democracy, and suggested a pessimistic view about the consolidation of democracy in MENA countries.

As we have seen above, Muravchik's insistences are right as far as the facts which he pointed out. However, his observations leaves out some aspects of the dynamics of MENA countries' politics and the transformation of Islamist parties, and we can not say that MENA countries' democratisation will necessary collapse, even if the Islamist parties' ideological shift and management on elections were just tactics. This kind of view, which was based on Islamic Essentialism or Arab Exceptionalism, is too exaggerated on the difference between the Islamist parties and the Western countries' parties to overlook the commonality between them.

Considering the pattern of party politics in Western countries, the Islamist parties' reaction to the people's requirement is not something specific; in the process of the development of democracy, it is a usual way for political parties to mitigate their ideologies and appeal practical benefits to the constituencies in order to enlarge their support base out of their core supporters. This tendency is inevitable for party politics, and that is represented by the fact that the introduction of 1867 Reform Act, in Britain, was led by Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli or the Conservative Party, not the Liberal Party, back-grounded by the Industrial

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<sup>22</sup> Joshua Muravchik (2011) "Neoconservatives and the Arab Spring: On the Potential Lessings and Lurking Hazards of a Much-Hoped-for Revolution," *Commentary*, September 2011, pp.28-35.



Revolution and the rising of the middle class. Moreover, just as Bell correctly pointed out, ideological conflicts became quiet in developed countries after World War II, because each of them could not avoid the requirement for the Welfare State<sup>23</sup>. In sum, in the process of the development of democracy in Western countries, regardless of their political thought, every political party has been compelled to become ideologically edgeless in order to obtain broader support in accordance with socio-economic changes.

In parallel with this, particularly when they get close to the political power, every political party tends to expand their range of policies. The Greens in Germany is a contemporary representative example of that. Although the Greens was originally an 'anti-party' party, which criticised party politics and every existing political party's elitism, and appealed immediate shut down of nuclear power plants, it adopted discipline as a normal political party after taking part in the coalition administration with the Social Democratic Party in Germany in 2002, and permitted tentative use of nuclear power in terms of economic policies. It might be right to regard this attitude as opportunistic, but it was also certain that the decision was a turning point for the Greens from a 'single issue party' to a 'catch-all party' or a big tent.

As we have seen above, most political parties have modified their principles, and adjusted themselves to party politics in order to gain political power even in Western countries. Whether these behaviours were good or bad will not be discussed at this point. Either way, it is certain that their reactions could have increased options for constituencies in Western countries as a result. From this view, we can not say that the 'real' thought of the Islamist parties' cadre will necessarily become a factor to prevent the democratisation in each country, nor

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel Bell (2000) *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties, with "The Resumption of History in the New Century"* (2nd New edition of Revised ed.), Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

can we even say that it is excessively idealistic to criticise their reactions as ‘tactics’, because that ignores the history of party politics’ development in Western countries. Rather, it is possible to evaluate that the Islamist parties are in the process of transforming themselves from ‘single issue parties’ to ‘catch-all parties’.

### **5. Concerned factors**

#### **5-1 Material satisfaction as a key concept for the rightness of the governance**

However, even if the Islamist parties are adjusting themselves to parliamentarianism, we must refrain from being exaggeratedly optimistic for the future of MENA countries which experienced the transitions. Considering the path of the ‘Spring’ and the distinction of the Islamist parties, it is easy to find some factors which could prevent the consolidation of democracy in MENA countries.

The first point to notice is that the spread of economic distress was the critical trigger for the transitions. As we have seen earlier, there were many transitions which did not bring both liberty and democracy, but fell into the new authoritarian rules, like the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Egyptian Revolution in 1956, and Gaddafi’s revolution in 1969. That was primarily caused by the main purpose of the transitions; when they set their goals to improve the socio-economic situation itself, the priority of the political reform became the second goal at best. In other words, most of the people who supported those transitions were primarily interested in resolving social problems, and it became acceptable for them to restrict civil liberties and political rights, if authoritarian regimes improved their socio-economic welfare.

Just as we confirmed, the broad frustration among the low-income people against economic distress was an immediate cause of the ‘Spring’. It is hard to deny that the ‘Spring’ holds similar tendencies with these historical events, and

that there have been a lot of people who primarily sought material benefits from the new regimes. In fact, for example, as soon as they took power in February 2011, Egypt's SCAF approved a 15% increase of public sector wages and pensions<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, we need to remember that the Islamist parties, which were originally supported by the poor and won the elections, campaigned to deal with poverty and disparity instead of religious values during the campaigns. It is entirely fair to say that these reactions represent the Islamist parties' transformation to reflect the people's demands. However, if the citizens require the new governments to have immediate outcomes of the revolutions in terms of material benefits, it is likely that the latter will succeed the predecessor's rentier-economy.

In addition to this, it is almost impossible for them to replace all public servants, who committed corruption during the reign of authoritarian regimes. In other words, the rentier-economy, whose sustainability is regarded as being very strict, has restricted the development of democracy in MENA countries. We should not overlook that non-democratic regimes have survived in the oil-rich GCC countries. Facing the people's broad requirements for political reform in the early 2011, the governments of these countries enlarged the material distribution; the Saudi government supplied \$36 billion for the people, the king of Bahrain gave every family of the nation \$400, the sultan of Oman promised the creation of 50,000 new jobs, and so on<sup>25</sup>. As these announcements were issued, almost all of the protest rallies became quiet in GCC countries. From this viewpoint, even if its appearance is improved a little, it is fairly reasonable to suppose that the new governments will succeed with the rentier-economy practically, and that can put the brakes on the consolidation of democracy.

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<sup>24</sup> *ARB* (February 1<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> 2011), 48(2), p.18717.

<sup>25</sup> Muravchik, *op.cit.*, p.30

## 5-2 The expansion of the cleavage with internal others

Secondly, there is a concern that the ‘Spring’ will fuel hostility across the cultural divisions within each society. In general, the revolutions have a tendency to force the people to unite in order to found a new society. On the other hand, as Rousseau pointed out, to discover the difference with the third party is the easiest way for two people to create unity<sup>26</sup>. In fact, revolutionary governments in history, regardless of their public ideology, usually forced ideological and cultural assimilation and took the way of waging wars against other countries in order to reject the otherness. In sum, revolution includes an energy of both differentiation and assimilation.

In the case of MENA countries, as confirmed by the Islamist parties’ victories, it is no doubt that religious identity is one of the most critical factors to unify people. At the same time, it can make an effect of differentiating cultural or religious others. The sectarian conflicts, in fact, became prominent during the transitions particularly in Egypt. The clash between Muslims and Christian Copts broke out, and 13 people died in Tahrir Square in Cairo on 9 March 2011, shortly after the beginning of the transition. Similar clashes had taken place before that event, thousands of Muslims and Copts clashed in a Cairo suburb the previous day when the latter were sitting-in on a motorway to protest an attack on a church which caused two people’s deaths on 5 March<sup>27</sup>. Under the Mubarak administration, religious movements had been restricted strictly, although they had been active unofficially. One may say that his taking leave from the office, at least as a result, had an effect to make them assert themselves openly, and to bring forth the differences and confrontations among people, which had been oppressed by the authoritarian regime.

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1973) *The Social Contract and Discourses; Translation and Introduction by G.D.H.Cole*, London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd..

<sup>27</sup> *ARB* (March 1<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> 2011), 48(3), p.18771

On the other hand, as religious identities were encouraged by the revolutions, the conflicts between Islamists and Secularist also became active. That has been obvious particularly in Tunisia. Although Tunisia has been known as one of most secularised countries in MENA since its independence, there is a social cleavage between French-speaking elite and Arab-speaking common citizens, and secularisation is mainly the former's feature. Therefore, even if its religious influence is not as remarkable as the other MENA countries, Tunisia is also not far from the activation of Islamist groups after the fall of the secular authoritarian regime, in particular among low-income people. Under these circumstances, violent clashes have often taken place between Islamists and Secularists. On 8 October 2011, two hundred protesters stormed into a university's campus in the city of Sousse, south of Tunis. This was caused by the situation in which a female student was rejected entry to the university because she was wearing a full face veil, which is banned in Tunisian universities. In addition to this, Salafist groups – this was not related to the earlier events at all – attacked Nessma TV which aired a film offensive to Islam on 9 October, and hundreds of protesters threw petrol bombs at the house of the TV station's CEO after 5 days<sup>28</sup>.

Although every Islamist party, which gained seats in the parliament in each country, have condemned the violence, it is entirely fair to say that the new government could not have restricted the conflicts among cultural groups. If party politics are connected to the social cleavage, the hostility across the cultural groups will become larger, and that has a possibility to make the society unstable.

### **Summary and conclusion**

We have seen that the 'Spring' was caused by multilayered factors; Islamic revival, the spread of the norm of democracy, and the people's socio-economic

<sup>28</sup> *ARB* (October 1<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> 2011), 48(10), p.19026.

frustration, which is founded on Muslim's values, and fuelled both by the increase of information about others and the rapidly worsened disparity. One may say that these different but interrelated energies had a common antipathy against the existing authoritarian regimes, and the resultant force propelled the transitions in each country. Considering the process, it should be regarded as a necessity that most of the citizens supported the Islamist parties, which refrained from religious values and appealed material well-being in the first elections of each country after the transitions.

On the other hand, as we have seen in the preceding section, the new governments have faced the difficulties which could turn over the outcome of the transitions; the succession of the rentire-economy, and the hostility caused by cultural differences within the society. If the new governments can not successfully deal with these inherent subjects, the societies will fall into confusion, and that situation will make the euphoria among citizens disappeared. It seems reasonable to suppose that the people's disappointment with party politics could propel radical Islamist groups' rising, which have not gained broad support from the citizens. In other words, one may say that the MENA countries after the 'Spring' are on a branch point of the consolidation of democracy, and the rising of extremism.

However, it is a total fallacy to solely suppose that Islam is a threat to the consolidation of democracy in MENA countries. Every political institution and movement can not exist far apart from its social climate, because human beings do not live in a cultural vacuum, but are affected by particular values more or less. On the other hand, under globalisation, nowadays it is impossible for almost all of the people living in any region to reject the influence of universal norms of democracy. Therefore every political activity is nothing but a hybrid of universal ideals and each society's particular historical conditions. Expanding these arguments into the issues of MENA countries, one may say that the rising of the moderate Islamist parties attempting to fuse Islamism and democracy are

not only a necessity, but also a representation of the effort to adjust their particularity to the global universality.

As early as the nineteenth century, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel noticed that freedom does not mean to obey the outside universality unilaterally, but, on the other hand, subjecting their particularity is nothing else than being arbitrary. According to Hegel, they can obtain freedom when they reach individuality with the absorption of the universality to their particularity<sup>29</sup>. One may say that his dialectic was a product of the circumstances of Germany in his time; the rapid and unilateral inflow of the universal ideal, like human rights, from France, and the rising of reactionary Romanticism against the rational spirits. We can see the similar situation in contemporary MENA countries; while they can not escape from the global norms of democracy, it is a kind of serfdom to accept outside ethos unconditionally which includes some conflicts with a lot of peoples' lifestyles and values, like secularism and individualism, and so on.

They can overcome this contradiction, and consolidate democracy genuinely only if they absorb the universal ethos into their particular culture or society, and reach individuality. What outsiders can and should do is to watch the process of their effort to absorb the universality of liberal democracy carefully and patiently. In other words, while the toleration to the cultural others within the society is necessary for the development of democracy in MENA countries, the toleration to the other kind of democracy is requested of Western countries. That attitude will also be the most profitable to Western countries, because the consolidation of democracy to the society can be the most effective way to prevent the rising of extremism in MENA countries.

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<sup>29</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1967) *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (translated with notes by T.M. Knox), London: Oxford University Press.