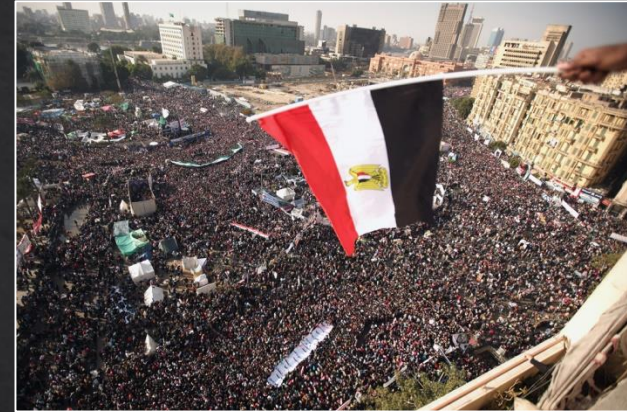


Arab Spring, Arab Winter and the Reassertion of Authoritarianism



What is/was the Arab Spring?

- ◆ Protests across MENA that challenged authoritarian regimes
- ◆ Called for more personal freedom, transparency and political participation.
- ◆ Initially seen as the 'fourth wave' of democratisation.
- ◆ Today, largely viewed as failed to affect lasting democratic change in region...



Themes

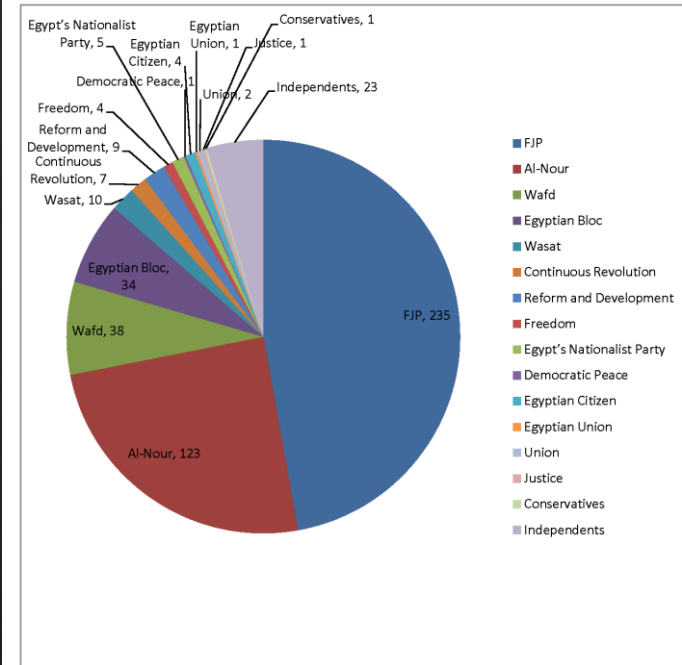
- ◆ The rapid rise and fall of democracy in Egypt.
- ◆ The 'Sectarianisation' of the spring.
- ◆ The success of democracy in Tunisia?



Egypt: power grabs, backlash, counter-coups

- ◇ 2011 revolution sees removal of Hosni Mubarak from power.
- ◇ Brotherhood runs as the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in 2011/2012 parliamentary elections, achieving near majority of seats.
- ◇ Commits 'to participate, but not to dominate,' but quickly seeks to marginalise non-Islamist actors in the government.
- ◇ Explicitly calls for a sharia state.
- ◇ Mohamed Morsi elected president on Egypt in June, 2012, but unpopular – 'a choice between cholera and the plague' (Wickham, 2013)

Figure 1: Election results: number of seats won by each party



Authoritarian democracy

- ❖ Morsi stacks public positions with Islamists, excludes secularists and liberals from decision making.
- ❖ New constitution fails to be consultative in drafting or passing – ratified at 64% with only 33% turnout.
- ❖ On 22nd November, 2012, a presidential decree places Morsi's activities above judicial review.
- ❖ Fails to address major economic issues inside Egypt – uses government for religio-political goals and consolidating power – déjà vu?



The weakness of the Brotherhood

- ◆ Rise of sectarian violence.
- ◆ Renewed Jihadist activity in 2012, including AQ in Sinai.
- ◆ Widespread dissatisfaction with government's performance leads to new mass rallies in June, 2013.
- ◆ Morsi is deposed by military coup in July – still a potent force.
- ◆ General Sisi takes control with emergency powers, subsequently 'elected' president.



The military reascending

- ◇ Military rule re-established with initial popular support and increasing authoritarianism begins to manifest.
- ◇ External support.
- ◇ Use of terrorism legislation to suppress and arbitrarily imprison brotherhood-affiliated individuals.
- ◇ Intensification of political executions.
- ◇ Recent developments overwhelmingly voted for in parliament (>81%):
 - ◇ Elimination of presidential two term limit.
 - ◇ Terms extended from 4 to 6 years.
 - ◇ Creation of a military council to ‘oversee the state’.
- ◇ Déjà vu with Egypt’s past?



The Gulf – sectarianism as counter-revolution

- ❖ Gulf states, portray protests as sectarian – threat to the oneness of God and potential for *Jahillyah*.
- ❖ Mobilisation of pro-regime *ulema*.
- ❖ Invoke Iranian influence - securitising Shi'a/Sunni divide.
- ❖ Bahrain – populist protest constituting 40% of country's population - Iranian conspiracy.
- ❖ Yemen – Houthi movement portrayed as Iranian proxies.
- ❖ Saudi security crackdown against Shi'a in east, Bahrain, with clerics fuelling divide.



Religification of the Syrian conflict

- ◇ Revolution originally centred on secular reformists aimed at anti-corruption, human rights and political participation.
- ◇ Regime claims protests driven by Islamists and terrorists from the Gulf.
- ◇ Releases large numbers of imprisoned militants and to lend credence to its claims and fragment the opposition.
- ◇ Self-fulfilling prophecy.
- ◇ Islamist actors prove far more effective than secular counterparts due to veteran status, experience governing and pre-existing networks.



Sectarianisation of Syrian conflict

- ❖ Collapse of government in east enables organised Islamist groups like ISIS to established roots.
- ❖ Brutalisation of the population leaves many open to radicalization.
- ❖ Intervention of Shi'a Iran and Alawi character of the regime emphasized as sectarian conflict by interested Gulf state propaganda.
- ❖ Regime continues to draw legitimacy claiming to protect secularism and minorities from militant Islam.
- ❖ Ramifications echo throughout the region.



Tunisia – hope?

- ◇ Nucleus of the Arab Spring protests after a Mohammad Bouazizi self-immolates in December, 2010.
- ◇ In January, 2011, protests demand shift from calls for jobs and anti-corruption to the transformation of the entire political system.
- ◇ Regime breaks down as army commanders refuse to use violence.
- ◇ President Ben Ali flees country in January and is taken in by Saudi Arabia.
- ◇ New Troika government formed in autumn, splitting power between the Islamist Ennahda Movement, the Arab-Nationalist and the Socialist democratic Ettakatol.



A growing public sphere

- ◇ Troika avoids implementing sharia – maintains article one of 1959 constitution which states country's official religion as Islam, but no legal dimension to this.
- ◇ Around 1,500 regime *ulema* lose jobs and large number of radicals released from jail.
- ◇ Govt Struggles to deal with economic woes of the country – high unemployment, particularly amongst youth.
- ◇ Widespread striking and political protests continue – in many cases stoked by 'revolutionary' imams.



Rising conflict

- ◆ Growing tendencies towards religious extremism blamed on numerous released clerics.
- ◆ Exceptionally high number of participants in Syrian Jihad with ISIS – estimated 7,000 fighters in 2017.
- ◆ Jihadist insurgency emerges in Kasserine in 2012, waged by Ansar al-Sharia and AQIM.
- ◆ Terror attacks on beachfront hotels in Sousse, 2015, damage the country's tourism industry.



Chaos and calls to order

- ◇ Growing calls in 2013 for reinstatement of state-sanctioned *ulema* due to uncontrollable situation in mosques centred on 'revolutionary' imams.
- ◇ Importance of civil society groups.
- ◇ Growth of religious violence targeting 'offensive' materials and individuals, such as art exhibitions and television stations.
- ◇ Assassinations of politicians Chokri Belaid & Mohamed Brahmi in 2013 by militant Salafists lead to the collapse of the troika government.



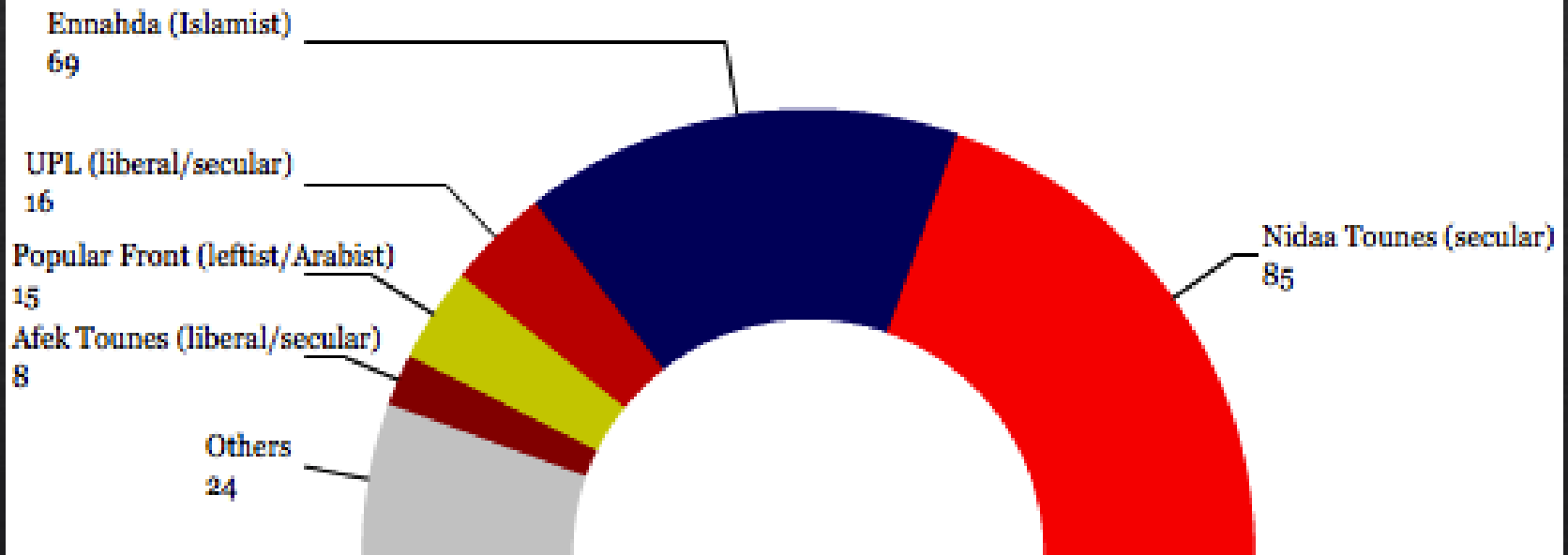
Technocracy and reassertion of state control

- ◇ Technocratic government assumes power in Jan, 2014 to 'clean up the chaos.'
- ◇ Initially supports independent religious sphere, but securitises issue - religious activities should be considered a state service.
- ◇ Passes a new constitution that guarantees personal religious freedom, the independence of judiciary, freedom of expression, the press and promotes gender equality.
- ◇ Article 6 of new constitution solidifies state control over mosques - religious neutrality can only be guaranteed by the state.



2014 election results

Tunisia parliamentary election: Oct. 2014



An uncertain future

- ◆ New coalition government formed in Oct 2014, led by secular Nidaa Tounes party, but also including Ennahda.
- ◆ In 2016, Ennahda abandons the term 'Islamist' and adopts 'Muslim democrat.'
- ◆ Government to determine what is permissible in sermons and still maintains a heavy security presence at many gatherings.
- ◆ In practice, are we back to where we started?



Conclusion

- ◆ Most attempts at revolution and progressivism have failed.
- ◆ Attempts to implement revolutionary Islamist agendas checked inside and out.
- ◆ Sectarianism a powerful tool to maintain authoritarian structures.
- ◆ Tunisia as an exception – unique features.
- ◆ Ongoing today – Algeria?

