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**The Participation of Women in Protests: The case of Arab
Uprisings**

BACHELOR'S THESIS

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I hereby declare that this Thesis is solely my own work and I have written it with the help of cited sources and literature.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
1. Theoretical framework	10
1.1. The Protesting Woman: Revisiting the Theories	10
1.1.1. Tipping, timing and framing theory.....	11
1.2. Protesting women.....	12
2. Egypt.....	15
2.1. Women in protests and the process of transition.....	16
2.2. National council and life in social movements	20
2.3. Possible future mobilization.....	20
3. Tunisia	22
3.1. Women in the protests.....	24
3.2. Transition process in Tunisia	26
Conclusion	29
Abstract.....	31
Sources and literature.....	32

Introduction

Arab Spring, the term is coined to describe the wave of revolutions and transformations of the political systems across the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) starting in December 2010. However, naming these revolutions as “spring” was ahead of time. The Western authorities and thinkers had become optimistic very fast, expecting positive outcomes from these protests, mostly democratization, or some of them to also strengthen the position of women in the Arab society.

The causes that made people head to the streets may be described from many perspectives. Starting with political causes, many countries in the region were authoritarian, in some cases even totalitarian and people felt the need for democratization. Arab Uprisings were not only about secularization and democracy, as the West predicted, but the increased pressure of Western democracies on the implementation of their ideologies in the Middle Eastern region was also a factor. (Mendel 2015:21) Another perspective on the causes of Arab Spring is the economic situation of citizens. Problems with general income and unemployment, mostly of young people, are often seen as critical and with high potential for protesting. Finally, another perspective on the causes can be environmental change and the causes of climate changing. With an issue like that especially in this geographical region, North Africa or Middle East the agriculture can be likely affected and struggle, therefore the prices for basic products can rapidly increase which may lead to protesting masses. Nevertheless, the causes for women’s participation could be different. From securing their rights in the political or social sector, to access to education or standing against some kinds of previously adopted humiliating and disgracing laws.

Leaving other topics aside, this thesis focuses on the cases of women’s participation in Tunisia and in Egypt. The Tunisian case for the reason of it being the only country from the region where we can be speaking about a successful ending of the Arab uprisings, so basically the only country where Arab Spring really happened, with minimal problems. The Egyptian case was chosen due to its uniqueness, mainly because of its development during the transition to democracy which was interrupted by a military coup, resulting into regression and a step back in the overall democratization of Egypt. During the history of women’s mobilization and women’s protesting we can come across some regularities, usually protesting under demands for equalization. Women in Tunisia are considered to have the most rights in comparison to the other Arab countries in the region. On the other hand, women in Egypt are not only suffering

from bad political participation conditions but also from high rates of sexual harassment on the streets and public squares, which represents additional agony to women and it is not limited only to this region.

The main research questions in this Thesis are *whether women in Tunisia and Egypt got to the tipping point in protesting in the Arab Uprisings and if not, what are the reasons that this moment did not occur and whether women were able to bring up their own demands, not simply the demands that were represented by the whole society throughout the protests or during the transition period.* An empirical-analytical approach is used throughout the Thesis for testing if the tipping, timing and framing theory is appropriate for analyzing the protests and the analytical method is used to verify whether the theory of tipping can be applied on the case of women in Egypt and Tunisia, whilst the descriptive method is used in both case studies to frame and describe the timing of the events essential to this research.

The Arab Uprisings have become a crucial moment for the whole Middle East, therefore a broad variety of literature has been presented. There are plenty of articles and books focusing on all the issues that were brought up by the Arab Spring. In the next paragraphs I will briefly summarize the literature and sources relevant for this Thesis. Starting with the tipping theory, it was used in combination with the timing and framing method only in one case before, by Lisa Baldez, to analyze women's participation. In her book *Why women protest: Women's movements in Chile* she introduced this theory and used it in the analyses of the mobilization of women's movements and their mobilization into protests in Chile during the governments of Allende and Pinochet. She notes that this theory can be applied on any protests, because women have mobilized in diverse political environments however, every case must be analyzed properly via the framing and timing methods to fully understand the tipping point. Nevertheless, in explaining the theories, Baldez focused mostly on the tipping and framing method. For further examination of the timing I used the article *Repression and Dissent: Substitution, Context, and Timing*, published in the *American Journal of Political Science* and written by Will H. Moore. However, I use it only for the part of theory where he describes the timing in context of reactions on repressions. The key details are described precisely in a variety of analyses published by Western scholars, but also Middle Eastern ones.

For the basic facts about the Arab Uprisings in general, such as what the triggering moments were, or what caused the protests, I am using the book of James Gelvin called *The Arab Uprisings: What everyone needs to know*. Another significant source in this Thesis

are some videos, for example a published Youtube video of Asmaa Mahfouz, Egyptian activist, in which she calls upon people to join her in the protest against the government on the Tahrir Square in Cairo. Another important audio-visual source was a series called *The trials of Spring* created by the New York Times in cooperation with the creators of the movie *Trials of Spring*, which was awarded multiple times in 2016 as best documentary on human rights. The video called *Tunisia: Keeping the promise* is used to describe the life of Ghazala Mhamdi, a Tunisian woman, who established a political party and ran for the seats in the Parliamentary election in 2014.

In the chapter, where I am focusing on the women in Egypt, I based my analysis on the article from Reem Wael named *Betrayal or realistic expectations? Egyptian women revolting*. This article was written in 2014 and was published in the *Journal for and about social movements*. The author writes mostly about women's contribution to the public life, or their exclusion from politics. Moreover, data for that paper was collected by the author through interviewing four female activists who had been working or volunteering in women's organizations and even knew the organizations and movements before the revolution. On the other hand, I would say, that basing your research only on four interviews and considering this as a representative sample may affect your final effect and misrepresent your results. However, this article proved to be useful repeatedly because it was not solely based on the mentioned interviews but also on other, relevant sources and the data from dialogues were used as a supplement. Another source used during analyzing the Egyptian case was the master's Thesis of Sasha J. Kuhlow, called *The Differential Impact of Women's Participation in the Arab Spring*, where she focuses not only on the physical participation, but also on the participation and women's contribution on social media, such as Facebook or Twitter.

In the Tunisian part of my research I used an article published in Middle East Report, specifically called *Gender and the Revolutions: Critique interrupted* written by Norma Claire Moruzzi. In the beginning of her analysis of the role of gender in the revolutions she gave another perspective on the beginning of the story of Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation, specifically the view of a policewoman, who had the conflict with Bouazizi in the beginning, which brought another point of view to the understanding of her reactions and moves. Rayed Khedher's article *Tracing the Development of the Tunisian 1956 Code of Personal Status* was also a useful source in the recognition of the context and women's circumstances in Tunisia, and in understanding their status in Tunisian society, which was later

crucial for women during the transition process. Supplementary sources for the information about events that happened in the region were daily journals such as BBC, Washington Post, Al Jazeera or The Reuters. Their topicality, accuracy and reliance made the research for crucial information simpler and clearer.

This Thesis is divided into three chapters. The first one describes the main theories focused on people's protesting throughout history in general, in terms of their causality and different approaches they received. Another part of this chapter explains the tipping, timing and framing theory, which is in later chapters applied on the cases. Tipping is described as reaching a certain point in the society, when a particular group of people rapidly changes its behavior. Timing together with framing are used for the clarification of the circumstances and conditions of why the steps in the form of protests were undertaken.

The main goal of the second chapter is to describe and analyze the relevant occasions over time during the protests in Egypt. The first part speaks about the women's direct participation in the protests, from support on the social media and organizing the demonstrations to the presence on the squares declaring their disagreements with the situation in the society. Another part of the second chapter focuses on the following transition that had to be done for the purpose of democratization. This part studies women's participation during the transition, their political participation and whether women had been able to mobilize and achieve the inclusion of their demands into the new constitution. The last parts of this chapter are mainly about the possibilities of mobilization for women in Egypt and how they did not embrace them.

The third and last chapter of this paper analyses the second case: The Tunisian uprising. The first part of the chapter studies the triggering moments of the protests, together with women's role in them and women's participation in the following uprisings. The next part describes women in protest, however not only in the protests under the demands from the whole society but under the demands from women themselves. In the last part I explain their role in the transition, their political participation and mobilization.

The Thesis is written to understand women's participation in the protest however, not only the participation under demands that resonated in the whole society, but the demands originating in women's part of the society. On the other hand, this bachelor's Thesis speaks only about the period of time from the beginning of the protests up until the transition period

when the analysis ends. Basically, this Thesis analyses how women participated in the protests, and if they were able to mobilize during the transition process and to assure a space for their rights in new constitutions and within the society. However, the Thesis is built mostly on the secondary literature written by other authors implemented into the context of the chosen cases.

1. Theoretical framework

The aim of this chapter is to explain and describe the theories and the framing of women's position in society and protests, used later in the Thesis. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first one explains general theories of protest, starting with why people start to protest in general, moving to explain the tipping, timing and framing theory, which will be used later in the chapters to explain the cases of women in protests in Egypt and Tunisia. The second part of this chapter deals with a short summary of why and how women in history were participating in protests, mostly about suffrage movements. The final part of this chapter stresses the importance of speaking about women's rights in the MENA region.

1.1. The Protesting Woman: Revisiting the Theories

For a long time, it was common for historians and political scientists to attempt to connect revolutions or uprisings with various reasons or changes in the society. Starting with economic changes, many thinkers from the perspective of social sciences say, that uprisings take place when a sudden reversal disrupts a period of improving economic conditions, thereby frustrating popular expectations. (Gelvin 2015:25) However, the problem is that neither of them can explain several key problems of political history, such as why Americans did not rebel in 1929, after the onset of the Great Depression, or other countless times in which conditions for uprising were met, but no uprising occurred.

When it comes to the Middle East, the unemployment or bread prices, as it was in the MENA region, are objective categories that are quantifiable, unlike years of hunger or other general causes, namely corruption or repression. *“The sense of deprivation or injustice—not to mention the compulsion to translate that sense into action...Thus they might suddenly discover a cause worth fighting for once their neighbors have taken to the streets”* (Ibid.: 26) Another common element for the Arab world was the authoritarianism and the lack of democratic values in the government. *„Arab world, where political institutions are weak and the lines separating the ruler, the ruling party, and ruling institutions...are often blurred, if they exist at all.”* (Ibid.: 25) Therefore people choose the way of protesting rather than elections because simply, there are no popular representatives and if there are, their power is limited. In order for a massive protest or uprising to take place, people have to be driven to the point where they have reached their tipping point, where the injustice that exists is so great that people have nothing to lose,

and thus have no other option but to rebel and protest. The idea is that groups of people have a threshold of injustice that they can endure before they take action.

1.1.1. Tipping, timing and framing theory

Starting with the tipping model, or tipping point, a term coming from sociology and created by Morton Grodzins, where he describes a tipping point using physics as a moment when adding a small amount of weight to a balanced object will make it suddenly and completely topple, or tip. In the theories of protests, it may be explained as a moment, when a group or large number of group members rapidly and dramatically change their behavior by widely adopting a previously rare practice. As I will analyze in the following, this methodology helps us explain how protests may erupt.

In a tipping model, the probability that any given individual will participate depends on the likelihood that person thinks other will participate. A tip occurs when a sufficiently large number of people believe that others will also participate. In the strongest case, a tip will occur when people come to believe that their participation becomes necessary or even is required. (Baldez 2002:6) This model explains mobilization in terms of how people respond to each other, rather than how they respond to the requirements or material benefits. Entrepreneurs cannot expect to issue a call to women at any time and expect tens of thousands to take to the streets. A rhetorical appeal will trigger a collective response only under certain conditions. Lisa Baldez argues that tipping, together with two other conditions, namely timing and framing set off mobilization among women in general and give the conditions that activate this process. Timing and framing evoke a desire to participate in a particular group of people, setting the tipping process in motion. (Ibid.:7) Timing refers to the catching of the right moment and framing means structuring of the demands.

“Timing” in this Thesis is the period of Arab uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. Speaking of Tunisia, it is the period of time before the end of the government of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, which was primarily known for its corruption and political repressions, but also the period after its resignation. In the Egyptian case, we speak about the period slightly later than in Tunisia, therefore we consider incidents that happened there as triggers for all Arab Spring revolts across the region of the Middle East and North Africa. The reaction can be effective only if the timing is fast, therefore the triggering moment or the triggering time is the accurate term that should be used. (Moore 1998: 853—855) Pointing out framing first in general, it is incomplete to identify only the conditions under which protests occur, even if we can clarify them with the

most precision. Moreover, framing may mean explaining why people, or in this Thesis specifically women recognize these conditions as opportunities, or why understanding these conditions requires them to act. (Baldez: 10) Timing and framing provide a broader field in understanding the reasons that led to the tipping point in the society.

The three concepts presented in this chapter – tipping, timing and framing may provide a general structure of understanding why and how women protest however, it must be linked to the specific cases in some regions, because variables will be different from case to case, depending of the region where protests happened, especially the causes or triggering moments of the protests, or particular political systems of the mentioned countries. Framing mobilization in terms of conventional gender roles may seem to be an obvious or inevitable move, especially in the MENA region, where the impact of Islam runs deep and appears to be an important component of an Arab culture. However, even in this framing, the stereotypical gender roles in this region differ in Tunisia and in Egypt. In Tunisia, women's rights were much more secularized than in Egypt, as you can see in next chapters.

1.2. Protesting women

Women's protests, and their mobilization are usually explained in the terms of partisan realignment, a special kind of balance of power with the male population. They have several strategies available to help solve the crisis of any kind, including becoming politically active to help through peace activism, becoming actively engaged in support through nonviolent resistance, or engaging in violence as combatants. If protest creates exceptional conditions for women to aspire to unity, the period of fragmentation which follows might be considered to exaggerate problems and barriers to collective action amongst women. (Kaufman, Williams 2013: 2; Shaw 1993: 246) Speaking about women in protests, in all history there were various situations that made women protest at any form. Women's suffrage movements were characteristic examples of one of the first mobilizations among women in the 19th and 20th centuries. The issue of women's voting rights has become an important part for partisan realignment and women started to act in the matter of their status as political outsiders. We cannot define certainly where the struggle was most intense because in every region, women started under different conditions, however in the case of Great Britain and the United States, the matter of voting rights for women was highly disputable. Consequently, many suffragists became involved in increasingly violent actions as time went on. These women militants, or suffragettes, as they were known, were sent to prison and continued their protests

there by engaging in hunger strikes. (BBC 2018) Public support of the women's suffrage movement grew in volume and public demonstrations, exhibitions and processions were organized in support of women's right to vote.

Speaking about women's rights in the Middle East, we cannot jump into demanding political rights for women, when there is an abuse of basic human rights. Crucial to this enterprise is an understanding of the structural underpinnings of women's lives. At least 90% of married Egyptian women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone female genital mutation, a practice that continues to cause an unknown number of deaths. In Tunisia – often seen as a liberal beacon in the region – 47.2 % of women have suffered domestic violence; in Egypt, 99.3 % of women have experienced sexual harassment. (Aspden 2015) Women protest as women not necessarily because they share mutual interests but because mobilizing as women frames their actions. In many movements throughout the history of transitioning to democracy there was always a significant number of women as activists, but there are some conditions under which it makes more sense to be mobilizing on the basis of gender identity. Women protest in terms of winning popular support and influencing political outcomes. As it can be seen in Egypt, or other countries in the MENA region, sexual harassment has become an issue for almost all women on a daily basis. Mona Eltahawy¹, Egyptian- American columnist, with her articles on this issue urges when writing about the situation in Egypt during the military coup that everyone should get basic rights first, before women demand a special treatment *“And what does gender, or for that matter, sex, have to do with the Arab Spring? But I'm not talking about sex hidden away in dark corners and closed bedrooms. An entire political and economic system — one that treats half of humanity like animals — must be destroyed along with the other more obvious tyrannies choking off the region from its future.”* (Eltahawy 2012) In many cases women do not represent the only organized group mobilizing at these moments, as it happened in the Arab Uprisings. In Egypt, the protests created an unusual atmosphere where women felt comfortable in a crowded, chaotic public place. In Tahrir Square, many women noted the lack of sexual harassment. The same moments occurred in Tunisia, during the protest, where people were protesting together, expecting that their demands for democracy and democratic values will be implied, but the reason why women were such

¹ In November 2011, Egyptian police beat her, breaking her left arm and right hand, and sexually assaulted her. She was detained by the Interior Ministry and military intelligence for 12 hours. Newsweek magazine named Ms Eltahawy one of its "150 Fearless Women of 2012", Time magazine featured her along with other activists from around the world as its People of the Year and Arabian Business magazine named her one of the 100 Most Powerful Arab Women. (monaeltahawy.com)

an important element, especially in the Egypt and Tunisia will be discussed in next two chapters.

2. Egypt

The Tunisian uprising left an immediate and powerful impression on many people in Egypt. Those who planned protests in Egyptian cities have attributed their tactics, principal slogans and ultimate goal to their counterparts in Tunisia. Among those two uprisings was the way in which the uprising fed off spontaneity, its leaderlessness, its rapid spread and its nonreligious and largely nonviolent orientation. Just like in Tunisia, in Egypt the political rights were linked with demands of economic justice and thus linked young and labor activists together in a common cause. (Gelvin 2015: 49—51) The most famous group of young activists, known as the April 6 Youth Movement had been working on calling for protests across Egypt. On the evening of the protest, one of the group's founders Asmaa Mahfouz² posted a video of herself on the internet stating:

„I, a girl, am going down to Tahrir Square and I will stand alone and I will hold up a banner, perhaps people will show some honor...I am making this video to give you one simple message. If we still have honor and want to live in a dignity on this land we have to go... We will go down and demand our rights...If you think yourself a man, come with me on January 25th. Whoever says women shouldn't go to protests because they will be beaten let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on January 25th. Whoever says it is not worth it...you are a traitor, just like the president or any security cop who beats us on the streets. Your presence with us will make a difference, a big difference!” (YouTube 2011)

Her demand for dignity in her video blog resonated with the protesters that gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo. After recognizing the opposition's use of social media by the Egyptian government, they blocked Twitter and Facebook on January 26th. (Kuhlow 2013: 45) In particular, women's participation in protests may encourage the use of nonviolent protest repertoires, which subsequently increases the potential for protest success. Thus, female communication skills may express collective identities in a less divisive way, leading to larger mobilization and therefore creating more potential for success. (Ibid.: 27) Women mobilized

² Asma Mahfouz is an Egyptian activist that was in 2011 one of five recipients of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, awarded for contributions to historic changes in the Arab world. The other joint recipients were Ahmed al-Senussi, Razan Zaitouneh, Ali Farzat, and Mohamed Bouazizi of the Arab Spring.

in significant numbers in both ways, online and offline. Women were leaders, organizers and also social media influencers.

2.1. Women in protests and the process of transition

On different days of protests women were seen on the Square, some days 5 % other days 15 % of them, covered in hijabs or without them. Some of them were just helping to create the atmosphere of the protests and some of them were confidently standing on the daises with microphones in their hands and openly sharing their opinions and notions. On the Tahrir Square, on the last week of January, a number of tents, stands with various articles, leaflet walls, and tribunes were built. When the protests moved to other cities, such as Alexandria, Port Seid or Suez, the regime had become more nervous. (Mendel 2015: 204—205) However, The Arab Spring was not the first occasion in which women in the region protested.³ But because all of them were based on nationalism, they failed prioritizing the women's emancipation and the result was that gender issues had been ignored and women were denied basic rights in legal systems.

The Egyptian revolution adopted a “national” agenda characterized by patriotism and calling for a set of mainstream goals, namely bread, freedom and human dignity. “*Women wholeheartedly participated in the uprising, but they were betrayed as soon as the movement left the streets and went into formal politics.*” (Wael 2014: 479) Therefore, Wael states, that the Egyptian revolution, that originated from Tahrir square cannot be considered by any means as a tipping point for the emancipation of women. Yet, a sense of optimism about women's future in Egyptian politics and society briefly prevailed.

Afterwards, in the transitional phase questions about women's involvement in the public and political sphere were triggered especially because of their beneficence in the movement. (Ibid.: 483) Tahrir Square provided a safe space for women where they could participate in public life without being scared of sexual harassment, which is a remarkable problem in Egypt even nowadays. According to the Thomson Reuters Foundation and its international poll on the most dangerous megacities Cairo was named as the worst. The results showed that

³ During the Egyptian anti-colonial and independence movement was given a rise to the Egyptian women's movement, when it helped to widen the base of support throught the country and rendered vital services.

women's rights and the treatment of women in Egypt has worsened since the 2011 uprisings.⁴ As reported by the data collected by the United Nations in 2013, 99 % of asked women reported sexual harassment and 47 % of divorced or separated women reported domestic abuse. Therefore, speaking about a safe space for women on a public square in Cairo is important. Women were present equally to men in remarkably crowded areas without being harassed or without feeling vulnerable or threatened. Despite these facts, the Tahrir square was not as utopic as it may seem. Women were free to mingle in public as long as they “*maintain a specific code that she identified as passive; women should not have a loud voice, specific demands and they should abide by men's rules.*” (Wael 2014: 484) That can be explained also in the way that the public sphere belongs to men and when a woman visits it, she must behave in a certain way. In fact, all the conditions that protesters had must have been gender neutral.

The exclusion of women in the transitional political process in Egypt shows us the male control over the national movements. Even though women were necessary during the 18 days of protesting on the Tahrir square, not only because of their work there in supplying the protesters with food or other needed goods, but also because the bigger the number of participants was, the more pressure was created on the government women's participation there also reflected national unity and validated the movements to the international community. On the day that Mubarak stepped down the women friendly atmosphere started to change. Violence against women gradually escalated, committed by both the state agents and civilians. A couple of days later, on the 8th March, the International Women's Day, the same thing happened to the women's march in Cairo. They were not convinced by the amendments of the new constitution as there were still some parts that were not giving women the same rights as to men. The idea of equal rights for women and men left many people agitated, some men were saying that it would be disgraceful for them, if women had the same rights as men. Others rejected the idea of a march using the Quran and a religious background, stating that “*We rule by the Quran and the Quran does not allow a woman to rule men.*” (Ekram 2011) At the moment, when these two groups met side by side, on one side with posters calling for equality and on the other people screaming that they want women to step down, it could not possibly end up well. It turned into more of a shouting match, with neither side hearing the other. The fundamental side became more and more insulting and aggressive and started to harass

⁴ The poll was made with the help of women's rights experts, who were collecting the data from 19 World's megacities. (The Thomson Reuters Foundation 2017)

those women. A feminist activist who participated in this march thought that this was a result of culture created by the old Egyptian regime. *“This is a natural product of the long years of dictatorship and the absence of culture in Egypt.”* (Ibid.) The march did not end in the way the organizing women expected.

Moreover, speaking again about the days after the resignation of Mubarak, expressions of irritation were commonly reported. Women were repeatedly driven out of the square, they were strip searched, they were accused of prostitution and in some cases forced to undergo virginity testing⁵. The most famous, or better said infamous picture that flew across the world and became the national symbol of abuse of power was “the girl in a blue bra”. A veiled young woman was dragged and beaten by members of the military. This image and the whole video had become an icon for the sexist and brutal use of power. It was a clear suppression of female rights but also the visual stamp which became a historical part of women’s liberation protests. (Amaria 2011) Women had not been only forcefully excluded from the public spaces but also from law and politics. In March, a committee of drafting constitutional amendments to regulate the first elections post revolution consisted of experts in law and politics, and members of minorities such as Coptic Christian and some members of a Muslim brotherhood, but not a single woman was appointed into this committee.

The first elections in the new regime put eight women in the people’s assembly, both as independent candidates and on party lists. This exclusion was aimed to silence women and their gender specific demands. The most common answer for any demand of this kind was *“This is not the time for women’s issues because priority is for the national interest.”* (Wael 2014: 187) The absence of women’s voices was even more intense, pointing on the women’s rights that were gained during the last decades. During the Mubarak era the progress in the protection and promotion of women’s rights was strongly supported by the National Council for women, which was led by Suzanne Mubarak, the former first lady of Egypt. Consequently, the revolution resulted in a reduction of legal rights and freedoms that men decided to grant. Some members of the first elected parliament, which was predominantly political Islamists proposed the withdrawal of rights such as the right to mobility, political representation as a fixed quota, unilateral divorce and even the criminalization of female genital mutilation.

⁵ Virginity testing is considered to be a form of gender-based violence and discrimination according to United Nation World Health Organization and also according to Egyptian administrative court, stating that this kind of testing is an illegal act and a violation of women’s rights and an assault on their dignity. (Human Rights Watch 2014)

(Wael 2014: 187—188) Other issues discussed in the parliament included lowering marital age for women or the 'beit el Ta'a' provision which meant that a man could legally force his wife to live with him. Those parliament members insisted these rights to be unavoidable and established because of the western ideologies. New regime was balancing in the matter of women's human rights: on one hand, the 2012 Constitution was generous with women's welfare, on the other hand it was ungenerous with gender equality and women's empowerment. The provisions mentioned in the constitution may have seemed as protective measures, however they were just emphasizing the division of labor and defining women as wives, mothers and daughters.

Speaking about the constitutions from this period of time, I must mention that two new constitutions were created, both approved and accepted in referendums, the first one in 2012 and the second one in 2014. Since the resignation of Mubarak and the new constitution of 2012 a provisional constitution was used, defining mostly the rules for the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. The elections were won by the Muslim Brotherhood, which not only gained the majority of Parliamentary seats, but also assumed the most of major offices in the Cabinet, following with the victory of Mohamed Morsi, the candidate of Muslim Brotherhood, as a president of Egypt. The mentioned 2012 constitution was showing indicators for the undermined inclusion of women one after the other. For example, the revocation of women's quota in the parliament denied the fair share of representation with only two percent of the 2012 parliament seats during the Mubarak's era, which was 12 % of seats preserved solely for women. Moreover, the parliamentarian Azza El Garf from the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party further stated, that women had not yet proven themselves competent enough to be appointed, provoking furious responses, from example from Mervat El Talawy, the President of National Council for Women when she stated, that how is it possible to have a constitution without justice for women that after revolution. (Khodair, Hassib 2015: 5) Women were not given any leading positions, neither in the upper house in the Egyptian parliament. Even other political parties did not provide support for women to be involved in or to run for the elections, what also takes them back to the culture of male domination, because some women even if willing to candidate, had had forbidden to, because their husbands did not allow it.

2.2. National council and life in social movements

The role of National Council for Women (NCW), which was established in 2000 by a presidential decree, should be crucial in the solving the problems impending women's participation and creating an enabling media environment which endeavors the change of the image of women and the way they are perceived by the others. Other issues should be an assertion of women's rights into the formulation of policies, reviewing the legislation related to women or consolidating the relations between the NCW and the local organizations or with the NGO's. Speaking about the improvement of an image of a woman the NCW started to cooperate with the radio and television and launched a media campaign called Women Development Enhancement via Awareness Campaigns. (Ibid.: 8) The campaign was designed to rise women's awareness about their rights and about available services provided by the institutions working on the advancement of women. Another part of this campaign was a training, consisting on several workshops and seminars on awareness on the role of a women in the society and on women's issues.

However, after the revolution even though the NCW participated in several local meetings aiming to continue with the women's awareness and workshops about the women's role in the protest or for building social partnerships to empower women and enable them to participate in development, did not succeed. Regarding to the culture and the institutional frame as was set in the constitution, the NCW should start to present the real image of a woman as portrayed in the Islamic religion, emphasizing the correct religious perceptions on women and present them to the society according to authorized religious rhetoric. (Khodair, Hassib 2015: 10) Nevertheless the training system, and with other efforts made by the NCW in cooperation with other NGO's work in this field, such as facilitating women's obtaining of national digital ID, to enable them to be eligible to vote, women's status in Egypt has regressed in the field of civil rights, freedoms and equal representation, especially after the period of the rule of Muslim Brotherhood, where women had only six female members in the parliament, what made two percent.

2.3. Possible future mobilization

Women in Egypt were not united interest group neither as a political one. They joined the national movement not for a gender cause. Women's initiative was weak, as during the period of time after the resignation of Mubarak, no mobilization of women occurred during the parliamentary elections, where these organizations could be supporting some candidates

or lobbied for their rights more. Moreover, in the drafting process of a new constitution was the pressure from women's movements almost nonexistent, although the drafting committee made some very disturbing amendments regarding women's position. Wael in her article states that women in Egypt could have a voting power because the number of women is big enough to force politicians to include their interests in their agendas, they are just not well organized. One of the cases which can be used here is, when Bothaina Rashwan, the only female candidate, willing to run for elections to set a precedent fully aware that she did not have any real chance of actual winning, but more upsetting is the fact, that she was not even able to secure 30 000 signatures to register herself as a candidate. (Wael 2014: 489) This number could have been effortlessly collected if she only had the support of at least some women organizations, that have access to the masses.

Egyptian women did not learn from the history, they did not seize the opportunity to mobilize for their specific goals and they just degenerated their ideas and followed men's lead. (Ibid.: 490) Talking about the Egyptian legal framework and the struggle for women to politically participate in the society, the division of districts and the number of candidates to run for each constituency is not supportive to women, therefore it fails to ensure equal representation for voters in each of them. Moreover, the non-explicit inclusion of a parliamentary quota system for women in the constitution is not a safeguard of a fair representation of women in the parliament. (Khodair, Hassib 2016: 21) Regarding to the Egyptian societal and cultural heritage, there is still a problem in this field slowing down the participation of women. Mostly in the rural areas, women are still perceived from a negative perspective, seen to bound to certain functions only.

3. Tunisia

Since the December 17, 2010, when a street vendor, Muhammad Buazizi set himself on fire in front of the local governmental building in the town of Sidi Bouzid, rural town in central Tunisia, is Tunisia considered as the spark that ignited the Arab uprisings. (Gelvin 2015: 27) Before the spark was ignited the economic-social conditions in Tunisia may be surprising for many of people. For example in comparison with Egypt, Egyptian population is from 85 to 100 million people, Tunisia has around 10,9 million. Egypt is six times larger in the surface than Tunisia, however, from the wealth point of view, Tunisia is more urbanized, more European⁶ and according to the World bank, during the time of uprising classified more than 80 % of the Tunisian population as “middle class.” (Ibid.: 39) Bouazizi, who had been supporting his family by selling fruit or vegetables from a cart was enraged when local officials repeatedly demanded bribes and confiscated his merchandise.

The policewoman, who was in charge of confiscating his trolley slapped him in front of other men in the street. It was not usual for a woman to humiliate a man in front of others. In that moment Muhammad did not feel only personal disgrace moreover, he felt the demonstration of the arrogance of the power. (Mendel 2015: 185) On the other hand, after the policewoman was released from the prison, where she got on the order of Ben Ali, she was able to tell the story from her point of view. She said, that after she confronted Bouazizi, he had grabbed her at her breasts. After this story came out the public opinion turned and suddenly *“the story of a gratuitous insult to masculine dignity was balanced by a story of an improper affront to feminine modesty”* (Moruzzi 2013: 5) This was the story that helped the reconciliation of opposing national actors. The policewoman returned to work, however in civilian clothes that replaced the uniforms reminding the old regime. In that moment, in the incident, she was no longer seen to have acted as a female state agent, but as proper feminine social subject, just as Buazizi affirmed his masculine dignity as the last signifier of his claim to respect from the state. However, policewoman chose her feminine honor as her claim for inclusion within the new state. Yet nothing in this balance in this shifting balance of obligation had much to do with democratic agency. (Ibid.) The protests took place on many cities across Tunisia, mostly young people, who were protesting against the economic situation, unemployment and corruption.

⁶ Gelvin states this based on the slogans, that were used in the protests, when Tunisians shouted at their president „*Dégage!*“_what means get out in French and Egyptians were using „*Irhal!*“ what also means get out, but in Arabic language. (Gelvin 2015: 39)

They also were using new ways of communication, social medias, namely Facebook and Twitter for organizing mass political actions. Lively discussions about the act of Buazizi took place on these actions, even though not everyone agreed on this matter, the majority of youth admitted that it was an act of despair and only those, who had been in such a position could understand. The western countries were enthusiastic and concerned at the same time from the incidents in Tunisia. On one hand, something universally new was happening in the region, on the other hand, the development there was showing destabilization in the Mediterranean, in the neighborhood of the European union and their leaders were afraid of possible refugees and immigrants. (Mendel 2015: 187) During the whole process that lead to President Ben Ali's fall has women participated in all the stages of the Tunisian revolution.

Tunisian women were a powerful unit during the uprisings of 2010 and 2011, setting a precedent for the rest of the region during the Arab Spring. Tunisia was known for its commitment to a secular political system and society, along with its support for women's rights. If we want to frame the position of women in Tunisia, we must mention the history of the development of women's rights there. First, what must be mentioned is the Code of Personal status that was ratified in 1956. The Code introduced dramatic changes proving its uniqueness in the Arab world, such as changes in family life namely the proclamation of marriage and divorce as state matters, the setting up of a minimum age for marriages, the protection of the wife against abuse by her husband and the abolition of polygamy. (Khedher 2017: 34) The Code consisted of ten books, each of them including a number of articles defining the legal status of women and the protection of Tunisian family life, specially named by the issues discussed, for example marriage, alimony, child custody, divorce, determination of parenthood, abandoned children and so forth. (Ibid.: 35) The distinctive position of Tunisian women in terms of gender equality and the advanced legal status of women could be credited to the modernization policy implemented by Habib Bourguiba.⁷ The Code of Personal Status instituted a number of changes benefitting women, it was an important and uncommon instrument of social changes for women in the MENA region.

However, the reality was the continual utilization of women's rights as a mechanism of state power and consolidation, under the guise of modernism. (Petkanas 2013: 3)

⁷ The first president of the independent Tunisian Republic. Bourguiba believed that the first step in the modernization of Tunisian society should be the transformation of people's consciousness through reforms in education, religion and the status of women. (Khedher 2017: 33)

The dominant narrative on feminism in Tunisia and the primary frames of the existing legacy helped to build the expectation that secular women in Tunisia were advantageously positioned to access political power. As the country got ready for the upcoming elections in October 2011, political parties began to form. Most of these parties were secular, in the opposite of the Ben Ali's regime, when all six political parties were identified as Islamist. The only exception among the secular parties was the Ennahda party, who re-emerged for the first time since 1990s. (Ibid.: 7) Ennahda was the most organized and best financed party, profiting on its name recognition and ability to connect to the people outside the capital, what turned out to be a big problem for the secular parties. Ennahda won 89 out of the 217 seats in the Constituent Assembly. (Al Jazeera 2011) As a winner of the elections, Ennahda held the responsibility of drafting Tunisia's post-revolutionary constitution.

3.1. Women in the protests

Tunisia was ahead of the rest in the region, due to considerable advancements pertains to women's empowerment made by both, Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Nevertheless, the authoritarianism and lack of a knowledge-based society have remained problematic. Denying freedoms and rights, restricting the political process, ruling with restrictions and stagnation of socioeconomic development, these were also attributes of Ben Ali's legacy. On the other hand, again, women constituted the majority of graduates, however, only 43,4 % of women were employed in comparison with 59.6 % of men. (Ghanem 2016:131) A lot of publications have underlined the important role played by traditional media in the shaping of public opinion and in this case, in the support of collective actions. The political revolution in Tunisia needed all kinds of medias and information technologies to appear. In a country where internet filtering was the rule and press censorship on daily bases, the development of Facebook and Twitter took an important part in the mobilization that caused the fall of Ben Ali. (Zlitni, Touati 2012: 51) New media had been playing a key role in keeping the moments going and to draw the World's attention to the events happening in the Middle East and North Africa region. The revolution was not only virtual, people must take to the streets, however these medias took a major part in the background of the protests.

Mentioning the women's role in the medias, especially social medias I must mention Linda Ben Mhenni, a girl that ran her blogs called *A Tunisian girl*.⁸ This blog was written

⁸ <http://atunisiangirl.blogspot.com/>

in French and Arabic language and later on had been awarded by the Deutsche Welle International Blog Award or El Mundo's International Journalism Prize in 2011 (Ibid.) Women activists, supporters or members of institutional organizations took an advantage of the opportunities offered by social networks to enhance public awareness and to carry out specific actions. During the revolution, in the households, some women sustained in their classical gender role, such as cooking, or cleaning, etc. Nonetheless, the role often extended into the whole neighborhood sometimes. Pending the revolution many families were left with no food, therefore families started to help each other, cooking for each other and sharing food. (National Public Radio 2011) This is considered to be another important contribution of women into the running protests against the government. Social media played an important role in empowering women's participation by providing them with networks and mobilization strategies, but the significant barriers for women's empowerment and the prevalence of gender inequality in the region cannot be overcome with social media alone.

Women took part in the revolution in 2011 and played significant roles in the activism that helped end decades of authoritarianism. However, the fight for retaining of the human rights women had during Ben Ali's regime has with his abdication and fleeing into the exile only started. When women all around the Tunisia realized, that in the first elections after the revolution Ennahda won, conservative Islamic party, women mobilized and stood upon their already gained rights. These kinds of protests sparked after the proposal of constitutional changes, especially speaking about the role of women. In the article 2.28 stating "*The state shall guarantee the protection of the rights of women and shall support the gains thereof as true partners to men in the building of the nation and as having a roll complementary thereto within the family.*" (Constitutionnet 2012) Every year are Tunisians celebrating Women's Day on 13 August, however in 2012 these words in mentioned constitutional article made women took to streets in Tunis to protest it. Their demonstration reflected an increasing discontent that many Tunisians expressed over the wording of this article, which stipulated that women were complimentary to men. The word *muwatinuun* meaning citizens stated early in the constitution made all Tunisians, women and men, equal in the eyes of the law. However, once reached the 28th article, suddenly women became "complimentary" to men. (Mamelouk 2012) Women believed, that the constitutionalists in charge will lean forward a language of equality that honors previous articles stating, that all Tunisian citizens are equal.

Men and women demonstrated against the language in the draft, fearing what they believed was a threat from the Islamist party and Salafists movements. Ennahda officials rejected the assertion that they are trying to roll back women's rights in the name of Islam, also explaining "*Article 28 was never meant to rob women of their rights or freedoms...the word complementary wasn't used to substitute for the word equality. We, as Ennahda, we follow Islam, and Islam is all about equality of men and women.*" (Daragahi 2012) Saying Faridea el-Albidi, an Ennahda member of the constituent assembly for the Washington Post. Because of the strong tradition of secular policies that granted women freedoms and rights since the Bourguiba era, the pressures for continuing the same policies were keeping the Islamists in check.

3.2. Transition process in Tunisia

In 2011, the Tunisian parliament consisted of 27,6 % seats reserved for women that makes 58 women out of total number of 217, which is considerably progressive compared to other Arab countries.⁹ The government was able to avert a national crisis that risked a coup and violent chaos. The Islamist Ennahda party face pressure from all sides possible, first, from the Salafists calling for implementation of Islamic law, second, from the secularist's side, who demanded secular liberal rights for everyone and third, from the side of the people, protesters, who participated in another wave of protests in 2012 against possible constitutional changes, that could threaten gender equality given by the Code of Personal Status.

Women's rights activists in Tunisia were determinate not to give up the pressure to maintain the long tradition of women's equality. (Alvi 2015: 306) Ennahda stepped down and the negotiations with the opposition led to an agreement for drafting a new constitution and forming a new, secular government. Both, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2014 and both were won by secularists. (The Guardian 2014) "*The fact, that Tunisian society has been able to pressure an Islamist government to step down from power is a significant achievement.*" (Alvi 2015: 304) It has been hailed as a major victory for Tunisia's transition to democracy, therefore Tunisia presents a promising environment for democratization and potentials for women's empowerment, social choices, and freedoms.

⁹ This number is not only progressive in the Arab world, but also higher than in countries in Central and East Europe, for example in Czech Republic, speaking about the period of time around 2010-2012 was only 22 % of seats occupied by women and in Slovak republic only 15 % of all 150 seats. (Poslanecká Snemovňa Parlamentu Českej Republiky 2017; Luppová Krajčivoričová 2016)

Speaking about women's participation in these elections, women had a presidential candidate running as an independent. Her name was Kalthoum Kannu, judge with 25 years long career as a judge, mother of three children was constantly receiving death threats after she publicly announced her candidature for president¹⁰. Another woman that announced candidacy, but not for presidential election, yet parliamentary, was for example Ghazala Mhamdi. She was coming from small city called Gafsa, situated in the southwest of Tunisia, city also known for its mining industry.¹¹ She was also a founder of the Union for the Unemployed, established in 2005. In the interview for the documentary movie *Trials of spring* she said, that *"It was a huge shock when the Islamist Ennahda party won the first parliamentary elections after the revolution. Ennahda has a retrograde view when it comes to women... The shock was that after removing a dictator like Ben Ali, that women would go backwards 50 years!"* (YouTube 2015) She decided to establish a political party, called Keeping the promise, representing unemployed, men and women. She entered a strong battle and competed with 57 men. Unfortunately, Ghazala's party did not win any seats in Parliament. As I mentioned before, the secular party, called Nidaa Tounes¹² won both, parliamentary and presidential elections. (Quamar 2015) Particularly for this woman the elections did not end up in the way she expected, or people from her city did, however the win of the secular party proved the trajectory of democratization in Tunisia.

The tipping theory in the case of women's participation in Tunisian revolution can be applied on the moment when women from all Tunisia stick together and head the streets all around the country. Especially in the moment when they stood against the change in the constitution, against the word complementary, that was used in the description of position of women next to men. Before that moment, women were protesting under gender neutral demands, what cannot be considered as a tipping point, because the framing in that case was different. Nevertheless, women believed that probability that all other individuals, namely women, will contribute to the demonstrations against this word. Referring to the framing of the steps women undertook, it can be described as the fear from slow path of losing their rights gained in the Code of Personal Status. Tipping together with framing and timing theory in the

¹⁰ She was receiving these messages not only during the candidacy, it started when Ben Ali fled the country. Most of the messages were signed by ultraconservative Salafist group. (Alvi 2015: 305)

¹¹ In 2008 was Gafsa the center of riots against the president Ben Ali, sowing the first seeds of the Jasmine Revolution.

¹² Nida Tounes can be translated as Call for Tunisia, or Tunisia's call.

Tunisian case proves, that women have reached their tipping point in protesting, however it was not in the exact moment as was protesting the rest of the nation.

Conclusion

This bachelor's Thesis focused on women's participation in the Arab Uprisings, specifically the cases of Egypt and Tunisia. This Thesis operated on the presumption that women played an important role in the Uprisings as members of the protesting groups, through the social media or through mobilizing during the period of the transition process; however, with different demands than during the period of protests.

The Thesis used the theories of tipping, timing and framing of protests, for the first time presented in the book of Lisa Baldez, where she analyzed the participation of women in the protests in Chile. Tipping was explained as a specific moment when a group of people rapidly and dramatically changes its behavior by widely adopting a previously rare practice, a protest in this case. We can describe the framing method as an approach not only to explain the conditions in the society and the conditions of women's rights in this region but also to explain why women saw these conditions as a moment or an opportunity to act on their behalf. Speaking about the timing, the rule there was to act quickly, because the longer the mobilization waited, the probability that everyone would participate would decrease.

I tried to apply these theories and find out *whether women in Tunisia and Egypt got to the tipping point in protesting in the Arab Uprisings and if not, what were the reasons that this moment did not occur*. Another part of the analysis was to find out, *whether women had been able to bring up their own demands, not simply the demands that were represented by the whole society throughout the protests or during the transition period*.

The analysis of the Egyptian case revealed, that even though women had been a significant part of the mobilization forces of the protests online or were physically present on the Squares without feeling insecure or endangered, what was unusual for women in Egypt was that they would not have been able to mobilize solely as women and come up with their own demands during the transition process. Many social scientists are stating that Egyptian women today are living in a worsened social status than they did before the revolution.

On the other hand, the analysis of the Tunisian case and women there showed that women's rights followed a similar trajectory and achieved not only maintaining the rights but also strengthening them in post-revolution Tunisia. However, the tipping point for women in Tunisia is not considered to have occurred during the period of protests, but during the transition, especially, after the new Islamist—majority Constitutional Assembly published the new version of the Tunisian Constitution. After the discovery women started to feel scared

and afraid of losing rights, which they maintained in the Code of Personal Status in 1956. This moment can be considered a tipping point for women in Tunisia when they brought up their own demands, focusing on women's rights only. In this sense, Tunisian women's rights should serve as an approach rather than as a blueprint in the struggle for advancing women's rights and achieving gender equality in the MENA region and beyond. This outcome was not assured and required the persistence and commitment of numerous individuals to secure these conditions, as could not be seen in Egypt.

Speaking about possible future research in this field it must be mentioned that this Thesis focuses solely on the period of time during the protests and during the transition, meaning until the new and democratic constitution was recognized and the democratic elections were held. Next research and analyses can focus on the period after the formal transition process is done and analyze the situation of women in these countries today, specifically whether their situation enhanced or worsened. There are still many fields where intense analyses are missing. Also focusing on other countries that were part of the Arab Spring but were not analyzed in this Thesis may also be very valuable for further research.

Abstract

Bachelor's Thesis is focusing on the participation of women in protests in the case of Arab Spring, especially in the cases of Egypt and Tunisia. The aim is to find out whether women's participation in protests could be explained in the terms of tipping, timing and framing theories of protests. Whether women in Tunisia and Egypt got to the tipping point in protesting in the Arab Uprisings and whether if women were able to bring up their own demands, not simply the demands that were represented by whole society throughout the protests or during the transition period. Women played significant roles as protestors, background organizers and mobilizers or international symbols of the fight of gender equality and creation of a better, quality life in the post-uprising region of Middle East and North Africa.

Keywords:

Arab Spring, Egypt, Tunisia, women, protest, participation, tipping point, timing and framing theory, transition process, democratization

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